

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Christchurch in Dorset

Report to the Electoral Commission

*April 2002*

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Christchurch is inserted inside the back cover of this report.



## WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to the Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No. 3692). The Order also transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)  
Professor Michael Clarke  
Robin Gray

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Christchurch in Dorset.



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Christchurch's electoral arrangements on 27 March 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 October 2001, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

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

- **in four of the 10 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to improve slightly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs (61–62) are that:

- **Christchurch Borough Council should have 24 councillors, one fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 11 wards, instead of 10 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of nine of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and one ward should retain its existing boundaries.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In all of the 11 proposed wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 8 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all 11 wards expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 13 May 2002:

**The Secretary  
Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
30 Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

*Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Burton & Winkton	2	<i>(unchanged)</i> the parish of Burton	Map 2 and Large Map
2	Grange	2	part of Grange ward; part of Mudeford ward; part of Twynham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
3	Highcliffe	2	part of Chewton ward; part of Nea ward	Map 2 and Large Map
4	Jumpers	2	part of Jumpers ward	Map 2 and Large Map
5	Mudeford & Friars Cliff	3	part of Mudeford ward	Map 2 and Large Map
6	North Highcliffe & Walkford	2	part of Chewton ward; part of Nea ward	Map 2 and Large Map
7	Portfield	2	part of Jumpers ward; part of Portfield ward	Map 2 and Large Map
8	Purewell & Stanpit	2	part of Grange ward; part of Mudeford ward; part of Twynham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
9	St Catherine's & Hurn	2	the parish of Hurn and the unparished area of St Catherine's ward; part of Jumpers ward	Map 2 and Large Map
10	Town Centre	2	part of Portfield ward; part of Twynham ward	Map 2 and Large Map
11	West Highcliffe	2	part of Grange ward; part of Mudeford ward; part of Nea ward; Wingfield ward	Map 2 and Large Map

*Notes: The borough is unparished apart from Burton and Hurn parishes.*

*The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.*

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Christchurch

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Burton & Winkton	2	3,268	1,634	5	3,210	1,605	-1
2	Grange	2	3,349	1,675	8	3,405	1,703	5
3	Highcliffe	2	3,020	1,510	-3	3,210	1,605	-1
4	Jumpers	2	3,146	1,573	1	3,167	1,584	-2
5	Mudford & Friars Cliff	3	4,533	1,511	-3	4,616	1,539	5
6	North Highcliffe & Walkford	2	2,918	1,459	-6	3,040	1,520	-6
7	Portfield	2	3,073	1,537	-1	3,103	1,552	-4
8	Purewell & Stanpit	2	3,233	1,617	4	3,424	1,712	6
9	St Catherine's & Hurn	2	2,979	1,490	-4	3,050	1,525	-6
10	Town Centre	2	3,255	1,628	5	3,436	1,718	6
11	West Highcliffe	3	4,553	1,518	-2	5,219	1,740	7
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37,327</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>38,880</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,555</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Christchurch in Dorset. The five districts in Dorset have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 Christchurch's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1978 (Report no. 301). The electoral arrangements of Dorset County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report no. 427). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
  - a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Christchurch was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Christchurch is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and stated that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, or that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 March 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Christchurch Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also

notified Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South-west region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It 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 16 July 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 9 October 2001 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Christchurch In Dorset*, and ended on 3 December 2001. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The Borough of Christchurch is situated in the south-east corner of the county of Dorset, abutting the unitary authority of Bournemouth to the west and the district of East Dorset to the north. It covers an area of 5,710 hectares and currently has an electorate of 37,327, an increase of 29 per cent since 1975. The present electorate is forecast to increase to 38,880 by 2006, an increase of 4 per cent. The main industries in the borough are electronics, aviation, tourism and retail. The borough also contains Bournemouth International Airport, the largest employer in Dorset. The borough has good road links along the A35 to Bournemouth and Southampton, and the London to Bournemouth railway line runs through the borough.

11 The borough contains only two parishes, Hurn and Burton, in the northern rural area of the borough. Christchurch town comprises 75 per cent of the borough's total electorate and is unparished.

