

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Swale in Kent

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

*May 2001*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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Peter Brokenshire  
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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Faversham and Sittingbourne is inserted inside the back cover of the report.





## Local Government Commission for England

9 May 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 9 May 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Swale under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in October 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although modifications have been made to the boundaries of eight wards in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Swale.

We recommend that Swale Borough Council should be served by 47 councillors representing 25 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 Swale on 9 May 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 17 October 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **In 14 of the 25 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **By 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 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 117-118) are that:

- **Swale Borough Council should have 47 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 23 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 23 of the proposed 25 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 24 wards expected to vary by no 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:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Faversham and Minster-on-Sea;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors representing Borden parish.**

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 19 June 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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Abbey	2	Abbey ward (Abbey parish ward of Faversham parish); St Ann's ward (part - part of St Ann's parish ward of Faversham parish); Watling ward (part of Watling parish ward of Faversham parish)
2	Borden	1	Borden ward (part - Borden parish)
3	Boughton & Courtenay	2	Boughton ward (Boughton under Blean parish); Courtenay ward (the parishes of Dunkirk, Graveney with Goodnestone, and Hernhill); East Downs ward (part - the parishes of Selling and Sheldwich)
4	Chalkwell	2	Grove ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)
5	Davington Priory	1	Davington Priory ward (part - part of Davington Priory ward of Faversham parish); St Ann's ward (part - part of St Ann's ward of Faversham parish)
6	East Downs	1	East Downs ward (part - the parishes of Badlesmere, Doddington, Eastling, Leaveland, Newnham, Stalisfield and Throwley); Teynham & Lynsted (part - Ospringle parish)
7	Grove	2	Grove ward (part - including Bobbing parish); Borden ward (part); Milton Regis ward (part)
8	Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch	2	Hartlip & Upchurch ward (the parishes of Hartlip and Upchurch); Newington ward (Newington parish)
9	Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (including Iwade parish as modified)
10	Kemsley	2	Kemsley ward (part); Milton Regis ward (part)
11	Leysdown & Warden	1	Eastern ward (part - Leysdown and Warden parishes)
12	Milton Regis	2	Milton Regis ward (part)
13	Minster Cliffs	3	Minster Cliffs ward (part - part of Minster-on-Sea parish); Eastern ward (part - part of Minster-on-Sea parish)
14	Murston	2	Murston ward (part)
15	Queenborough & Halfway	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (including Queenborough parish)
16	Roman	2	Roman ward (part); Murston ward (part)

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
17	St Ann's	2	Davington Priory ward (part - part of Davington Priory ward of Faversham parish); St Ann's ward (part - part of St Ann's parish ward of Faversham parish)
18	St Michaels	2	Murston ward (part); Roman ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)
19	Sheerness East	2	Sheerness East ward; Sheerness West ward (part)
20	Sheerness West	2	Sheerness West ward (part)
21	Sheppey Central	3	Sheppey Central ward (including part of Minster-on-Sea parish); Eastern ward (part - Eastchurch parish); Minster Cliffs ward (part - part of Minster-on Sea parish)
22	Teynham & Lynsted	2	Teynham & Lynsted ward (part - the parishes of Luddenham, Lynsted, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare and Teynham); West Downs ward (part - Tonge parish and former Kingsdown parish)
23	Watling	2	St Ann's ward (part - part of St Ann's ward of Faversham parish); Watling ward (part - part of Watling ward of Faversham parish)
24	West Downs	1	West Downs ward (part - the parishes of Bapchild, Bredgar, Milstead and Rodmersham)
25	Woodstock	2	Woodstock ward (part); Borden ward (part)

*Notes: 1 The parishes referred to above are those operative from 1 April 2003.*

*2 Sheerness and Sittingbourne are the only unparished parts of the borough.*

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Swale

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 Abbey	2	3,632	1,816	-4	3,836	1,918	-4
2 Borden	1	1,673	1,673	-12	1,829	1,829	-8
3 Boughton & Courtenay	2	4,151	2,076	9	4,214	2,107	5
4 Chalkwell	2	3,897	1,949	3	3,911	1,956	-2
5 Davington Priory	1	1,953	1,953	3	2,011	2,011	1
6 East Downs	1	2,049	2,049	8	2,081	2,081	4
7 Grove	2	3,499	1,750	-8	3,797	1,899	-5
8 Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch	2	4,357	2,179	15	4,442	2,221	11
9 Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	1,711	1,711	-10	2,074	2,074	4
10 Kemsley	2	3,665	1,833	-3	4,003	2,002	0
11 Leysdown & Warden	1	2,067	2,067	9	2,159	2,159	8
12 Milton Regis	2	3,624	1,812	-4	3,968	1,984	-1
13 Minster Cliffs	3	5,477	1,826	-4	5,743	1,914	-4
14 Murston	2	3,910	1,955	3	4,080	2,040	2
15 Queenborough & Halfway	3	5,480	1,827	-4	6,070	2,023	1
16 Roman	2	3,760	1,880	-1	3,766	1,883	-6
17 St Ann's	2	3,918	1,959	3	3,930	1,965	-2
18 St Michael's	2	3,632	1,816	-4	4,063	2,032	2
19 Sheerness East	2	3,747	1,874	-1	3,812	1,906	-5
20 Sheerness West	2	3,939	1,970	4	3,991	1,996	0
21 Sheppey Central	3	5,212	1,737	-8	5,907	1,969	-1

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 %
22 Teynham & Lynsted	2	4,067	2,034	7	4,202	2,101	5
23 Watling	2	3,921	1,961	3	4,038	2,019	1
24 West Downs	1	1,845	1,845	-3	1,985	1,985	-1
25 Woodstock	2	3,970	1,985	5	3,981	1,991	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>89,156</b>	–	–	<b>93,893</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,897</b>	–	–	<b>1,998</b>	–

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

Note: *1 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.*

*2 The total number of electors in 2000 varies marginally from the total shown in Figure 3, but this would have a negligible effect on electoral variances and the average number of electors per councillor.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Swale in Kent. We have now reviewed the 12 two-tier districts in Kent 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 Swale. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1976 (Report No. 148). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We commenced a periodic electoral review of Medway in November 2000, and expect to commence a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (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 the best 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 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Swale Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 17 October 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Swale in Kent*, and ended on 11 December 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 Swale borough is situated in the north of Kent and it is bordered to the west by Medway and Maidstone boroughs, to the south by Ashford borough, to the east by Canterbury city and to the north by the Thames estuary. The borough covers an area of around 37,387 hectares and has a population of 115,769. The principal settlement is Sittingbourne, while Faversham and Sheerness are also significant local settlements. It is a diverse borough, containing large urban areas, extensive rural areas and environmentally important marshlands and coastline.

13 The borough contains 38 parishes; Sittingbourne and an area in the north of the Isle of Sheppey are the only unparished areas.

14 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'.

