

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Castle Point in Essex

May 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Castle Point is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Castle Point on 30 November 1999.

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

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

- **in six of the 14 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 this unequal representation 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 six wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 72–73) are that:

- **Castle Point Borough Council should have 41 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 14 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all 14 of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should take place by thirds as opposed to whole council elections every four years, as at present.**

These draft 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 all of the 14 proposed 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 expected to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all 14 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

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

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

**Review Manager
Castle Point Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

**Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
Website: www.lgce.gov.uk**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Appleton	3	Appleton ward (part); Boyce ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)
2 Boyce	3	Appleton ward (part); Boyce ward (part); St James' ward (part)
3 Canvey Island Central	3	Canvey Island Central ward; Canvey Island West ward (part); Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part)
4 Canvey Island East	3	Canvey Island East ward (part)
5 Canvey Island North	3	Canvey Island North ward (part); Canvey Island East ward (part); Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part)
6 Canvey Island South	3	Canvey Island South ward; Canvey Island North ward (part); Canvey Island West ward (part)
7 Canvey Island West	2	Canvey Island West ward (part)
8 Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part); Canvey Island North ward (part)
9 Cedar Hall	3	Cedar Hall ward (part); St Peter's ward (part)
10 St George's	3	St George's ward (part)
11 St James'	3	St James' ward (part); Victoria ward (part)
12 St Mary's	3	St Mary's ward (part); Appleton ward (part)
13 St Peter's	3	St Peter's ward (part); St George's ward (part)
14 Victoria	3	Victoria ward (part); Cedar Hall ward (part)

Notes: 1 The Borough is unparished.

2 Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Castle Point

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Appleton	3	5,192	1,731	4	5,287	1,762	5
2	Boyce	3	5,001	1,667	0	5,021	1,674	-1
3	Canvey Island Central	3	5,151	1,717	3	5,185	1,728	3
4	Canvey Island East	3	5,145	1,715	3	5,259	1,753	4
5	Canvey Island North	3	4,679	1,560	-7	4,707	1,569	-7
6	Canvey Island South	3	5,140	1,713	3	5,146	1,715	2
7	Canvey Island West	2	3,543	1,772	6	3,635	1,818	8
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	5,084	1,695	2	5,243	1,748	4
9	Cedar Hall	3	4,907	1,636	-2	4,949	1,650	-2
10	St George's	3	5,065	1,688	1	5,070	1,690	0
11	St James'	3	5,055	1,685	1	5,062	1,687	0
12	St Mary's	3	5,130	1,710	2	5,128	1,709	1
13	St Peter's	3	4,615	1,538	-8	4,657	1,552	-8
14	Victoria	3	4,697	1,566	-6	4,706	1,569	-7
	Totals	41	68,404	-	-	69,055	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,668	-	-	1,684	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Point Borough Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Castle Point. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1976 (Report No. 137). The electoral arrangements of Essex County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (report No. 401). We completed a directed electoral review of Thurrock in 1996 and a periodic electoral review of Southend-on-Sea in 1999. We expect to undertake a periodic electoral review of Thurrock in 2000 and a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. 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 borough 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 borough’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

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

12 Stage One began on 30 November 1999, when we wrote to Castle Point Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council,

Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, Essex Local Councils' Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 28 February 2000.

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

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

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of Castle Point is situated on the Thames coastline of south-east Essex. The borough is centred around Benfleet Creek, an inlet of the Thames estuary, which essentially results in the creation of two separate communities. To the north of the Creek is Benfleet, which comprises the communities of Benfleet, Thundersley and Hadleigh, while to the south is Canvey Island. The borough is compact, covering an area of approximately 4,500 hectares and neighbours Basildon and Thurrock to the west, Southend-on-Sea to the east and Rochford to the north. The borough has good communication links to Southend-on-Sea and London by rail and the A13 and A127 trunk roads. The borough contains no civil parishes.

17 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'.

