

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Ipswich in Suffolk

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

June 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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Local Government Commission for England

26 June 2001

Dear Secretary of State

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

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although one modification has been made (see paragraphs 143-144) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Ipswich.

We recommend that Ipswich Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 16 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

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

Yours sincerely

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

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

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

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

- **In three of the 16 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.**
- **By 2005 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in five wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 143 - 144) are that:

- **Ipswich Borough Council should have 48 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 14 of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all 16 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 6 August 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Bixley	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
2	Bridge	3	Bridge ward (part)
3	Broom Hill	3	Broom Hill ward (part); Town ward (part)
4	Castle Hill	3	Broom Hill ward (part); Castle Hill ward (part); White House ward (part)
5	Chantry	3	Chantry ward (part); Sprites ward (part); Town ward (part); White House ward (part)
6	Gainsborough	3	Gainsborough ward (part); Priory Heath ward (part)
7	Priory Heath	3	Gainsborough ward (part); Priory Heath ward (part)
8	Rushmere	3	Rushmere ward; St Margaret's ward (part)
9	St Clement's	3	Bridge ward (part); Gainsborough ward (part); Priory Heath ward (part); St Clement's ward (part)
10	St John's	3	St Clement's ward (part); St John's ward (part)
11	St Margaret's	3	Broom Hill ward (part); Castle Hill ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part)
12	Sprites	3	Chantry ward (part); Sprites ward (part); Stoke Park ward (part)
13	Stoke Park	3	Bridge ward (part); Sprites ward (part); Stoke Park ward (part)
14	Town	3	St Clement's ward (part); St John's ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part); Town ward (part)
15	White House	3	Castle Hill ward (part); White House ward (part)
16	Whitton	3	Castle Hill ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part); White House ward (part); Whitton ward (part)

Notes: 1 The borough contains no parishes.

2 The large map inserted inside the back of the report illustrates the proposed wards outlined above.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ipswich

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bixley	3	5,839	1,946	4	5,839	1,946	-1
2 Bridge	3	5,627	1,876	0	5,836	1,945	-1
3 Broom Hill	3	5,632	1,877	0	5,994	1,998	2
4 Castle Hill	3	5,985	1,995	7	5,985	1,995	2
5 Chantry	3	5,577	1,859	-1	5,643	1,881	-4
6 Gainsborough	3	6,212	2,071	11	6,262	2,087	6
7 Priory Heath	3	4,471	1,490	-20	5,703	1,901	-3
8 Rushmere	3	6,085	2,028	8	6,085	2,028	3
9 St Clement's	3	5,039	1,680	-10	5,875	1,958	0
10 St John's	3	5,767	1,922	3	5,993	1,998	2
11 St Margaret's	3	5,895	1,965	5	5,970	1,990	1
12 Sprites	3	5,601	1,867	0	5,601	1,867	-5
13 Stoke Park	3	5,565	1,855	-1	5,565	1,855	-5
14 Town	3	5,041	1,680	-10	5,602	1,867	-5
15 White House	3	5,469	1,823	-3	6,184	2,061	5
16 Whitton	3	6,021	2,007	7	6,030	2,010	2
Totals	48	89,826	-	-	94,167	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,871	-	-	1,962	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Ipswich Borough Council's submission.*

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

1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Ipswich. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1978 (Report No. 280). The electoral arrangements of Suffolk County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report No. 429). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

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

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. 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. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to Ipswich Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Constabulary, the local authority associations, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 2 October 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 The borough of Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk, and lies in the south of the county on the Orwell estuary. It covers almost 4,000 hectares, and has a population of some 114,000. The borough comprises an almost entirely urban residential settlement, with a commercial centre and successful port and docks. Ipswich has excellent road and rail links with London and the rest of East Anglia. The borough contains no parishes.

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

14 The electorate of the borough is 89,826 (February 2000). The Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 16 wards. All 16 wards are each represented by three councillors, and the Council is elected by thirds.

15 Since the last electoral review there has been a small increase in the electorate in Ipswich borough, with around 1 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increase has been in Town ward.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,871 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,962 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in three of the 16 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Chantry ward, where each councillor represents 20 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Ipswich

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bixley	3	5,839	1,946	4	5,839	1,946	-1
2 Bridge	3	5,761	1,920	3	5,970	1,990	1
3 Broom Hill	3	5,137	1,712	-8	5,383	1,794	-9
4 Castle Hill	3	5,750	1,917	2	5,750	1,917	-2
5 Chantry	3	4,515	1,505	-20	4,526	1,509	-23
6 Gainsborough	3	5,909	1,970	5	7,240	2,413	23
7 Priory Heath	3	5,381	1,794	-4	5,392	1,797	-8
8 Rushmere	3	6,080	2,027	8	6,080	2,027	3
9 St Clement's	3	5,846	1,949	4	6,622	2,207	13
10 St John's	3	6,103	2,034	9	6,370	2,123	8
11 St Margaret's	3	6,094	2,031	9	6,431	2,144	9
12 Sprites	3	5,323	1,774	-5	5,323	1,774	-10
13 Stoke Park	3	5,556	1,852	-1	5,556	1,852	-6
14 Town	3	6,209	2,070	11	6,638	2,213	13
15 White House	3	5,329	1,776	-5	6,044	2,015	3
16 Whitton	3	4,994	1,665	-11	5,003	1,668	-15
Totals	48	89,826	-	-	94,167	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,871	-	-	1,962	-

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

Note: *The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Chantry ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in Whitton ward were relatively under-represented by 11 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 10 representations, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, the Conservative Group, and the Liberal Democrats, and further representations from seven local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Ipswich in Suffolk*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and retained a pattern of three-member wards for the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting 11 wards. We proposed that:

- Ipswich Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, the same as at present, representing 16 wards, also as at present;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

Draft Recommendation

Ipswich Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 16 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 16 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 45 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Ipswich Borough Council and the Commission.

Ipswich Borough Council

21 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations, subject to proposing amendments to the boundaries between the wards of Castle Hill and Whitton, Chantry Sprites and Stoke Park, St John's and Town, Bixley and St John's, Priory Heath and St Clement's, Gainsborough and St Clement's and Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards. In addition, the Borough Council proposed changes to the names of the wards of Broom Hill, Chantry, St Clement's, St Margaret's and Town.

Ipswich Borough Council Conservative Group

22 The Conservative Group stated that they largely accepted the draft recommendations but opposed the proposals for the north-west of the borough. In particular it criticised boundaries in the wards of Broomhill, Castle Hill, Chantry, St Margaret's, Sprites, White House and Whitton on the grounds that they would not reflect community identities and interests in the areas concerned. Instead it reiterated support for the ward boundaries which it had proposed in this area in its Stage One submission, particularly as they would minimise change and would be based on the existing parliamentary constituency boundary. The Conservative Group also emphasised that the Borough Council's Stage One submission only represented the views of the Labour Group and not the views of the other groups on the Council.

23 The Conservative Group reiterated its support for a cycle of whole-council elections for the borough, which it considered would improve turnout locally.

Ipswich Liberal Democrats

24 The Liberal Democrats noted that there is substantial common ground between their proposals, the draft recommendations and the Borough Council's proposals. They opposed the draft recommendations for the wards of Broomhill, St Margaret's and Town as they did not consider that they would reflect local community identities and interests in the area concerned. The Liberal Democrats made alternative proposals, in the light of their own local consultation exercise, which they considered would better reflect local community identities and interests. They also opposed any proposal to alter the name of St Margaret's ward. The Liberal Democrats also emphasised that the Borough Council's Stage One submission only represented the views of the Labour Group and not the views of the other groups on the Council.

