

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Epping Forest in Essex

*May 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Loughton and Waltham Abbey is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



## SUMMARY

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

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

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

- **in 19 of the 30 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 10 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve overall, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 18 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 119-120) are that:

- **Epping Forest District Council should have 58 councillors, one less than at present;**
- **there should be 32 wards, instead of 30 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of two, and six wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 31 of the proposed 32 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Sheering and Waltham Abbey.**

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

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

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

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Abbey North East	2	Paternoster ward (part - part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
2 Abbey South West	2	Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish )
3 Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing	1	Epping Lindsey ward (part – Epping Upland parish); Nazeing ward (part – Bumbles Green parish ward of Nazeing parish); Roydon ward (part – Broadley Common parish ward of Roydon parish)
4 Buckhurst Hill East	2	<i>Unchanged</i>
5 Buckhurst Hill West	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
6 Chigwell Row	1	Chigwell Row ward (part – part of Chigwell Row parish ward of Chigwell parish)
7 Chigwell Village	2	Chigwell Village ward (part – part of Chigwell Village parish ward of Chigwell parish)
8 Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash	2	Chipping Ongar ward (part – part of Chipping Ongar parish ward of Ongar parish); Greensted & Marden Ash ward (the parish wards of Greensted and Marden Ash in Ongar parish)
9 Epping Hemnall	3	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish)
10 Epping Lindsey & Thornwood	3	Epping Hemnall ward (part – part of Epping Hemnall parish ward of Epping parish); Epping Lindsey ward (St John's parish ward of Epping parish); North Weald Bassett ward (part – Thornwood parish ward of North Weald parish)
11 Grange Hill	3	Chigwell Row ward (part – part of Chigwell Row parish ward of Chigwell parish); Chigwell Village ward (part – part of Chigwell Village parish ward of Chigwell parish); Grange Hill ward (Grange Hill parish ward of Chigwell parish)
12 Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village	1	Moreton & Matching ward (part – Matching parish); North Weald Bassett ward (part – Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish); Sheering ward (part - Sheering Village parish ward of Sheering parish)
13 High Beach	1	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey West ward (part - part of Waltham Abbey West parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
14	High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings	1	High Ongar ward (High Ongar parish); Roothing Country ward (part – Abbess, Beauchamp & Berners Roding and Willingale parishes)
15	Honey Lane	3	High Beach ward (part - part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey ward); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
16	Lambourne	1	<i>Unchanged</i>
17	Loughton Alderton Arch	2	Broadway ward (part – part of Broadway parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part – part of St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton Roding ward (part – part of Loughton Roding parish ward of Loughton parish)
18	Loughton Broadway	2	Broadway ward (part – part of Broadway parish ward of Loughton parish); Debden Green ward (part – part of Debden Green parish ward of Loughton parish)
19	Loughton Fairmead	2	Debden Green ward (part – part of Debden Green parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish)
20	Loughton Forest	2	<i>Unchanged</i>
21	Loughton Roding	2	Loughton Roding ward (part – part of Loughton Roding parish ward of Loughton parish)
22	Loughton St John's	2	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part - part of St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)
23	Loughton St Mary's	2	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s (part – part of St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)
24	Lower Nazeing	2	Nazeing ward (part – Nazeingbury and Riverside parish wards of Nazeing parish)
25	Lower Sheering	1	Sheering ward (part – Sheering West parish ward of Sheering parish)
26	Moreton & Fyfield	1	Moreton & Matching ward (part - Moreton, Bobbingworth, High Laver, Little Laver and Magdalen Laver parishes); Roothing Country ward (part – Fyfield parish)
27	North Weald	2	North Weald Bassett ward (part – Village parish ward of North Weald parish)
28	Passingford	1	<i>Unchanged</i>
29	Paternoster	2	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
30	Roydon	1	Roydon ward (part – Dobbs Weir and Roydon Village parish wards of Roydon parish)
31	Shelley	1	Chipping Ongar ward (part – part of Chipping Ongar parish ward of Ongar parish); Shelley ward (Shelley parish ward of Ongar parish)
32	Theydon Bois	2	<i>Unchanged</i>

*Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (1999)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Abbey North East	2	3,256	1,628	1	3,256	1,628	-2
2	Abbey South West	2	2,279	1,140	-29	3,179	1,590	-5
3	Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing	1	1,577	1,577	-2	1,607	1,607	-4
4	Buckhurst Hill East	2	3,427	1,714	6	3,437	1,719	3
5	Buckhurst Hill West	3	5,120	1,707	6	5,162	1,721	3
6	Chigwell Row	1	1,748	1,748	9	1,752	1,752	5
7	Chigwell Village	2	3,079	1,540	-4	3,193	1,597	-4
8	Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash	2	3,057	1,529	-5	3,316	1,658	-1
9	Epping Hemnall	3	4,814	1,605	0	4,942	1,647	-1
10	Epping Lindsey & Thornwood	3	4,784	1,595	-1	4,998	1,666	0
11	Grange Hill	3	4,782	1,594	-1	4,896	1,632	-2
12	Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village	1	1,668	1,668	4	1,694	1,694	2
13	High Beach	1	1,766	1,766	10	1,804	1,804	8
14	High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings	1	1,619	1,619	0	1,627	1,627	-2
15	Honey Lane	3	4,736	1,579	-2	4,742	1,581	-5
16	Lambourne	1	1,504	1,504	-7	1,616	1,616	-3
17	Loughton Alderton Arch	2	3,365	1,683	4	3,369	1,685	1
18	Loughton Broadway	2	3,236	1,618	0	3,291	1,646	-1
19	Loughton Fairmead	2	3,198	1,599	-1	3,301	1,651	-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 %
20	Loughton Forest	2	3,228	1,614	0	3,384	1,692	1
21	Loughton Roding	2	3,498	1,749	9	3,498	1,749	5
22	Loughton St John's	2	3,342	1,671	4	3,350	1,675	0
23	Loughton St Mary's	2	3,211	1,606	0	3,399	1,700	2
24	Lower Nazeing	2	3,259	1,630	1	3,291	1,646	-1
25	Lower Sheering	1	1,528	1,528	-5	1,608	1,608	-4
26	Moreton & Fyfield	1	1,593	1,593	-1	1,720	1,720	3
27	North Weald	2	3,307	1,654	3	3,457	1,729	4
28	Passingford	1	1,602	1,602	-1	1,686	1,686	1
29	Paternoster	2	3,543	1,772	10	3,553	1,777	7
30	Roydon	1	1,685	1,685	5	1,699	1,699	2
31	Shelley	1	1,487	1,487	-8	1,631	1,631	-2
32	Theydon Bois	2	3,141	1,571	-3	3,219	1,610	-3
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>93,439</b>	–	–	<b>96,677</b>	–	–
	<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,611</b>	–	–	<b>1,667</b>	–

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

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



# 1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Epping Forest. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1976 (Report No. 147). We completed a directed electoral review of Thurrock in 1996 and a periodic electoral review of Southend-on-Sea in 1999. The electoral arrangements for Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 401). 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 must have regard to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

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

12 Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Epping Forest District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, and the headquarters

of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 February 2000.

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

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

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 Epping Forest is bordered to the east by the Essex districts of Uttlesford, Chelmsford and Brentwood, to the south by the London boroughs of Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Enfield and to the north by the Hertfordshire districts of Broxbourne and East Hertfordshire and Harlow Borough, Essex. It covers an area of 34,021 hectares and has a population of some 116,023, giving a population density of around 3 persons per hectare. The forest, after which the district is named, spans the west side of the district. The district contains both commuter towns and country villages, including the settlements of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar and Waltham Abbey.