18 The electorate of the borough is 68,404 (February 1999). The Council at present has 39 councillors who are elected from 14 wards. Eleven of the wards are each represented by three councillors and the remaining three are represented by two councillors. The whole council is elected every four years.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Castle Point borough, with around 19 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Canvey Island North, Canvey Island South and Canvey Island Winter Gardens wards.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,754 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,771 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 14 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, one of which varies by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward, where the two councillors represent 62 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Castle Point

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Appleton	3	5,364	1,788	2	5,459	1,820	3
2	Boyce	3	5,014	1,671	-5	5,034	1,678	-5
3	Canvey Island Central	3	4,306	1,435	-18	4,318	1,439	-19
4	Canvey Island East	3	5,332	1,777	1	5,478	1,826	3
5	Canvey Island North	3	5,572	1,857	6	5,616	1,872	6
6	Canvey Island South	2	3,786	1,893	8	3,783	1,892	7
7	Canvey Island West	2	4,077	2,039	16	4,202	2,101	19
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	2	5,669	2,835	62	5,778	2,889	63
9	Cedar Hall	3	4,575	1,525	-13	4,617	1,539	-13
10	St George's	3	5,489	1,830	4	5,494	1,831	3
11	St James'	3	4,567	1,522	-13	4,574	1,525	-14
12	St Mary's	3	4,900	1,633	-7	4,898	1,633	-8
13	St Peter's	3	5,207	1,736	-1	5,249	1,750	-1
14	Victoria	3	4,546	1,515	-14	4,555	1,518	-14
	Totals	39	68,404	-	-	69,055	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,754	-	-	1,771	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Castle Point 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 1999, electors in Canvey Island Central ward were relatively over-represented by 18 per cent, while electors in Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward were relatively under-represented by 62 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Castle Point Borough Council.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two borough-wide representations during Stage One, one from the Borough Council and one from Castle Point Conservative Association both of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Castle Point Borough Council

23 The Borough Council proposed a council of 41 members, two more than at present, serving 14 wards. The Borough Council's proposals largely built on the existing warding arrangements, with relatively minor modifications to all wards, except Boyce ward which would remain unchanged. In addition, it proposed that Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards should each gain a councillor, resulting in a pattern of predominantly three-member wards, with one two-member ward. The Council also proposed a change from whole council elections every four years to elections by thirds.

24 The Borough Council's proposals would provide for improved levels of electoral equality for the borough as a whole, resulting in the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average in all the proposed 14 wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain constant over the next five years. The Council's proposal is summarised at Appendix A.

Castle Point Conservative Association

25 Castle Point Conservative Association ('the Conservatives') proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for the Benfleet area, arguing that the existing boundaries represent "clear and defined" areas of the borough. They also argued that, under a council size of 41, the Benfleet wards would all have an acceptable level of electoral equality, and that the only benefit in making small changes would be that of political gain. They did, however, propose minor modifications to ward boundaries on Canvey Island, with an additional councillor for both Canvey Island South and Canvey Island Winter Gardens wards. As part of their submission, the Conservatives also proposed a move to elections by thirds. Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average both now, and in 2004. The Conservatives' proposal is summarised at Appendix A

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Castle Point is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is as nearly as possible the same. 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.

27 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 next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

28 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.

29 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, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

30 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 1 per cent from 68,404 to 69,055 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Canvey Island East ward. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorate of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

31 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council's figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

33 Castle Point Borough Council at present has 39 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 41 members, which it argued would achieve improved levels of electoral equality throughout the borough.

34 The Conservatives argued that an increase in council size of two, from 39 to 41, would go some way to achieving their intention of creating a pattern of predominantly three-member wards for the borough.

35 We recognise that, since the last review, the electorate of Canvey Island has grown at a faster rate than Benfleet and that a small increase in council size would provide each part of the borough with the number of councillors to which it is entitled. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 41 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we have decided to base our draft recommendations on elements of both the Borough Council's and the Conservatives' submissions. We note there is significant consensus between the two schemes, and we consider that this combination would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or either of the two schemes in their entirety. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to put forward further modifications in some areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) **Benfleet**
 - Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards;
 - Appleton, Boyce, St James' and St Mary's wards

- (b) **Canvey Island**
 - Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards;
 - Canvey Island Central, Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards.