15 The electorate of the borough is 89,154 (February 2000). The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 25 wards. Eight of the wards are each represented by three councillors, eight are each represented by two councillors and nine are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Swale borough, with around 15 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,819 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,916 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 14 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Kemsley ward where the councillor represents 66 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Swale*

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 Abbey	2	3,104	1,552	-15	3,311	1,656	-14
2 Borden	1	2,024	2,024	11	2,180	2,180	14
3 Boughton	1	1,410	1,410	-23	1,428	1,428	-25
4 Courtenay	1	1,754	1,754	-4	1,768	1,768	-8
5 Davington Priory	2	2,741	1,371	-25	2,799	1,400	-27
6 East Downs	1	2,523	2,523	39	2,577	2,577	34
7 Eastern	2	3,846	1,923	6	4,058	2,029	6
8 Grove	3	5,361	1,787	-2	5,664	1,888	-1
9 Hartlip & Upchurch	1	2,379	2,379	31	2,459	2,459	28
10 Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	1,711	1,711	-6	2,074	2,074	8
11 Kemsley	1	3,017	3,017	66	3,355	3,355	75
12 Milton Regis	3	4,457	1,486	-18	4,801	1,600	-16
13 Minster Cliffs	3	5,294	1,765	-3	5,541	1,847	-4
14 Murston	3	4,836	1,612	-11	5,006	1,669	-13
15 Newington	1	1,978	1,978	9	1,983	1,983	3
16 Queenborough & Halfway	3	5,480	1,827	0	6,070	2,023	6
17 Roman	3	5,618	1,873	3	5,627	1,876	-2
18 St Ann's	2	4,257	2,129	17	4,278	2,139	12
19 Sheerness East	2	3,496	1,748	-4	3,561	1,781	-7
20 Sheerness West	3	4,190	1,397	-23	4,242	1,414	-26
21 Sheppey Central	2	3,616	1,808	-1	4,210	2,105	10
22 Teynham & Lynsted	2	4,281	2,141	18	4,352	2,176	14

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 %
23 Watling	2	3,316	1,658	-9	3,427	1,714	-11
24 West Downs	1	2,144	2,144	18	2,357	2,357	23
25 Woodstock	3	6,321	2,107	16	6,770	2,257	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>89,154</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>93,898</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,916</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Swale 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 Davington Priory ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Kemsley ward were relatively under-represented by 66 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 13 representations, including borough-wide schemes from Swale Conservatives, Swale Labour Party and Swale Liberal Democrats, and representations from five parish councils, one town council, four local councillors (who made a joint submission) and two local residents. In the light of these representations and the evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Swale in Kent*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on parts of Swale Conservatives', Swale Labour Party's and Swale Liberal Democrats' schemes together with a number of our own proposals. They achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mix of single-, two- and three-member wards across of the borough. We proposed that:

- Swale Borough Council should be served by 47 councillors, compared with the current 49, representing 25 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of 23 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements for Faversham and Minster-on-Sea parishes, while there should be an increase in the number of councillors representing Borden parish.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Swale Borough Council should comprise 47 councillors, serving 25 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 22 of the 25 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 one ward, Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report 38 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Swale Borough Council and the Commission.

### **Swale Borough Council**

22 The Borough Council proposed minor amendments to the boundaries of Chalkwell, Faversham East, Faversham South, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, Roman and St Michael's wards, which were unanimously supported by all groups on the Council. On the Isle of Sheppey the Council proposed by a majority vote (comprising the Conservative and Labour groups) that the area covered by the wards of Leysdown & Warden, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway and Sheppey Central should be reconfigured to be covered by a pattern of four two-member wards and two single-member wards. It also proposed that the existing names of the wards in Faversham should be retained.

23 Under the Borough Council's proposals two wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average initially, improving to one ward by 2005.

### **Kent County Council**

24 The County Council stated that it broadly supported the draft recommendations although it did not make specific observations relating to Swale borough. In addition it included a submission from Councillor Mrs Newman, member for Swale East division, who supported the draft recommendations as they affected the area covered by her division.

### **The Conservatives**

25 Sittingbourne & Sheppey Conservative Association, Faversham & Mid-Kent Conservative Association and the Conservative Group ('the Conservatives') supported the Commission's proposals for the mainland, subject to proposing minor amendments to the boundaries of Faversham East, Faversham South, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Roman and St Michael's wards. The Conservatives opposed the draft recommendations for the Isle of Sheppey, with the exception of the Sheerness wards which they generally supported. They proposed that the existing names of the wards in Faversham should be retained.

### **Swale Labour Party**

26 Swale Labour Party supported all of the amendments put forward by the Borough Council and provided further evidence in support of the alternative proposals for the Isle of Sheppey.

## **Swale Liberal Democrats**

27 Swale Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for the wards of Faversham, East, Faversham South, Iwade & Lower Halstow, Kemsley, Leysdown & Warden, Milton Regis, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central. The Liberal Democrats proposed minor amendments to the boundaries of the wards of Borden, Chalkwell, Grove, Murston, Roman, St Michael's, West Downs and Woodstock. They proposed a reconfiguration of Faversham North and Faversham West wards. The Liberal Democrats opposed the draft recommendations for the two-member wards of Boughton & Courtenay, Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch and Teynham & Lynsted, instead proposing that they should be divided into single-member wards. They proposed that the existing ward names should be retained in Faversham, while West Downs ward should be renamed Bapchild, Bredgar & Rodmersham.

28 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals three wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average initially, improving to two wards in 2005.

## **Members of Parliament**

29 Andrew Rowe MP supported the draft recommendations. Derek Wyatt MP proposed that the whole Council should be elected together every four years.

## **Parish Councils**

30 At Stage Three we received 12 representations from parish and town councils. Bobbing and Dunkirk parish councils each supported the draft recommendations in their areas, while Selling and Tunstall parish councils stated that they had no objections to the draft recommendations for their areas. Faversham Town Council considered that the four existing ward names should be retained for Faversham. The Town Council also proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Faversham East and Faversham South wards. Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for Faversham.

31 Boughton-under-Blean Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation combining the parish with neighbouring parishes to form a new two-member ward, instead preferring to retain a single-member ward for the parish on its own. Hartlip and Upchurch parish councils opposed the draft recommendations in their area, instead proposing that the existing Hartlip & Upchurch ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. Eastchurch Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations in its area, supporting instead the alternative warding arrangements put forward by the Borough Council. Sheldwich, Badlesmere & Leaveland Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations as they would divide its constituent parishes between different district wards. Warden Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations in its area, as it considered that the parish would be under-represented.

## **Other Representations**

32 A further 19 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. Trevor Payne, Chairman of Faversham Branch Labour Party, proposed retaining the existing ward names in Faversham, although he considered that Davington Priory ward could be renamed either Davington or Priory. He also proposed two minor amendments to the boundaries of the wards in Faversham. Councillor Davis, member for Watling ward, and Councillor Coulter, a Faversham Town councillor, supported the proposals for Faversham included in the Borough Council's submission, although Councillor Coulter observed that Davington Priory ward might be more appropriately named Priory.

33 Councillor Bowles, leader of the Conservative Group, stated that he generally supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments to the draft recommendations. Councillor Clarke-Sturman, member for Boughton ward, opposed the draft recommendations for the area, instead proposing that Boughton-under-Blean parish should remain a single-member ward, as at present. Councillor Vassilou, member for Eastern ward, and 13 residents of the Isle of Sheppey opposed the proposals for three three-member wards and one single-member ward on the island. A resident of Faversham supported the Borough Council's submission, while another resident of the town broadly supported the draft recommendations, subject to proposing an amendment to the boundary between Faversham East and Faversham South wards. Two residents of Kemsley proposed minor amendments to the boundary of Kemsley ward.



## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

35 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.

36 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.

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

38 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 11 per cent from 89,154 to 98,814 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. We sought detailed evidence from the Borough Council in support of its electorate forecasts. Following detailed examination of its original electorate projections, the Borough Council provided a revised projected electorate for 2005 of 93,898 (an increase of 5 per cent). It expected the growth to be relatively evenly distributed, with the most noticeable increases in Queenborough & Halfway ward (590 electors) and Sheppey Central ward (594 electors). The Council 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 was obtained.

39 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

40 At Stage Three, the Conservatives queried the electorate projections for the parishes of Leysdown and Warden. We therefore asked officers at the Borough Council to revisit their projections in this area; they indicated that they remained satisfied that their original revised projections represented the best estimates for growth in electorate over the five-year period. Therefore, having examined the Council's projections, we are content that they represent the best estimates presently available.

## **Council Size**

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

42 Swale Borough Council presently has 49 members. At Stage One the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats each proposed a council size of 47 for the borough, arguing that this would provide the fairest distribution of representation between distinct areas of the borough, and, in particular, between the Isle of Sheppey and the mainland. The Conservatives stated that their preferred option was for a council size of 40, although they included proposals based on council sizes of 46 and 49 as well. In particular they argued that revised committee and management structures would require fewer councillors and that "the appropriate balance between adequate representation and reduced workload should be drawn at 40 councillors". We also received a proposal from Faversham Town Council and from Councillors Coulter, Faulkner, Fentiman and Gates that the number of councillors serving the Borough Council should be increased to 52.