Suffolk County Council

25 The County Council forwarded comments from a number of individuals at the County Council. The Director of Environment and Transport welcomed the draft recommendations. The councillor for St Margaret's division stated they had no comment to make. The councillor for Whitehouse division supported the draft recommendations, but proposed alternative names for the wards of Bridge, Broom Hill, St Clement's and St John's.

Suffolk Constabulary

26 Suffolk Constabulary stated that some of the proposed wards would make it difficult to work with the local authority on a ward-by-ward basis. It noted that "Town ward is policed on foot which is currently made difficult because it extends westwards well beyond the town centre. The proposals effectively move this ward eastwards but extend it to the point that it would be impractical to patrol the whole of the new ward on foot."

Other Representations

27 A further 44 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents.

28 Ipswich Constituency Labour Party compiled submissions from 15 branch and ward Labour parties, who broadly supported the draft recommendations subject to variously supporting aspects of the Borough Council's Stage Three submission. In addition St Clement's Branch Labour Party proposed a further amendment to the boundary between St Clement's ward and St John's ward and proposed altering the name of St Clement's ward. A local resident proposed amending the boundary between Stoke Park and Sprites wards. Councillor Rawlingson, member for Stoke Park ward, supported the retention of a 48-member council elected by thirds.

29 Central Suffolk & North Ipswich Conservative Association opposed the draft recommendations as they would divide two wards between different county divisions and, in the case of Broomhill ward, between different parliamentary constituencies. It also argued in the case of Broomhill ward that the draft recommendation would fail to provide ward boundaries with which the electorate would identify. Mr Cockram, organising secretary for Ipswich Conservative Association, supported a change in electoral cycle to whole-council elections as he considered that this would improve turnout and would better reflect the needs of local democracy. A resident of the borough noted that the Borough Council's proposals did not have cross-party support and considered that its proposals would provide the Labour group with political advantage.

30 Six residents of the area opposed the changes to Broom Hill ward while another resident opposed the proposed modifications to the north-west of the borough. In addition we received two sets of pro forma letters. The first, received from seven respondents, generally opposed the draft recommendations, arguing that utilising geographical boundaries would be more understandable to the electorate locally and would therefore encourage higher turnout at elections. The second, which was sent in by 21 respondents, opposed the draft recommendations and instead preferred the Conservatives' Stage One proposals which they considered would

provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests, particularly in the north-west of the borough. In addition they proposed a change to a system of whole-council elections for the borough.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

33 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

35 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 5 per cent from 89,826 to 94,167 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Gainsborough ward, on the site of the former Ipswich Airfield, although a significant amount of growth is also expected in St Clement’s and White House 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 Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

36 In arriving at our draft recommendations we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, were content that they represented the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

37 At Stage Three a resident of Holly Road queried the electorate projections for St Margaret's ward as he noted that proposals existed for a further 1,500 properties in the ward. We therefore queried the electorate projections for this area with officers at the Borough Council, who indicated that "all of the sites identified by the Council in response to your original request for projected 2005 electorate are ones which are included in the current Local Plan and designated for development in the next five years." We therefore remain satisfied that the Council's projections represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

38 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case. In particular, when considering proposals for a significant change in council size, we will look for some evidence of consensus and local consultation over the proposed increase or reduction.

39 Ipswich Borough Council presently has 48 members. The Borough Council proposed retaining a council of 48 members, serving 16 three-member wards. It stated that a Working Group had been established to consider proposals for warding arrangements in Ipswich. The Working Group concluded that the achievement of electoral equality in Ipswich would best be met by retaining the current council size and a pattern of 16 three-member wards. A proposed scheme based on a council size of 48, covering 16 three-member wards, was subsequently approved and adopted by the Council.

40 The Conservatives proposed a significant reduction in council size from 48 to 32 members. Although the existing pattern of 16 wards would be retained under their proposals, each ward would be represented by two councillors, rather than three as at present. The Conservatives stated that the Borough Council had recently implemented a modernised structure of political management, and they argued that in light of the new structure "three councillors per ward are simply no longer needed". They contended that the proposed reduction in council size would provide for more efficient decision making by the Council, greater accountability and increased cost savings for the electorate.

41 The Liberal Democrats expressed support for retaining the current council size of 48. They stated that, while they had initially considered a pattern of 14 three-member wards and three two-member wards, they were subsequently content to support the Working Group's proposal to retain the current pattern of 16 three-member wards. The Liberal Democrats objected to the Conservatives' proposal to reduce the council size to 32, stating that they "value highly the representative role of the councillor". They also noted that the ratio of electors to councillors in Ipswich under the current council size compares favourably with other large towns in East Anglia.

42 In our draft recommendations we considered carefully all the representations and evidence received at Stage One of the review. We noted that, as detailed above, the Commission will not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size, but will be prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence. We recognised that there was some disagreement between the three borough-wide schemes received as to the most appropriate

council size for the borough. However, while the proposals put forward by both the Council and the Conservatives were the subject of local public consultation, we received no evidence at Stage One which would indicate that there was significant support for a radical change in council size. Furthermore, having carefully considered the Conservatives' proposals, we found no evidence to indicate that the existing council size fails to secure convenient and effective local government. We also received no evidence as to how the Council would function more effectively under a decreased council size of 32, as opposed to the existing council size of 48.

43 As outlined in our *Guidance*, we noted that it is important that those proposing to change council size are able to demonstrate that such schemes have been properly researched and consulted on locally. It is especially important to establish what new structures they plan to put in place, and to explain the role of councillors in the proposed new structure. In addition, it is also important to demonstrate that proposed changes will have a reasonable degree of longevity. We therefore considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We considered that the current council size provided for convenient and effective local government in Ipswich, and were content that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

44 During Stage Three we received no further evidence in relation to a change in council size for the Borough Council and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendation to retain a council size of 48 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

45 In arriving at our draft recommendations we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the three borough-wide schemes for electoral arrangements in Ipswich. From these representations, some considerations emerged which informed our draft recommendations. As outlined above, our proposals for Ipswich were based on a council size of 48, which we considered to be the most appropriate council size for the borough, having regard to the evidence submitted and to the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area. Notwithstanding the reduction in council size proposed by the Conservatives, we noted that all three schemes were based on 16 wards, and that there were some areas where there was a degree of consensus regarding community boundaries in Ipswich. Wherever possible, we attempted to reflect those areas of agreement.

46 Our draft recommendations were based largely on the Borough Council's proposals, although we also drew upon elements of the other borough-wide schemes submitted at Stage One of the review. We also sought to build on those proposals in several areas in order to further improve electoral equality and reflect community identities and interests in the borough.

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

- (a) White House and Whitton wards;
- (b) Broom Hill and Castle Hill wards;
- (c) Chantry and Sprites wards;
- (d) Bridge and Stoke Park wards;
- (e) St Margaret's and Town wards;
- (f) St Clement's and St John's wards;
- (g) Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards;
- (h) Bixley and Rushmere wards.