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

Benfleet (eight wards)

38 The urban area of Benfleet covers the settlements of Benfleet, Thundersley and Hadleigh. It comprises over half the borough's total electorate and is separated from Canvey Island by Benfleet Creek and sparsely populated land. The area contains no civil parishes and is represented by eight borough wards, three of which have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards

39 The existing wards of Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria are situated in the north of the borough and broadly cover the area to the north of the A13 trunk road. All four wards are currently represented by three councillors. Under current arrangements, Cedar Hall, St Peter's and Victoria wards contain 13 per cent, 1 per cent and 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while St George's ward contains 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

40 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed minor modifications to Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards in order to provide improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed that the area to the east of Roseberry Avenue and north of Church Road, and the area bounded by Church Road and Kennington Road should be transferred from St George's ward to St Peter's ward. This would result in the transfer of 522 electors from St George's ward to St Peter's ward. It also proposed that two areas should be transferred from St Peter's ward to Cedar Hall ward. It proposed that the boundary between the two wards should, in future, continue down Kenneth Road for its entire length, resulting in the transfer of The Chase and adjacent roads from St Peter's ward to Cedar Hall ward. In addition, in the north, it proposed that Goldfinch Lane and adjoining roads, plus the new developments on the A127 Arterial Road and Rivenhall, should be transferred from St Peter's ward to Cedar Hall ward. In relation to the boundary between Cedar Hall and Victoria wards, the Council proposed that the Queensmere area be transferred from Cedar Hall ward to Victoria ward. A modification was also proposed to the southern boundary of Victoria ward. The Council proposed that the area to the south of Poors Lane be transferred from Victoria ward to St James' ward.

41 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards would vary from the Borough average by 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

42 The Conservatives proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards, arguing that the current arrangements provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality, while representing clear and defined areas of the borough. They argued that any small changes to ward boundaries in this area would only be for political gain.

43 Under the Conservatives' proposals, based on a council size of 41, the number of electors per councillor in Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards would vary from the borough average by 9 per cent, 10 per cent, 4 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

44 Having considered the representations received during Stage One, we consider that the Borough Council's proposals for this area would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and are largely content to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. We do, however, propose one amendment. We note that the Council's proposal would divide Woodside Avenue between St George's and St Peter's wards. We propose amending the boundary so that the whole of Woodside Avenue and Woodside View would remain part of St George's ward.

45 While we consider that the Conservatives' proposals to retain the existing warding arrangements for this area have some merit, we note that they would result in marginally higher levels of electoral equality than the proposals submitted by the Borough Council, without, in our view, compromising community identity and interests.

46 Under our draft recommendations, the revised Cedar Hall, St George's, St Peter's and Victoria wards would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 8 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Appleton, Boyce, St James' and St Mary's wards

47 The existing wards of Appleton, Boyce, St James' and St Mary's are situated in the centre of the borough and cover the South Benfleet and Hadleigh areas. All four wards are currently represented by three councillors. Under current arrangements, Boyce, St James' and St Mary's wards contain 5 per cent, 13 per cent and 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Appleton ward contains 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

48 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed minor modifications to Appleton, St James' and St Mary's wards, while proposing that Boyce ward should remain unchanged. It proposed that the boundary between Appleton and St Mary's wards should be modified to follow the rear of properties on Limetree Avenue, Oakfield Close and Oakfield Road, incorporating the whole of these roads in a revised St Mary's ward. It also proposed a modification to the boundary between Victoria and St James' wards with the revised boundary following Poors Lane (as outlined above).

49 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Appleton, St James' and St Mary's wards would vary from the borough average by 3 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, while Boyce ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally improve over the next five years.

50 The Conservatives proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements for Appleton, Boyce, St James' and St Mary's wards, arguing that the current arrangements provide for acceptable levels of electoral equality, while representing clear and defined areas of the borough. They also argued that any small changes to ward boundaries in this area would only be for political gain.

51 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Appleton, St James' and St Mary's wards would vary from the borough average by 7 per cent, 9 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, while Boyce ward would contain equal to the average number of electors. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

52 Having considered the representations received during Stage One, we consider that the Borough Council's proposals for this area would provide for improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and propose basing our draft recommendations for this area on their scheme. However, in order to better reflect the local community and provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries, we propose modifying the Council's proposals in four areas. Firstly, we propose a minor modification to the boundary between the revised Appleton and Boyce wards in order that the whole of Downer Road to the north of the junction with Bowers Road, would form part of Appleton ward. Secondly, we propose a minor modification to the boundary between Boyce and St James' wards so that properties on Benfleet Road (45 electors), to the west of the junction with St John's Road, would be united with similar properties in Boyce ward. Thirdly, we propose a modification to the boundary between Appleton and St Mary's wards in order to tie the current ward boundary to ground detail. Finally, we propose a further modification to the boundary between Appleton and Boyce wards to provide a clearer boundary. While none of these minor amendments would have a significant effect of electoral equality, we consider they would provide clearer, more identifiable boundaries for these wards.