43 In our draft recommendations we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We noted that the Conservatives' preferred option is for a council size of 40 but noted that we had not received evidence of widespread support for such a substantial reduction and consequently we were not able to give this proposal further consideration. We also did not consider that there was sufficient evidence to justify increasing the number of councillors to 52, as proposed by some respondents. Of the remaining three sets of proposals that we received we noted that a council size of 47 would provide the fairest distribution of representation between the mainland and the Isle of Sheppey, both now and in 2005. Consequently we concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 47 members.

44 During Stage Three Sittingbourne & Sheppey Conservative Association, Swale Labour Party, Swale Liberal Democrats and Councillor Bowles, leader of the Conservative Group, each indicated that they supported a council size of 47. Boughton-under-Blean Parish Council considered that, in view of the increasing electorate of the borough, the number of borough councillors should increase rather than decrease. We received no further opposition to our

proposed council size. Consequently, in view of the generally strong support for a council size of 47, we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

45 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the views which we received during Stage One, and, in particular, the borough-wide schemes from the Conservatives, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. We calculated that each of the schemes would secure substantial improvements to electoral equality compared to the existing arrangements. We also noted that each of the schemes considered that no part of the Isle of Sheppey should be combined with an area of the mainland for warding purposes. As noted above, we felt unable to adopt the Conservatives' proposal for a substantial reduction in council size and, of the remaining schemes, calculated that a 47-member council would provide the fairest division of representation between the Isle of Sheppey and the mainland. Consequently, in looking at detailed warding proposals, we gave primary consideration to the schemes put forward by the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives' 46-member proposal. Noting that each of these schemes would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality across the borough, we also noted that each differed in some areas regarding the precise boundaries which it proposed. Moreover, while we gave consideration to the arguments relating to community identities which each of the political parties had put forward, we noted that there was no consensus locally on the precise boundaries of such communities.

46 We therefore sought to utilise the aspects of each scheme which we considered would provide the greatest improvements to electoral equality while, we judged, reflecting the other statutory criteria. We also put forward our own modifications where we considered that the proposals of all three schemes could be improved upon.

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) Sittingbourne (six wards)
- (b) The Western Area (five wards)
- (c) Faversham (four wards)
- (d) The Eastern Area (four wards)
- (e) The Isle of Sheppey (six wards)

48 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.

### **Sittingbourne (six wards)**

49 The six wards of Grove, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, Roman and Woodstock together cover the town of Sittingbourne. Kemsley ward is represented by a single councillor, while the remaining wards are each represented by three councillors. Grove ward comprises Bobbing parish

and an unparished area, while Woodstock ward includes Tunstall parish and Kemsley ward contains a small part of Iwade parish. The remaining three wards are entirely unparished. There is considerable electoral inequality in this area: the number of electors per councillor is 2 per cent below the borough average in Grove ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 66 per cent above in Kemsley ward (75 per cent above in 2005), 18 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (16 per cent below in 2005), 11 per cent below in Murston ward (13 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent above in Roman ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 16 per cent above in Woodstock ward (18 per cent in 2005).

50 At Stage One the Conservatives proposed that Bobbing and Tunstall parishes should no longer form part of wards containing unparished areas and combined them with neighbouring parishes to form new wards, as discussed later. In the remaining area of Sittingbourne town they proposed, under their 46-member scheme, a revised pattern of wards which they considered would offer improved electoral equality while providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests. They proposed that a new three-member Sittingbourne East ward should comprise the majority of Murston ward together with an area in the east of Roman ward around St John's Avenue. The remainder of Roman ward would be combined with a small area of the existing Murston ward around West Lane to form a new two-member Sittingbourne Town ward. The Conservatives proposed that a new two-member Sittingbourne South ward should comprise the majority of the unparished part of the existing Woodstock ward. They also proposed that a new three-member Sittingbourne West ward should comprise the remainder of the unparished area of Woodstock ward, together with the unparished part of the existing Borden ward and an unparished part of the existing Grove ward. The remaining unparished area of Grove ward, around Mill Way, would be combined with the majority of Milton Regis ward to form a new two-member Milton Regis & Chalkwell ward. They further proposed that the remainder of Milton Regis ward should be combined with Kemsley ward to form a new two-member Kemsley & Church Milton ward.

51 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 46-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Kemsley & Church Milton ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above in Milton Regis & Chalkwell ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 7 per cent above in Sittingbourne East ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent below in Sittingbourne South ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 8 per cent above in Sittingbourne Town ward (3 per cent above in 2005) and 8 per cent above in Sittingbourne West ward (4 per cent above in 2005).

52 The Labour Party proposed a uniform pattern of two-member wards covering Sittingbourne town. It proposed that a modified Woodstock ward should comprise Tunstall parish together with much of the unparished western part of Woodstock ward and part of Borden ward. It proposed that a new St Michael's ward should comprise the eastern part of Woodstock ward around Northwood Drive, together with the western part of Roman ward and a small area of Murston ward to the west of St Michael's Road. The Labour Party proposed that a modified Roman ward should cover the remainder of the existing Roman ward together with an area of Murston ward around Goodnestone Road, while a modified Murston ward would cover the remainder of the existing Murston ward. It proposed that a new Chalkwell ward should cover the east of the

existing Grove ward, together with part of Woodstock ward to the south of London Road, while a revised Grove ward would also include parished and unparished areas of the existing Borden ward. The Labour Party proposed that a revised Milton Regis ward should comprise the majority of the existing ward, while a modified Kemsley ward would comprise the area of Milton Regis ward around Attlee Way and the whole of Kemsley ward except for several properties located in the north of the ward. The Labour Party considered that its proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while providing a good reflection of communities locally.

53 Under the Labour Party's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Chalkwell ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Grove ward (equal to the average in 2005), 6 per cent above in Kemsley ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above in Murston ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in Roman ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 11 per cent below in St Michael's ward (5 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent above in Woodstock ward (equal to the average in 2005).

54 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the existing level of representation in which Kemsley ward is represented by a single councillor and each of the remaining wards by three councillors - should be retained for the wards in this area. They proposed that Roman ward should be modified to include an area around Eurolink Road, currently in Grove Ward, an area to the west of West Lane, currently in Murston ward, the west side of Ufton Lane, currently in Woodstock ward, and part of Woodstock ward in the Capel Road area. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Milton Regis ward should be expanded to include areas of Kemsley ward around Newman Drive and Blue Houses. They proposed that Murston ward should be modified to include Bapchild parish (currently in West Downs ward), while Woodstock ward should be modified by transferring Tunstall parish to West Downs ward. They proposed that Grove ward should be further modified to include the unparished area of Borden ward. They considered that their proposals would reflect local community identities and interests, arguing in particular that Bapchild parish shared a strong community affinity with the area covered by the existing Murston ward. They also considered that Tunstall parish should form part of a rural ward.

55 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Grove ward (the same in 2005), 9 per cent below in Kemsley ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent above in Milton Regis ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent below in Murston & Bapchild ward (the same in 2005), 2 per cent above in Roman ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 4 per cent below in Woodstock ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

56 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we had received during Stage One. While we noted that all three schemes would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality in the town, we were concerned at the proposals which we had received from the Conservatives to remove Bobbing and Tunstall parishes, and from the Liberal Democrats to remove Tunstall parish, from the existing Sittingbourne town wards. In both these cases we noted that residential development within the town crossed the parish boundaries and some of this development was therefore included in the parished areas.