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

White House and Whitton wards

49 White House and Whitton wards lie in the north-west of the borough and are each represented by three members. White House ward comprises the White House Estate and the community of Westbourne to the west of the A1156 Norwich Road, and has 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (3 per cent more than the average by 2005). Whitton ward, which is bounded by Norwich Road to the west and Stratford Road and Fircroft Road to the south, has 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (15 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

50 At Stage One, under the Borough Council's proposals the boundary between White House and Whitton wards would be amended to follow the A1156 Bury Road and the A14 northwards to the borough boundary. The Council proposed transferring the part of Castle Hill to the west of the A1156 Norwich Road, comprising Cromer Road, Deben Road, Kelvin Road, Lister Road, Rayleigh Road and Westbourne Road, to a revised White House ward, while Castle Road, Shrubland Avenue and Ravensfield Road would be transferred from White House ward to the revised Castle Hill ward. In order to improve electoral equality, Whitton ward would be enlarged to include the part of the current Castle Hill ward to the east of Congreve Road and north of the Ipswich to Woodbridge railway line. Under the Council's proposals, the boundary between the revised Whitton and Castle Hill wards would be amended to run to the north of Cedar Croft Road and Fircroft Road. Based on a council size of 48, the Council's three-member Whitton ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent more than the average by 2005. White House ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (6 per cent more than the average by 2005).

51 The Conservatives proposed less significant amendments to the existing electoral arrangements of White House and Whitton wards. In order to improve electoral equality in Whitton ward, they proposed transferring the part of White House ward to the north of Kildare Avenue and White House Road to a new two-member Whitton White House ward. The remaining part of the current White House ward would form a new Westbourne ward, also

represented by two councillors. Under the Conservatives' proposed council size of 32, Westbourne ward would have 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor initially, improving to 7 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Whitton White House ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

52 The Liberal Democrats also proposed broadly retaining the existing White House and Whitton wards. They noted that the current Whitton ward has an especially high level of electoral inequality and, in order to improve electoral equality, they proposed transferring the part of Castle Hill ward to the east of Congreve Road and north of the Ipswich to Woodbridge railway line to a revised Whitton ward, as also proposed by the Borough Council. The current White House ward would be retained without amendment. Based on a council size of 48, the Liberal Democrats' three-member White House ward would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 3 per cent more than the average by 2005. Whitton ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (equal to the borough average by 2005).

53 We received six further representations in relation to warding arrangements in this area. Six residents of the White House Estate, currently in White House ward, opposed the Conservatives' proposal to divide the estate between a new Westbourne ward and an enlarged Whitton White House ward, arguing that the proposal would divide a well-established community.

54 In arriving at our draft recommendations, we carefully considered all the representations received and the evidence presented to us at Stage One of the review. Notwithstanding the improved levels of electoral equality which would be provided under the Conservatives' scheme, we were not persuaded that their proposal to enlarge Whitton ward to include part of White House ward would adequately reflect community identities and interests in this area. We considered that the White House Estate, located to the west of the A1156 Norwich Road, formed a distinct and discrete community, and proposed retaining the estate in its entirety within White House ward.

55 We noted that the Borough Council's proposed White House ward would provide improved electoral equality and considered that it would reflect local community ties well. While Castle Road, Ravensfield Road and Shrubland Avenue lie to the west of the A1156 Norwich Road, we considered that they share few links with the Westbourne and White House communities which form the remaining parts of White House ward. We therefore put forward the Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations. We proposed transferring the Castle Road area to a revised Castle Hill ward, as detailed below, and including the Westbourne Road area in our proposed White House ward. The boundary between White House and Whitton wards would be amended to follow the A1156 Bury Road and the A14.

56 We noted that there was some consensus between the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats concerning the transfer of part of the current Castle Hill ward to the east of Congreve Road and north of the Ipswich to Woodbridge railway line to an amended Whitton ward. We were content that this proposal would address the level of over-representation in the current Whitton ward and would reflect local community identities well, and proposed it as part of our draft recommendations. We considered that the area to the east of Congreve Road shares good

communication links with the remaining part of Whitton ward, and that the Ipswich to Woodbridge Railway line would form a distinct boundary between Whitton and Castle Hill wards. We were also content to retain Meredith Road, Stratford Road and Garrick Way as the current boundary between Castle Hill and Whitton wards, although a minor amendment was proposed in order to unite the whole of Castle Court within Castle Hill ward.

57 Under our draft recommendations, the proposed three-member Whitton ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average initially, improving to equal to the borough average by 2005. White House ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent more than the average by 2005).

58 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed a relatively minor amendment transferring 138 electors on Stratford Road from Castle Hill ward to Whitton ward, a modification which it considered would better reflect local community identities and interests in the area concerned. Under the Borough Council's proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in both Castle Hill and Whitton wards (2 per cent above in each in 2005). Castle Hill Labour Party, Ipswich Constituency Labour Party and North Ipswich Branch Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed amendment.

59 As discussed later, the Conservative Group opposed our draft recommendations in the north west of the borough, instead reiterating their Stage One proposals, although they noted that they could be modified to provide a pattern of three-member wards instead of two-member wards. They stated in particular that they continued to consider that part of the White House Estate should be transferred to Whitton ward as they shared community identities and interests.

60 Suffolk County Council informed us that the member for Whitehouse division generally supported the proposals in their area.

61 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area in response to our draft recommendations. In particular we note that the Conservative Group oppose our draft recommendations for the north-west of the area and instead prefer their original Stage One proposals for ward boundaries. However, having revisited our draft recommendations, we are content that our proposals represent a satisfactory balance between the need to secure improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We do not consider that we have received substantive new evidence in support of the Conservative Group's proposals and therefore we are not adopting them as part of our final recommendations. With regard to the Borough Council's proposed amendment to the boundary between Castle Hill and Whitton wards, we note that it would provide a more equitable distribution of the electorate between the two wards and, we judge, provide a satisfactory reflection of the statutory criteria. Consequently, in the absence of further alternative proposals in this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to adopting the Borough Council's amendment to the boundary between Castle Hill and Whitton wards.

62 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in White House ward (5 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent above

in Whitton ward (2 per cent above in 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Broom Hill and Castle Hill wards

63 Broom Hill and Castle Hill wards cover the area to the north of the commercial centre of Ipswich and broadly to the west of Henley Road. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Castle Hill ward, which comprises residential areas to the east of the A1156 Norwich Road and north of Dales View Road, has 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Broom Hill ward, located to the south of Castle Hill and White House wards, is bounded by Chevalier Street and Anglesea Road in the south and has 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (9 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

64 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed revised warding arrangements for Broom Hill and Castle Hill wards. Under its proposals, the part of the current Castle Hill ward to the east of Congreve Road would be transferred to a revised Whitton ward, and the Westbourne Road area would be transferred from Castle Hill ward to the revised White House ward, as detailed above. The Council proposed enlarging Castle Hill ward to include the Castle Road area of White House ward, as detailed above, and the part of Broom Hill ward to the east of the A1156 Norwich Road and to the north of Sherrington Road, Pine View Road and Cotswold Avenue. It also proposed combining the part of Broom Hill ward to the west of Norwich Road with the part of Town ward to the north of London Road and Crown Street, to form a revised Broom Hill ward. Under its proposals the remaining part of the current Broom Hill ward would be transferred to a revised St Margaret's ward, as detailed below. Under a council size of 48, the Council's proposed three-member Castle Hill ward would have 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 3 per cent more than the average by 2005. Broom Hill ward, also represented by three councillors, would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (2 per cent more than the average by 2005).