17 The district contains 28 parishes, and is entirely parished. The district's two largest towns, Loughton and Waltham Abbey, comprise 25 per cent and 17 per cent of the district's total electorate respectively.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 93,439 (February 1999). The Council presently has 59 members who are elected from 30 wards, those in the west of the district being relatively urban, while the remainder are predominantly rural. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, seven are each represented by two councillors and 12 are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Epping Forest district, with around 6 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards, which have 888 and 1,142 more electors respectively than 20 years ago.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,584 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,639 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 30 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 10 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalances are in High Ongar ward, where the councillor represents 45 per cent fewer electors than the district average and North Weald Bassett ward, where the councillor represents 43 per cent more electors than the district average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Epping Forest*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Broadway	3	4,095	1,365	-14	4,153	1,384	-16
2 Buckhurst Hill East	3	3,427	1,142	-28	3,437	1,146	-30
3 Buckhurst Hill West	3	5,120	1,707	8	5,162	1,721	5
4 Chigwell Row	1	1,813	1,813	14	1,817	1,817	11
5 Chigwell Village	2	3,323	1,662	5	3,437	1,719	5
6 Chipping Ongar	1	1,322	1,322	-17	1,681	1,681	3
7 Debden Green	3	4,030	1,343	-15	4,130	1,377	-16
8 Epping Hemnall	3	4,768	1,589	0	4,896	1,632	0
9 Epping Lindsey	3	4,744	1,581	0	4,975	1,658	1
10 Grange Hill	3	4,473	1,491	-6	4,587	1,529	-7
11 Greensted & Marden Ash	1	1,852	1,852	17	1,892	1,892	15
12 High Beach	1	2,174	2,174	37	2,212	2,212	35
13 High Ongar	1	871	871	-45	877	877	-46
14 Lambourne	1	1,504	1,504	-5	1,616	1,616	-1
15 Loughton Forest	2	3,228	1,614	2	3,384	1,692	3
16 Loughton Roding	3	4,192	1,397	-12	4,192	1,397	-15
17 Loughton St John's	3	4,182	1,394	-12	4,194	1,398	-15
18 Loughton St Mary's	2	3,351	1,676	6	3,539	1,770	8
19 Moreton & Matching	1	1,580	1,580	0	1,594	1,594	-3
20 Nazeing	2	3,676	1,838	16	3,714	1,857	13
21 North Weald Bassett	2	4,543	2,272	43	4,700	2,350	43
22 Passingford	1	1,602	1,602	1	1,686	1,686	3
23 Paternoster	3	3,481	1,160	-27	3,493	1,164	-29
24 Roothing Country	1	1,242	1,242	-22	1,361	1,361	-17
25 Roydon	1	2,195	2,195	39	2,209	2,209	35
26 Sheering	1	2,215	2,215	40	2,317	2,317	41

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 %
27 Shelley	1	1,370	1,370	-13	1,374	1,374	-16
28 Theydon Bois	2	3,141	1,571	-1	3,219	1,610	-2
29 Waltham Abbey East	3	5,758	1,919	21	5,762	1,921	17
30 Waltham Abbey West	2	4,167	2,084	32	5,067	2,534	55
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>93,439</b>	–	–	<b>96,677</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,584</b>	–	–	<b>1,639</b>	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in High Ongar ward were relatively over-represented by 45 per cent, while electors in North Weald Bassett ward were relatively under-represented by 43 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met with officers and members from the District Council. We are most grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 18 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, Epping Forest Liberal Democrat Group and Epping Forest Conservative Group, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

#### **Epping Forest District Council**

24 The District Council proposed a council of 58 members, one fewer than at present, serving 33 wards, compared to the existing 30, with changes proposed to all but six of the existing wards. It proposed retaining a mixed pattern of one, two and three-member wards across the district. The District Council proposed retaining the present system of elections by thirds. The District Council stated that its proposals had been sent to all parishes and town councils, local political bodies, district councillors and those persons who had commented directly to the Council during Stage One. However, it acknowledged that local parish and town councils may not have had “sufficient time to digest the District Council’s ideas and respond” at this stage in the review.

25 The Council proposed that there should be 14 members representing Loughton town, two fewer than at present, and 10 members representing Waltham Abbey town, one more than at present. There would be a significant re-warding in these two areas, with all but two wards to be represented by two members. It would provide improved levels of electoral equality, with all but one ward varying by 10 per cent or less than the average in 1999, improving to all wards varying by 8 per cent or less by 2004.

26 The Council’s proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

#### **Epping Forest Conservative Group**

27 Epping Forest Conservative Group submitted two schemes for consideration, one based on a council of 45, a reduction of 14, the other based on a council of 58, a reduction of one. It stated that, although its 45-member scheme was “not perfect from the electoral tolerance point of view ... the Conservative Group did not necessarily feel that 58 Councillors was the right number”. Additionally, it stated that, in considering its response to the Council’s proposals, it “found that some of the proposed changes to existing Wards were unnecessary and the arguments for them were indeed questionable”.

28 The Conservative Group's 45-member scheme proposed 25 wards, five fewer than at present. It proposed a pattern of mainly two-member wards, with some single- and three-member wards. Its 58-member scheme proposed 28 wards, two fewer than at present, retaining a mixed pattern of single, two and three-member wards. The Conservative Group also proposed retaining the present system of elections by thirds. The Conservative Group stated that it had based its 58-member proposal on that submitted by the District Council, moving away from the District Council's scheme in the areas covered by Waltham Abbey, Chigwell and those parishes bounded by Harlow Borough. Both options would provide improved levels of electoral equality, with all but two wards varying by 12 per cent or less under the 45-member scheme, while under the 58-member scheme all but two wards would vary by 11 per cent or less.

29 Epping Forest Conservative Group's proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

### **Epping Forest Liberal Democrat Group**

30 Epping Forest Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council's Stage One submission and submitted the same proposals. It argued that the District Council's proposals had "regard to permitted tolerance levels and, wherever possible, communities". Additionally, the Liberal Democrat Group stated that it would "wish consideration to be given to moving to elections by halves ... once Government legislation is sanctioned".

### **Parish and Town Councils**

31 We received representations direct from six parish and town councils. Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for the east of the district, considering the proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward would be "a long and unmanageable ward". It also objected to the principle of electoral equality across the district, considering that more rural councillors were required. Epping Town Council objected to the District Council's proposals for the Epping area and instead proposed retaining the status quo. North Weald Bassett Parish Council proposed that North Weald Bassett ward be retained, but as a three-member (an increase by one). Ongar Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for Ongar parish. Sheering Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for Sheering parish, considering that they would "split the village in two". The Parish Council proposed instead that Sheering parish should be combined with the parishes of Matching Tye, High Laver and part of Moreton parish in a two-member ward. Waltham Abbey Town Council proposed an alternative distribution of district councillors for Waltham Abbey, with a similar distribution of town councillors.

### **Other Representations**

32 We received a further 10 representations from Loughton Labour Party, Loughton Residents' Association, five district councillors, three of whom made a joint submission, one county councillor, one parish councillor and three local residents. Loughton Labour Party commented only on the Loughton area, where it submitted two schemes for consideration. One was based on a mixed pattern of two- and three-member wards, a reduction of two members, while the other was based on five three-member wards, a reduction of one member. The Labour Party's 14-

member option would provide improved levels of electoral equality in the Loughton area, with all six wards varying by no more than 6 per cent by 2004. The Labour Party's 15-member option would also provide improved levels of electoral equality in the Loughton area, with none of the five wards varying by more than 8 per cent by 2004.

33 Loughton Residents' Association supported the District Council's proposals for the Loughton Town Council area, with one exception, proposing that the boundary between the modified Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards should follow the existing boundary to Wellfields.

34 Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, members for Paternoster, Waltham Abbey West and Paternoster wards, made a joint submission. They generally supported the District Council's proposals for the Waltham Abbey area, but proposed minor amendments. Their proposals reflected the Conservative Group's proposals for Waltham Abbey in their entirety. Under the three councillors' proposals for Waltham Abbey, no ward would vary by more than 10 per cent from the district average by 2004. Councillor Mrs Webster, County Councillor for Waltham Abbey, also proposed these amendments.