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

13 The electorate of the borough is 37,327 (February 2001). The Council presently has 25 members who are elected from 10 wards, eight of which are relatively urban in Christchurch and Highcliffe, with the remainder being mainly rural. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors and five are represented by two councillors. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

14 At present each councillor represents an average of 1,493 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,555 by 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 10 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Mudeford ward where the councillor represents 20 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Christchurch*

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Burton	2	3,324	1,662	11	3,260	1,630	5
2	Chewton	3	4,251	1,417	-5	4,410	1,470	-5
3	Grange	3	4,539	1,513	1	5,040	1,680	8
4	Jumpers	3	4,129	1,376	-8	4,180	1,393	-10
5	Mudford	3	5,395	1,798	20	5,500	1,833	18
6	Nea	2	2,523	1,262	-16	2,740	1,370	-12
7	Portfield	2	3,306	1,653	11	3,350	1,675	8
8	St Catherine's	2	2,777	1,389	-7	2,830	1,415	-9
9	Twynham	3	4,359	1,453	-3	4,650	1,550	0
10	Wingfield	2	2,724	1,362	-9	2,920	1,460	-6
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>37,327</b>	–	–	<b>38,880</b>	–	–
	<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,493</b>	–	–	<b>1,555</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Christchurch 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 2001, electors in Nea ward were relatively over-represented by 16 per cent, while electors in Mudford ward were significantly under-represented by 20 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received four representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Christchurch Borough Council, and representations from Burton Parish Council, the Jumpers & St Catherine's Residents Association and the Highcliffe Residents' Association. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Christchurch in Dorset*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposal. However, to improve electoral equality further and better reflect community identity in certain areas, it moved away from the Council's two-member ward pattern in the east of the district, where it proposed boundary modifications to five wards. It proposed that:

- Christchurch Borough Council should be served by 24 councillors, compared with the current 25, representing 11 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of nine of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**

Christchurch Borough Council should comprise 24 councillors, serving 11 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average based on either 2001 or 2006 figures.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received six representations. A list of all respondents is available on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Christchurch Borough Council.

### **Christchurch Borough Council**

19 The Borough Council broadly supported the LGCE's draft recommendations. However, it reiterated its support for its proposed warding arrangement of 12 two-member wards, which it put forward at Stage One. It argued that this would better reflect community identity across the borough. It stressed its opposition to the LGCE's proposed three-member Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards, arguing that the two wards did not reflect community identity in the area and stating that "the Commission may have misdirected itself as these do not reflect the historic community of Mudeford and the community links between Friars Cliff and Hoburne". It also proposed three minor boundary modifications, two between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards. It proposed placing the Mudeford Wood Community Centre in West Highcliffe ward with the "All Weather" sports area adjacent to it, and proposed moving numbers 2a and 2b Wellington Avenue into West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward from Mudeford & Friars Cliff ward to ensure that all the properties on Wellington Avenue were in the same ward. The third boundary modification proposed by the Borough Council was between the LGCE's proposed Purewell & Stanpit and Somerford wards and involved moving number 36 Mudeford Lane into the same ward as numbers 8 to 34 Mudeford Lane. The Borough Council also proposed a number of ward name changes to better reflect community identity in the borough.

### **Parish Councils**

20 Hurn Parish Council argued that the name of the LGCE's proposed St Catherine's ward should be changed to St Catherine's & Hurn ward in order to better reflect the constituent parts of the ward.

### **Residents Groups**

21 Friars Cliff Residents' Association proposed that the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards should be moved north to run along Lymington Road in order to include Auckland Road, Dunedin Grove and Wellington Avenue in the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff ward. It argued that the roads concerned are naturally part of the Friars Cliff area and that they have established community links with the Friars Cliff area. It stated that "the residents associate themselves totally with Friars Cliff and most are paid-up members of this association" and "the residents use some or all of the local pub, the church in Mudeford, Bure Stores and Post Office and the local beaches at Friars Cliff".

22 Jumpers & St Catherine's Residents Association proposed an amendment to the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Avon and Fairmile wards. It argued that the boundary should be amended so that the Jumpers Cemetery and Jumpers Common ward would be included in the LGCE's proposed Fairmile ward. It argued that the residents of Fairmile ward use Jumpers Cemetery and Jumpers Common and therefore the two open spaces should be warded in Fairmile ward.

23 The Friends and Residents of Grange Community Association proposed that the name of the LGCE's proposed Somerford ward should be changed to Grange ward. It argued that the name Grange would better reflect community identity in the area and would not carry the negative connotations of the name Somerford.

