

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for St Edmundsbury 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 St Edmundsbury.

Members of the Commission are:

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>3</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>7</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>9</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>29</i>
APPENDICES	
A Final Recommendations for St Edmundsbury: Detailed Mapping	<i>31</i>
B Draft Recommendations for St Edmundsbury (January 2001)	<i>35</i>
C Code of Practice on Written Consultation	<i>37</i>

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

26 June 2001

Dear Secretary of State

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

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 111) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in St Edmundsbury.

We recommend that St Edmundsbury Borough Council should be served by 45 councillors representing 31 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 every four years .

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

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

Yours sincerely

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of St Edmundsbury 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 St Edmundsbury:

- **in 23 of the 33 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and 13 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **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 22 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 18 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 111-112) are that:

- **St Edmundsbury Borough Council should have 45 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 31 wards, instead of 33 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 26 of the proposed 31 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only three wards expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Fornham All Saints, Haverhill and Honington.**

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	Map reference
1	Abbeygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map
2	Bardwell	1	Barningham ward (part – the parish of Coney Weston); Honington ward (part – the parishes of Barnham, Euston, Fakenham Magna, Sapiston and the Village parish ward of Honington parish); Ixworth ward (part – the parish of Bardwell)	Maps 2 and A2
3	Barningham	1	Barningham ward (part – the parishes of Barningham, Hopton, Knettishall, Market Weston and Thelnetham); Stanton ward (part – the parish of Hepworth)	Map 2
4	Barrow	1	Barrow ward (part – the parishes of Barrow, Denham, The Saxhams and Westley)	Map 2
5	Cavendish	1	Cavendish ward (the parishes of Cavendish, Denston, Hawkedon, Poslingford and Stansfield); Chevington ward (part – the parish of Brockley)	Map 2
6	Chedburgh	1	Chevington ward (part – the parishes of Chedburgh, Chevington, Rede and Wkepstead); Whelnetham ward (part – the parish of Hawstead)	Map 2
7	Clare	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Clare)	Map 2
8	Eastgate (Bury St Edmunds)	1	Eastgate ward (part)	Large map
9	Fornham	1	Fornham ward (part – the parishes of Fornham St Genevieve, Fornham St Martin and the Village parish ward of Fornham All Saints)	Map 2 and large map
10	Great Barton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Great Barton)	Map 2
11	Haverhill East	3	Chalkstone ward; St Mary's & Helions ward (part)	Large map
12	Haverhill North	3	Cangle ward (part); Castle ward (part)	Large map
13	Haverhill South	2	Clements ward; St Mary's & Helions ward (part)	Large map
14	Haverhill West	2	Cangle ward (part); Castle ward (part)	Large map
15	Horringer & Whelnetham	1	Whelnetham ward (part – the parishes of Nowton, Great Whelnetham and Little Whelnetham); Horringer ward (part – the parishes of Horringer and Ickworth)	Map 2
16	Hundon	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Hundon, Stoke-by-Clare, Stradishall and Wixoe)	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17	Ixworth	1	Ixworth ward (part – the parishes of Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe)	Map 2
18	Kedington	1	Kedington ward (the parish of Kedington); Withersfield ward (part – the parish of Barnardiston)	Map 2
19	Minden (Bury St Edmunds)	2	Sextons ward; Westgate ward (part)	Large map
20	Moreton Hall (Bury St Edmunds)	3	Eastgate ward (part)	Large map
21	Northgate (Bury St Edmunds)	1	Northgate ward (part)	Large map
22	Pakenham	1	Pakenham ward (the parishes of Ampton, Great Livermere, Little Livermere, Pakenham, Timworth and Troston); Honington ward (part – the Honington Station parish ward of Honington)	Maps 2 and A2
23	Risby	1	Risby ward (the parishes of Culford, Flempton, Hengrove, Lackford, Risby, West Stow and Wordwell); Fornham ward (part - the parish of Ingham)	Map 2
24	Risbygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	Risbygate ward; Eastgate ward (part)	Large map
25	Rougham	1	Rougham ward (the parishes of Bradfield St Clare, Bradfield St George and Rushbrooke with Rougham); Whelnetham ward (part – the parish of Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield)	Map 2
26	Stanton	1	Stanton ward (part – the parish of Stanton)	Map 2
27	St Olaves (Bury St Edmunds)	2	St Olaves ward; Northgate ward (part); Fornham ward (part-the All Saints parish ward of Fornham All Saints parish)	Large map
28	Southgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	Southgate ward; Westgate ward (part)	Large map
29	Westgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	Horringer Court ward; Westgate ward (part)	Large map
30	Wickhambrook	1	Wickhambrook ward (part – the parishes of Depden, Lidgate, Ousden and Wickhambrook); Barrow ward (part – the parish of Hargrave)	Map 2
31	Withersfield	1	Withersfield ward (part – the parishes of Great Bradley, Little Bradley, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, Great Wrating, Little Wrating and Withersfield); Wickhambrook ward (part – the parish of Cowlinge)	Map 2

Notes:

- 1 Bury St Edmunds is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises the nine wards indicated above.*
- 2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map in the back of the report, illustrate the proposed wards as above.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for St Edmundsbury