35 Councillor Grigg and Councillor Stallan, members for North Weald Bassett ward, objected to the District Council's proposal to split North Weald Bassett ward and proposed that the ward should be retained, but as a three-member ward (an increase of one) to address the current electoral inequality.

36 Councillor Ainsworth, a Sheering parish councillor, proposed that the existing Sheering ward should be divided into two new district wards, stating that there are two distinct areas in the parish.

37 A resident of Epping supported the District Council's Stage One submission in full. We received two further representations from residents of the existing North Weald Bassett ward. A resident of Thornwood Common supported the District Council's proposals for the ward, whereas a resident of North Weald objected to these proposals, supporting the submission made by North Weald Bassett Parish Council.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

38 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Epping Forest is, so far as is 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 interests and identities 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”.

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

40 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.

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

42 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 93,439 to 96,737 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. Having examined their electorate forecasts, we were concerned that planned single-person dwellings had not been sufficiently taken into account in preparing its forecast electorates and asked the District Council to revisit its forecast electorate. After further work, the District Council submitted a revised forecast electorate total of 96,677. A revised ward-by-ward forecast electorate was placed on deposit for public inspection.

43 The District Council expects most of the growth to be in Waltham Abbey West ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Chipping Ongar and Epping Lindsey wards. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

44 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council's revised figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

## **Council Size**

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

46 Epping Forest District Council presently has 59 members. The District Council proposed a council size of 58, a reduction of one. It argued that such a proposal would provide for electoral arrangements which would achieve the appropriate balance of representation across the district. This council size of 58 members was supported by the Liberal Democrat Group. The Conservative Group also submitted a 58-member scheme, although it also proposed, as an alternative, a council size of 45.

47 In proposing an alternative council size of 45, the Conservative Group stated that Epping Forest District Council is currently "in an advanced position in the process of Modernising Local Government with the first stages due to be implemented from May 2000". It argued that, as there is unlikely to be another review of Epping Forest's electoral arrangements for up to 15 years, the PER "should embrace the changes which we are now in the process of implementing and not the outdated Committee system which is presently being dismantled".

48 However, in considering radical reductions in council size we would expect such proposals to have the support of more than one party on the council, and preferably that there should be all-party consensus on such an important issue. The Liberal Democrat Group, in its submission, stated it had discarded the 45-member option "primarily because our Modernisation of Local Government Review is insufficiently advanced to prove any case for a 25% seat reduction". Both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group noted that reflecting communities while achieving good levels of electoral equality was much more difficult under such a reduced council size. Furthermore, the Conservative Group did not provide an analysis of how the council would function with a council of 45 and, given the lack of evidence and support, both amongst political parties on the council and of consultation with local people, we are reluctant to propose such a reduction in council size.

49 Therefore, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 58 members.

## Electoral Arrangements

50 Having proposed a council size of 58, we have carefully considered both 58-member district-wide options proposed at Stage One, as well as the other submissions which we have received. We note that both district-wide proposals would provide some improvements to electoral equality and appear to have regard to communities. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our recommendations.

51 First, there is consensus on the proposed warding arrangements in the Loughton area between the District Council's, the Liberal Democrat Group's and the Conservative Group's schemes. Second, there is consensus that the wards of Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois should remain unchanged. Third, all district-wide schemes proposed that Ongar Parish Council be re-warded, so that a single-member ward and a two-member ward should replace the three existing single-member wards. Fourth, there is general agreement that the parishes of Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding, High Ongar and Willingale should be combined to form the new High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward.

52 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the District Council's scheme and the greatly improved levels of electoral equality provided, we have concluded that we should utilise it as the basis of our recommendations. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the alternative scheme submitted at Stage One. However, having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the District Council's proposals in four areas. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards
- (b) High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards
- (c) Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards
- (d) High Ongar, Moreton & Matching, Roothing Country and Sheering wards
- (e) Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley wards
- (f) Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois wards
- (g) Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards

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

## **Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards**

54 These six wards, situated in the southwest of the district, together generally comprise the urban area of Loughton town and together make up the parish of the same name. Loughton Forest and Loughton St Mary's wards are each represented by two members while the remaining wards are each represented by three. The number of electors per councillor is 14 per cent below the district average in Broadway ward (16 per cent in 2004), 15 per cent below in Debden Green ward (16 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above in Loughton Forest ward (3 per cent in 2004), 12 per cent below in Loughton Roding ward (15 per cent in 2004), 12 per cent below in Loughton St John's ward (15 per cent in 2004) and 6 per cent above in Loughton St Mary's ward (8 per cent in 2004).

55 At Stage One the District Council proposed a new configuration of seven two-member wards covering this area. It considered that its proposals in this area would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. In the north of the town it proposed that Loughton St John's ward should be modified to include part of Debden Green ward in the Debden Lane area. The Council proposed that Loughton St John's ward should be further modified to transfer an area around Hillcroft and Hillyfields to a new Loughton Fairmead ward and Wellfields to an amended Loughton St Mary's ward. The remainder of a new Loughton Fairmead ward would comprise that part of Debden Green ward lying generally to the west of Castell Road, Jessell Drive and Westall Road. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Debden Green ward should be combined with that part of Broadway ward to the northeast of Chigwell Lane, to form a new Loughton Broadway ward. In the centre of the town, in addition to the modification to the northern boundary of Loughton St Mary's ward (detailed above), the Council proposed that an area around The Lindens should be transferred from Loughton St Mary's ward to a new Loughton Alderton Arch ward. Loughton Alderton Arch ward would also comprise part of Broadway ward to the west of Chigwell Lane, together with an area in the east of Loughton Roding ward. In the south of the town a modified Loughton Roding ward would comprise the remainder of the existing ward, while Loughton Forest ward would remain unchanged.

56 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Loughton Alderton Arch ward (1 per cent above in 2004), equal to the average in Loughton Broadway ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 1 per cent below in Loughton Fairmead ward both now and in 2004, equal to the average in Loughton Forest ward (1 per cent above in 2004), 9 per cent above in Loughton Roding ward (5 per cent above in 2004), 5 per cent above in Loughton St John's ward (2 per cent in 2004) and 2 per cent below the average in Loughton St Mary's ward (equal to the average in 2004).

57 The Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group each supported the District Council's proposals for Loughton.

58 Loughton Labour Party submitted two alternative proposals for Loughton at Stage One, one based on a pattern of five three-member wards, the other based on a pattern of four two-member wards and two three-member wards. Under its proposals for a uniform pattern of five three-member wards, Loughton St Mary's ward would cease to exist, while each of the remaining

wards would be modified to some extent. Specifically, Loughton Labour Party proposed that a new Loughton Broadway ward should comprise the majority of the existing Broadway ward with the exception of an area around Greenfields and an area around Alderton Rise, each of which would be transferred to a new Loughton Roding ward, together with an area of Loughton St Mary's ward around Whitehills Road. It also proposed that Loughton Roding ward should include an area of St Mary's ward around The Lindens, while Loughton Forest ward should be expanded to include part of St Mary's ward around Sparelease Hill. The Labour Party proposed that Loughton St John's ward should be expanded to include a large part of the existing Loughton St Mary's ward, together with a small area of Debden Green ward, while Loughton Debden Green ward should be modified to include an area of Loughton St John's ward around Oakley Court. Under this 15-member proposal, which only included electorate figures for 2004, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the district average in Loughton Broadway ward, 5 per cent below in Loughton Debden Green ward, 7 per cent below in Loughton Forest ward, 4 per cent below in Loughton Roding ward and 8 per cent below in Loughton St John's ward.