### **Other Representations**

24 We received a further representation from a local organisation, the Preston Group. It expressed its support for the LGCE's proposed Town Centre ward but argued that the boundary between it and the neighbouring Purewell & Stanpit ward should be moved slightly eastwards in order to enable a number of residents who more readily identify with the town centre area rather than Purewell to be included in the Town Centre ward.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

25 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Christchurch is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – which stipulates the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

26 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

27 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

28 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered, and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

29 Since 1975 there has been a 29 per cent increase in the electorate of Christchurch borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4 per cent from 37,327 to 38,880 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It forecast that most of the growth would be in the Hoburne area. In order to prepare these forecasts, 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. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

30 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### **Council Size**

31 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

32 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted an amended version of the Borough Council's proposal for a council of 24 members representing 12 two-member wards, and proposed a council of 24 members representing nine two-member wards and two three-member wards. No other representations regarding council size were received at Stage One.

33 During Stage Three Christchurch Borough Council reiterated its support for a council of 24 members. No other submissions regarding council size were received at Stage Three. Given the support for this council size from the Borough Council, the lack of other submissions relating to council size and having considered the size and the distribution of the electorate, the geography and the other characteristics of the area, we remain of the view that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council size of 24 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

34 At Stage One the LGCE based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. It allocated the correct number of councillors to the east and west of the River Avon, utilised good natural boundaries such as the River Avon, the main London to Bournemouth railway line to the west of the River Avon and Mudeford Wood and Bure Brook to the east of the River Avon, and recognised a number of distinct communities within Christchurch town itself. The Borough Council's scheme also retained the existing ward of Burton, thereby respecting Burton's parish boundaries. However, to improve electoral equality further and better reflect community identity in certain areas, the LGCE proposed departing from the Council's two-member ward pattern in the east of the district. It proposed boundary modifications to the Borough Council's proposed Friars Cliff & Hoburne, Mudeford & Bure and West Highcliffe wards, creating two three-member wards instead of three two-member wards as proposed by the Council. It also proposed amendments to the Council's proposed Purewell & Stanpit and Town Centre wards.

35 At Stage Three the Borough Council commented on the proposed wards of Mudeford & Friars Cliff, Purewell & Stanpit, Somerford and West Highcliffe & Hoburne. It also reiterated its support for a 24-member council comprising 12 two-member wards and proposed three minor boundary amendments and a number of ward name changes across the borough.

36 In response to the LGCE's draft recommendations report, a number of respondents proposed minor boundary amendments to the proposed Avon, Fairmile, Mudeford & Friars Cliff, Town Centre and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards and a number of ward name changes.

37 The draft recommendations have been reviewed 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) Jumpers, Portfield, St Catherine's and Twynham wards;
- (b) Burton, Chewton, Grange, Mudeford, Nea and Wingfield wards.

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

## **Jumpers, Portfield, St Catherine's and Twynham wards**

39 The existing three-member wards of Jumpers and Twynham and the existing two-member wards of Portfield and St Catherine's (including the parish of Hurn) cover the area of the borough to the west of the River Avon. Under the current arrangements of a 25-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the Jumpers, St Catherine's and Twynham wards is 8 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively (10 per cent below, 9 per cent below and equal to the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the Portfield ward is 11 per cent above the borough average (8 per cent above the borough average by 2006).

40 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should comprise four new two-member wards, thereby changing the boundaries of all of the existing wards. It proposed that the boundaries of the existing St Catherine's ward should be amended, so that the area of the existing Jumpers ward to the north-east of Suffolk Avenue and Norfolk Avenue and to the east of Fairmile Road and Hurn Road, including Sandy Lane but excluding the properties on Fairmile Road, be included in St Catherine's ward. It also argued that the boundary of St Catherine's ward should run along the middle of The Grove and then along the middle of Barrack Road to the borough boundary. It proposed that a new Fairmile ward should be created from the remainder of Jumpers ward, excluding that area to the south of the northern boundary of its proposed Avon ward which would run north-west to the rear of the properties on Cairns Close, Kimberly Close and Crofton Close, westwards to the rear of the cemetery, south-westwards to the rear of the properties on Gardiner Road and along the centre of Barrack Road to the borough boundary. It also proposed that a new Avon ward should be created from the remainder of the existing Jumpers ward and the area of the existing Portfield Ward to the north of the railway line. Under the Council's proposals, the remaining area of the borough to the south of the railway line and the west of the River Avon would be named Town Centre ward. The Borough Council argued that all the wards to the west of the River Avon have entities that should be preserved and stated that "the opportunity has been taken to use natural boundaries where possible".