65 The Conservatives proposed retaining the existing boundaries of the current Broom Hill and Castle Hill wards without amendment. They noted that the southern and eastern boundaries of these wards are presently coterminous with the boundary between the Ipswich and Central Suffolk & North Ipswich parliamentary constituencies, and argued that "there would be no sense and considerable disadvantage in replacing one very unusual division with another." Under the Conservatives' proposed council size of 32, the two-member Broom Hill ward would have 8 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (9 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Castle Hill ward, also represented by two councillors, would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

66 As detailed above, the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the part of the current Castle Hill ward to the east of Congreve Road and north of the Ipswich to Woodbridge railway line to a revised Whitton ward. Under their proposals, Castle Hill ward would be enlarged to include the part of Broom Hill ward to the north of Bramford Lane and west of Richmond Road, Norwich Road and Dales View Road. The remaining part of Broom Hill ward would be combined with the part of St Margaret's ward broadly to the west of Westerfield Road and Christchurch Park and the part of Town ward to the north of London Road and the west of Victoria Street, Rendlesham

Road and Wellington Street, to form a revised Broom Hill ward. The Liberal Democrats opposed the Conservatives' proposal to retain coterminosity between district warding arrangements and the parliamentary constituency boundary in this area. While they expressed support for retaining the existing boundary in principle, the Liberal Democrats argued that the Conservatives' proposal to allocate eight councillors to the north-western area of the borough (based on a council size of 32) would not provide for improved levels of electoral equality in this area. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the three-member Broom Hill ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to equal to the average by 2005. Castle Hill ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

67 In considering our draft recommendations for this area, we were not persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed warding arrangements would provide an appropriate balance between community identity and electoral equality in the north-western part of Ipswich. We noted that Parliamentary constituency boundaries were not a factor which we took into account in our work. Furthermore, we noted that the Parliamentary Boundary Commission, in its Fifth General Review of parliamentary constituencies, which started in February 2000, will be basing its recommendations for new constituencies on the warding patterns which we recommend and the Secretary of State implements. We noted that, based on our proposed council size of 48, the area comprising the current Broom Hill, Castle Hill, White House and Whitton wards is entitled to 11.3 councillors, rather than 12 as at present. While the Conservatives' scheme would minimise change to the existing arrangements, their proposals would not address the problem of over-representation in this area.

68 We considered that the A1156 Norwich Road forms a clearly identifiable community boundary which effectively delineates local communities to the north of the town centre, and we were not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats' proposed Castle Hill and Broom Hill wards would reflect community identities appropriately in this area. In particular, we noted that their proposed Broom Hill ward would encompass a number of disparate and diverse communities, extending from Yarmouth Road in the south to Westerfield Road in the north. We were content that the Council's proposed Castle Hill ward would provide the most appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area, and put it forward as part of our draft recommendations, subject to retaining part of the existing boundary between Whitton and Castle Hill wards, as detailed above.

69 We noted that the boundaries of Broom Hill ward would be substantially modified under the Borough Council's proposals. We considered, however, that the A1156 Norwich Road and Anglesea Road form strong and clearly identifiable boundaries in this area, and we were content that the residential area to the north of Crown Street and London Road shares similar characteristics and strong communication links with the part of the current Broom Hill ward to the west of Norwich Road. Moreover, we noted that the Council's proposals would provide for a significant improvement in electoral equality in Broom Hill ward, and we were content to put forward its proposed Broom Hill ward as part of our draft recommendations. Under our proposals, the part of the current Broom Hill ward to the east of Norwich Road and south of Sherrington Road, Pine View Road and Cotswold Avenue would be transferred to a revised St Margaret's ward, as detailed below.

70 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Castle Hill ward would have 9 per cent more electors than the borough average, improving to 4 per cent more than the average by 2005. Broom Hill ward, also represented by three councillors, would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (2 per cent more than the average by 2005).

71 At Stage Three, as described earlier, the Borough Council proposed only one amendment to the wards in this area, proposing that the boundary between Castle Hill and Whitton wards should be amended to follow the rear of properties on the south of Stratford Road. The Borough Council proposed that Broom Hill ward should be renamed Westgate. North Ipswich Branch Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals in this area. Broom Hill Ward Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for Broom Hill ward.

72 The Conservative Group opposed the draft recommendations for Broom Hill ward and reiterated their Stage One proposals for the wards in the north-west of the borough as they considered that these would better reflect local community identities and interests. They also stated that "we are now prepared to withdraw our proposals for two councillors per ward and accept the Commission's recommendation to retain three per ward." We also received representations from Central Suffolk & North Ipswich Conservative Association, six local residents and pro forma letters from a further 27 local residents opposing the proposals for Broom Hill ward, generally on the grounds that they would not reflect local community identities and interests. Central Suffolk & North Ipswich Conservative Association stated that it was particularly concerned that the proposed Broom Hill ward would breach parliamentary constituency boundaries.

73 As discussed later, the Liberal Democrats proposed amendments to Broom Hill ward which they considered would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests and would reflect the findings of their own local consultation exercise. They proposed that the area of our proposed St Margaret's ward around Westwood Avenue should be transferred to Broom Hill ward and that an area around Suffolk College should be included in Town ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which only included electorate totals for 2005, the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Broom Hill ward.

74 Suffolk County Council informed us that the member for Whitehouse division proposed that Broom Hill ward might be renamed either Handford, Springfield or Westbourne.

75 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage Three. In particular we note that there is some local opposition to the proposed Broom Hill ward, which a number of respondents do not consider would reflect local community identities or interests. We have therefore revisited our draft recommendations in the light of the alternative proposals which we have received from the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. However, we do not consider that the alternative proposals which we have received would provide as satisfactory a balance of the need to achieve improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and we also note that there is no consensus regarding what would be the most suitable arrangements in this area. Moreover, as stated in our draft recommendations, we do not have regard for parliamentary constituency boundaries when putting forward our proposals, as a review of parliamentary constituencies will follow, which will base its new arrangements on the wards which we propose as a result of this exercise. Consequently we are

confirming our draft recommendations as final for the wards of Broom Hill and Castle Hill, subject to the minor amendment to Castle Hill ward described earlier, as we consider that they would provide the best balance between the need to provide improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We are not proposing to amend the name of Broom Hill ward as we do not consider that there is evidence of a clear consensus in support of a new name.

76 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Broom Hill ward (2 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Castle Hill ward (2 per cent above in 2005). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Chantry and Sprites wards

77 Chantry and Sprites wards are located in the south-western part of the borough, to the south of the River Gipping, London Road and the Ipswich to Stowmarket railway line, and are each represented by three councillors. Chantry ward is significantly over-represented at present, with 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, while Sprites ward has 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (23 per cent and 10 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

78 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed enlarging Chantry ward to include the part of Town ward to the south of London Road and the west of Civic Drive and Princes Street, and the part of Sprites ward to the west of Mallard Way and north of Gannet Road, Sheldrake Drive and Tern Road. It also proposed transferring the part of the current Chantry ward to the east of Birkfield Drive and Birkfield Close and the part of Sprites ward to the east of Mallard Way to a revised Stoke Park ward, as detailed below. Under the Council's proposals for warding arrangements in this area, the remaining part of the current Sprites ward would be combined with the part of Chantry ward to the south of Pheasant Road, Partridge Road and Robin Drive, and the part of Stoke Park ward to the west of Birkfield Drive, to form a revised three-member Sprites ward. Based on a council size of 48, the Council's three-member Chantry and Sprites wards would each have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent and 5 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

79 The Conservatives also proposed transferring part of Town ward to the south-western area of the borough in order to address the high level of electoral inequality in the current Chantry ward. Under their proposals Chantry ward, less the area to the west of Robin Drive, would be combined with the part of Town ward to the south of London Road and to the west of Portman Road and Princes Street to form a new Gippeswyk ward. The Conservatives proposed a revised Sprites ward comprising the existing ward and the part of Chantry ward to the east of Robin Drive. The Conservatives' proposed Gippeswyk and Sprites wards, each represented by two councillors, would have 3 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent fewer than the average in both wards by 2005), based on a council size of 32.