59 As noted above, Loughton Labour Party also proposed a scheme providing 14 members representing Loughton, which would comprise two three-member wards and four two-member wards. It proposed that a new three-member Roding Valley ward should comprise the polling districts of Oakwood East, Oakwood West, St Michael's and Whitbridge, together with part of Barfields and St Mary's polling districts. Loughton Labour Party proposed that the remainder of Barfields polling district should be combined with part of St John's and Whitehills polling districts to form a new two-member Loughton Hall ward. It proposed that a modified two-member Broadway ward should comprise Willingale polling district and part of Hereward polling district, while a new two-member Fairmead ward would comprise Fairmead polling district together with part of Hereward and St John's polling districts. A new three-member Old Loughton ward would comprise part of St John's polling district, part of St Mary's polling district and a small part of Hereward polling district. Loughton Labour Party considered that this proposal would reflect local community identities while securing improvements to electoral equality. Under Loughton Labour Party's 14-member proposal, which only included electorate figures for 2004, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the district average in Roding Valley ward, 3 per cent below the average in Loughton Hall ward, 2 per cent above the average in Broadway ward, 6 per cent above the average in Fairmead ward, 3 per cent above the average in Old Loughton ward and 6 per cent above the average in Forest ward.

60 Loughton Residents' Association stated that it broadly supported the District Council's proposals, although it proposed that "the present boundary between St John's and St Mary's wards is retained between the Kings Head public house in Church Hill and 20 Church Lane". It argued that such an arrangement would provide a more clearly defined boundary than that put forward by the District Council.

61 We have carefully considered the views which we have received in this area. We note in particular that we have received proposals based on both 14 and 15 members to cover the Loughton area. However we have calculated that, under a council size of 58, Loughton merits 14 councillors and consequently we do not consider that the proposal put forward by Loughton Labour Party for a pattern of five three-member wards for Loughton can be justified. With regard

to the two alternative proposals which we have received based on 14 councillors serving the Loughton area, we note that by 2004 the District Council's proposals would achieve better levels of electoral equality while enjoying some local support and, we judge, appearing to reflect local community identities and interests. Consequently we are proposing to adopt the District Council's proposals for Loughton as part of our draft recommendations, subject to adopting the amendment put forward by Loughton Residents' Association to the boundary between Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards, as we consider that it would provide a more clearly defined boundary while providing a minor improvement to current levels of electoral equality. We also propose a minor boundary amendment between Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards to clarify a boundary anomaly in the Hill Top Place area. Under these proposed amendments, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Loughton St John's ward (equal to the average in 2004) and equal to the average in Loughton St Mary's ward (2 per cent above in 2004). Our proposals for Loughton are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

### **High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West wards**

62 Situated in the west of the district and bounded by the Hertfordshire borough of Broxbourne and the London borough of Enfield to the west, the Waltham Abbey area is currently represented by nine councillors. Paternoster and Waltham Abbey East wards are both represented by three members, Waltham Abbey West ward is represented by two members and the rural High Beach ward is represented by a single member. The number of electors per councillor is 37 per cent above the district average in High Beach ward (35 per cent in 2004), 27 per cent below the average in Paternoster ward (29 per cent in 2004), 21 per cent above the average in Waltham Abbey East ward (17 per cent in 2004) and 32 per cent above the average in Waltham Abbey West ward (55 per cent in 2004).

63 At Stage One we received representations regarding Waltham Abbey from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, Councillor Mrs Webster and Waltham Abbey Town Council. The District Council proposed that 10 councillors, an increase of one, represent six wards, an increase of two. It proposed that the existing Waltham Abbey East ward should be modified in order to correct its "unconventional geography". The Council proposed that it should be renamed Abbey North East and that it be extended westwards so that its western boundary follow the Cornmill Stream to Abbeyview. It would then run south along Crooked Mile, east along Farm Hill Road, south along the backs of the properties on Howard Close and Elm Close. The boundary would then follow Cobbin's Brook to the existing boundary, diverting onto Broomstick Hall Road where the brook runs parallel with the street.

64 The District Council proposed that Waltham Abbey West ward should be modified in the east, as described above. From the Cobbin's Brook the boundary would return to the existing boundary at the M25, then running west to the district boundary, transferring Beechview Nursery to High Beach ward. This ward would be renamed Abbey South West.

65 The southern half of the existing Waltham Abbey East ward, east of Cobbin's Brook, would be split into two wards, to be named Honey Lane North and Honey Lane South respectively, with

the boundary between the two wards following Honey Lane. Honey Lane South ward's southern and eastern boundaries would follow the existing Waltham Abbey East ward's current boundaries. Honey Lane North ward's eastern boundary would continue along Old Shire Lane. The boundary would then run west along the existing boundary, then north behind Mason Way and Badburgham Court to Ninefields, Paternoster Hill and the existing boundary at Cobbin's Brook.

66 Under the District Council's proposals, Paternoster ward would be amended in the west as described above. The Council also proposed that the ward should be extended east to include Abbotts Drive and Stanway Road, an urban area currently in the more rural High Beach ward, providing a more coherent boundary between the two wards. High Beach ward's boundaries would continue to follow Waltham Abbey Town Council's external boundaries in the south and east but would be amended in the north. The District Council stated that it accepted that "distinct communities exist in the rural and urban parts of the Town Council area", and amendments had been proposed to the boundary of High Beach ward and the more urban wards of Honey Lane South and Paternoster to respect these differences.

67 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Abbey North East ward would be 1 per cent above the average (2 per cent below in 2004), 29 per cent below the average in Abbey South West ward (5 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent above the average in High Beach ward (8 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Honey Lane North ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 6 per cent above the average in Honey Lane South ward (2 per cent in 2004) and 3 per cent above in Paternoster ward (equal to the average in 2004).

68 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council's proposals for Waltham Abbey in their entirety.

69 The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposals for the Waltham Abbey area, but proposed three minor modifications. First, the Group proposed that the District Council's proposed Abbey North East ward should be amended so that the area around Rochford Avenue and Elm Close would be transferred to the proposed Honey Lane South ward. Second, the Group proposed that the District Council's amended Paternoster ward should be further extended so that Amwell Court, Badburgham Court and all of Ninefields would be placed in Paternoster ward. Third, the Group proposed that the District Council's proposed two-member Honey Lane North and single-member Honey Lane South wards should be combined to create a new three-member Honey Lane ward.

70 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Abbey North East ward would be 6 per cent below the average (10 per cent in 2004), 29 per cent below the average in Abbey South West ward (3 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent above the average in High Beach ward (8 per cent in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in Honey Lane ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 8 per cent above in Paternoster ward (5 per cent above in 2004).

71 Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, district council members for Paternoster, Waltham Abbey West and Paternoster wards respectively, and Councillor Mrs Webster, county council member for Waltham Abbey, proposed identical boundaries to those proposed by the Conservative Group.

72 Waltham Abbey Town Council proposed that the Waltham Abbey area should be represented by 10 district councillors, representing five wards, reflecting the Conservative Group's proposals. It stated that it considered a three-member ward in the town would provide for more effective and convenient local government than a single-member ward and a two-member ward. It proposed alternative ward names, so that Abbey North East and Abbey South West wards would be prefixed by "Waltham" and proposed that Honey Lane ward should be alternatively named Waltham Abbey East. For town council warding purposes it proposed that the existing 11 members be retained, but they should be re-distributed to reflect the new district wards, proposing each town council ward be represented by two town councillors, except Waltham Abbey East ward, which would be represented by three members.

73 We have carefully considered representations from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillors Farren, Pennell and Sumner, Councillor Mrs Webster and Waltham Abbey Town Council and propose adopting, in part, the District Council's proposals and, in part, the Conservative Group's proposals for these wards. We propose endorsing the Conservative Group's proposal to transfer Amwell Court and Badburgham Court to a modified Paternoster ward, as we consider it would better reflect communities in this area. We consider that electors on these two roads have community of interest with the streets around Ninefields, rather than Honey Lane. We note that, under the District Council's scheme, these electors would have no direct road access to the remainder of the new Honey Lane North ward. Consequently, we do not believe it would best reflect community identities to combine these areas. We consider that the Conservative Group's proposal would better reflect local communities, while not impacting significantly on electoral equality.