41 The Jumpers & St Catherine's Resident's Association proposed that the boundary between the existing Jumpers and Portfield ward should be amended, but it did not provide any evidence in support of this proposal.

42 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One the LGCE proposed largely endorsing the Borough Council's proposals, with one amendment to the boundary between Town Centre and Purewell & Stanpit wards. It considered that the Borough Council's recommendations for the area provided a good balance between electoral equality and community identity and utilised a number of good and well-defined boundaries such as the London to Bournemouth railway line and the River Avon. It proposed that the eastern boundary of the Council's proposed Town Centre ward should be amended to run to the east of Bridge Street Island. It considered that bringing Bridge Street Island into the proposed Town Centre ward would better reflect the community links which the island has with the town centre and the transport links between the two areas. Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed two-member Avon and Fairmile wards would be equal to the borough average in both cases (both 3 per cent and 3 per cent below the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed St Catherine's and Town Centre wards would be 4 per cent below and 5 per cent above the borough average respectively (6 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average by 2006).

43 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed its broad support for the LGCE's recommendations in the area. However it proposed renaming three of the LGCE's proposed wards. It proposed that the LGCE's proposed Avon ward should be renamed Portfield and its proposed Fairmile ward should be renamed Jumpers ward. Jumpers & St Catherine's Residents Association objected to the LGCE's proposed Avon and Fairmile wards. It argued that the boundary between the two wards should be amended to run along the centre of Jumpers Road to Fairmile Road and then down the centre of Knapp Mill Avenue so that Jumpers Common and Jumpers Cemetery would be included in the proposed Fairmile ward. It argued that these two open spaces are important to the people of Fairmile ward and stated its proposed boundary amendment "will, however, keep two open spaces which are so important to the residents as part of the Fairmile Ward and therefore covered by their Ward councillors". The Preston Group proposed an amendment to the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Purewell & Stanpit and Town Centre wards. It argued that moving the boundary between the two wards eastwards from the River Avon to the Purewell Cross Roundabout would help to reflect community identity by including a number of properties along Bridge Street in Town Centre ward, an area with which they more readily identify. It went on to state that "the dozen or so residents and traders in this area, without doubt, consider themselves part of the Town Centre, both geographically and in spirit".

44 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three we have decided to largely endorse the LGCE's draft recommendations for the area. We have noted the proposal from the Preston Group to move the boundary of the LGCE's proposed Town Centre ward eastwards to include part of the LGCE's proposed Purewell & Stanpit ward. However, we are of the opinion that it has not provided enough argumentation to demonstrate community links between the properties on Bridge Street and the town centre area. We are also of the opinion that the River Avon, the eastern boundary of the LGCE's proposed Town Centre ward, provides a strong and easily identifiable boundary between its proposed Town Centre and Purewell & Stanpit wards. Therefore we propose endorsing the LGCE's proposed Town Centre ward as final.

45 However, we have decided to move away from the draft recommendations and propose a minor boundary amendment based on the comments of Jumpers & St Catherine's Residents Association. We have noted the arguments of the Residents Association and we have been convinced that the two open spaces of Jumpers Common and Jumpers Cemetery should be placed in the proposed Fairmile ward. However, this boundary amendment adversely affects electoral equality in the area, therefore we propose amending the boundary between the proposed Fairmile and Portfield wards so that Jumpers Common and Cemetery, Halewood Way and numbers 6 to 30 Jumpers Road are included in Fairmile ward and the boundary would then follow the existing boundary between the two wards. We also propose adopting the ward name changes proposed by the Borough Council. We propose that the LGCE's Avon ward be renamed Portfield ward, its proposed Fairmile ward be renamed Jumpers ward and its proposed St Catherine's ward be renamed St Catherine's & Hurn ward. We are of the opinion that these ward name changes would help to better reflect community identity in the area.

46 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in our proposed two-member Portfield and St Catherine's & Hurn wards would be 1 per cent and 4 per cent below the borough average respectively (4 per cent and 6 per cent below the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Jumpers and Town Centre wards would be 1 per cent and 5 per cent above the borough average respectively (2 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average by 2006).

47 Our final recommendations are illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

### **Burton, Chewton, Grange, Mudeford, Nea and Wingfield wards**

48 The existing two-member wards of Burton (comprising the parish of Burton), Nea and Wingfield and the existing three-member wards of Chewton, Grange and Mudeford cover the area of the borough to the east of the River Avon. Under the current arrangements of a 25-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Burton, Grange and Mudeford wards is 11 per cent, 1 per cent and 20 per cent above the borough average respectively (5 per cent, 8 per cent and 18 per cent above the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Chewton, Nea and Wingfield wards is 5 per cent, 16 per cent and 9 per cent below the borough average respectively (5 per cent, 12 per cent and 6 per cent below the borough average by 2006).