80 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for warding arrangements in this area, Chantry ward would be enlarged to include the part of Town ward bounded by London Road, Victoria Street,

Rendlesham Road and Wellington Street to the west and the A1156 Norwich Road, Portman Road, Civic Drive and Princes Street to the east, and the part of Bridge ward to the west of Stoke Street and the north of Belstead Road. They proposed transferring the part of the current Chantry ward to the south of Chantry Lane, Orchid Close, Trefoil Close and Marigold Avenue to a revised Sprites ward. Under their proposals, the parts of the current Sprites ward to the south of Belmont Road and to the east of Mallard Way would be transferred to an amended Stoke Park ward, as detailed below. Based on a council size of 48, the Liberal Democrats' proposed three-member Sprites and Stoke Park wards would have 6 per cent and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

81 In considering our draft recommendations for this area, we noted that there was some consensus among borough-wide submissions as to the most appropriate warding arrangements for the south-western part of Ipswich. While our draft recommendations for this area were broadly based on those put forward by the Borough Council, we sought to build on those proposals in order to improve further electoral equality and reflect community identities and interests. We noted that, at present, Chantry ward is significantly over-represented, and in order to improve electoral equality we proposed transferring the part of the current Town ward to the south of London Road and the west of Civic Drive and Princes Street to a revised Chantry ward, as proposed by the Borough Council. This change also broadly reflected the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' proposals.

82 We considered that the Borough Council's proposal to unite the Robin Drive and Kingfisher Avenue areas within Sprites ward had some merit, and we were content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. However, we were not persuaded that the Council's proposal to transfer the part of Sprites ward to the west of Mallard Way and north of Gannet Road, Sheldrake Drive and Tern Road to Chantry ward would adequately reflect local community ties in this area, and we proposed retaining the area within Sprites ward. In order to ensure a reasonable level of electoral equality in Chantry ward, we proposed transferring the part of the current Sprites ward to the east of Mallard way, including Chantry High School, to the revised Chantry ward. We noted that Ellenbrook Road and Sheldrake Drive are currently divided between borough wards, and we proposed transferring the eastern side of Ellenbrook Road and the southern side of Sheldrake Drive from Stoke Park ward to a revised Sprites ward, thereby uniting the whole of each road within one ward. We also proposed transferring the part of Mallard Way to the south of Tern Road from Sprites ward to a revised Stoke Park ward, as detailed below.

83 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Chantry and Stoke Park wards would each have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. By 2005, Chantry ward would have 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average, while Stoke Park ward would have 5 per cent fewer than the average.

84 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed two amendments to the wards in this area. First, it proposed that part of the proposed Stoke Park ward generally to the west of Birkfield Drive should be transferred to Sprites ward. Second it proposed that part of the proposed Chantry ward around Grantham Crescent should be transferred to Stoke Park ward. It considered that these changes would provide a more accurate reflection of local community identities and interests, although it later noted that such changes could only take place if the original Stage One

proposals for these three wards were utilised. The Borough Council proposed that Chantry ward should be renamed Portman. Sprites and Chantry Ward Labour parties supported the Borough Council's proposals for Chantry ward.

85 A resident of Stoke Park ward supported the Borough Council's proposal that properties in the Gippeswyk Avenue/Belstead Road area should be transferred from Chantry ward to Stoke Park ward and that some properties in the Birkfield Drive area of Stoke Park ward should be transferred to Sprites ward.

86 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage Three. In particular we note that the Borough Council has proposed amendments to ward boundaries in this area, but we are not convinced that such amendments would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests or that we have received evidence which would justify the adoption of the Borough Council's original Stage One proposals for the three wards in this area. Consequently, as we judge that our draft recommendations would continue to provide the best available balance of the need to provide improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Chantry and Sprites wards as final.

87 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average in Chantry ward (4 per cent below in 2005) and equal to the average in Sprites ward (5 per cent below in 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Bridge and Stoke Park wards

88 Bridge and Stoke Park wards lie in the south of the borough, to the west of the Orwell estuary, and are each represented by three councillors. Bridge ward comprises the communities of Maidenhall and Stoke, and has 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent more than the average by 2005). Stoke Park ward comprises the area to the south of Stone Lodge Lane, including the Stoke Park development, and has 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (6 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

89 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Bridge and Stoke Park wards, with some amendments to provide for improved electoral equality. The Council proposed amending the boundary between Bridge and Stoke Park wards to include the whole of Stoke Park Drive and the roads leading from it (Crowland Close, Hexham Close, Buckfast Close, Tintern Close and Woodspring Close) within Stoke Park ward. As detailed above, it also proposed enlarging Stoke Park ward to include parts of the current Chantry and Sprites wards, and transferring the part of the current Stoke Park ward to the west of Birkfield Drive to a revised Sprites ward. The proposed Bridge and Stoke Park wards would each retain three councillors. Based on a council size of 48, the Council's Bridge and Stoke Park wards would each have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (1 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than the average respectively by 2005).

90 The Conservatives proposed only minor amendments to the existing ward boundaries in this area, transferring the part of Bridge ward to the west of Fernhayes Close and Broomhayes and

to the north of and including Chatsworth Crescent to a revised Stoke Park ward. Under the Conservatives' proposed council size of 32, the two-member Stoke Park ward would have 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. Bridge ward would also be represented by two councillors, and would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (6 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

91 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for warding arrangements in this area, Stoke Park ward would be enlarged to include the parts of the current Sprites ward to the south of Belmont Road and to the east of Mallard Way. They proposed transferring the part of Bridge ward to the west of Stoke Street and the north of Belstead Road to a revised Chantry ward, as detailed above, and amending the eastern boundary of Bridge ward to follow the centre of the Orwell estuary, rather than the docks as at present. Based on a council size of 48, the Liberal Democrats' three-member Stoke Park ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Their proposed Bridge ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

92 In arriving at our draft recommendations we noted that the borough-wide schemes submitted at Stage One all proposed only minor changes to the existing Bridge and Stoke Park wards, and we were content to retain largely the existing warding arrangements for this area. As discussed previously, we proposed uniting properties on both sides of Ellenbrook Road and Sheldrake Drive within Sprites ward, and transferring part of Mallard Way to the revised Stoke Park ward. We noted that there was some consensus between the Borough Council and the Conservatives to unite those roads leading from Stoke Park Drive within Stoke Park ward, and we considered that the proposal had some merit. We therefore proposed amending the boundary between Bridge and Stoke Park wards to follow to the rear of the properties on Crowland Close, Hexham Close, Buckfast Close, Tintern Close and Woodspring Close. We also proposed amending the eastern boundary of Bridge ward to follow the centre of the Orwell estuary, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. This change would affect no electors.

93 Under our draft recommendations the three-member Bridge ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Stoke Park ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average (5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

94 At Stage Three, as noted above, the Borough Council proposed two amendments to the boundary between Chantry ward and Stoke Park ward and between Sprites ward and Stoke Park ward. The Borough Council proposed no further amendments. Councillor Rawlingson, member for Stoke Park ward, supported the retention of the existing ward name. Stoke Park Ward Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments. Bridge Ward Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for Bridge ward.

95 Suffolk County Council informed us that the member for Whitehouse division proposed that Bridge ward might be renamed Maidenhall or Halifax.