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 Abbeygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,218	1,609	-3	3,472	1,736	-4
2 Bardwell	1	1,873	1,873	13	1,961	1,961	8
3 Barningham	1	1,983	1,983	19	2,091	2,091	15
4 Barrow	1	1,644	1,644	-1	1,794	1,794	-1
5 Cavendish	1	1,595	1,595	-4	1,675	1,675	-8
6 Chedburgh	1	1,657	1,657	0	1,776	1,776	-2
7 Clare	1	1,682	1,682	1	1,694	1,694	-7
8 Eastgate (Bury St Edmunds)	1	1,708	1,708	3	1,747	1,747	-4
9 Fornham	1	1,680	1,680	1	1,722	1,722	-5
10 Great Barton	1	1,769	1,769	7	1,793	1,793	-1
11 Haverhill East	3	5,187	1,729	4	5,610	1,870	3
12 Haverhill North	3	4,932	1,644	-1	5,785	1,928	6
13 Haverhill South	2	3,214	1,607	-3	3,714	1,857	2
14 Haverhill West	2	3,000	1,500	-10	3,868	1,934	6
15 Horringer & Whelnetham	1	1,723	1,723	4	1,767	1,767	-3
16 Hundon	1	1,686	1,686	2	1,753	1,753	-3
17 Ixworth	1	1,665	1,665	0	1,699	1,699	-6
18 Kedington	1	1,504	1,504	-9	1,602	1,602	-12
19 Minden (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,663	1,832	10	3,750	1,875	3
20 Moreton Hall (Bury St Edmunds)	3	3,567	1,199	-28	5,550	1,850	2
21 Northgate (Bury St Edmunds)	1	1,813	1,813	9	1,845	1,845	2
22 Pakenham	1	1,559	1,559	-6	1,637	1,637	-10
23 Risby	1	1,910	1,910	15	2,012	2,012	11

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 %
24 Risbygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,017	1,509	-9	3,459	1,730	-5
25 Rougham	1	1,792	1,792	8	1,838	1,838	1
26 Stanton	1	1,893	1,893	14	1,927	1,927	6
27 St Olaves (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,536	1,768	6	3,605	1,803	-1
28 Southgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,415	1,708	3	3,527	1,764	-3
29 Westgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,581	1,791	8	3,654	1,827	1
30 Wickhambrook	1	1,650	1,650	-1	1,733	1,733	-5
31 Withersfield	1	1,580	1,580	-5	1,678	1,678	-8
Totals	45	74,726	-	-	81,738	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,661	-	-	1,816	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of St Edmundsbury in Suffolk. We have now reviewed 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 St Edmundsbury. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in February 1978 (Report No. 279). The electoral arrangements of Suffolk County Council were last reviewed in 1982 (Report No.429). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 June 2000, when we wrote to St Edmundsbury Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Suffolk Local Council Association, parish and town councils in the borough, 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 St Edmundsbury 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 St Edmundsbury contains the towns of Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and a large rural hinterland. The borough covers 65,697 hectares and has a population of around 97,000. The borough contains 67 parishes, but Bury St Edmunds town itself is unparished. Bury St Edmunds town comprises 36 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

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 74,726 (February 2000). The Council presently has 44 members who are elected from 33 wards, 14 of which are relatively urban in nature with the remaining 19 being predominantly rural. Eleven wards are each represented by two councillors and 22 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

15 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in St Edmundsbury borough, with around 23 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in the towns of Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,698 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,858 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 23 of the 33 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, 13 wards by more than 20 per cent and seven wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Castle ward, in Haverhill, where the councillor represents 121 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in St Edmundsbury

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 Abbeygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,218	1,609	-5	3,445	1,723	-7
2 Barningham	1	1,892	1,892	11	1,994	1,994	7
3 Barrow	1	1,442	1,442	-15	1,571	1,571	-15
4 Cangle (Haverhill)	2	4,173	2,087	23	4,999	2,500	35
5 Castle (Haverhill)	1	3,759	3,759	121	4,641	4,641	150
6 Cavendish	1	1,363	1,363	-20	1,426	1,426	-23
7 Chalkstone (Haverhill)	2	4,652	2,326	37	4,981	2,491	34
8 Chevington	1	1,621	1,621	-5	1,745	1,745	-6
9 Clare	1	1,682	1,682	-1	1,694	1,694	-9
10 Clements (Haverhill)	2	2,404	1,202	-29	2,845	1,423	-23
11 Eastgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	5,640	2,820	66	7,616	3,808	105
12 Fornham	1	2,325	2,325	37	2,379	2,379	28
13 Great Barton	1	1,769	1,769	4	1,793	1,793	-3
14 Honington	1	1,193	1,193	-30	1,259	1,259	-32
15 Horringer	1	1,186	1,186	-30	1,233	1,233	-34
16 Horringer Court (Bury St Edmunds)	1	1,875	1,875	10	1,907	1,907	3
17 Hundon	1	1,686	1,686	-1	1,753	1,753	-6
18 Ixworth	1	2,234	2,234	32	2,277	2,277	23
19 Kedington	1	1,387	1,387	-18	1,476	1,476	-21
20 Northgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	2,228	1,114	-34	2,269	1,135	-39