Consequently we did not consider that separating these parishes from the town would provide a good reflection of local community identities and, in view of the excellent electoral equality which would have resulted under the Labour Party's proposals, together with the good reflection of community identities and interests which we judged that they provided, we adopted its proposals as part of our draft recommendations, subject to an amendment such that Grove ward would not include part of Borden parish, as we did not consider that this would provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria. We also proposed modifying the boundary between the Labour Party's proposed Kemsley ward and the wards to the north and west to ensure that they followed parish boundaries. Under our revised proposal the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Grove ward (5 per cent below in 2005).

57 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed a number of amendments to ward boundaries in Sittingbourne. It proposed that the boundary between Chalkwell and St Michael's wards should be modified to follow Dover Street. The Council also considered that all the properties on Farm Crescent should be included in St Michael's ward and that the boundary between Roman ward and St Michael's ward should be modified to follow South Avenue. In addition the Council proposed that Murston ward should be further modified to include those properties on Murston Road. The Borough Council also proposed transferring two areas of Milton Regis ward, generally to the north of Attlee Way and North Street, to Kemsley ward. The Borough Council considered that these proposals would provide an improved reflection of local community identities and interests.

58 Under the Borough Council's proposed modifications the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Chalkwell ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 3 per cent below in Kemsley ward (equal to the average in 2005), 4 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 3 per cent above in Murston ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent below in Roman ward (6 per cent below in 2005) and 4 per cent below in St Michael's ward (2 per cent above in 2005).

59 The Labour Party supported the Borough Council's submission. The Conservatives and Councillor Bowles supported our draft recommendations for Sittingbourne subject to endorsing the Borough Council's proposed amendments to the boundary between Kemsley and Milton Regis wards and to the boundary between Roman and St Michael's wards in the South Avenue area.

60 The Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposed amendments to the boundary between St Michael's ward and Chalkwell ward, to the boundary between Murston ward and Roman ward and to the boundary between Roman ward and St Michael's ward in the Farm Crescent area. They also supported transferring a similar area to that contained in the Borough Council's submission to the west of South Avenue ward from Roman ward to St Michael's ward and all of Roonagh Court in Woodstock ward. In addition they proposed that the boundary between Grove ward and Woodstock ward should be modified to include Park Road in the former ward. They also proposed further possible amendments in the east of St Michael's ward, which would retain the area around Merlin Close in St Michael's ward. They further proposed an amendment to the boundary between Woodstock ward and Borden ward in an area

where new properties are to be built before 2005. The Liberal Democrats considered that these amendments would better reflect local community identities and interests in the area concerned. Under any combination of the various possible amendments to ward boundaries in Sittingbourne contained in the Liberal Democrats' submission, no ward would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average either now or in 2005.

61 Two residents of Kemsley supported the Borough Council's proposed amendment to the boundary between Kemsley ward and Milton Regis ward in the Grovehurst Road area.

62 We have given careful consideration to the views we received in response to our draft recommendations for Sittingbourne. In particular we note that there is some consensus between respondents with regard to proposed amendments to the draft recommendations, and in view of the improvements to electoral equality which would be secured we are proposing to adopt the proposed amendments which were unanimously supported by the Borough Council as part of our final recommendations. We are not proposing to adopt the further amendments which were supported by the Liberal Democrats alone as we do not consider that these proposals would offer a better reflection of the statutory criteria than those contained in our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

63 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Chalkwell ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 3 per cent below in Kemsley ward (equal to the average in 2005), 4 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 3 per cent above in Murston ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent below in Roman ward (6 per cent below in 2005) and 4 per cent below in St Michael's ward (2 per cent above in 2005).

### **The Western Area (five wards)**

64 The five single-member wards of Borden, Hartlip & Upchurch, Iwade & Lower Halstow, Newington and West Downs are located in the west of the borough, and each is entirely parished. The wards of Hartlip & Upchurch and Newington each comprise the parishes of those names, while West Downs ward comprises the parishes of Bapchild, Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham and Tonge together with Kingsdown parish which is to form part of the newly expanded Lynsted parish. Borden ward comprises Borden parish and an unparished area on the edge of Sittingbourne town, and Iwade & Lower Halstow ward comprises Lower Halstow parish together with Iwade parish (except for an area containing four electors currently in Kemsley ward). The area as a whole is under-represented: the number of electors per councillor is 11 per cent above the borough average in Borden ward (14 per cent above in 2005), 31 per cent above in Hartlip & Upchurch ward (28 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent above in Newington ward (3 per cent above in 2005) and 18 per cent above in West Downs ward (23 per cent above in 2005).

65 At Stage One the Conservatives proposed two options for this area under their 46-member scheme. First, they proposed a pattern utilising only single-member wards which would involve new wards named Iwade & Bobbing, Upchurch & Lower Halstow, Hartlip & Newington and

Borden, comprising the parishes of those names. Under this option a new single-member Tunstall & Rodmersham ward would comprise the parishes of Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham and Tunstall, while a new Bapchild & Lynsted ward would comprise the parishes of Bapchild, Lynsted and Tonge. Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the borough average in Bapchild & Lynsted ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 14 per cent below in Borden ward (10 per cent below in 2005), 33 per cent above in Hartlip & Newington ward (27 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent above in Iwade & Bobbing ward (26 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below in Tunstall & Rodmersham ward (9 per cent above in 2005) and 39 per cent above in Upchurch & Lower Halstow ward (36 per cent above in 2005).

66 Under their proposals for a council size of 46, the Conservatives also put forward an option for warding in this area utilising some multi-member wards. They proposed that Iwade & Lower Halstow ward should comprise the parishes of those names and retain the existing level of representation. They proposed a new two-member Western ward comprising the parishes of Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch, while a modified two-member Borden ward would comprise the parishes of Bobbing, Borden and Tunstall. They proposed that a new two-member North Downs ward should comprise West Downs ward together with Lynsted parish (currently in Teynham & Lynsted ward) and the parishes of Doddington, Eastling and Newnham (currently in East Downs ward). Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 12 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (2 per cent above in 2005), equal to the average in North Downs ward (1 per cent above in 2005) and 12 per cent above the borough average in Western ward (9 per cent above in 2005).

67 The Labour Party proposed retaining the existing Iwade & Lower Halstow ward subject to including an area in the north of Kemsley ward. It proposed a new two-member Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward comprising the three parishes of those names, while a new two-member Borden & West Downs ward would comprise the whole of West Downs ward together with most of Borden parish. The Labour Party stated that its proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the separate urban and rural profiles of the areas concerned. The number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Borden & West Downs ward (equal to the average in 2005), 15 per cent above in Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward (11 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005).

68 The Liberal Democrats considered that the existing arrangements should be retained for the single-member wards of Hartlip & Upchurch, Iwade & Lower Halstow and Newington wards. They proposed that a modified single-member Borden ward should comprise only the parish of that name, with the remaining unparished area of the existing ward being transferred to a ward in Sittingbourne, as discussed earlier. They proposed that a single-member West Downs ward should be modified to comprise the parishes of Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham, Tunstall and Tonge, while Bapchild parish would form part of a modified Murston ward and the whole of Lynsted parish (including the former Kingsdown parish) would form part of a new Mid Downs ward. The Liberal Democrats noted that under these proposals Hartlip & Upchurch ward would be significantly under-represented, but considered that this was justified in view of the strong

community affinity locally and the position of the two parishes concerned, on the edge of the borough. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 25 per cent above in Hartlip & Upchurch ward (23 per cent above in 2005), 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent above in Newington ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 10 per cent above in West Downs ward (9 per cent above in 2005).

69 Borden Parish Council objected to any proposal combining Borden and West Down wards to form a new two-member ward. Upchurch Parish Council supported retaining the status quo in its area.