49 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should comprise eight two-member wards: seven new two-member wards and the existing two-member Burton ward. It proposed that four new wards should be created in the area between the River Avon and the Highcliffe area. The Borough Council proposed a new Purewell & Stanpit ward, comprising the existing Twynham Ward (less that area to the west of Bridge Street Island and that area to the east of Mudeford Lane), that part of the existing Mudeford Ward to the west of Mudeford Lane and to the north of Warren Avenue and that part of Grange Ward to the west of Burton Road. It also proposed creating a new Somerford ward from that part of the existing Grange Ward that lies to the west of Watery Lane, that part of the existing Twynham ward to the east of Mudeford Lane, and that part of the existing Mudeford ward to the south of the existing northern boundary of Mudeford where it runs through the Ambassador Industrial Estate.

50 The Council also proposed that a new Mudeford & Bure ward should be created from the areas of the existing Mudeford ward to the west of Bure Lane and the River Mude, to the east of Mudeford Lane, to the south of a boundary running southwest along Warren Avenue, south-east along the middle of Pauntley Road, south-west to the rear of the recreation ground, north-west along the middle of Stanpit, then south-west along Ledbury Road and to the rear of the properties on the north side of Coast Guard Way. It proposed the creation of a new Friars Cliff ward to be called Friars Cliff & Hoburne from that part of the existing Grange ward to the east of Watery Lane, that area of the existing Wingfield Ward to the west of Hoburne and Verno Lane, and that area of the existing Mudeford ward to the east of Bure Lane. The Council proposed three two-member wards in the Highcliffe area. It proposed that a new West Highcliffe ward be created from that area of the existing Wingfield Ward to the east of Hoburne Lane, that area of the existing Mudeford ward to the north-east of East Cliff Way and that part of the existing Nea ward to the north of Lymington Road, to the west of Abbots Close including Castle Avenue and to the rear of the properties on the west side of Hinton Wood Avenue. It also argued that the remaining area of Highcliffe should be divided into two two-member wards, Highcliffe and North Highcliffe & Walkford. It proposed that Highcliffe ward should comprise the remaining area of Highcliffe to the south of Lymington Road and Braemar Drive, to the east of Castle Avenue and Hinton Wood Avenue and to the south-west of the eastern ends of Ringwood Road and Lymington Road. The Council proposed that the remaining area of Highcliffe to the north of this area should comprise its proposed two-member North Highcliffe & Walkford ward.

51 The LGCE also received a representation from the Highcliffe Residents' Association. It objected to the Council's proposed Friars Cliff & Hoburne ward, arguing that the proposed ward failed to recognise the community links between Hoburne and the Highcliffe area.

52 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, the LGCE decided to largely draw upon the Council's proposals as they used a number of good boundaries such as Mudeford Wood, Chewton Common Road and Lymington Road, and recognised a number of distinct communities in the east of Christchurch such as Purewell, Stanpit, Mudeford and the area to the north of Somerford Road. It considered that the majority of wards proposed by the Borough Council reflected community identity and provided for good electoral equality. However, in order to better reflect community identity around the West Highcliffe area, it proposed creating a three-member West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward. It judged that new housing developments have created an urban link between the West Highcliffe area and the Hoburne Estate, and concurred with the Highcliffe Residents' Association's assertion that the Hoburne area is a part of Highcliffe. As a result of this, it proposed a new three-member Mudeford & Friars Cliff ward, and welcomed views from local people during Stage Three.

53 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed two-member Burton, Purewell & Stanpit and Somerford wards would be 5 per cent, 4 per cent and 8 per cent above the borough average respectively (1 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 5 per cent above the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the proposed two-member Highcliffe and North Highcliffe & Walkford wards and the proposed three-member Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards would be 3 per cent below, 6 per cent below, 5 per cent below and equal to the borough average respectively (1 per cent below, 6 per cent below, 7 per cent below and 10 per cent above the borough average by 2006).