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 %
21 Pakenham	1	1,366	1,366	-20	1,438	1,438	-23
22 Risby	1	1,577	1,577	-7	1,668	1,668	-10
23 Risbygate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	2,682	1,341	-21	3,134	1,567	-16
24 Rougham	1	1,361	1,361	-20	1,395	1,395	-25
25 Sextons (Bury St Edmunds)	2	2,752	1,376	-19	2,849	1,425	-23
26 Southgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	3,283	1,642	-3	3,373	1,687	-9
27 St Mary's & Helions (Haverhill)	1	1,345	1,345	-21	1,511	1,511	-19
28 St Olaves (Bury St Edmunds)	2	2,809	1,405	-17	2,855	1,428	-23
29 Stanton	1	2,288	2,288	35	2,347	2,347	26
30 Westgate (Bury St Edmunds)	2	2,749	1,375	-19	2,848	1,424	-23
31 Wheltenham	1	1,645	1,645	-3	1,696	1,696	-9
32 Wickhambrook	1	1,672	1,672	-2	1,756	1,756	-5
33 Withersfield	1	1,468	1,468	-14	1,565	1,565	-16
Totals	44	74,726	-	-	81,738	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,698	-	-	1,858	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by St Edmundsbury 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 Northgate ward were relatively over-represented by 34 per cent, while electors in Castle ward were significantly under-represented by 121 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 20 representations, including a borough-wide scheme from St Edmundsbury Borough Council, and representations from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent Groups on the Council, seven parish councils, one local political party, two local groups, two councillors and two 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 St Edmundsbury in Suffolk*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mix of single- and two-member wards in the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in two areas, affecting four wards. We proposed that:

- St Edmundsbury Borough Council should be served by 45 councillors, compared with the current 44, representing 31 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified, while five wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Fornham All Saints, Haverhill and Honington.

Draft Recommendation

St Edmundsbury Borough Council should comprise 45 councillors, serving 31 wards. The Council should continue to be elected every four years.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 26 of the 31 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only two 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, 19 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of St Edmundsbury Borough Council and the Commission.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

21 The Borough Council generally supported the draft recommendations. However, it proposed an alternative boundary between the proposed Haverhill West and Haverhill North wards. It also proposed the inclusion of Ingham parish within the proposed Risby ward, rather than Pakenham ward.

Suffolk County Council

22 The County Council argued that our draft recommendations for the parish of Honington did not allow for co-terminosity between parish and borough ward boundaries.

Parish and Town Councils

23 Haverhill Town Council reiterated its Stage One submission that Haverhill should be represented by 11 councillors on a 46-member Borough Council.

24 Bardwell Parish Council supported our draft recommendations, while Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield Parish Council opposed forming part of the proposed Rougham ward. The parish councils of Bradfield St. George, Chedburgh and Hawstead supported our draft recommendations. Barnardiston Parish Meeting expressed the view that the parish should remain within its parish grouping. Honington & Sapiston Parish Council objected to the proposed warding of Honington parish and the inclusion of RAF Honington within a separate borough ward. Ingham Parish Council also opposed our draft recommendations and proposed that Ingham parish remain within Fornham borough ward for reasons of community identity. Horringer-cum-Ickworth Parish Council proposed an alternative name for our proposed Whelnetham ward, while Great and Little Whelnetham Parish Council proposed that the existing electoral arrangements for the parish be retained for reasons of electoral equality and community identity.

Other Representations

25 A further eight representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from a local political group, the Suffolk Police Constabulary, three councillors, a residents' association and two local residents.

26 Councillor Clements opposed the proposed Whelnetham ward, while Councillor Sutton opposed our proposal to place Honington RAF Station in a revised Pakenham ward. Haverhill Town Councillor Dane supported our draft proposals for the creation of the Haverhill East,

Haverhill North, Haverhill South and Haverhill West wards, but argued that there should be 46 members on the borough council, with Haverhill town being represented by 11 councillors. The Mildenhall Road Estate Residents Association opposed our proposal to modify Northgate ward, while the Local Party Bury St Edmunds submitted a revised scheme to the one it proposed at Stage One. A local resident commented on the potential future growth in Moreton Hall ward. Another local resident expressed concern at our proposed naming of Whelnetham ward, while the Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary proposed retaining the current boundary between the Haverhill and Bury Rural police sectors.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

31 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 9 per cent from 74,726 to 81,738 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the town of Haverhill and the Eastgate ward in Bury St Edmunds. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

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

34 St Edmundsbury is at present served by 44 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed an increase in council size from 44 to 45. It stated that the optimum balance between electoral equality and the recognition of local community identities and interests would best be met under a council size of 45.

35 In its Stage One submission the Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposed a 44-member council based on a pattern of two-member wards, while Councillor Thorndyke supported a 45-member council size. The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups proposed a council of 46 members, their schemes being identical to that of the Borough Council except that they proposed an extra member for Haverhill.

36 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council size of 45 members.

37 During Stage Three St Edmundsbury Borough Council confirmed its support for a 45-member council, thereby endorsing our draft recommendations. Haverhill Town Council and Haverhill Town Councillor Dane both opposed our proposed 45-member council, reiterating proposals for a 46-member council, with 11 members representing Haverhill.

38 We have not been persuaded that there is sufficient evidence for 11 councillors to represent Haverhill. To allocate the town 11 councillors would necessitate an increase in council size and would have adverse effects on other wards proposed in the borough. We therefore conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a 45-member council.

Electoral Arrangements

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, Councillor Thorndyke and the Local Party Bury St Edmunds. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

40 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme.

41 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by this scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We proposed moving away from the Borough Council's proposals in two areas: Haverhill and the proposed wards of Risby and Pakenham.