53 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Appleton, St James' and St Mary's wards would vary from the borough average by 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively, while Boyce ward would be equal to the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Canvey Island (six wards)

54 Canvey Island is separated from Benfleet by Benfleet Creek, with the only links being the A130 Canvey Way and the Canvey Road. The island is densely populated around the centre and surrounded by sparse areas to its south and west. The area contains no civil parishes and is divided into six wards, three of which have electoral imbalances of more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards

55 The existing wards of Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South broadly cover the eastern half of Canvey Island. Canvey Island East and Canvey Island North wards are both currently represented by three councillors, while Canvey Island South ward is represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Canvey Island East, Canvey Island

North and Canvey Island South wards contain 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

56 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed amending the boundaries of Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards, in order to achieve improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed that Canvey Island North ward should be expanded to include the part of Canvey Island East ward to the west of Westerland Avenue. It also proposed that the part of Canvey Island North ward to the west of Central Wall Road should be transferred to a revised Canvey Island Central ward. Finally, it proposed an amendment to the western boundary of Canvey Island South ward so that the area to the west of Welbeck Road would be transferred to the neighbouring Canvey Island West ward. Canvey Island East and Canvey Island North wards would continue to return three councillors and Canvey Island South ward, two councillors.

57 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards would vary from the borough average by 3 per cent, 1 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

58 The Conservatives also proposed modifications to the boundaries of Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards, as well as an additional councillor for Canvey Island South ward. They proposed significant changes to the boundaries of Canvey Island North ward, modifying the southern boundary with Canvey Island South ward to follow the High Street. This would result in the town centre and 1,075 electors being transferred from Canvey Island North ward to Canvey Island South ward. They also proposed a modification to the boundary between Canvey Island North and Canvey Island East wards. They proposed that Canvey Island North ward should be enlarged to include the part of Canvey Island East ward to the west of Baardwyk Avenue, Hassell Road and Orange Road. The Conservatives proposed two further minor modifications in this area. Firstly, they proposed that the boundary between Canvey Island South and Canvey Island Central wards should follow the centre of Furtherwick Road resulting in the transfer of properties on the west side to Canvey Island Central ward. Secondly, they proposed modifying the western boundary of Canvey Island South ward, transferring the whole of Rose Road, Berkeley Lane and Chichester Close from Canvey Island West ward.

59 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain constant over the next five years.

60 Having considered the representations received, we note that both the Borough Council's and the Conservatives' proposals for this area achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality. However, we are not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals would adequately reflect the identities and interests of the local community. In particular, we are concerned that the modification to the western boundary of Canvey Island North ward would result in the Harvest Road area being combined with areas with which it has no affinity and from which it is physically separated. As a consequence of not utilising the Council's boundary in this area, we are unable

to take account of the Borough Council's scheme for the majority of the Canvey Island area. We therefore propose endorsing the Conservatives' proposals in the Canvey Island area, subject to some modifications. In the east of the island, we propose endorsing the Borough Council's proposals in relation to the boundary between Canvey Island East and Canvey Island North wards. We consider that its proposed boundary would provide for a clearer boundary than that proposed by the Conservatives, which we consider would not satisfactorily reflect the identities and interests of the local community. We also propose that the existing boundary be retained between the revised Canvey Island Central and Canvey Island South wards in order that the whole of Furtherwick Road, one of the shopping streets in the town, can continue to be contained in a single ward. In addition, we propose that the western boundary and part of the southern boundary of Canvey Island North ward both be realigned in order to tie them to ground detail. These changes would affect no electors.

61 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Canvey Island East, Canvey Island North and Canvey Island South wards would vary from the borough average by 3 per cent, 7 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain relatively constant over the next five years.