96 We have given careful consideration to the views received in this area. As noted earlier, we are not proposing to adopt the amendments put forward by the Borough Council as we do not consider that they would provide a satisfactory scheme for the area concerned. Therefore, in the absence of further alternative proposals, we are confirming our draft recommendation for Bridge and Stoke Park wards as final. We are not proposing to amend the name of Bridge ward as we have not received widespread support for such a change.

97 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Bridge ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 1 per cent below in Stoke Park ward (5 per cent below in 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

St Margaret's and Town wards

98 St Margaret's and Town wards cover the central area of Ipswich to the north of the docks and to the west of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line, and are each represented by three councillors. St Margaret's ward comprises the primarily residential areas to the north and east of Christchurch Park, and has 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in 2005. Town ward covers the main commercial centre of the borough, but also contains some residential settlements to the north and west of the town centre. Town ward has 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, increasing to 13 per cent more than the average by 2005.

99 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that parts of the current Town ward should be transferred to revised Broom Hill and Chantry wards, as detailed above. The Council proposed a revised Town ward comprising the remaining part of Town ward, plus the part of St John's ward to the west of Cauldwell Hall Road and to the north of Spring Road and the part of St Clement's ward to the west of Holywells Park, White Elm Street and Devonshire Road, including the small area to the north of Weymouth Road and east of St John's Road. Its proposed Town ward would also include the part of the current St Margaret's ward to the south and east of Finchley Road, Arthur's Terrace and Woodbridge Road. The remaining part of the current St Margaret's ward would be combined with the part of Broom Hill ward to the east of the A1156 Norwich Road and the south of Sherrington Road, Pine View Road and Cotswold Avenue to form a revised St Margaret's ward. The Council also proposed amending the boundary between St Margaret's and Rushmere wards to follow the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line, thereby uniting both sides of Tuddenham Road within the proposed Rushmere ward. Based on a council size of 48, the Council's proposed three-member St Margaret's and Town wards would have 4 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, improving to 1 per cent more than the average in both wards by 2005.

100 The Conservatives proposed a revised Town ward, and proposed retaining the existing St Margaret's ward without amendment. Under their proposals, Town ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area to the south of London Road and to the west of Portman Road and Princes Street, which they proposed transferring to a new Gippeswyk ward in order to improve electoral equality in the south-western part of the borough. Based on the Conservatives' proposed council size of 32, the two-member Town ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. St

Margaret's ward, also represented by two councillors, would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

101 The Liberal Democrats proposed revised three-member St Margaret's and Town wards. In order to improve electoral equality in the north-western part of the borough, the Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the part of the current St Margaret's ward broadly to the west of Westerfield Road and Christchurch Park to a revised Broom Hill ward, as detailed above. This proposal would also result in improved electoral equality in the amended St Margaret's ward. As detailed above, the Liberal Democrats also proposed transferring parts of the current Town ward to revised Broom Hill and Chantry wards. In order to improve electoral equality in the centre of Ipswich, they proposed enlarging Town ward to include the part of St Clement's ward to the north of Patteson Road and Cavendish Street, to the west of Fuchsia Avenue and to the south of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposed council size of 48, Town ward would have 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. The proposed St Margaret's ward would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (equal to the average by 2005).

102 In arriving at our draft recommendations, as detailed above, we proposed enlarging St Margaret's ward to include the part of the current Broom Hill ward to the east of the A1156 Norwich Road and south of Sherrington Road, Pine View Road and Cotswold Avenue. We also proposed transferring parts of the current Town ward to revised Chantry and Broom Hill wards. In order to improve electoral equality in the revised Town ward, we proposed enlarging the ward eastwards to include parts of the current St Clement's, St Margaret's and St John's wards. We considered that the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the part of the current St Margaret's ward to the south and east of Finchley Road, Arthur's Terrace and Woodbridge Road had some merit, and put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. We were content that the residential area between Spring Road and Woodbridge Road, bounded by the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line in the east, shares good communications links and some community of interest with areas to the south of St Helen's Street and Spring Road. We also proposed amending the boundary between St Margaret's and Rushmere wards to follow the railway line, as proposed by the Council, in order to unite both sides of Tuddenham Road within Rushmere ward.

103 We were not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposed amendments to the eastern and southern boundaries of Town ward would adequately reflect community ties in this area. In particular, we noted that the area of St John's ward between Woodbridge Road and Spring Road shared only limited communication links with the current Town ward to the west of the railway line. We recognised, however, that in order to improve electoral equality the boundaries of Town ward might need to be amended to include areas to the east of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line. As part of our draft recommendations for this area, we proposed transferring the part of St John's ward to the south of Spring Road and west of Cauldwell Hall Road and the part of St Clement's ward to the north of Foxhall Road to a revised Town ward. We were content that Foxhall Road formed a strong and clearly identifiable community boundary in this area, and that the Cauldwell Hall Road and St John's Road areas share good communication links with the remaining parts of our proposed Town ward. We also proposed retaining Back Hamlet and Coprolite Street as the southern boundary of Town ward.

104 Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Town ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 5 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. St Margaret's ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (1 per cent more than the average by 2005).

105 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed transferring the area around Ringham Road from Town ward to St John's ward. However the Council went on to note that it had "considered community identities and made suggestions for ward change in part without considering the overall effect on the electorate in each ward", and it therefore reiterated its original Stage One proposals in this area. The Borough Council proposed that Town ward should be renamed Alexandra and that St Margaret's ward should be renamed Christchurch. St Margaret's Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for St Margaret's ward. Town Ward Labour Party supported the draft recommendations for the ward.

106 As discussed earlier, the Liberal Democrats proposed amendments to St Margaret's and Town wards which they considered would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests and would reflect the findings of their own local consultation exercise. They proposed that the area of the proposed St Margaret's ward around Westwood Avenue should be transferred to Broom Hill ward and that an area of Broom Hill ward around Suffolk College should be included in Town ward. They also proposed that an area of St Margaret's ward around Lacey Street should be retained in the existing ward and not transferred to Town ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which only included electorate totals for 2005, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in St Margaret's ward and 1 per cent above in Town ward.

107 Suffolk County Council informed us that the member for St Margaret's division stated that they had no comment to make on the draft recommendations.

108 Suffolk Constabulary noted that "Town ward is policed on foot which is currently made difficult because it extends westwards well beyond the town centre. The proposals effectively move this ward eastwards but extends it to the point that it would be impractical to patrol the whole of the new ward on foot".

109 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. We note that the Liberal Democrats have proposed a number of amendments to the boundaries of these two wards. However we are not persuaded that the amendments which they have put forward would provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria and we are not therefore modifying our draft recommendations in this area. Similarly we are not proposing to adopt the Borough Council's original Stage One submission for these wards as we consider that our draft recommendations would provide a better balance of the need to seek improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. While we note the concerns of Suffolk Constabulary we are not persuaded that these considerations outweigh the need to secure improvements to electoral equality and we are not taking them into account when considering our recommendations for future electoral arrangements. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of St Margaret's and Town as final. We are not proposing to amend the ward names in this area as we have not received evidence of support for such a change.

110 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in St Margaret's ward (1 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below in Town ward (5 per cent below in 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

St Clement's and St John's wards

111 St Clement's and St John's wards lie to the south and east of the town centre respectively. St Clement's ward, which is represented by three councillors, covers the Holywells Park and Rose Hill areas. St John's ward comprises the community of California to the north-east of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line, and is also represented by three councillors. St Clement's ward has 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, increasing to 13 per cent more than the average over the next five years. St John's ward has 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (8 per cent more than the average by 2005).