42 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) Bury St Edmunds

- Abbeygate, Eastgate, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves wards;
- Horringer Court, Sextons, Southgate and Westgate wards.

(b) Haverhill

- Cangle, Castle, Chalkstone, Clements and St Mary's & Helions wards.

(c) The rural area

- Barningham, Honington, Ixworth and Stanton wards;
- Fornham, Great Barton, Pakenham and Risby wards;
- Barrow, Chevington, Horringer, Rougham and Whelnetham wards;
- Cavendish, Clare and Hundon wards;
- Kedington, Wickhambrook and Withersfield wards.

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

Bury St Edmunds

44 The town of Bury St Edmunds is the only unparished area of the borough and comprises 36 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

Abbeygate, Eastgate, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves wards

45 These five wards are situated in the centre and to the north of the town and are each represented by two members. The wards of Abbeygate, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves are over-represented and have electoral variances of 5 per cent, 34 per cent, 21 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (7 per cent, 39 per cent, 16 per cent and 23 per cent by 2005). Eastgate ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 66 per cent (105 per cent by 2005).

46 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing two-member Abbeygate ward. In order to achieve better electoral equality in the remainder of the town the Council proposed creating a single-member Eastgate ward comprising the western part of the existing Eastgate ward. The Council also proposed a new three-member Moreton Hall ward, comprising

the recent and projected development to the east of Bury St Edmunds. It further proposed a revised single-member Northgate ward covering only part of the current ward with the remainder of the ward forming part of a modified St Olaves ward. It further proposed that, apart from a slight modification, the existing two-member Risbygate ward should be retained. The Council also put forward a new two-member St Olaves ward, comprising the existing ward, electors from Northgate ward and a proposed Town parish ward of Fornham All Saints parish, covering the recently built properties on the edge of the town.

47 Under the Borough Council's proposals the wards of Abbeygate, Eastgate, Moreton Hall, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves would have electoral variances of 3 per cent, 3 per cent, 28 per cent, 9 per cent, 9 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (4 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent, 2 per cent, 5 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

48 The Borough Council's proposals were broadly accepted by political groups on the Borough Council. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposed a scheme for the area based on a 44-member council, while Fornham All Saints Parish Council opposed the proposed warding of the parish.

49 Given the general support received for the Borough Council's proposals and the resulting levels of electoral equality, we adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

50 At Stage Three the Local Party Bury St Edmunds submitted a new scheme for the area that differed from its Stage One submission, based on completely new warding arrangements and councillor representation. We have not been persuaded to adopt its proposals as they would not improve electoral equality, nor were they subject to local consultation and therefore lack a general measure of local agreement.

51 Mildenhall Road Estate Residents' Association proposed retaining a two-member Northgate ward and put forward an alternative scheme for the ward that would allow it to retain this level of representation. Although this would achieve reasonable electoral equality for Northgate ward, no consideration was given to the effect that this would have on neighbouring wards. We cannot look at a particular area in isolation and therefore we are not endorsing this proposal as part of our final recommendations. A local resident was concerned at the potential electoral inequality for the proposed Eastgate and Moreton Hall wards beyond 2005. However, we are legally required to consider electoral data for the current year and the ensuing five-year period, and therefore consider that our draft recommendations would result in reasonable levels of electoral equality.

52 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the Abbeygate, Eastgate, Moreton Hall, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves wards, given that they achieve reasonable electoral equality and have generally received local support.

53 Under our final recommendations the electoral variances in the proposed Abbeygate, Eastgate, Moreton Hall, Northgate, Risbygate and St Olaves wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Horringer Court, Sextons, Southgate and Westgate wards

54 These four wards are located in the southern part of the town. The single-member Horringer Court ward is under-represented and has an electoral variance of 10 per cent (3 per cent by 2005). The two-member wards of Sextons, Southgate and Westgate are over-represented, with electoral variances of 19 per cent, 3 per cent and 19 per cent respectively (23 per cent, 9 per cent and 23 per cent by 2005).

55 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a new two-member Minden ward, comprising the existing Sextons ward and part of the existing Westgate ward. The Council also proposed that the existing Horringer Court ward be included with the majority of the existing Westgate ward in a new two-member Westgate ward.

56 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the electoral variance in the proposed wards of Minden, Southgate and Westgate would be 10 per cent, 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (3 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

57 The Borough Council's proposals received support from political groups on the Borough Council and Councillor Thorndyke. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposed alternative warding arrangements based on a council size of 44.

58 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for these wards, given the general level of support they received and the high level of electoral equality which would be achieved.

59 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations, while the Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposed minor modifications to the wards within this area. However, as this scheme has not been subject to local consultation, does not significantly improve electoral equality and lacks evidence of local support, we are not adopting it as part of our final recommendations. No other representations were received and, given the general level of support our draft recommendations received during Stage Three, we confirm them as final.

60 Under our final recommendations the electoral variance in the proposed wards of Minden, Southgate and Westgate would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Haverhill

Cangle, Castle, Chalkstone, Clements and St Mary's & Helions wards

61 The town of Haverhill is currently represented by eight members serving five wards. The single-member Castle ward and two-member Cangle and Chalkstone wards are under-represented and have electoral variances of 121 per cent, 23 per cent and 37 per cent respectively (150 per cent, 35 per cent and 34 per cent by 2005). The two-member Clements ward and the single-member St Mary's & Helions ward are over-represented with electoral variances of 29 per cent and 21 per cent respectively (23 per cent and 19 per cent by 2005).