74 However, we are adopting the District Council's proposals for the remainder of the Waltham Abbey area. In particular, we propose adopting the District Council's proposal for the southern boundary of the new Abbey North East ward, as we note that its proposals use the strong boundary of Cobbin's Brook and provide for better electoral equality in this area than other schemes proposed at Stage One. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Abbey North East ward would be 1 per cent above the average (2 per cent below in 2004), 29 per cent below the average in Abbey South West ward (5 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent above the average in High Beach ward (8 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent below the average in Honey Lane ward (5 per cent in 2004) and 10 per cent above in Paternoster ward (7 per cent above in 2004). Our proposed Abbey North East, Abbey South West, High Beach, Honey Lane and Paternoster wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

### **Buckhurst Hill East, Buckhurst Hill West, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill wards**

75 The parishes of Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell are bounded by Loughton to the north and the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge to the south. Both the Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell areas are each represented by six councillors. Buckhurst Hill East and Buckhurst Hill West wards of Buckhurst Hill parish are each represented by three members, whereas Chigwell parish is represented by the single-member Chigwell Row ward, the two-member Chigwell Village ward and the three-member Grange Hill ward. The number of electors per councillor is 28 per cent below the district average in Buckhurst Hill East ward (30 per cent in 2004), 8 per cent above the average in Buckhurst Hill West ward (5 per cent in 2004), 14 per cent above the

average in Chigwell Row ward (11 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent above the average in Chigwell Village ward both now and in 2004 and 6 per cent below the average in Grange Hill ward (7 per cent in 2004).

76 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. The District Council proposed minor amendments to the three Chigwell wards to improve electoral equality between the wards. The northern, eastern and western boundaries of Chigwell Village ward would remain unchanged, but the District Council proposed that its boundary with Grange Hill ward should be modified to follow Manor Road, transferring the area south of this road to an enlarged Grange Hill ward. Grange Hill ward would be further extended to the east, so that the west side of Vicarage Lane and the north side of Manor Road, including High Elms, would be transferred from Chigwell Row ward to Grange Hill ward. Chigwell Row ward would otherwise remain unaltered. The District Council stated that it considered Chigwell Row “is an identifiable community in its own right”, and that it should remain a separate ward. The District Council proposed that the two wards covering Buckhurst Hill remain unchanged, but that Buckhurst Hill East ward should be reduced from a three-member ward to a two-member ward to improve electoral equality.

77 Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Buckhurst Hill East ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (3 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above the average in Buckhurst Hill West ward (3 per cent in 2004), 9 per cent above the average in Chigwell Row ward (5 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chigwell Village ward both now and in 2004 and 1 per cent below the average in Grange Hill ward (2 per cent in 2004).

78 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council’s proposals for Chigwell in their entirety.

79 The Conservative Group considered that, in Chigwell, “the Liberal/Labour Proposals were unnecessarily complex”. It proposed two three-member wards, to be named Chigwell and Grange Hill. Chigwell ward would consist of Chigwell Row parish ward, Village polling district and part of St John’s polling district. The modified Grange Hill ward would consist of Limes Farm and St Winifred’s polling districts and the remaining part of St John’s polling district. The Conservative Group supported the District Council’s proposals for Buckhurst Hill.

80 Under the Conservative Group’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Buckhurst Hill East ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (3 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above the average in Buckhurst Hill West ward (3 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Chigwell ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 2 per cent below the average in Grange Hill ward (3 per cent in 2004).

81 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. We note the consensus regarding the reduction in members representing Buckhurst Hill from six to five and the retention of the existing boundaries in this area, and in view of the good levels of electoral equality which would result, are including them as part of our draft recommendations. In Chigwell we consider that the Chigwell Village area is sufficiently separate in profile from the remainder of the parish to justify separate Chigwell Village and Chigwell Row wards. We

therefore consider that the District Council's proposals to modify the existing wards in Chigwell would better reflect communities in this area, while achieving good electoral equality, and are therefore adopting them as part of our draft recommendations.

82 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Buckhurst Hill East ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (3 per cent in 2004), 6 per cent above the average in Buckhurst Hill West ward (3 per cent in 2004), 9 per cent above the average in Chigwell Row ward (5 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chigwell Village ward both now and in 2004 and 1 per cent below the average in Grange Hill ward (2 per cent in 2004). Our proposals for Buckhurst Hill are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report. Our proposals for Chigwell are illustrated on Map A7 in Appendix A.

### **High Ongar, Moreton & Matching, Roothing Country and Sheering wards**

83 These wards stretch from the northernmost point in the district along its eastern border, and are bounded by the Essex districts of Uttlesford to the north, Chelmsford to the east and Brentwood to the south. All four wards are represented by a single councillor each. The number of electors per councillor is 45 per cent below the district average in High Ongar ward (46 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in Moreton & Matching ward (3 per cent below in 2004), 22 per cent below the average in Roothing Country ward (17 per cent in 2004) and 40 per cent above the average in Sheering ward (41 per cent in 2004).

84 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding Parish Council, Sheering Parish Council and a parish councillor. The District Council proposed that High Ongar ward, consisting of the parish of the same name, should be combined with the parishes of Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding and Willingale, currently in Roothing Country ward, creating a single-member High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. The District Council proposed that the remainder of Roothing Country ward, the parish of Fyfield, should join with part of the existing Moreton & Matching ward, creating a new Moreton & Fyfield ward. It proposed that this ward would comprise the parishes of Bobbingworth, Fyfield, High Laver, Little Laver, Magdalen Laver and Moreton and would be represented by one councillor. The Council proposed that a new single-member Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward should comprise Matching parish, Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish, and Sheering Village parish ward of Sheering parish. A single-member ward would cover the remainder of Sheering parish and would be named Lower Sheering ward. Under these proposals the southern boundary of the proposed Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would follow the existing parish ward boundary along field lines, north of Rye Hill Road, Cross Keys and Ashlyn Farm, then along the Cripsey Brook to the parish boundary. The boundary between the new wards of Lower Sheering and Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village would follow the Sheering and Matching parish boundary east to the M11, then north along the motorway to the district boundary.

85 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would be 4 per cent above the district average (2 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 5 per cent below the average in Lower Sheering ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Moreton & Fyfield ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

86 The Liberal Democrat Group supported the District Council's proposals in this area.

87 The Conservative Group supported the District Council's proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. However, it proposed an alternative warding configuration for the remainder of the area. Similarly to the District Council, it proposed that a new single-member Fyfield & Moreton ward should comprise the parishes of Bobbingworth, Fyfield, Magdalen Laver and Moreton. The Conservative Group acknowledged that this ward would be over-represented (by 27 per cent), but argued "this is a rural situation with natural community interest".

88 The Conservative Group proposed that the remainder of the existing Moreton & Matching ward, that is, the parishes of High Laver, Little Laver and Matching, should be combined with the existing Sheering ward, consisting of the parish of the same name, to form a two-member Matching & Sheering ward. Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward would be 1 per cent above the district average (2 per cent below in 2004), 27 per cent below the average in Fyfield & Moreton ward (22 per cent in 2004) and 3 per cent below the average in Matching & Sheering ward both now and in 2004.

89 Abbess Beauchamp & Berners Roding Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. It considered that "the proposed new warding would be detrimental to electoral equality and would not secure convenient and effective local government". The Parish Council also proposed an increase in rural councillors, stating that "electoral equality, in the sense of each voter having a vote of equal weight does not depend on any arithmetical factor". Sheering Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals in the Sheering area. It argued that the proposal to create a Lower Sheering ward and a Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would "split the village in two". It proposed instead, similarly to the Conservative Group, a two-member ward combining Sheering parish with the parishes of Matching Tye and High Laver, and part of Moreton parish.