Canvey Island Central, Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards

62 The existing wards of Canvey Island Central, Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West broadly cover the western half of Canvey Island. Canvey Island West and Canvey Island Winter Gardens wards are each currently represented by two councillors, while Canvey Island Central is represented by three councillors. Under current arrangements, there is a relatively poor level of electoral equality. Canvey Island West and Canvey Island Winter Gardens wards contain 16 per cent and 62 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively, while Canvey Island Central ward contains 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

63 The Borough Council proposed modifying the boundaries of all three wards, together with allocating an additional councillor for Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards. It proposed that the south west corner of Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (First Avenue, Second Avenue, Link Road, The Weald and Crossways), be transferred to Canvey Island West ward. It also proposed a modification to the boundary between Canvey Island Central and Canvey Island North wards to incorporate the area to the west of Central Wall Road in Canvey Island Central ward, and to the boundary between Canvey Island West and Canvey Island South wards to incorporate an area to the west of Welbeck Road in Canvey Island West ward. Both of these changes are discussed in more detail above.

64 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively, while Canvey Island Central ward would be equal to the average. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

65 The Conservatives proposed transferring the same area from Canvey Island Winter Gardens as the Borough Council and to increase its representation from two to three councillors. However, they proposed that this area along with an area containing 239 electors from the existing Canvey Island West ward should be transferred to Canvey Island Central ward. They also proposed a minor modification to the boundary between Canvey Island South and Canvey Island West wards to incorporate the Rose Road area in Canvey Island South ward, and to transfer part of Furtherwick Road from Canvey Island Central ward to Canvey Island South ward, as discussed above.

66 Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Canvey Island Central, Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards would vary from the borough average by 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

67 Having considered the representations received during Stage One, we note that both the Borough Council's and the Conservatives' proposals achieve improved levels of electoral equality. However, as outlined above, we are not persuaded that the Borough Council's proposals for the Canvey Island area satisfactorily reflect the identities and interests of the local community and therefore propose endorsing the Conservatives' proposals in this area, subject to minor modifications. We propose three modifications to the revised Canvey Island Central ward in order to provide for more clearly identifiable boundaries. In the south-west corner of the ward, we propose that the boundary follows the centre of Long Road, rather than to the rear of properties. We also propose amending part of the boundary between Canvey Island Central and Canvey Island Winter Gardens wards to include part of Meadow View Walk in Canvey Island Central ward. We also propose a minor modification to the eastern boundary of Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward in order to align the boundary with Hilton Dyke.

68 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the revised Canvey Island Central, Canvey Island Winter Gardens and Canvey Island West wards would vary from the borough average by 3 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to marginally deteriorate over the next five years.

Electoral Cycle

69 We received two representations regarding the Borough Council's electoral cycle. The Borough Council stated that, following a special meeting, it had approved the proposal to transfer from whole council elections to elections by thirds by 30 votes to four.

70 The Conservatives also proposed a move to elections by thirds, in line with a move towards a borough-wide pattern of three-member wards.

71 Having considered the representations received, we are content to consult on a change to the electoral cycle from whole council elections to elections by thirds as part of our draft recommendations. We would, however, particularly welcome the views of local residents and interested parties at Stage Three.

Conclusions

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

- there should be an increase in council size from 39 to 41;
- there should be 14 wards;
- the boundaries of all 14 of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should take place by thirds as opposed to whole council elections every four years, as at present.

73 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals for the Benfleet area, and the Conservatives' proposals for the Canvey Island area. However, we propose departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose modifying the boundary between Canvey Island West and Canvey Island Central wards to follow Long Road;
- we propose that part of Meadow View Walk be incorporated in Canvey Island Central ward;
- we propose modifying the boundary between St James' and Boyce wards in order that similar properties on Benfleet Road be united in the same ward;
- we propose amending the boundary between St George's and St Peter's wards in order that the whole of Woodside Avenue and Woodside View be incorporated in the same ward;
- we propose modifying the boundary between Appleton and Boyce wards resulting in properties on Downer Road being transferred to Appleton ward;
- we further propose four amendments within the borough to realign boundaries to geographical detail.

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

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	39	41	39	41
Number of wards	14	14	14	14
Average number of electors per councillor	1,754	1,668	1,771	1,684
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	1	0

75 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Castle Point Borough Council would result in all wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This improved level of electoral equality is projected to continue over the next five years.

Draft Recommendation
 Castle Point Borough Council should comprise 41 councillors serving 14 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should, in future, hold elections by thirds.