62 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Haverhill should be represented by ten members elected from four wards. It specifically proposed two three-member wards; one ward comprising the existing Chalkstone ward and part of the existing St Mary's & Helions ward and one ward comprising parts of Cangle and Castle wards. The Council also proposed two two-member wards, the first comprising the existing Clements ward and part of the existing St Mary's & Helions ward, the second comprising parts of the existing Cangle and Castle wards.

63 Under the Borough Council's proposals the electoral variance in the proposed wards of Haverhill East, Haverhill North, Haverhill South and Haverhill West would be zero, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 16 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 10 per cent, 8 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

64 A number of other submissions were received at Stage One. Councillor Thorndyke and the Local Party Bury St Edmunds supported the allocation of ten members to Haverhill, while Town Councillor Dane proposed a three-member Chalkstone ward. The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council and Haverhill Town Council opposed the Council's recommendations for Haverhill, proposing instead a 46-member council with Haverhill being represented by 11 members.

65 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the 45-member council size proposed by the Borough Council and under a council of this size Haverhill would only be entitled to 10 members. We adopted the Council's recommendations for this area and proposed naming the Council's proposed wards Haverhill East, Haverhill North, Haverhill South and Haverhill West respectfully. We also proposed minor modifications to the proposed boundaries of these wards. Under our proposals Haverhill East ward would have an electoral variance of 4 per cent (3 per cent by 2005), Haverhill North ward would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent (6 per cent by 2005), Haverhill South ward would have an electoral variance of 3 per cent (2 per cent by 2005) and Haverhill West ward would have an electoral variance of 10 per cent (6 per cent by 2005).

66 At Stage Three, the Borough Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Haverhill but reaffirmed its draft proposal regarding the boundary between the proposed wards of Haverhill North and Haverhill West. It argued that its proposed boundary between the two wards, running as it does between older and more recent housing developments in the Cambridge Close area, better reflected community identity. The Council's proposals would result in an electoral variance for the Haverhill North and Haverhill West wards of 10 per cent and 1 per cent respectively by 2005, compared to a 6 per cent electoral variance for both wards by 2005 achieved under our proposed scheme.

67 During Stage Three both Haverhill Town Council and Haverhill Town Councillor Dane resubmitted their respective Stage One proposals that Haverhill should be represented by 11 councillors based on a 46-member borough council. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds, meanwhile, opposed our proposed three-member wards in Haverhill Town but did not offer an alternative scheme for the town at Stage Three.

68 We have carefully considered the Borough Council submission received during the consultation period and while we acknowledge the differing age of properties, we have not received any evidence that this reflects community identities in this area. We have not, therefore,

been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. We were not convinced that modifying the boundary between the proposed Haverhill North and Haverhill West wards would more closely reflect community identity and note that this would result in higher electoral inequality. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final.

69 We also considered further the submissions received from Haverhill Town Council and Councillor Dane. As stated earlier, in the light of any further evidence or justification for an increase to a council size of 46, we confirm our draft recommendation that the Borough Council should be represented by 45 councillors, thereby entitling Haverhill to ten councillors.

70 At Stage Three no suggestions were received in response to our invitation for alternative ward names in this area. We therefore confirm the proposed ward names as Haverhill East, Haverhill North, Haverhill South and Haverhill West.

71 The electoral variances for these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations and details of our proposals can be found on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

The Rural Area

Barningham, Honington, Ixworth and Stanton wards

72 These four single-member wards are located in the north of the borough. Barningham ward, which is under-represented, comprises the parishes of Barningham, Coney Weston, Hopton, Knettishall, Market Weston and Thelnetham, and has an electoral variance of 11 per cent (7 per cent by 2005). Honington ward, currently over-represented, comprises the parishes of Barnham, Euston, Fakenham Magna, Honington and Sapiston and has an electoral variance of 30 per cent (32 per cent by 2005). Ixworth ward, comprising the parishes of Bardwell, Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe, and Stanton ward, comprising the parishes of Hepworth and Stanton, are both currently under-represented and have electoral variances of 32 per cent and 35 per cent respectively (23 per cent and 26 per cent by 2005).

73 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a single-member Barningham ward comprising the parishes of Barningham, Hepworth, Hopton cum Knettishall, Market Weston and Thelnetham. It also proposed a single-member Ixworth ward comprising the parishes of Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe, and a single-member Stanton ward, comprising the parish of the same ward name. The Council further proposed a single-member Bardwell ward, comprising the parishes of Bardwell, Barnham, Coney Weston, Euston, Fakenham Magna and Sapiston together with a new Village parish ward of Honington parish. The remainder of Honington parish would form part of a modified Pakenham ward. The Council stated that it had amended its original proposals in this area following representations received from parishes, community groups and individuals.

74 Under the Borough Council's proposals the electoral variances in the proposed wards of Bardwell, Barningham, Ixworth and Stanton would be 13 per cent, 19 per cent, zero and 14 per cent respectively (8 per cent, 15 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent by 2005).

75 At Stage One, the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council fully supported the Council's proposals. Bardwell Parish Council supported the proposal regarding Bardwell ward, while Coney Weston Parish Council opposed forming part of a ward with the parishes of Euston and Bardwell.