70 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the alternative proposals which we received in this area. We noted that the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives (under their predominantly multi-member 46-councillor scheme) all generally proposed retaining Iwade & Lower Halstow ward on its existing boundaries. In view of the satisfactory electoral equality which would be achieved under such a proposal and given that this would be compatible with our proposals for the wider area, we adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations, subject to proposing that the whole of Iwade parish should be included in the new ward. With regard to the Liberal Democrats' proposal to retain Hartlip & Upchurch ward on its existing boundaries, we did not consider that their arguments relating to community identities in the area justified the very poor electoral equality which would result under such a proposal. We noted that both the Labour Party and the Conservatives (under their multi-member option) proposed a two-member ward covering the parishes of Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch which would achieve some improvements to electoral equality in the area. While we noted that by 2005 electoral equality would remain slightly beyond 10 per cent in this ward we noted that we had not received any alternative proposals in this area under a council size of 47 and we therefore put forward a two-member Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward as part of our draft recommendations.

71 We noted that all three groups included proposals for a single-member Borden ward. In view of the good electoral equality which would be achieved and its compatibility with our proposals for neighbouring wards, we proposed retaining a single-member ward comprising all of Borden parish, as put forward by the Conservatives (under their single-member option) and the Liberal Democrats, as part of our draft recommendations. Additionally, we noted the alternative proposals for warding in the West Downs area but considered that we were unable to adopt any of the proposals which we had received. We therefore decided to put forward our own proposal as part of our draft recommendations in this area, which would comprise the existing West Downs ward with the exception of the new Lynsted parish and Tonge parish, each of which would form part of a modified Teynham & Lynsted ward, discussed later. We noted that such a ward would provide good electoral equality while, we judged, providing a satisfactory reflection of local community identities and interests.

72 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 15 per cent above in Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward (11 per cent above in 2005), 10 per cent below in Iwade

& Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 3 per cent below in West Downs ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

73 At Stage Three the Conservatives and Councillor Bowles supported the draft recommendations for the wards in this area. Swale Liberal Democrats supported our proposals for the wards of Borden, Iwade & Lower Halstow and West Downs, subject to proposing a minor boundary amendment in the north-east of Borden ward and proposing that West Downs ward should be renamed Bapchild, Bredgar & Rodmersham. With regard to our proposed Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward the Liberal Democrats reiterated their proposals for the retention of two single-member wards in this area, arguing that such an arrangement would better reflect local community identities and interests. Hartlip and Upchurch parish councils each supported the retention of the existing arrangements for Hartlip & Upchurch ward.

74 We have carefully considered the further views which we have received in this area. While we note the support of the Liberal Democrats and Hartlip and Upchurch parish councils for retaining the existing arrangements for Hartlip & Upchurch and Newington wards we remain concerned at the significant levels of electoral inequality which would result. Consequently, in the absence of further alternative warding arrangements which would be compatible with our proposals for the wider area, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward as final. With regard to the remaining areas we note that there is general support for our warding arrangements and consequently we are confirming our draft recommendations for the wards of Borden, Iwade & Lower Halstow and West Downs as final. As noted previously we are not adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed amendment in the north of Borden ward; we are also not proposing to change the name of West Downs ward to Bapchild, Bredgar & Rodmersham as we do not consider that there is adequate evidence of widespread support for such an amendment. Our draft recommendations for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

75 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 15 per cent above in Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward (11 per cent above in 2005), 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 3 per cent below in West Downs ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

### **Faversham (four wards)**

76 Faversham is the largest urban settlement in the east of the borough, and contains some 13,500 electors. The area as a whole comprises Faversham parish. The town is currently represented by eight councillors representing four two-member wards: Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann's and Watling. The area as a whole is over-represented: the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average in Abbey ward (14 per cent below in 2005), 25 per cent below in Davington Priory (27 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent below in St Ann's ward (12 per cent above in 2005) and 9 per cent below in Watling ward (11 per cent below in 2005).

77 Under their 46-member scheme, the Conservatives proposed reducing the number of councillors serving Faversham to seven, (which it merits under a council size of 46 or 47), serving three two-member wards and one single-member ward. Consequently, they proposed that a new single-member Faversham North ward should cover most of the existing Davington Priory ward, together with properties on the south side of Bysing Wood Road. The Conservatives proposed that a new two-member Faversham West ward should comprise most of St Ann's ward, together with the Alexander Drive area of Davington Priory ward. In the south of the town a new two-member Faversham South ward would comprise most of Watling ward, together with an area of St Ann's ward around Lower Road. The remaining two-member Faversham East ward would comprise the whole of Abbey ward, together with an area of Watling ward around Love Lane and an area of St Ann's ward around Stone Street. The Conservatives considered that their proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while providing a good reflection of local community identities and interests.

78 Under the Conservatives' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Faversham East ward (the same in 2005), 1 per cent above in Faversham North ward (1 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Faversham South ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Faversham West ward (4 per cent below in 2005).

79 The Labour Party proposed a revised pattern of three two-member wards and one single-member ward in this area, and it also proposed including Oare parish in a ward with the northern part of Faversham. It proposed that a modified single-member Watling ward should comprise the western part of the existing ward, together with an area of St Ann's ward around Lower Road. In the south and east of the town it proposed that a new two-member Preston ward should comprise the remainder of Watling ward, together with the eastern part of Abbey ward. The Labour Party further proposed that the centre of the town should be covered by a modified St Ann's ward, encompassing parts of Abbey and St Ann's wards, together with a small area of the existing Davington Priory ward. In the north of the town, it proposed a modified two-member Davington Priory ward which would include most of Davington Priory ward together with an area in the north of the existing St Ann's ward and Oare Parish (currently in Teynham & Lynsted ward). The Labour Party considered that its proposals would achieve improvements to electoral equality while reflecting community identities locally. In particular it stated that, in the case of Davington Priory ward, "Oare [parish] is included because there is continuous development linking it to Faversham and its residents look to the town for shopping and other facilities".

80 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in Davington Priory ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent below in Preston ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent above in St Ann's ward (5 per cent above in 2005) and 9 per cent above the borough average in Watling ward (5 per cent above in 2005).

81 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised pattern of three wards covering the town. They proposed that a new three-member Faversham town ward should cover the town centre, comprising Abbey ward and an area of St Ann's ward around South Road. A revised two-member Watling ward would comprise the existing ward, together with a similar area of St Ann's

ward to that proposed under the Conservatives' 46-member scheme. The north of the town would be covered by a two-member Davington Priory ward expanded to cover an area in the north of St Ann's ward.

82 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average in Faversham Town ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in Davington Priory ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 3 per cent above in Watling ward (1 per cent above in 2005).

83 Faversham Town Council stated that it wished to see the retention of the existing arrangements for eight borough councillors and 16 town councillors representing the town, but with minor adjustments to ward boundaries to improve electoral equality. Councillors Coulter, Faulkner, Fentiman and Gates proposed a 52-member council for Swale borough and put forward consequential warding arrangements for Faversham for four two-member wards. They also proposed alternative options based on a council size of 40, providing three two-member wards in Faversham; and 46, providing three two-member wards and one single-member ward. A resident of Faversham considered that there should be greater representation for the town and its surrounding area.

84 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we received during Stage One. We noted that under a council size of 47, a number of the proposals which we had received for this area would provide the correct allocation of councillors for Faversham town and would secure good electoral equality in each of the town wards. However, we did not consider that there was sufficient justification, in terms of the statutory criteria, to look outside the present boundaries of Faversham town for new warding arrangements and consequently we did not consider that we should give further consideration to the Labour Party's proposals. Of the remaining schemes, we judged that the Conservatives' proposals would better reflect local community identities and interests and would generally provide more clearly defined boundaries. We therefore adopted their proposals as our draft recommendations for Faversham, subject to modifying the boundary between the proposed Faversham East and Faversham South wards to follow the railway line throughout its length, thereby transferring 12 electors to Faversham South ward.