90 Councillor Ainsworth, a Sheering parish councillor, stated that "Lower Sheering is a discreet area", noting that it "is separated from the Village by the M11 and agricultural land". Similarly to the District Council, Councillor Ainsworth proposed a separate ward for Lower Sheering.

91 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. With regard to the proposals put forward by the Conservative Group under its 58-member scheme, while we note that it would use whole parishes and would provide for some improvement to electoral equality, we are not convinced that there is sufficient evidence to justify over-representation of 27 per cent in 1999 in the Conservative Group's proposed Fyfield & Moreton ward. We note that the District Council's scheme generally uses whole parishes, otherwise combining areas of similar profiles, and provides for better levels of electoral equality across the wider area. We also note the consensus between the political groups on the council for the

proposed High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward. Consequently we consider that, based on the evidence available, the District Council's proposals would provide the best balance between the need to seek electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria and therefore are adopting its proposals for High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward as part of our draft recommendations. In particular, we cannot accept an argument for a different councillor:elector ratio in one part of the district, given that the objective of a periodic electoral review is the achievement, as nearly as may be, of electoral equality.

92 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward would be 4 per cent above the district average (2 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 5 per cent below the average in Lower Sheering ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Moreton & Fyfield ward (3 per cent above in 2004). Our proposals for Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village ward is illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A2 and A4 in Appendix A. Our proposals for High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings ward is illustrated on Map 2. Our proposals for Lower Sheering ward is illustrated on Map A2 in Appendix A. Our proposal for Moreton & Fyfield ward is illustrated on Map 2.

### **Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley wards**

93 The three wards of Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash and Shelley are each part of Ongar parish. They are situated to the west of High Ongar parish and north of Brentwood district. All three Ongar wards are represented by one councillor each. The number of electors per councillor is 17 per cent below the district average in Chipping Ongar ward (3 per cent above in 2004), 17 per cent above in Greensted & Marden Ash ward (15 per cent in 2004) and 13 per cent below the average in Shelley ward (16 per cent in 2004).

94 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group and Ongar Parish Council. The District Council proposed that Ongar parish should be divided into two district wards: Shelley ward, to be represented by one councillor, and Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash ward, to be represented by two councillors. The boundary between the two wards would follow Epping Road and Chelmsford Road from Ackingford Bridge to High Ongar Bridge, transferring all the properties north of this road, currently in Chipping Ongar ward, to an enlarged Shelley ward.

95 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash ward would be 5 per cent below the district average (1 per cent in 2004) and 8 per cent below the average in Shelley ward (2 per cent in 2004).

96 These proposals were supported by the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. Ongar Parish Council supported the District Council's proposals for Ongar parish and proposed that parish warding reflect the proposed district ward boundaries.

97 Given the high level of consensus behind the District Council's proposals for Ongar, the good levels of electoral equality which would ensue and the clear boundaries which would be utilised, we propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Ongar as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would

be as under the District Council's proposals. Our proposals for Ongar parish are illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

### **Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois wards**

98 The wards of Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois, situated in the southern part of the district between Chigwell and Ongar, each comprise the parish of the same name. Lambourne and Passingford wards are each represented by a single councillor, while Theydon Bois is a two-member ward. The number of electors per councillor is 5 per cent below the district average in Lambourne ward (1 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above in Passingford ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Theydon Bois ward (2 per cent in 2004).

99 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. The District Council proposed no change to the wards of Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois. Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Lambourne ward would be 7 per cent below (3 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent below in Passingford ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 3 per cent below the average in Theydon Bois ward both now and in 2004.

100 These proposals were supported by the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group.

101 Having considered the proposals received in this area we are adopting the District Council's proposal to retain these wards on their existing boundaries. We note in particular the good levels of electoral equality currently enjoyed by these three wards and note that these levels are expected to be maintained in five years' time. We also consider that the retention of these three wards would not have an adverse effect on our proposals for other wards in the district. We therefore propose adopting the District Council's proposals for the wards of Lambourne, Passingford and Theydon Bois as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey, Nazeing, North Weald Bassett and Roydon wards**

102 The wards of Roydon and Nazeing are situated in the north-west of the district, north of Waltham Abbey and west of Harlow borough. Epping Upland and North Weald Bassett parishes lie south of Harlow borough, and Epping town is placed in the centre of the district. Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey are both three-member wards, North Weald Bassett and Nazeing are both two-member wards and Roydon is a single-member ward. The number of electors per councillor is equal to the district average in Epping Hemnall ward both now and in 2004, equal to the average in Epping Lindsey ward (1 per cent above in 2004), 16 per cent above the average in Nazeing ward (13 per cent in 2004), 43 per cent above the average in North Weald Bassett ward both now and in 2004 and 39 per cent above the average in Roydon ward (35 per cent in 2004).

103 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, the Conservative Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Grigg, Councillor Stellan, Epping Town Council, North Weald Bassett Parish Council and three local residents. The District

Council proposed that Roydon and Nazeing wards should both be divided in two, so that the more urban west side of the wards comprise single- and two-member wards. The remainder of the parishes of Roydon and Nazeing would be combined with Epping Upland Parish to form a new single-member Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward. The District Council argued that “the link between Epping Upland and Epping was not strong enough to allow the present Lindsey Ward to continue in being”.

104 Epping town is currently split between the existing Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey wards. Under the District Council’s proposals Epping Upland Parish would be transferred from Epping Lindsey ward to a new ward with parts of Roydon and Nazeing parishes, as described above. That part of Epping currently in Epping Lindsey ward would be combined with Thornwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish, forming a new Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward, to be represented by three councillors. Epping Hemnall ward would remain unchanged, except for a minor boundary amendment with the proposed Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward so that this new ward would include all of the High Road to the M25 Bell Common Tunnel. As described above, Hastingwood parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish would form part of a new Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering ward.

105 North Weald village constitutes Village parish ward of North Weald Bassett parish. It is situated in the south-east of the parish and is separated from Thornwood by the M11 and from Hastingwood by the Cripsey Brook and open land. The District Council proposed that Village parish ward should form a two-member North Weald ward.

106 Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward would be 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in Epping Hemnall ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 1 per cent below in Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward (equal to the average in 2004), 1 per cent above in Lower Nazeing ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in North Weald ward (4 per cent in 2004), and 5 per cent above the average in Roydon ward (2 per cent in 2004).

107 These proposals were supported in their entirety by the Liberal Democrat Group.

108 The Conservative Group objected to the District Council’s proposals for Epping and the northern parishes. The Group stated that the District Council’s argument that there is no community interest between Epping town and Epping Upland parish “is to say the least misleading”. It continued “there has always been real links between the village of Epping Upland and Epping”. The Conservative Group proposed instead that Roydon parish and the parish wards of Nazeingbury and Riverside, parts of Nazeing parish, should be combined to form a three-member Nazeing & Roydon ward. The Group proposed that Epping Lindsey and Epping Hemnall wards should be retained, but that the boundary between the two wards should follow the High Road, transferring all those properties west of the railway line and north of Stonards Hill from Epping Lindsey ward to Epping Hemnall ward. Epping Lindsey ward would be extended in the west to include Broadley Common parish ward, part of Nazeing ward. The Conservative Group proposed that North Weald Bassett ward should be retained, but as a three-member ward, an increase of one councillor, to improve electoral equality.

109 Under the Conservative Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Epping Hemnall ward would be 6 per cent above the district average (5 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent above in Epping Lindsey ward (3 per cent in 2004), 11 per cent above in Nazeing & Roydon ward (8 per cent above in 2004) and 6 per cent below the average in North Weald Bassett ward both now and in 2004.