76 As part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the Borough Council's proposals, given the general support they received and the resulting improvement in electoral equality. We noted the level of electoral inequality in the proposed Barningham ward but considered this an appropriate balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria given its location in the north of the borough, and the fact that any alternative to improve its electoral equality would have necessitated warding the parish or the creation of two-member rural wards, both of which were strongly opposed locally.

77 During Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposed a reconfiguration of parishes in this area. However, we were not persuaded that it would significantly improve electoral equality or better reflect community identity in the area and were concerned about the lack of evidence of local support.

78 Given the general level of support received during Stage Three, we confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final. The electoral variances would be the same as under our draft recommendations and details of our proposals can be found on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Fornham, Great Barton, Pakenham and Risby wards

79 These four single-member wards lie to the north of Bury St Edmunds. Fornham ward, currently under-represented, comprises the parishes of Fornham All Saints, Fornham St Genevieve, Fornham St Martin and the detached parish of Ingham, and has an electoral variance of 37 per cent (28 per cent by 2005). Great Barton ward, also under-represented, comprises the parish of the ward name and has an electoral variance of 4 per cent (3 per cent by 2005). Pakenham ward, which is over-represented, comprises the parishes of Ampton, Great Livermere, Little Livermere, Pakenham, Timworth and Troston and has an electoral variance of 20 per cent (23 per cent by 2005). Risby ward, also over-represented, comprises the parishes of Culford, Flempton, Hengrave, Lackford, Risby, West Stow and Wordwell, and has an electoral variance of 7 per cent (10 per cent by 2005).

80 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifications to the wards of Fornham, Pakenham and Risby. It proposed a single-member Pakenham ward comprising the parishes of Ampton, Little Livermere, Timworth, Great Livermere, Pakenham and Troston and a new Station parish ward of Honington parish encompassing the RAF Station. The Council also proposed a single-member Fornham ward comprising the parishes of Fornham St Genevieve and Fornham St Martin and part of Fornham All Saints. The remainder of Fornham All Saints parish ward would be included in a modified St Olaves ward as described above. The Council further proposed a single-member Risby ward comprising the parishes of Culford, West Stow and Wordwell, Flempton and Hengrave, Ingham, Lackford and Risby. Finally in this area the Council proposed no change to the existing single-member Great Barton ward.

81 A particular issue that was addressed by the Borough Council during Stage One was that of the RAF Station in Honington. The Council considered that it would be advantageous to enclose the station within one borough ward rather than it continue to straddle a parish and borough ward boundary. A new parish ward was suggested by the Council to incorporate the station and they proposed its placement in the proposed Pakenham ward.

82 The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council fully supported the proposals. Ingham Parish Council opposed being linked with Pakenham ward and preferred to continue to form part of the Fornham ward. Fornham All Saints Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposal to ward the parish and proposed that the three Fornham parishes of St Martin, St Genevieve and All Saints remain as a single-member ward. The Parish Council of Fornham St Martin cum Fornham St Genevieve also supported this recommendation.

83 As part of our draft recommendations we generally endorsed the Borough Council's proposals. We noted the opposition of Fornham All Saints to the warding of the parish for borough warding purposes, but were persuaded that creating a new Town parish ward clearly reflects local community identities and would improve electoral equality. We were generally content with the proposed wards of Risby and Pakenham, but proposed including the parish of Ingham in the Council's proposed Pakenham ward to further improve electoral equality. Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards of Fornham, Great Barton, Risby and Pakenham would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent, 7 per cent, 5 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 1 per cent, 8 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005).

84 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported our draft proposals for the area but restated its Stage One proposal to place the parish of Ingham in the proposed Risby ward for community identity reasons. Ingham Parish Council reiterated its Stage One submission that it should remain part of Fornhams ward for reasons of community identity. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds submitted a revised scheme for this area that differed from its Stage One submission.

85 Honington-cum-Sapiston Parish Council and Councillor Sutton both opposed our draft recommendations concerning the RAF station at Honington, principally the creation of a new parish ward for the RAF station, separating it from the village of Honington. The Parish Council argued that the creation of new parish wards would be detrimental to community identity and concern was also raised about the future role of Sapiston parish at parish council level. Further concern was expressed as to the transient electorate of the RAF station and its potential effect on voter turn-out.

86 Given the repeated proposal from the Borough Council that Ingham parish should be placed within the ward of Risby, we closely re-examined this proposal and have concluded that Ingham parish should be located within Risby ward rather than the proposed Pakenham ward. We concur with the Council that Ingham has better access and connections with villages within the proposed Risby ward, and note that the A134 in the east of Ingham parish forms a strong and identifiable boundary with the proposed Pakenham ward. We also note that while placing Ingham parish in Risby ward would slightly worsen electoral equality in the wards of Risby and Pakenham it would have no adverse effect across the borough as a whole. We consider that this proposal would achieve a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm it as part of our final recommendations.

87 We noted Ingham Parish Council's concern at the proposed removal of Ingham parish from Fornham ward. However, Ingham parish is detached from Fornham ward and, as stated in our *Guidance*, we consider that detached wards do not lend themselves to the creation of electoral areas which have community identity. Therefore, we are not adopting Ingham Parish Council's proposal. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds proposals for this area slightly improved electoral equality but also included the use of detached wards, with the inclusion of Little Livermore parish within its proposed Great Barton ward. For reasons already stated, we are not adopting proposals for detached wards as part of our final recommendations.