85 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Faversham East ward (the same in 2005), 3 per cent above in Faversham North ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent above in Faversham South ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 3 per cent above in Faversham West ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

86 At Stage Three the Borough Council put forward one amendment to the ward boundaries in Faversham, proposing that the Tin Bridge area should be transferred from Faversham East ward to Faversham South ward. The Borough Council also proposed that the existing ward names of Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann's and Watling should be retained for the wards in Faversham. The Labour Party, Sittingbourne & Sheppey Conservative Association, Faversham Town Council, Councillor Bowles and Councillor Davis each supported the Borough Council's

proposals in this area. Councillor Coulter, a Faversham Town councillor, supported the proposals for Faversham included in the Borough Council's submission, although he observed that Davington Priory ward might be better named Priory. Trevor Payne, Chairman of Faversham Branch Labour Party, proposed retaining the existing ward names in Faversham, although he considered that Davington Priory ward could also be named either Davington or Priory. He also proposed two minor amendments to the boundaries of the wards in Faversham: he proposed that three properties at the top of Bysing Wood Road should be transferred to Faversham West ward and he proposed that the boundary between Faversham East and Faversham North ward should follow Leslie Smith Drive.

87 Swale Liberal Democrats supported the proposals to retain the existing ward names in Faversham, and stated that they had no objections to the "proposals to realign the border around Tin Bridge Oast so that a few houses are transferred from Abbey to Watling". However, the Liberal Democrats proposed more substantial amendments in the remainder of the town. They proposed that a modified single-member St Ann's ward should cover an area generally to the south and east of The Knole and Faversham Creek, while the remaining area of the proposed Faversham West ward would be included in a modified two-member Davington Priory ward. The Liberal Democrats argued that this would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests than under our draft recommendations. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Davington Priory ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 8 per cent above in St Ann's ward (3 per cent above in 2005).

88 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. While we note the alternative warding configuration proposed by the Liberal Democrats in the north and west of the town, we also note that there is some support among the remaining respondents for the proposals contained in our draft recommendations. We remain of the view that our draft recommendations in this area generally provide the best available balance between the need to provide improvements to electoral equality and the statutory criteria, and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations as final, subject to two areas of amendment. First, we are adopting the proposal to amend the boundary between Faversham East and Faversham South wards in the Tin Bridge area, a proposal which we judge would better reflect local community identities and interests, and which would enjoy some support locally. Second, in view of the general support for retaining the existing ward names in Faversham, we are modifying our draft recommendations and renaming Faversham East ward as Abbey, Faversham North ward as Davington Priory, Faversham South ward as Watling and Faversham West ward as St Ann's. Our final recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

89 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Abbey ward (the same in 2005), 3 per cent above in Davington Priory ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above in St Ann's ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 3 per cent above in Watling ward (1 per cent above in 2005).

## **The Eastern Area (four wards)**

90 The four wards of Boughton, Courtenay, East Downs and Teynham & Lynsted are situated in the east of the borough and are entirely parished. The wards of Boughton, Courtenay and East Downs are each represented by a single councillor, while Teynham & Lynsted ward is represented by two councillors. Boughton ward comprises the parish of Boughton under Blean; Courtenay ward comprises the parishes of Dunkirk, Graveney with Goodnestone and Hernhill; East Downs ward comprises the parishes of Badlesmere, Doddington, Eastling, Leaveland, Newnham, Selling, Sheldwich and Stalisfield; and Teynham & Lynsted ward comprises the parishes of Luddenham, Lynsted, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare, Ospringe and Teynham. The number of electors per councillor is 23 per cent below the average in Boughton ward (25 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent below in Courtenay ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 39 per cent above in East Downs ward (34 per cent above in 2005) and 18 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (14 per cent above in 2005).

91 The Conservatives provided two sets of proposals for this area under their 46-member scheme. First, they proposed a single-member scheme for the area. They proposed that Courtenay ward should be retained on its existing boundaries, while a new Boughton & Selling ward would comprise the parishes of Boughton under Blean and Selling. They further proposed a new Throwley ward comprising the parishes of Badlesmere, Eastling, Leaveland, Ospringe, Sheldwich, Stalisfield and Throwley. They also proposed a new Doddington & Oare ward comprising the parishes of Doddington, Luddenham, Newnham, Norton, Buckland & Stone and Oare. The remaining area would be covered by a single-member Teynham ward covering the parish of the same name. Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Boughton & Selling ward (equal to the average in 2005), 10 per cent below in Courtenay ward (13 per cent below in 2005), 23 per cent below in Doddington & Oare ward (26 per cent below in 2005), 15 per cent above in Teynham ward (11 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below in Throwley ward (13 per cent below in 2005).

92 As an alternative, the Conservatives proposed a pattern of mainly multi-member wards which, they stated, would achieve better electoral equality than their single-member ward pattern. Under this option, they proposed that a new two-member South-Eastern ward should comprise Boughton and Courtenay wards together with the parishes of Badlesmere, Leaveland, Selling and Sheldwich (currently in East Downs ward). The Conservatives also proposed that a new two-member Teynham & Ospringe ward should comprise the parishes of Luddenham, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare, Ospringe, Stalisfield, Teynham and Throwley. They proposed that the remaining parts of the existing Teynham & Lynsted and East Downs wards should form part of a new two-member North Downs ward, as described earlier. Under this proposal, the number of electors per councillor would be 11 per cent above the borough average in South-Eastern ward (7 per cent above in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Teynham & Ospringe ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

93 The Labour Party proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area which would provide improvements to electoral equality, while, it considered, generally offering a good reflection of community identities and interests. Consequently, it proposed that Teynham & Lynsted ward

should be retained on its existing boundaries and with its existing level of representation subject to transferring Oare parish to form part of a Faversham town ward (discussed earlier). It proposed that a new two-member Boughton & Courtenay ward should comprise Boughton and Courtenay wards together with Selling parish (currently in East Downs ward), and that the remainder of East Downs ward should be retained as a single-member ward. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average in Boughton & Courtenay ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in East Downs ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

94 The Liberal Democrats proposed a number of changes to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed that a modified single-member Courtenay ward should comprise the parishes of Graveney with Goodnestone, Hernhill, Selling and Sheldwich, together with the eastern part of Dunkirk parish. They proposed that a modified single-member Boughton ward should comprise the remainder of Dunkirk parish together with Boughton-under-Blean parish, as they considered that this part of Dunkirk parish was more urban and therefore had more in common with Boughton ward. They also proposed that the remainder of East Downs ward should be modified to include Ospringe parish. The Liberal Democrats further proposed that a new single-member Green Street ward should cover the urban area in the north of Lynsted parish and in the south of Teynham parish, while a new single-member Mid Downs ward would comprise the remaining parts of Lynsted and Teynham parishes, together with the parishes of Luddenham, Norton, Buckland & Stone and Oare. The Liberal Democrats considered that this configuration would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests than at present while providing some improvements to electoral equality within this area. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Boughton ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 17 per cent above in Courtenay ward (13 per cent above in 2005), 8 per cent above in East Downs ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent above in Green Street ward (5 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent below in Mid Downs ward (10 per cent below in 2005).

95 Dunkirk Parish Council stated that "members see the current electoral arrangements for this area as satisfactory and would wish to see as little change as possible". Ospringe Parish Council stated that the parish should remain in Teynham & Lynsted ward. The Parish Council also expressed concern at any possible reduction in representation for Faversham. Selling Parish Council stated that it would oppose any attempt to divide the parish for electoral purposes.