110 Epping Town Council objected to the District Council's proposals for the Epping Town Council area and proposed that the existing arrangements should be retained. It argued that the town has historical links with Epping Upland parish and that residents of Epping Upland look to Epping town for many facilities "thereby making it a joint community". The Town Council also asserted that Epping's connection with Thornwood "is not so close" and that such boundary modifications would "be creating confusion in the minds of the electorate".

111 An Epping resident supported the District Council's proposals in full.

112 North Weald Bassett Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals for North Weald Bassett parish. It proposed instead that the existing ward should be retained, but as a three member ward, an increase of one councillor. The Parish Council stated that the villages share a parish church and have common interests in the North Weald Airfield. It argued that "the links are of a community and historical nature and are not simply geographical". The Parish Council also expressed concern that its provision of local amenities would be affected if the parish were split at district level. Additionally, it stated that it had undertaken local consultation and that local residents "wish to remain as part of North Weald Bassett".

113 Councillor Grigg and Councillor Stallan, members for North Weald Bassett ward, both objected to the District Council's proposals for North Weald Bassett ward. They both proposed that the ward should be retained as a three-member ward, as proposed by the Conservative Group and the Parish Council, arguing that the villages are linked by common interests in the parish church and the airfield. Councillor Grigg stated that the ward's two district councillors are also parish councillors and stated her concern that district councillors would not attend parish council meetings if the District Council's proposals were implemented. Councillor Stallan argued that the proposals "do not take into account the community and historical links between the three villages", commenting that the parish has strong links with its district councillors.

114 A resident of Thornwood Common supported the District Council's proposals for the ward, stating that "geographically this makes sense". A resident of North Weald objected to the District Council's proposals and supported the submission made by North Weald Bassett Parish Council, considering that the parts of the "ancient parish" should not be combined with another area which, "traditionally has not had the same connection".

115 We have noted the arguments both for and against the District Council’s submission for Epping and the northern parishes. Having visited the area we note that whilst the Epping Town Council area is relatively urban, Epping Upland parish is rural and is separated from the town area by large open spaces and a valley. We also consider that a rural ward in this area would provide for good electoral equality whilst meeting the statutory criteria and facilitating our proposals for neighbouring wards. We are therefore adopting the District Council’s proposals for the wards of Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing, Lower Nazeing and Roydon as part of our draft recommendations.

116 Regarding the proposals in the North Weald Bassett area, we note that an increase in representation for the ward from two councillors to three would significantly improve electoral equality in the ward. However, we cannot look at any single ward in isolation, but must look for electoral equality across the district. We accept that, historically, the three villages in North Weald Bassett have many links. We also note the Parish Council’s concerns that its local service provision would be affected by boundary changes. However, we also note that the parish of North Weald Bassett is already warded for parish election purposes; the District Council propose using these existing parish wards as the basis of their proposed new district wards. Therefore, having visited the area, noting the improved levels of electoral equality achieved, and, in order to facilitate warding patterns in the east of the district, we propose adopting the District Council’s new Epping Hemnall, Epping Lindsey & Thornwood and North Weald wards.

117 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward would be 2 per cent below the district average (4 per cent in 2004), equal to the average in Epping Hemnall ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 1 per cent below in Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward (equal to the average in 2004), 1 per cent above in Lower Nazeing ward (1 per cent below in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in North Weald ward (4 per cent in 2004), and 5 per cent above the average in Roydon ward (2 per cent in 2004). Our proposals for Broadley Common, Epping Upland & Nazeing ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A5 and A6. Our proposals for Epping Hemnall ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A5. Our proposals for Epping Lindsey & Thornwood ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A4 and A5. Our proposals for Lower Nazeing ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A6. Our proposals for North Weald ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A4. Our proposals for Roydon ward are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A6.

## **Electoral Cycle**

118 At Stage One all district-wide schemes proposed the retention of elections by thirds. The Liberal Democrat Group stated that it would “wish consideration to be given to moving to elections by halves ... once Government legislation is sanctioned”. However, we are guided by the legislation which only allows currently for whole-council elections every four years or elections by thirds and therefore propose no change to the Council’s present system of elections by thirds at this time.

## Conclusions

119 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- (i) there should be a reduction in council size from 59 to 58;
- (ii) there should be 32 wards, two more than at present;
- (iii) the boundaries of 24 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of two wards;
- (iv) elections should continue to be held by thirds.

120 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- (i) we propose that the boundary between the amended Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards be retained along Church Hill and Church Street;
- (ii) we propose to unite all of Hill Top Place in the modified Loughton St John's ward;
- (iii) we propose that Amwell Court and Badburgham Court be placed in the amended Paternoster ward;
- (iv) we propose that the proposed new Honey Lane North and Honey Lane South wards be combined to form a new Honey Lane ward.

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

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	59	58	59	58
Number of wards	30	32	30	32
Average number of electors per councillor	1,584	1,611	1,639	1,667
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	19	1	18	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	10	1	8	0

122 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Epping Forest District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 19 to one. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

**Draft Recommendation**  
 Epping Forest District Council should comprise 58 councillors serving 32 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 Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

**Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

123 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Ongar, Sheering and Waltham Abbey to reflect the proposed district wards.

124 The parish of Chigwell is currently served by 11 councillors representing three wards, Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill, which are represented by two, four and five councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Chigwell parish, reflecting the District Council’s proposals for Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village and Grange Hill district wards, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish.

**Draft Recommendation**

Chigwell Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Chigwell Row (returning two councillors), Chigwell Village (four) and Grange Hill (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A7 in Appendix A.

125 Epping Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards, Hemnall and St John's, which are represented by six councillors each. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Epping town, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Epping Hemnall and Epping Lindsey & Thornwood district wards, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish.

**Draft Recommendation**

Epping Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Epping Hemnall and St John's, each returning six councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Maps A4 and A5 in Appendix A.

126 Loughton Town Council is currently served by 22 councillors representing six wards, Broadway, Debden Green, Loughton Forest, Loughton Roding, Loughton St. John's and Loughton St. Mary's, which are represented by four, four, three, four, four and three councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Loughton town, which generally reflect the District Council's proposal for Loughton town although modified to reflect Loughton Residents Association's proposal and to amend a boundary anomaly between Loughton St John's and Loughton St Mary's wards, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish.

**Draft Recommendation**

Loughton Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Loughton Alderton Arch (returning three councillors), Loughton Broadway (three), Loughton Fairmead (three), Loughton Forest (three), Loughton Roding (four), Loughton St John's (three) and Loughton St Mary's (three). The boundaries between the seven parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

127 The parish of Ongar is currently served by 15 councillors representing four wards, Chipping Ongar, Greensted, Marden Ash and Shelley, which are represented by four, two, four and five councillors respectively. In the light of our draft recommendations for district warding in Ongar parish, reflecting the District Council's proposals for Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

and Shelley district wards, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district within the parish.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Ongar Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Chipping Ongar (returning four councillors), Greensted (two), Marden Ash (four) and Shelley (five). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

128 The parish of Sheering is currently served by 11 councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Sheering parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the newer settlement which borders Harlow borough, to be called Sheering West, and the other covering the older settlement, to be called Sheering Village. The two wards would be represented by seven and four parish councillors respectively. For district warding purposes the proposed Sheering West parish ward would form the new Lower Sheering district ward and the proposed Sheering Village parish ward would form part of the new Hastingwood, Matching & Sheering Village district ward.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Sheering Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Sheering West (returning seven councillors) and Sheering Village (four). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

129 Waltham Abbey Town Council is currently served by 11 councillors representing the four parish wards of High Beach, Paternoster, Waltham Abbey East and Waltham Abbey West, which are represented by two, three, three and three councillors respectively. At Stage One Waltham Abbey Town Council proposed that the parish wards be based on the five new district wards. It proposed that Honey Lane ward, alternatively named Waltham Abbey East ward, be represented by three parish councillors, with the remaining four parish wards to be represented by two parish councillors each. We would consider this a reasonable distribution of parish councillors and are therefore adopting the Town Council’s proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

**Draft Recommendation**

Waltham Abbey Town Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Abbey North East (returning two councillors), Abbey South West (two), High Beach (two), Honey Lane (three) and Paternoster (two). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named in the large map at the back of the report.