76 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Castle Point and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Castle Point

5 NEXT STEPS

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

78 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

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

APPENDIX A

Castle Point Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure A1: Castle Point Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Appleton	3	Appleton ward (part)
2	Boyce	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
3	Canvey Island Central	3	Canvey Island Central ward; Canvey Island North ward (part)
4	Canvey Island East	3	Canvey Island East ward (part)
5	Canvey Island North	3	Canvey Island North ward (part); Canvey Island East ward (part)
6	Canvey Island South	2	Canvey Island South ward (part)
7	Canvey Island West	3	Canvey Island West ward; Canvey Island South ward (part); Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part)
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	Canvey Island Winter Gardens (part)
9	Cedar Hall	3	Cedar Hall ward (part); St Peter's ward (part)
10	St George's	3	St George's ward (part)
11	St James'	3	St James' ward; Victoria ward (part)
12	St Mary's	3	St Mary's ward; Appleton ward (part)
13	St Peter's	3	St Peter's ward (part); St George's ward (part)
14	Victoria	3	Victoria ward (part); Cedar Hall ward (part)

Figure A2: Castle Point Borough Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Appleton	3	5,134	1,711	3	5,229	1,743	3
2	Boyce	3	5,014	1,671	0	5,034	1,678	0
3	Canvey Island Central	3	4,991	1,664	0	5,003	1,668	-1
4	Canvey Island East	3	5,145	1,715	3	5,291	1,764	5
5	Canvey Island North	3	5,074	1,691	1	5,118	1,706	1
6	Canvey Island South	2	3,261	1,631	-2	3,258	1,629	-3
7	Canvey Island West	3	5,164	1,721	3	5,289	1,763	5
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	5,107	1,702	2	5,216	1,739	3
9	Cedar Hall	3	4,907	1,636	-2	4,949	1,650	-2
10	St George's	3	4,967	1,656	-1	4,972	1,657	-2
11	St James'	3	5,100	1,700	2	5,107	1,702	1
12	St Mary's	3	5,130	1,710	2	5,128	1,709	1
13	St Peter's	3	4,713	1,571	-6	4,755	1,585	-6
14	Victoria	3	4,697	1,566	-6	4,706	1,569	-7
	Totals	41	68,404	–	–	69,055	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,668	–	–	1,684	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Point Borough Council's submission.

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

Castle Point Conservative Association's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure A3: Castle Point Conservative Association's Proposal: Constituent Areas

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Appleton	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
2	Boyce	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
3	Canvey Island Central	3	Canvey Island Central ward; Canvey Island West ward (part); Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part); Canvey Island North ward (part)
4	Canvey Island East	3	Canvey Island East ward (part)
5	Canvey Island North	3	Canvey Island North ward (part); Canvey Island East ward (part)
6	Canvey Island South	3	Canvey Island South ward; Canvey Island North ward (part); Canvey Island West ward (part)
7	Canvey Island West	2	Canvey Island West ward (part)
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	Canvey Island Winter Gardens ward (part)
9	Cedar Hall	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
10	St George's	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
11	St James'	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
12	St Mary's	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
13	St Peter's	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
14	Victoria	3	<i>Unchanged</i>

Figure A4: Castle Point Conservative Association's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Appleton	3	5,364	1,788	7	5,459	1,820	8
2	Boyce	3	5,014	1,671	0	5,034	1,678	0
3	Canvey Island Central	3	5,112	1,704	2	5,146	1,715	2
4	Canvey Island East	3	4,913	1,638	-2	5,021	1,674	-1
5	Canvey Island North	3	4,911	1,637	-2	4,945	1,648	-2
6	Canvey Island South	3	5,126	1,709	2	5,132	1,711	2
7	Canvey Island West	2	3,573	1,787	7	3,665	1,833	9
8	Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	5,107	1,702	2	5,266	1,755	4
9	Cedar Hall	3	4,575	1,525	-9	4,617	1,539	-9
10	St George's	3	5,489	1,830	10	5,494	1,831	9
11	St James'	3	4,567	1,522	-9	4,574	1,525	-9
12	St Mary's	3	4,900	1,633	-2	4,898	1,633	-3
13	St Peter's	3	5,207	1,736	4	5,249	1,750	4
14	Victoria	3	4,546	1,515	-9	4,555	1,518	-10
	Totals	41	68,404	-	-	69,055	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,668	-	-	1,684	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Castle Point Conservative Association's submission.

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

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to boroughs within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire boroughs:

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

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

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

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

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

(f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

(g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

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

(h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;

(i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and

(j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

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