112 At Stage One, as detailed above, the Borough Council proposed transferring parts of the current St Clement's and St John's wards to a revised Town ward. Under its proposals for this area, the revised St John's ward would be enlarged to include the part of the current Bixley ward to the west of Cherry Lane and to the south of Rushmere Road. The Council proposed transferring the part of St John's ward to the east of Fernleigh Road and Halliwell Road to a revised Bixley ward, as detailed below. The part of St Clement's ward to the east of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line would also be transferred to the amended St John's ward. The Council proposed combining the remaining part of the current St Clement's ward with the part of Gainsborough ward to the north of Greenwich Road and the part of Priory Heath ward to the west of Murray Road and north of Powling Road to form a revised St Clement's ward. Under the Council's proposals for a council size of 48, the three-member St Clement's and St John's wards would have 3 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2 per cent and 6 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

113 The Conservatives proposed minimal change to the existing warding arrangements in this area. Under their proposals, the part of St Clement's ward to the east of Derby Road, comprising Pearce Road, Stanley Avenue and Orwell Road, would be transferred to a revised St John's ward. Lattice Avenue, currently in St John's ward, would be transferred to an amended Bixley ward, as detailed below. Based on a council size of 32, the Conservatives' two-member St Clement's ward would have 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (8 per cent more than the average by 2005). Their proposed St John's ward, also represented by two councillors, would have 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, both now and in five years' time.

114 The Liberal Democrats proposed transferring the part of the current St Clement's ward broadly to the north of Cavendish Street to a revised Town ward, as detailed above. Under their proposals for warding arrangements in this area, St Clement's ward would be enlarged to include the part of Priory Heath ward to the west of and including Hatfield Road and Derby Road, and the part of St John's ward to the south of Spring Road and Ringham Road and the west of Cauldwell Hall Road, Kemball Street and Orwell Road. Under their proposals, the remaining part of St John's ward would form a revised three-member St John's ward. Based on a council size of 48, the Liberal Democrats' proposed three-member St Clement's ward would have 1 per cent

more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). St John's ward would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor, both now and in five years' time.

115 In arriving at our draft recommendations we proposed transferring parts of the current St Clement's and St John's wards to the revised Town ward, as discussed previously. We noted that there was a degree of consensus between the Borough Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals to transfer part of Priory Heath ward to St Clement's ward, and we considered that their proposals had some merit. However, as discussed below, we proposed some amendments to Priory Heath ward in order to ensure electoral equality, and as a result we were unable to put forward these proposals in their entirety. We proposed that the part of Priory Heath ward to the west of and including Derby Road and Levington Road, including those properties on the western side of Clapgate Lane to the north of Benacre Road, should be transferred to a revised St Clement's ward. We also proposed enlarging St Clement's ward to include the part of Gainsborough ward to the north of Greenwich Road, as also proposed by the Council. As discussed previously, we proposed amending the boundary between St Clement's and Bridge wards to follow the centre of the Orwell estuary.

116 We were content that the boundary between the current Bixley and St John's wards continued to define community boundaries in this area well, and proposed retaining it as part of our draft recommendations. As detailed above, we proposed transferring part of the current St John's ward to the revised Town ward. We also proposed transferring the Pearce Road, Stanley Avenue and Orwell Road area from St Clement's ward to St John's ward, as proposed by both the Borough Council and the Conservatives, thereby uniting those roads to the west of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line within the revised St John's ward.

117 Under our draft recommendations, our proposed three-member St Clement's ward would have 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. As a result of developments which are forecast to take place in the area over the next five years, St Clement's ward is expected to have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole by 2005. St John's ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005.

118 At Stage Three, in addition to the change to the boundary between St John's and Town wards, described earlier, the Borough Council proposed a number of further amendments to the boundaries of these two wards. It proposed that the boundary between Bixley and St John's ward should be amended to include an area around Reading Road in St John's ward. It further proposed that an area around Goring Road should be transferred from St John's ward to Bixley ward. However, as noted earlier, the Council went on to note that it had "considered community identities and made suggestions for ward change in part without considering the overall effect on the electorate in each ward", and it therefore reiterated its original Stage One proposals in this area. With regard to St Clement's ward, the Borough Council proposed that an area of the proposed Priory Heath ward around Hatfield Road should be included in St Clement's ward on the grounds that this would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests. It proposed that St Clement's ward could be renamed Holywells. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in St Clement's ward would be 2 per cent below

the borough average (8 per cent above in 2005). St John's Ward Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals in this area. St Clement's Branch Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments and made further observations. It proposed that St Clement's ward should be renamed Rosehill.

119 Suffolk County Council informed us that the member for Whitehouse division proposed that St Clements ward might be renamed Bishops Hill, Holywells or Rose Hill, while St Johns ward might be renamed California.

120 We have given careful consideration to the proposals which we have received in this area. While we note that the Borough Council has proposed amendments to both St Clement's and St John's wards we do not consider that we have received sufficient evidence in terms of the statutory criteria to support making such amendments. Consequently, in view of the absence of further proposals in this area, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of St Clement's and St John's, without amendment. We have not received evidence of widespread support for modifications to the names of these wards and we are therefore not proposing any modifications to ward names in this area as part of our final recommendations.

121 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent below the borough average in St Clement's ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 3 per cent above in St John's ward (2 per cent above in 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards

122 Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards cover the south-eastern part of Ipswich, to the east of the Orwell estuary and broadly to the south of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line. The three-member Priory Heath ward comprises the Racecourse and Priory Heath areas, and has 4 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Gainsborough ward, also represented by three councillors, includes the settlements of Greenwich and Gainsborough, and has 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average. As a result of the large number of residential developments which are expected to be completed on the site of the former Ipswich Airfield over the next five years, Gainsborough ward is forecast to have 23 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2005.

123 At Stage One, under the Borough Council's proposals for warding arrangements in this area, parts of the current Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards would be transferred to a revised St Clement's ward, as detailed above. The Council also proposed transferring the part of Priory Heath ward to the south of Powling Road to an amended three-member Gainsborough ward. The remaining part of the current Priory Heath ward would be combined with the former Ipswich Airfield site and those properties on the western side of Nacton Road to form a revised three-member Priory Heath ward. Based on a council size of 48, the Council's proposed Priory Heath ward would have 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 8 per cent fewer than the average by 2005. Gainsborough ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (2 per cent more than the average by 2005).

124 The Conservatives also proposed transferring the former Ipswich Airfield site from Gainsborough ward to a revised Priory Heath ward. Under their proposals for warding arrangements in this area, the part of the current Priory Heath ward to the south-west of Nacton Road, comprising Powling Road, Beatrice Close, Avondale Road, Normanton Crescent and Henstead Gardens, would be transferred to a revised Gainsborough ward. Each ward would be represented by two councillors, rather than three as at present. Based on a council size of 32, the Conservatives' proposed Priory Heath ward would have 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 2 per cent more than the average by 2005. Gainsborough ward would have 16 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (12 per cent more than the average by 2005).

125 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for warding arrangements in this area, parts of Priory Heath ward would be transferred to St Clement's ward, as detailed above. The part of Gainsborough ward to the south of Nacton Road, including the former Ipswich Airfield site, would also be transferred to the amended Priory Heath ward, and the remaining part of Gainsborough ward would form a revised Gainsborough ward. Based on a council size of 48, the Liberal Democrats' proposed three-member Gainsborough ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent more than the average by 2005. Priory Heath ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 1 per cent more than the average by 2005.