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

**Draft Recommendation**

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

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

133 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest: Detailed Mapping**

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

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 - A7 and the large map at the back of the report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Sheering parish.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Ongar parish.

**Map A4** illustrates the proposed warding of North Weald Bassett parish.

**Map A5** illustrates the proposed warding of Epping Town.

**Map A6** illustrates the proposed warding of Roydon and Nazeing parishes.

**Map A7** illustrates the proposed warding of Chigwell parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Loughton and Waltham Abbey.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Epping Forest: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed Warding of Sheering Parish*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Ongar Parish*

*Map A4: Proposed Warding of North Weald Bassett Parish*

*Map A5: Proposed Warding of Epping Town*

*Map A6: Proposed Warding of Roydon and Nazeing parishes*

*Map A7: Proposed Warding of Chigwell Parish*

# APPENDIX B

## Proposed Electoral Arrangements

The following tables illustrate the electoral variances under the schemes submitted by the District Council and the Conservative Group. Full details of each submission, including accompanying mapping, may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

### Epping Forest District Council’s Proposals

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council only in five wards, where the Council’s proposals were as follows:

*Figure B1: Epping Forest District Council’s Proposal: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Honey Lane North	High Beach ward (part - part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
Honey Lane South	Waltham Abbey East ward (part – part of Waltham Abbey East parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)
Loughton St John’s	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s ward (part - part of St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)
Loughton St Mary’s	Loughton St John’s ward (part – part of St John’s parish ward of Loughton parish); Loughton St Mary’s (part – part of St Mary’s parish ward of Loughton parish)
Paternoster	High Beach ward (part – part of High Beach parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish); Paternoster ward (part – part of Paternoster parish ward of Waltham Abbey parish)

*Figure B2: Epping Forest District Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (1999)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
Honey Lane North	2	3,248	1,624	1	3,254	1,627	-2
Honey Lane South	1	1,700	1,700	6	1,700	1,700	2
Loughton St John's	2	3,398	1,699	5	3,406	1,703	2
Loughton St Mary's	2	3,155	1,578	-2	3,343	1,672	0
Paternoster	2	3,331	1,666	3	3,341	1,671	0

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

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

## Epping Forest Conservative Group's Proposals

Figure B3: Epping Forest Conservative Group's 58-Member Proposals: 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 %
1 Abbey North East	2	3,012	1,506	-6	3,016	1,508	-10
2 Abbey South West	2	2,279	1,140	-29	3,221	1,611	-3
3 Buckhurst Hill East	2	3,427	1,714	6	3,437	1,719	3
4 Buckhurst Hill West	3	5,120	1,707	6	5,162	1,721	3
5 Chigwell	3	4,892	1,631	1	5,010	1,670	0
6 Epping Hemnall	3	5,125	1,708	6	5,253	1,751	5
7 Epping Lindsey	3	4,897	1,632	1	5,128	1,709	3
8 Fyfield & Moreton	1	1,179	1,179	-27	1,303	1,303	-22
9 Grange Hill	3	4,717	1,572	-2	4,831	1,610	-3
10 Greensted, Marden Ash & Chipping Ongar	2	3,057	1,529	-5	3,321	1,661	0
11 High Beach	1	1,766	1,766	10	1,804	1,804	8
12 High Ongar, Willingale & The Rodings	1	1,619	1,619	1	1,627	1,627	-2
13 Honey Lane	3	4,977	1,659	3	4,985	1,662	0
14 Lambourne	1	1,504	1,504	-7	1,618	1,618	-3
15 Loughton Alderton Arch	2	3,365	1,683	4	3,369	1,685	1
16 Loughton Broadway	2	3,236	1,618	0	3,291	1,646	-1
17 Loughton Fairmead	2	3,198	1,599	-1	3,307	1,654	-1
18 Loughton Forest	2	3,228	1,614	0	3,384	1,692	1
19 Loughton Roding	2	3,498	1,749	9	3,498	1,749	5
20 Loughton St John's	2	3,398	1,699	6	3,406	1,703	2
21 Loughton St Mary's	2	3,155	1,578	-2	3,343	1,672	0

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 %
22 Matching & Sheering	2	3,110	1,555	-3	3,220	1,610	-3
23 Nazeing & Roydon	3	5,361	1,787	11	5,413	1,804	8
24 North Weald	3	4,543	1,514	-6	4,700	1,567	-6
25 Passingford	1	1,602	1,602	-1	1,686	1,686	1
26 Paternoster	2	3,493	1,747	8	3,505	1,753	5
27 Shelley	1	1,487	1,487	-8	1,631	1,631	-2
28 Theydon Bois	2	3,141	1,571	-2	3,219	1,610	-3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>93,386</b>	–	–	<b>96,688</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,610</b>	–	–	<b>1,667</b>	–

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Epping Forest Conservative Group's submission. There are slight discrepancies between the Conservative Group's total electorates and those provided by the District Council. We do not consider that these discrepancies would have a substantial impact on ward variances.*

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

Figure B4: Epping Forest Conservative Group's 45-Member Proposals: 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 %
1	Abbey North East	1	2,169	2,169	4	2,169	2,169	1
2	Abbey South West	2	2,968	1,484	-29	3,866	1,933	-10
3	Buckhurst Hill East	2	3,942	1,971	-5	3,952	1,976	-8
4	Buckhurst Hill West	2	4,605	2,303	11	4,647	2,324	8
5	Chigwell	3	5,809	1,936	-7	5,969	1,990	-7
6	Epping Hemnall	2	4,310	2,155	4	4,424	2,212	3
7	Epping Lindsey	2	4,387	2,194	6	4,618	2,309	8
8	Grange Hill	2	4,005	2,003	-4	4,079	2,040	-5
9	High Ongar & Roothing	1	1,619	1,619	-22	1,627	1,627	-24
10	Honey Lane	2	4,364	2,182	5	4,368	2,184	2
11	Loughton Alderton	1	2,113	2,113	2	2,169	2,169	1
12	Loughton Broadway	2	4,333	2,167	4	4,333	2,167	1
13	Loughton Forest	2	3,942	1,971	-5	4,018	2,009	-6
14	Loughton Hall	2	4,145	2,073	0	4,369	2,185	2
15	Loughton Roding	2	4,193	2,097	1	4,193	2,097	-2
16	Loughton St John's	2	4,352	2,176	5	4,352	2,176	1
17	Moreton & Matching	1	2,074	2,074	0	2,206	2,206	3
18	Nazeing & Roydon	3	5,871	1,957	-6	5,923	1,974	-8
19	North Weald	2	4,543	2,272	9	4,700	2,350	10
20	Ongar	2	4,544	2,272	9	4,952	2,476	15
21	The Passingfords	1	2,216	2,216	7	2,266	2,266	6

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 %
22 Paternoster	2	3,912	1,956	-6	3,924	1,962	-9
23 Sheering	1	2,215	2,215	7	2,317	2,317	8
24 Theydon Bois & Abridge	2	4,641	2,321	12	4,879	2,440	14
25 Waltham Abbey Villages	1	2,167	2,167	4	2,205	2,205	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>93,439</b>	–	–	<b>96,525</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,076</b>	–	–	<b>2,145</b>	–

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Epping Forest Conservative Group's submission. There are slight discrepancies between the Conservative Group's total forecast electorate and that provided by the District Council. These discrepancies would have a marginal impact on ward variances under 2004 figures.*

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

## APPENDIX C

### The Statutory Provisions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