96 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the schemes which we received in this area during Stage One. In particular we noted that under the Conservatives' 46 councillor single-member ward proposal substantial electoral inequalities would persist, which we did not consider were justified in terms of the statutory criteria, and we therefore did not give further consideration to this option. With regard to the remaining proposals which we had received for the wards to the east and south of Faversham, we noted that under the Liberal Democrats' proposals some electoral inequality would persist in Courtenay ward and the proposed ward would not be connected by a substantive common boundary between Dunkirk parish and Selling parish. Consequently, in view of the proposals for a two-member ward in this

area which we received from the Conservatives and the Labour Party, we proposed a two-member ward comprising Boughton and Courtenay wards together with the parishes of Selling and Sheldwich (currently in East Downs ward), which would be called Boughton & Courtenay ward. We noted that such a ward would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality while facilitating a good scheme for the wider area, which we considered would meet the statutory criteria. We also adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed East Downs ward as we considered that, in particular, it would retain the existing community identities and interests in this area, while achieving significant improvements to electoral equality. In the remaining area, currently covered by Teynham & Lynsted ward, we noted that none of the proposals which we had received were compatible with our proposals for the wider area. Consequently, we proposed retaining the existing Teynham & Lynsted ward, subject to transferring Ospringe parish to East Downs ward, together with transferring Tonge parish and the area covered by the former Kingsdown parish from West Downs ward to Teynham & Lynsted ward.

97 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Boughton & Courtenay ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 8 per cent above in East Downs ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (5 per cent above in 2005).

98 At Stage Three the Conservatives and Councillor Bowles supported the draft recommendations for these wards. Swale Liberal Democrats opposed our proposals for the wards in this area. They reiterated their initial proposals for five single-member wards, arguing that their proposals would better reflect local community identities and interests, although they also stated that "the ward we are happiest with is East Downs and would only need a slight amendment to transfer Badlesmere and Leaveland into Courtenay ward". Selling Parish Council did not object to the draft recommendations in its area. Sheldwich, Badlesmere & Leaveland Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations, as they would divide its constituent parishes between different district wards. Councillor Clarke-Sturman, member for Boughton ward, and Boughton-under-Blean Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations for a two-member Boughton & Courtenay ward.

99 We have given careful consideration to the views we have received during Stage Three. While we note that the Liberal Democrats have reiterated their preference for a pattern of five single-member wards, and that Boughton-under Blean Parish Council and Councillor Clarke-Sturman have proposed retaining a single-member ward covering Boughton parish, we are not persuaded that their proposals would provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than under our draft recommendations and consequently we are not adopting them as part of our final recommendations. We have also considered the preference of Sheldwich, Badlesmere & Leaveland Parish Council to be retained in a single ward. While we note that the Liberal Democrats proposed that all three parishes could be included in Boughton & Courtenay ward, we remain concerned at the levels of electoral inequality which would result under these proposals - Boughton & Courtenay ward would vary by 13 per cent from the borough average initially, improving marginally to 10 per cent by 2005. We continue to consider that the alternative arrangement contained in our draft recommendations would offer a better balance of the need to achieve improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the statutory

criteria. In the absence of further alternative proposals we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

100 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Boughton & Courtenay ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 8 per cent above in East Downs ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (5 per cent above in 2005).

### **The Isle of Sheppey (six wards)**

101 The Isle of Sheppey is located in the north of the borough and is connected to the mainland by a single road bridge in the west of the island. The island is currently covered by six wards: Eastern, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central. Eastern ward (comprising the parishes of Eastchurch, Leysdown and Warden, together with an area of the new Minster-on-Sea parish), Sheerness East ward and Sheppey Central ward (which comprises the southern part of the new Minster-on-Sea parish) are each represented by two councillors. Minster Cliffs ward (which comprises an area in the north of the new Minster-on-Sea parish), Queenborough & Halfway ward (which comprises Queenborough parish and an unparished area) and Sheerness West ward are each represented by three councillors. Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards are unparished. At present, the number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the borough average in Eastern ward (the same in 2005), 3 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (4 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Queenborough & Halfway ward (6 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below the average in Sheerness East ward (7 per cent below in 2005), 23 per cent below the average in Sheerness West ward (26 per cent below in 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in Sheppey Central ward (10 per cent above in 2005).

102 At Stage One the Conservatives proposed, under their 46-member scheme, a substantial re-warding of the Isle of Sheppey. They proposed a new two-member Sheppey East ward comprising polling districts QJ, QL and QM together with part of polling district QI. A new three-member Minster North ward would comprise polling districts QF, QG and QK together with part of polling districts QI and QE. The remainder of polling district QI would be combined with polling district QH and part of polling district QE to form a new two-member Minster South-West ward. A new three-member Sheerness East & Halfway ward would comprise polling districts QC, QD and IA, together with parts of polling districts IB, ID and IE. A single-member Sheerness Town ward would comprise most of polling district IB together with parts of polling districts IC and ID. A three-member Sheerness West & Queenborough ward would comprise polling districts QA and QB, together with parts of polling districts IC, ID and IE.

103 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 46-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Minster North ward (5 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Minster South-West ward (equal to the average in 2005), 6 per cent below in Sheerness East & Halfway ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Sheerness Town ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent below in Sheerness West & Queenborough ward (the same in 2005) and 5 per cent below in Sheppey East ward (the same in 2005).

104 The Labour Party proposed that Sheerness should comprise two two-member wards: a modified Sheerness East ward, comprising polling districts IA, IB and part of IC, and a modified Sheerness West ward, comprising the remainder of polling district IC together with polling districts ID and IE. It considered that Sheerness East ward could also be named Marine ward and that Sheerness West ward could be named either Fleet or Ordnance. The Labour Party proposed that Eastern ward should continue to be represented by two councillors and should be retained on its existing boundaries. It proposed that Sheppey Central ward should be modified to comprise polling district QI together with polling district QH (except Minster Road) and Tam Gardens in polling district QF. It proposed that a new two-member Minster Cliffs ward should comprise the remainder of polling district QF, together with polling district QG. The Labour Party further proposed that the existing Queenborough & Halfway ward, together with surrounding areas, should be divided to form two new two-member wards named Halfway and Queenborough. The Labour Party's proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while, it considered, making use of strongly defined boundaries.

105 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Eastern ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 5 per cent below in Halfway ward (equal to the average in 2005), 5 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent above in Sheerness East ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in Sheerness West ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 7 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (3 per cent above in 2005).

106 The Liberal Democrats calculated that, under a 47-member council, the Isle of Sheppey merits 14 councillors. Consequently, they proposed new warding arrangements for the island which would secure improvements to electoral equality while, they considered, reflecting local community identities and interests. In the west of the island, the Liberal Democrats noted that the Sheerness area is over-represented and therefore proposed that it should comprise two two-member wards based on the existing Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards, subject to transferring an area around Beach Street from Sheerness West ward to Sheerness East ward. They also proposed that Queenborough & Halfway ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. In the east of the island, they proposed a modified three-member Minster Cliffs ward comprising the northern part of the new Minster-on-Sea parish (including Minster East polling district which is currently in Eastern ward). The remaining part of Minster-on-Sea parish would then be combined with Eastchurch parish to form a modified three-member Sheppey Central ward. Finally, they proposed a new single-member Leysdown & Warden ward comprising the parishes of the same names.

107 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Leysdown & Warden ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (the same in 2005), 4 per cent below in Queenborough & Halfway ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent below in Sheerness East ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above in Sheerness West ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 8 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

108 A resident of the island considered that no part of Minster should be included in Sheppey East ward.

109 In arriving at our draft recommendations we gave careful consideration to the views which we received in this area and noted that each of the three schemes would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality on the island. However, we considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which would achieve improvements to electoral equality while, in the main, retaining the existing warding pattern, would provide the best reflection of local community identities and interests. Moreover, given that it was necessary to divide the newly formed Minster-on-Sea parish between more than one ward, and having visited the area, we considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposal provided the most reasonable division of the parish in terms of the statutory criteria. Consequently, we adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the wards of Leysdown & Warden, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central as part of our draft recommendations.