88 As at Stage One and throughout the whole review, we recognise the arguments put forward in opposition to the proposed warding of Honington parish. However, we must seek to achieve electoral equality across the borough as a whole and cannot look at any one area in isolation. Furthermore, the proposed warding of the parish of Honington will not affect the existing parish boundary of Honington, nor will it affect the boundary of the grouped Parish Council of Honington-cum-Sapiston. Finally, voter turn-out at elections is a factor that we cannot consider when conducting a review. Therefore, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for Honington parish as final.

89 As part of our final recommendations the proposed wards of Fornham, Great Barton, Risby and Pakenham would have electoral variances of 1 per cent, 7 per cent, 15 per cent and 6 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 1 per cent, 11 per cent and 12 per cent by 2005). Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Barrow, Chevington, Horringer, Rougham and Whelnetham wards

90 These five single-member wards are centrally located in the borough and are all currently over-represented. Barrow ward comprises the parishes of Barrow, Denham and Hargrave and has an electoral variance of 15 per cent both currently and by 2005. Chevington ward comprises the parishes of Brockley, Chedburgh, Chevington, Rede and Whepstead, and has an electoral variance of 5 per cent (6 per cent by 2005). Horringer ward comprises the parishes of Horringer, Ickworth, The Saxhams and Westley and has an electoral variance of 30 per cent (34 per cent by 2005). Rougham ward comprises the parishes of Bradfield St Clare, Bradfield St George and Rushbrooke with Rougham, and has an electoral variance of 20 per cent (25 per cent by 2005).

91 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a single-member Barrow ward comprising the parishes of Barrow, Denham, The Saxhams and Westley, and a single-member Chedburgh ward comprising the parishes of Chedburgh, Chevington, Hawstead, Rede and Whepstead. The Council also proposed a single-member Rougham ward comprising the parishes of Rushbrooke with Rougham, Bradfield St George, Bradfield St Clare and Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield. The Council further proposed a single-member Whelnetham ward comprising the parishes of Horringer, Ickworth, Nowton, Great Whelnetham and Little Whelnetham. Under the Council's proposals the electoral variance in the proposed wards of Barrow, Chedburgh, Rougham and Whelnetham would be 1 per cent, zero, 8 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

92 The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council fully supported the Council's proposals with regard to these wards while Hawstead Parish Council opposed any warding of its parish.

93 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for the wards of Barrow, Chedburgh, Rougham and Whelnetham as they were generally supported and resulted in improved levels of electoral equality.

94 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. Bradfield St George Parish Council supported our draft proposal for Rougham ward, while Hawstead Parish Council supported our proposed Chedburgh ward. Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for reasons of community identity, as did the Parish Council of Great & Little Whelnetham. Councillor Clements also opposed our draft recommendations for reasons of community identity, although he did not identify which wards the parishes of Horringer and Ickworth should be included in. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds also proposed a reconfiguration of wards for the area.

95 Horringer-cum-Ickworth Parish Council argued that the proposed Whelnetham ward should be named Horringer ward as Horringer Village is the largest village within the proposed ward. A local resident suggested the name of Horringer & Whelnetham, a proposal we are content to adopt as part of our final recommendations.

96 We have carefully considered the submissions received during Stage Three and have noted both the support for, and opposition to, our proposals. However, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations, except in the renaming of Whelnetham ward, given the general level of support they received and the absence of viable and acceptable alternatives. We are convinced that they offer the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Therefore, we propose endorsing them as part of our final recommendations, with the level of electoral equality remaining the same as under our draft proposals. Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Cavendish, Clare and Hundon wards

97 These single-member wards are located in the south of the borough and are over-represented. Cavendish ward comprises the parishes of Cavendish, Denston, Hawkedon, Polingsford and Stansfield, and has an electoral variance of 20 per cent (23 per cent by 2005). Clare ward, comprising the parish of the same name, has an electoral variance of 1 per cent (9 per cent by 2005). Hundon ward comprises the parishes of Hundon, Stoke-by-Clare, Stradishall and Wixoe and has an electoral variance of 1 per cent (6 per cent by 2005).

98 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a modified single-member Cavendish ward with the addition of the parish of Brockley, from the current Chevington ward. The Council also proposed no change to the existing Clare and Hundon wards. Under the Council's proposals the electoral variance in the proposed wards of Cavendish, Clare and Hundon would be 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (8 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005).

99 The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council fully supported the Council's proposals with regard to these wards and we received no other representations. We therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposals for the wards of Cavendish, Clare and Hundon as part of our draft recommendations.

100 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds generally supported our proposals for this area, but proposed transferring the parish of Rede to the proposed Cavendish ward to further improve electoral equality. No other representations were received.

101 Given the general level of support our draft recommendations received during Stage Three, we propose adopting them as final. The levels of electoral equality remain the same as under our draft proposals. Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Kedington, Wickhambrook and Withersfield wards

102 These three single-member wards are in the south-west of the borough and are over-represented. Kedington ward comprises the parish of the same name and has an electoral variance of 18 per cent (21 per cent by 2005). Wickhambrook ward comprises the parishes of Cowlinge, Depden, Lidgate, Ousden and Wickhambrook and has an electoral variance of 2 per cent (5 per cent by 2005). Withersfield ward comprises the parishes of Barnadiston, Great Bradley, Little Bradley, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, Great Wrating, Little Wrating and Withersfield, and has an electoral variance of 14 per cent (16 per cent by 2005).