126 In arriving at our draft recommendations we carefully considered the representations and evidence received at Stage One. We noted that while the current Gainsborough ward has a reasonable level of electoral variance at present, it is expected to be significantly under-represented by 2005. In order to address this high level of electoral inequality, all three borough-wide schemes proposed enlarging Priory Heath ward to include the Ravenswood development on the site of the former airfield, where some 700 properties are expected to be completed during the next five years. We noted that there was consensus among respondents in relation to this area, and we were content to put forward this proposal as part of our draft recommendations for Ipswich.

127 We considered that Nacton Road forms a strong and clearly identifiable community boundary in this area, and we were not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposal to unite properties on both sides of Nacton Road within Priory Heath ward would appropriately reflect community ties in this area. We noted that the Conservatives' proposal to transfer the part of Priory Heath ward to the south-west of Nacton Road to the revised Gainsborough ward would unite the Avondale Road and Benacre Road areas within a single ward. We considered that their proposal had some merit, and we were content to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. As detailed above, we also proposed transferring the part of the current Gainsborough ward to the north of Greenwich Road to St Clement's ward, and uniting both sides of Clapgate Lane to the north of Benacre Road within the revised St Clement's ward.

128 As discussed previously, the Borough Council proposed transferring the part of Priory Heath ward to the west of Murray Road to a revised St Clement's ward. However, in order to ensure electoral equality in the amended Priory Heath ward, we proposed amending the boundary between Priory Heath and St Clement's wards to follow the rear of the properties on the eastern

side of Levington, thereby retaining Murray Road and Hatfield Road within the proposed Priory Heath ward. Under our draft recommendations, the three-member Gainsborough ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average, improving to 6 per cent more than the average by 2005. Priory Heath ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 20 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average initially, improving to 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2005.

129 At Stage Three, in addition to the modification to the boundary between St Clement's and Priory Heath wards (discussed earlier), the Borough Council proposed further amendments to the boundary between Gainsborough and Priory Heath wards. It proposed that the northern boundary of Gainsborough ward should be amended to follow the southern side of Powling Road, while the eastern boundary of Gainsborough ward would be amended to follow the rear of properties on the western side of Nacton Road. The Borough Council considered that such changes would better reflect local community identities and interests in the area concerned. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent above the borough average in Gainsborough ward (2 per cent above in 2005) and 23 per cent below in Priory Heath ward (6 per cent below in 2005). Gainsborough Ward Labour Party and Priory Heath Branch Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments to the wards concerned.

130 We have given careful consideration to the Borough Council's proposals. However, we are not persuaded that the alternative proposals which it has put forward offer a better reflection of the need to seek improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria and consequently we are confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

131 Under our final amendments the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the borough average in Gainsborough ward (6 per cent above in 2005) and 20 per cent below the average in Priory Heath ward (3 per cent below in 2005). Our final recommendations for these two wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Bixley and Rushmere wards

132 Bixley and Rushmere wards lie in the east of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Bixley ward, which centres on the A1189 Heath Road and Bixley Road and contains Ipswich Hospital, has 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005). Rushmere ward comprises the area to the east of the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line and north of Rushmere Road, and has 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (3 per cent more than the average by 2005).

133 At Stage One, as detailed above, the Borough Council proposed enlarging the current Bixley ward to include Lattice Avenue, Goring Road, Fernleigh Road and Halliwell Road, currently located in St John's ward. It also proposed transferring the part of Bixley ward to the west of Cherry Lane and the south of Rushmere Road to the amended St John's ward, and uniting those properties to the south of Rushmere Road between Woodbridge Road and Cherry Lane within a revised Rushmere ward. The boundary between the Council's proposed Rushmere and St Margaret's wards would be amended to follow the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line, rather than Tuddenham Road, as at present. Under the Council's proposed council size of 48, the three-member Rushmere ward would have 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough

average, improving to 5 per cent more than the average by 2005. Bixley ward, also represented by three councillors, would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough as a whole (4 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

134 Under the Conservatives' proposals for warding arrangements in this area, Lattice Avenue would be transferred from St John's ward to a revised Bixley ward, as detailed above. The current Rushmere ward would be retained without amendment. Based on a council size of 32, the Conservatives' proposed two-member Bixley and Rushmere wards would have 7 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, improving to 2 per cent and 3 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005.

135 The Liberal Democrats proposed retaining the existing electoral arrangements of both Bixley and Rushmere wards without amendment. Under a council size of 48, the proposed three-member Bixley and Rushmere wards would have 4 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average respectively by 2005).

136 In arriving at our draft recommendations we carefully considered the representations received and we were content that existing warding arrangements in this area reflect local community ties well. We also noted that the current Bixley and Rushmere wards would provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality under a council size of 48, both now and in five years' time. We proposed retaining the current Bixley ward without modification, and amending the boundary between the proposed Rushmere and St Margaret's wards to follow the Ipswich to Felixstowe railway line, thereby uniting those properties to the east of the railway line within Rushmere ward, as proposed by the Borough Council.

137 Under our draft recommendations, our proposed three-member Rushmere ward would have 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average initially, improving to 3 per cent more than the average by 2005. Bixley ward, also represented by three councillors, would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average (1 per cent fewer than the average by 2005).

138 At Stage Three, as noted above, the Borough Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between Bixley and St John's wards. It proposed no further amendments to the boundaries of Bixley and Rushmere wards. Rushmere Branch Labour Party supported the Commission's draft recommendations. Bixley Ward Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments.

139 As noted earlier, we have not been persuaded to make the amendments to the boundary between Bixley and St John's wards and consequently we are confirming our draft recommendations for these two wards as final. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the borough average in Bixley ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 8 per cent above in Rushmere ward (3 per cent above in 2005). Our final recommendations for these wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

140 At Stage One we received two representations regarding the Borough Council’s electoral cycle. The Borough Council argued that, in the light of the proposal to retain a pattern of three-member wards across the borough, elections should continue to be held by thirds. However, it acknowledged that there could, in future, be a case for elections every two years and a pattern of two-member wards for the borough. The Conservatives proposed a change to whole-council elections every four years in Ipswich, arguing that “all out elections will increase accountability of the different political parties” and would result in greater voter participation.

141 In arriving at our draft recommendations we carefully considered all representations. We noted that, when considering proposals to change the electoral cycle of a district, we will look for some evidence of local consensus over the proposed change. We were not persuaded that there was any significant local support for the Conservatives’ proposal to move to whole-council elections every four years in Ipswich. We therefore proposed no change to the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds for the Borough Council.

142 At Stage Three we received further comments from a number of respondents supporting a change in electoral cycle to a pattern of whole-council elections. However, we continue to consider that we have not received evidence of a consensus of support for a change in electoral cycle and therefore we are not recommending such a change as part of our final recommendations.

Conclusions

143 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to amending the boundary between Castle Hill and Whitton wards to follow the rear of properties on the south of Stratford Road.

144 We conclude that, in Ipswich:

- a council of 48 members should be retained;
- there should be 16 wards;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	48	48	48	48
Number of wards	16	16	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,871	1,871	1,962	1,962
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	2	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	2	0

146 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from three to two with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Ipswich Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Ipswich

6 NEXT STEPS

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

148 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 6 August 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Ipswich

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Castle Hill	Broom Hill ward (part); Castle Hill ward (part); White House ward (part)
Whitton	Castle Hill ward (part); St Margaret's ward (part); White House ward (part); Whitton ward (part)

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Castle Hill	3	6,123	2,041	9	6,123	2,041	4
Whitton	3	5,883	1,961	5	5,892	1,964	0

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

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

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

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