110 At Stage Three the Borough Council, the Labour Group and the Conservatives opposed the draft recommendations for the wards of Leysdown & Warden, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway and Sheppey Central, instead proposing a pattern of four two-member wards and two single-member wards in the area concerned. They supported the draft recommendations for Sheerness town although the Conservatives proposed a minor amendment to the southern boundary of Sheerness West ward, which would effect no electors. In the remaining area, they proposed that a two-member Queenborough & Rushenden ward should comprise Queenborough parish, together with polling district QD and a small part of polling district QC. The remainder of the existing Queenborough & Halfway ward would comprise a modified single-member Halfway ward. They proposed that a modified two-member Minster Cliffs ward should comprise polling districts QG and QK, together with part of polling districts QF and QI, while a single-member Danley ward would comprise the remainder of polling district QF together with part of polling district QE and QI. They proposed that the remainder of polling districts QE and QI should be combined with polling district QH to form a modified two-member Sheppey Central ward. The remainder of the island would be covered by a revised two-member Eastern ward, comprising the parishes of Leysdown, Warden and Eastchurch, together with part of polling district QI. They considered that their proposals would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests than our draft recommendations. They also considered that the proposals contained in the draft recommendations for a pattern of three-member wards would not reflect the statutory criteria. In addition, the Conservatives queried the accuracy of the electorate projections in the east of the island. They also expressed concern that two parts of Warden parish were not connected by road, noting that "there is no contiguous road connection between that part of the old village of Warden (which lies at the end of Warden Road) and that part of the parish of Warden which comprises the village of Warden Bay". The Conservatives therefore argued that our proposals would not reflect local community identities and interests.

111 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Danley ward (3 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent below in Eastern ward both now and in 2005, 13 per cent below in Halfway ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent above in Queenborough & Rushenden

ward both now and in 2005 and 10 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (1 per cent above in 2005).

112 Eastchurch Parish Council, Warden Parish Council, Councillor Vassilou, member for Eastern ward, and 13 residents of the island opposed the proposals for three three-member wards and one single-member ward on the Isle of Sheppey. Swale Liberal Democrats supported our draft recommendations for the Isle of Sheppey.

113 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area. We note the general support for our draft recommendations for the wards of Sheerness East and Sheerness West and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. We are not adopting the Conservatives' proposed modification in the south of the town as we have not received evidence of general support for such a change. In the remainder of the island, we note in particular the alternative proposal which we have received from the Borough Council, the Conservative Association and the Labour Party. However, we are concerned at the warding pattern put forward in this proposal as we do not consider that it would provide as good a reflection of local community identities and interests for the island as a whole as our draft recommendations. In particular we are concerned at the proposal to divide the new Minster parish between four different district wards, a proposal which we do not consider would reflect local community identities and interests. We have noted the Conservatives' concerns with regard to electorate forecasts for the parishes of Leysdown and Warden but, as noted earlier, officers at the Council have indicated that they remain satisfied that their electorate projections are accurate. With regard to the Conservatives' concerns about the lack of direct road links between two areas of Warden parish, having consulted officers at the Council we have been advised that a revision to the parish boundary is due to take place which will transfer the properties in the north of Warden parish to Eastchurch parish and that this transfer has already been accounted for in our electorate figures. Consequently, in view of the good electoral equality which would result under our draft recommendations and in the light of the good reflection of community identities and interests which we continue to judge that they would provide, we are confirming our final recommendations for these wards as final.

114 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Leysdown & Warden ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (the same in 2005), 4 per cent below in Queenborough & Halfway ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent below in Sheerness East ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above in Sheerness West ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 8 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

## **Electoral Cycle**

115 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

116 At Stage Three Derek Wyatt MP considered that the whole Council should be elected together every four years. However, we have not received further evidence of widespread support for a change to the present system of elections by thirds, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

**Conclusions**

117 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 making minor amendments to the boundaries of Chalkwell, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, Roman and St Michael’s wards in Sittingbourne and to the wards of Faversham East and Faversham South in Faversham. We are also retaining the existing ward names of Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann’s and Watling in Faversham.

118 We conclude that, in Swale:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 49 to 47;
- there should be 25 wards;
- the boundaries of 23 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to be elected by thirds.

119 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	49	47	49	47
Number of wards	25	25	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,819	1,897	1,916	1,998
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	2	15	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	7	0

120 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 14 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 only one ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**

Swale Borough Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

**Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

121 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government 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, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Faversham and Minster-on-Sea to reflect the proposed borough wards, and an increase in representation for Borden Parish Council.

122 In its Stage One submission Borden Parish Council requested an increase in the number of councillors serving the parish from 11 to 13. In our draft recommendations we noted this request and were content to recommend such an increase in representation for Borden Parish Council. At Stage Three no further comments were received in relation to this proposal, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation for Borden Parish Council as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Borden Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, two more than at present, representing the parish as a whole.

123 The parish of Faversham is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards, each of which is coterminous with the borough wards, and is represented by four parish councillors. At Stage One the Conservatives proposed a pattern of three two-member wards and one single-member ward for Faversham: Faversham East, Faversham North, Faversham South and Faversham West. As this proposal formed part of our draft recommendations, and in the absence of specific proposals from the Conservatives, we proposed that Faversham should be divided into four parish wards: Faversham East, Faversham North, Faversham South and Faversham West,

each of which would be coterminous with the borough ward of the same name and represented by four councillors.

124 At Stage Three the Borough Council, Faversham Town Council and a number of other respondents opposed the proposal to change the names of these wards, instead preferring that each ward retained its existing name. They also proposed that, in order to provide a fairer distribution of representation on the Town Council, the number of town councillors representing the single-member borough ward should be reduced from four to two, thereby giving a reduced council size of 14 for the Town Council as a whole. Having considered these representations we are content to adopt these amendments as part of our final recommendations, and are consequently proposing that Davington Priory parish ward should be represented by two councillors, while the remaining parish wards would each return four councillors. We are confirming our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in this area as final, subject to the modification in the Tin Bridge area as shown on the large map at the back of this report.

**Final Recommendation**

Faversham Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, two fewer than at present, representing four wards: Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann’s and Watling returning four, two, four and four councillors respectively. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

125 The new Minster-on-Sea parish will be represented by 11 councillors. In its submission the Liberal Democrats proposed that this ward should be divided between two borough wards: Minster Cliffs and Sheppey Central. As this proposal formed part of our draft recommendations, and in the absence of specific proposals from the Liberal Democrats, we proposed that the new Minster-on-Sea parish should be divided into two parish wards, North and South, represented by six and five councillors respectively. In view of our final recommendations, which confirm our draft recommendations for borough warding in this area, we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for parish warding in this area as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, representing two wards: North and South, represented by six and five councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

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

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Swale*



## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

128 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 19 June 2001.

129 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 Swale: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed boundary between Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Minster-on-Sea parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Faversham and Sittingbourne.

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for Swale: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed boundary between Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Minster-on-Sea parish*

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for Swale

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of a number of wards, where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figures B1 and B2, is that we propose to retain the existing names for the four wards in Faversham: Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann's and Watling.

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Chalkwell	Grove ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)
Faversham East	Abbey ward; St Ann's ward (part); Watling ward (part)
Faversham West	Davington Priory ward (part); St Ann's ward (part)
Kemsley	Kemsley ward (part); Milton Regis ward (part)
Milton Regis	Milton Regis ward (part)
Murston	Murston ward (part)
Roman	Roman ward (part); Murston ward (part)
St Michael's	Murston ward (part); Roman ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)

*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 %
Chalkwell	2	3,894	1,947	3	3,908	1,954	-2
Faversham East	2	3,671	1,836	-3	3,875	1,938	-3
Faversham West	2	3,918	1,959	3	3,930	1,965	-2
Kemsley	2	3,558	1,779	-6	3,896	1,948	-2
Milton Regis	2	3,731	1,866	-2	4,075	2,038	2
Murston	2	3,897	1,949	3	4,067	2,034	2

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
Roman	2	4,035	2,018	6	4,041	2,021	1
St Michael's	2	3,373	1,687	-11	3,804	1,902	-5

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Swale 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](http://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.

#### *Commission compliance with Code criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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