103 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a single-member Kedington ward comprising the parishes of Kedington and Barnadiston, a single-member Wickhambrook ward comprising the parishes of Depden, Hargrave, Lidgate, Ousden and Wickhambrook, and a single-member Withersfield ward comprising the parishes of Cowlinge, Great Bradley, Little Bradley, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, Withersfield, Great Wrating and Little Wrating. Under the Council's proposals the electoral variance in the wards of Kedington, Wickhambrook and Withersfield would be 9 per cent, 1 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (12 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent by 2005).

104 The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups on the Borough Council fully supported the Council's proposals with regard to these wards, while Kedington Parish Council stated a preference for no change.

105 Given the general support they received and the good electoral equality they achieved, we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

106 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. Barnardiston Parish Meeting opposed our proposal to place the parishes of Barnardiston and Kedington in a single-member ward for reasons of community identity, proposing instead that it should remain within Withersfield ward. The Local Party Bury St Edmunds supported our proposals for Wickhambrook ward but opposed our draft recommendation for a modified Kedington ward, arguing that electors in Barnardiston parish would not receive effective

representation. It proposed as an alternative that Kedington parish should join the current Withersfield ward and the parish of Cowlinge in a new two-member ward.

107 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have not been persuaded to adopt the alternative proposals. It would involve a significant reconfiguration to our draft recommendations and there has been little evidence of wide-spread opposition to our proposals. It would also involve the creation of a two-member ward for the area, something which has been opposed locally. We therefore endorse our draft recommendations as final.

108 Under our final recommendations, the electoral equality would be the same as under our draft proposals. Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

109 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the current electoral cycle of whole-council elections. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

110 At Stage Three only one further comment was received to the contrary, from a local resident, who proposed annual elections. However, no evidence to support this proposal was offered and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- we propose that the parish of Ingham be included in a modified single-member Risby ward
- we propose that the proposed ward of Whelnetham should be renamed Honninger & Whelnetham.

112 We conclude that, in St Edmundsbury:

- there should be a increase in council size from 44 to 45;
- there should be 31 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

113 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	44	45	44	45
Number of wards	33	31	33	31
Average number of electors per councillor	1,698	1,661	1,858	1,816
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	23	5	22	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	13	1	18	0

114 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 23 to five 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 only three wards, Barningham, Keddington and Risby, having a variance of 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
 St Edmundsbury Borough Council should comprise 45 councillors serving 31 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

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

116 The unwarded parish of Fornham All Saints is currently served by seven councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed warding the parish for borough warding purposes. The proposed six-member Village parish ward would form part of the proposed Fornham borough ward, while the proposed single-member Town parish ward would form part of the proposed St Olaves borough ward. As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals. At Stage Three no further submissions were received and we therefore endorse these proposals as part of our final recommendations.

Final Recommendation

Fornham All Saints Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Town parish ward, returning one councillor and Village parish ward, returning six councillors. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

117 The parish of Haverhill is currently served by 16 councillors representing five wards: Cangle, Chalkstone and Clements (each represented by four councillors) and Castle and St Mary's & Helions wards (each represented by two councillors). As part of our draft recommendations we proposed that the parish should continue to be represented by 16 councillors, but representing four wards, reflecting the proposed borough ward boundaries for the town of Haverhill. At Stage Three, Haverhill Town Council and Town Councillor Dane supported our draft proposals for parish arrangements. No other submissions were received and having confirmed our proposals at borough level as final, we also confirm these recommendations as final.

Final Recommendation

Haverhill Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Haverhill East and Haverhill North parish wards (each returning five councillors) and Haverhill South and Haverhill West parish wards (each returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

118 The unwarded parish of Honington is currently served by nine councillors on Honington-cum-Sapiston Parish Council. The Borough Council proposed warding the parish for borough warding purposes. The proposed two-member Station parish ward would form part of the proposed Pakenham borough ward, while the proposed five-councillor Village parish ward would form part of the proposed Bardwell borough ward. The Parish Council would continue to include two members elected from Sapiston parish. As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals. At Stage Three the Parish Council opposed our draft recommendation to ward Honington parish for reasons of community identity. The Council also noted that we had omitted reference to Sapiston parish in our draft recommendations. We are grateful for the comments on this issue but, as detailed earlier, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendation for this area and confirm it as final.

Final Recommendation

Honington-cum-Sapiston Parish Council covers the parishes of Honington and Sapiston. The Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing: Sapiston parish, returning two councillors, Station parish ward, returning two councillors and Village parish ward, returning five councillors. The boundary between the parish wards of Station and Village should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A

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

Final Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the Borough Council.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for St Edmundsbury

6 NEXT STEPS

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

121 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.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for St Edmundsbury: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Honington parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for St Edmundsbury: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Honington Parish

APPENDIX B

Draft Recommendations for St Edmundsbury

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose to rename Whelnetham ward as Horringer & Whelnetham.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Pakenham	Pakenham ward (the parishes of Ampton, Great Livermore, Little Livermore, Pakenham, Timworth and Troston); Honington ward (part - the Honington Station parish ward of Honington); Fornham ward (part - the parish of Ingham)
Risby	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Culford, Flempton, Hengrave, Lackford, Risby, West Stow and Wordwell)

Figure B2: 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 %
Pakenham	1	1,892	1,892	14	1,981	1,981	9
Risby	1	1,577	1,577	-5	1,668	1,668	-8

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by St Edmundsbury 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 C

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 C1: 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.