54 At Stage Three the Borough Council broadly supported the LGCE's draft recommendation in this area of the borough but expressed the view that a council comprising 12 two-member wards would for "reasons of economy, efficiency of representation and uniformity, best serve the needs of the Borough's electorate". It went on to suggest three minor boundary amendments to the LGCE's proposals in the area, in the event of its 12 two-member ward scheme not being adopted, in order to better reflect community identity. It proposed that the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Purewell & Stanpit and Mudeford wards be amended to ensure that number 36 Mudeford Lane is in Purewell & Stanpit ward along with numbers 8 to 34. It argued that the boundary between the LGCE's Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards should be amended so that Mudeford Wood Community Centre is placed in West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward along with the all weather sports area. It proposed amending the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards to ensure that all the properties on Wellington Avenue are in West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward.

55 The Borough Council also proposed three ward name changes in the area. It proposed that Burton ward be renamed Burton & Winkton ward, that Somerford ward be renamed Grange ward and that West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward be renamed West Highcliffe ward.

56 Friars Cliff Residents Association proposed amending the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards to run along Lymington Road, thereby including Auckland Road, Dunedin Grove and Wellington Avenue in Mudeford & Friars Cliff ward. It argued that these three roads share community links with the Mudeford and Friars Cliff areas and stated that "the residents use some or all of the local pub, the church in Mudeford, Bure Stores and Post Office and the local beaches at Friars Cliff, using the twitten (a passage way) from Wellington Avenue to Bure Lane to gain access to them."

57 The Friends and Residents of Grange Community Association proposed that the LGCE's proposed Somerford ward be renamed Grange ward. It argued that changing the name of the ward would more accurately reflect community identity in the ward. It also argued that the name

Somerford carries with it negative connotations which would adversely affect the lives of the residents.

58 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received. We are of the opinion that two of the minor boundary amendments proposed by the Borough Council should be adopted. We consider that placing the Mudeford Wood Community Centre in West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward along with the adjacent all weather sports area and link roads, and placing number 36 Mudeford Lane in Purewell & Stanpit ward along with numbers 8 to 36 Mudeford Lane, are justified as they have no effect on electoral equality and help to reflect community identity on the ground. We are of the opinion that the amendment to the boundary between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards proposed by the Friars Cliff Residents Association helps to better reflect community identity in the area. The Residents Association has in our opinion provided enough argumentation to justify its assertion that Auckland Road, Dunedin Grove and Wellington Avenue have better community links with the Mudeford and Friars Cliff areas than they do with the West Highcliffe or Hoburne areas. We propose adopting its boundary amendment. This will result in the whole of Wellington Avenue being placed in the same district ward and will at the same time address the Borough Council's concerns about splitting Wellington Avenue between two district wards. We are also of the opinion that the ward name changes proposed by the Borough Council for the LGCE's proposed Burton, Somerford and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards are justified, as they would better reflect the constituent areas of the wards. Therefore we propose changing the names of the LGCE's proposed Burton, Somerford and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards to Burton & Winkton, Grange and West Highcliffe respectively.

59 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Highcliffe, Mudeford & Friars Cliffe, North Highcliffe & Walkford and West Highcliffe wards would be 3 per cent, 3 per cent, 6 per cent and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (1 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 7 per cent above the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in our proposed Grange, Burton & Winkton and Purewell & Stanpit wards would be 8 per cent, 5 per cent and 4 per cent above the borough average respectively (5 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

60 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

## **Conclusions**

61 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose minor amendments to the boundaries between the LGCE's proposed Mudeford & Friars Cliff and West Highcliffe & Hoburne wards, and between the LGCE's proposed Purewell & Stanpit and Somerford wards.

- we propose that Avon ward be renamed Portfield ward, Burton ward be renamed Burton & Winkton ward, Fairmile ward be renamed Jumpers ward and Somerford ward be renamed Grange ward.
- we propose that St Catherine's ward be renamed St Catherine's & Hurn Ward and that West Highcliffe & Hoburne ward be renamed West Highcliffe ward.

62 We conclude that, in Christchurch:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 25 to 24;
- there should be 11 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of nine of the existing 10 wards should be modified.

63 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

*Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	25	24	25	24
Number of wards	10	11	10	11
Average number of electors per councillor	1,493	1,555	1,555	1,620
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average	4	0	2	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	0	0

64 As Table 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 four to zero, with no wards varying by more than 8 per cent from the borough average. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 7 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**

Christchurch Borough Council should comprise 24 councillors serving 11 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Christchurch*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

65 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in Christchurch and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692).

66 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 13 May 2002.

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

The Secretary  
Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
30 Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW