

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Chelmsford 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. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the borough.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Chelmsford town and the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Chelmsford 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 Chelmsford:

- **in six of the 27 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 eight 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 76–77) are that:

- **Chelmsford Borough Council should have 57 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 27 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and eight wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In only one of the proposed 24 wards would the number of electors per councillor vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving South Hanningfield Parish Council and a reduction in the number of councillors serving South Woodham Ferrers Town Council.**

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:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield	2	East & West Hanningfield ward; Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre ward	Map 2
2	Boreham & The Leighs	2	Boreham ward; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward (part – Great Leighs parish)	Map 2
3	Broomfield & The Walthams	3	Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward (part – the parishes of Broomfield and Great Waltham); Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward (part – Little Waltham parish)	Map 2
4	Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park	3	Springfield North ward (part – part of Springfield North parish ward of Springfield parish); Springfield South ward	Map 2 and Large map
5	Chelmsford Rural West	1	Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward; Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward (part – Pleshey parish)	Map 2
6	Galleywood	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
7	Goat Hall	2	Goat Hall ward; Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Large map
8	Great Baddow East	3	Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward; Rothmans ward (part – part of Rothmans parish ward of Great Baddow parish)	Map 2 and Large map
9	Great Baddow West	2	Rothmans ward (part – part of Rothmans parish ward of Great Baddow parish)	Map 2 and Large map
10	Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
11	Marconi	2	All Saints ward (part); Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Large map
12	Moulsham & Central	3	Cathedral ward (part); Old Moulsham ward	Large map
13	Moulsham Lodge	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map
14	Patching Hall	3	All Saints ward (part); Patching Hall ward	Large map
15	Rettendon & Runwell	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
16	St Andrews	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Large map
17	South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting	2	Margaretting & Stock ward; South Hanningfield ward	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18	South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
19	South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
20	Springfield North	3	Springfield North ward (part – part of Springfield North parish ward of Springfield parish)	Map 2 and Large map
21	The Lawns	2	The Lawns ward (part)	Large map
22	Trinity	2	Cathedral ward (part); The Lawns ward (part)	Large map
23	Waterhouse Farm	2	Waterhouse Farm ward (part)	Large map
24	Writtle	2	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2

Notes: 1 Chelmsford town is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises nine wards.

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 Chelmsford

	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	Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield	2	4,188	2,094	-1	4,212	2,106	-5
2	Boreham & The Leighs	2	3,994	1,997	-6	4,534	2,267	3
3	Broomfield & The Walthams	3	5,945	1,982	-7	6,118	2,039	-8
4	Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park	3	5,398	1,799	-15	6,814	2,271	3
5	Chelmsford Rural West	1	2,155	2,155	1	2,162	2,162	-2
6	Galleywood	2	4,684	2,342	10	4,690	2,345	6
7	Goat Hall	2	4,526	2,263	7	4,642	2,321	5
8	Great Baddow East	3	6,295	2,098	-1	6,418	2,139	-3
9	Great Baddow West	2	4,130	2,065	-3	4,175	2,088	-5
10	Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	6,533	2,178	3	6,574	2,191	-1
11	Marconi	2	4,361	2,181	3	4,665	2,333	6
12	Moulsham & Central	3	6,662	2,221	5	6,729	2,243	2
13	Moulsham Lodge	2	3,962	1,981	-7	4,294	2,147	-3
14	Patching Hall	3	6,677	2,226	5	6,992	2,331	6
15	Rettendon & Runwell	2	4,069	2,035	-4	4,470	2,235	1
16	St Andrews	3	6,812	2,271	7	6,905	2,302	4
17	South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting	2	4,237	2,119	0	4,361	2,181	-1
18	South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood	3	6,214	2,071	-2	6,222	2,074	-6

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 %
19 South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	6,189	2,063	-3	6,213	2,071	-6
20 Springfield North	3	6,728	2,243	6	6,734	2,245	2
21 The Lawns	2	4,360	2,180	3	4,422	2,211	0
22 Trinity	2	4,387	2,194	3	4,417	2,209	0
23 Waterhouse Farm	2	3,999	2,000	-6	4,494	2,247	2
24 Writtle	2	4,544	2,272	7	4,553	2,277	3
Totals	57	121,049	–	–	125,810	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,124	–	–	2,207	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Chelmsford 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 Chelmsford in Essex on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the twelve 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 Chelmsford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1986 (Report No. 529). The electoral arrangements for Essex County Council were last reviewed in 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 Councils 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, i.e. 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. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

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 district 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 district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified; in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 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 district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

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 Chelmsford 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, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 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 Chelmsford is situated in mid-Essex and includes Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, South Woodham Ferrers town and 24 villages. It is one of the largest shire districts in England. The borough has excellent communication links, with good rail and road access to London and six international airports.

17 The borough contains 27 parishes, but Chelmsford town itself is unparished. Chelmsford town comprises 38 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

18 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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 The electorate of the borough is 121,049 (February 1999). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 27 wards, 15 of which are relatively urban in Chelmsford, Great Baddow, South Woodham Ferrers and Springfield, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 11 are each represented by two councillors and seven are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Chelmsford borough, with around 7 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in the South Woodham and Springfield wards.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,162 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,247 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 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Boreham ward where the councillor represents 27 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Chelmsford

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 All Saints	2	4,444	2,222	3	4,750	2,375	6
2 Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village	3	6,008	2,003	-7	6,132	2,044	-9
3 Boreham	1	2,737	2,737	27	2,885	2,885	28
4 Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham	2	5,170	2,585	20	5,309	2,655	18
5 Cathedral	2	4,491	2,246	4	4,519	2,260	1
6 Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell	1	1,915	1,915	-11	1,922	1,922	-14
7 East & West Hanningfield	1	1,805	1,805	-16	1,817	1,817	-19
8 Galleywood	2	4,684	2,342	8	4,690	2,345	4
9 Goat Hall	2	4,526	2,263	5	4,642	2,321	3
10 Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham	1	2,272	2,272	5	2,700	2,700	20
11 Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon	3	6,533	2,178	1	6,574	2,191	-2
12 Margaretting & Stock	1	2,373	2,373	10	2,468	2,468	10
13 Moulsham Lodge	2	3,962	1,981	-8	4,294	2,147	-4
14 Old Moulsham	3	6,160	2,053	-5	6,229	2,076	-8
15 Patching Hall	3	5,911	1,970	-9	6,227	2,076	-8
16 Rettendon & Runwell	2	4,069	2,035	-6	4,470	2,235	-1
17 Rothmans	2	4,417	2,209	2	4,461	2,231	-1
18 St Andrews	3	6,812	2,271	5	6,905	2,302	2
19 South Hanningfield	1	1,864	1,864	-14	1,893	1,893	-16

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 %
20 South Woodham – Collingwood East & West	3	6,214	2,071	-4	6,222	2,074	-8
21 South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville	3	6,189	2,063	-5	6,213	2,071	-8
22 Springfield North	3	6,728	2,243	4	7,488	2,496	11
23 Springfield South	3	5,398	1,799	-17	6,060	2,020	-10
24 The Lawns	2	4,755	2,378	10	4,818	2,409	7
25 Waterhouse Farm	2	4,685	2,343	8	5,174	2,587	15
26 Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre	1	2,383	2,383	10	2,395	2,395	7
27 Writtle	2	4,544	2,272	5	4,553	2,277	1
Totals	56	121,049	–	–	125,810	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,162	–	–	2,247	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Chelmsford 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 Springfield South ward were relatively over-represented by 17 per cent, while electors in Boreham ward were relatively under-represented by 27 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 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 Chelmsford Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 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 ten representations during Stage One, including a borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

Chelmsford Borough Council

24 The Borough Council proposed a council size of 57 members, one more than at present, serving 24 wards, compared to the existing 27. It proposed that there should be nine wards covering the Chelmsford town area, as at present, and that there should be minor boundary alterations to all of the Chelmsford town wards, except St Andrews ward, in order to improve electoral equality. These wards should comprise a mixture of two- and three-member wards. It also put forward new ward names for the wards of All Saints, Cathedral and Old Moulsham, to be renamed Marconi, Trinity and Moulsham & Central respectively.

25 In the urban parished areas the Borough Council proposed that the electoral arrangements for South Woodham Ferrers should remain unchanged, while there should be minor alterations to the boundaries within the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield to improve electoral equality. It proposed that the number of wards in the rural area should be reduced from twelve to nine, with the wards of Galleywood, Little Baddow & Danbury & Sandon, Rettendon & Runwell and Writtle retaining their existing boundaries. It proposed merging the remaining eight wards into five wards to improve electoral equality. No change was proposed to the current cycle of whole-council elections every four years.

26 Under its proposals only one ward would have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average, with all wards having a variance of less than 10 per cent in 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix A.

Parish and Town Councils

27 We received representations from seven parish and town councils. The parish councils of Springfield, Stock and Writtle supported the Borough Council's proposals in their parishes. Great Baddow Parish Council, South Hanningfield Parish Council and South Woodham Ferrers Town Council all submitted proposals for alterations to the electoral arrangements within their own parishes.

28 Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council stated that they were opposed to the Borough Council's proposal to include their parish in a borough ward with the parishes of East Hanningfield and West Hanningfield. It stated that the current arrangements should be retained.

Other Representations

29 We received a further two representations from local residents. One stated that single-member wards should be introduced across the borough to "re-invigorate local democracy", as well as suggesting ways to improve representation at a local level. The other requested that a system of proportional representation should be introduced for council elections in Chelmsford.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

30 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Chelmsford 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.

31 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.

32 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.

33 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

34 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 121,049 to 125,810 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Springfield, although a significant amount is also expected in the wards of Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham, Rettendon & Runwell and Waterhouse Farm. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

35 Having visited the area we were concerned that the Borough Council's electorate projections for the housing development on the former Marconi site at Writtle Road in Waterhouse Farm ward may be too conservative. We consulted the Borough Council, who assured us that the figures submitted within its proposals were correct based on current planning consent. We are therefore happy to accept the Borough Council's electorate forecasts for Waterhouse Farm ward, based on the information currently available to them. We would welcome further comments on this issue during Stage Three.

36 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

37 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.

38 Chelmsford Borough Council presently has 56 members. The Borough Council proposed a council size of 57 members, since it "felt that it would be undesirable for the existing electoral quota of 2,162 to rise significantly ... the quota under [its] proposals would be contained to 2,207, an increase of only 2 per cent overall". The Borough Councils argued that its scheme would be better facilitated by a council size of 57, which would help to attain high levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria.

39 The Commission is pleased to note that widespread consultation was conducted on a 57-member scheme and that the proposals put forward by the Council enjoy cross-party consensus. We received no further representations regarding council size.

40 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 57 members.

Electoral Arrangements

41 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the borough-wide scheme put forward by Chelmsford Borough Council.

42 In view of the degree of consensus behind the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to propose slight modifications to the Borough Council's proposals in the Chelmsford town area. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Cathedral, Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, Old Moulsham and The Lawns wards (Chelmsford town);
- (b) All Saints, Patching Hall, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards (Chelmsford town);
- (c) Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Rothmans, Springfield North and Springfield South wards;

- (d) Margaretting & Stock, Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards;
- (e) East & West Hanningfield; Galleywood; Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre wards;
- (f) Boreham; Broomfield & Pleshey & Great Waltham; Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham and Writtle wards.

43 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.

Cathedral, Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, Old Moulsham and The Lawns wards

44 These five wards are situated in the south and east of Chelmsford town, which lies in the centre of the borough. Old Moulsham is currently represented by three councillors while the other four wards return two councillors each. The wards of Moulsham Lodge and Old Moulsham are currently over-represented by 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (4 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004). Cathedral, Goat Hall and The Lawns wards are all under-represented, by 4 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 3 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004).

45 The Borough Council proposed minor boundary alterations for these five wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed transferring the 225 electors of Hill View Road, currently in The Lawns ward, into Cathedral ward, while transferring 269 electors west of Springfield Road and south of Meadowside (including the electors of Meadowside), currently in Cathedral ward, into Old Moulsham ward. The Council proposed new ward names for Cathedral ward and Old Moulsham ward, putting forward the names of Trinity and Moulsham & Central respectively. It also put forward a proposal to transfer the 182 electors of Dove Lane, Falcon Way, Petrel Way and Sandpiper Walk, currently in Goat Hall ward, into Moulsham Lodge ward. The Council proposed that the wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham Lodge, The Lawns and Trinity should each be represented by two councillors, with Moulsham & Central ward returning three councillors.

46 Under the Borough Council's proposals Moulsham Lodge ward would have an electoral variance 2 per cent below the borough average (1 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity would have electoral variances above the borough average, by 2 per cent, 1 per cent, 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (1 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 4 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). The Borough Council's proposals for these wards are outlined in Appendix A.

47 We have carefully considered all representations received, and propose basing our recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals; however, we propose making modifications to the boundaries it put forward. We intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals for the number of councillors in each of these five wards. We propose transferring the electors of Hill View Road from The Lawns ward to Trinity ward, as put forward by the Borough Council. However, having visited the area we consider that the electors of Chichester Drive have strong community links with the electors of Hill View Road, and consequently that both streets

should be included in the same ward. We are therefore proposing to transfer the 167 electors of Chichester Drive, in addition to the 229 electors of Hill View Road, from The Lawns ward into Trinity ward. This proposal would increase electoral inequality in Trinity ward and we therefore propose transferring the 222 electors of Balmoral Court, Boswells Drive, Sandringham Place, Weight Road and ten electors from Springfield Road into Moulsham & Central ward from Trinity ward, in addition to the 269 already proposed by the Borough Council. Our proposals will provide clear boundaries while improving electoral equality in the wards of Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity.

48 The Borough Council's proposals to include Dove Lane, Falcon Way, Petrel Way and Sandpiper Walk in Moulsham Lodge ward instead of Goat Hall ward would leave these electors with no direct access to the ward of Moulsham Lodge in which they are to vote. We consider that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for the electors of Dove Lane, Falcon Way, Petrel Way and Sandpiper Walk. We therefore propose retaining the existing boundary between Goat Hall ward and Moulsham Lodge ward. Our proposal provides marginally worse levels of electoral equality in these two wards, however we consider that it offers clearer boundaries while having regard to community interests. We welcome further comments on this issue during Stage Three.

49 Under our proposals Moulsham Lodge ward would have an electoral variance 7 per cent below the borough average (3 per cent by 2004). The wards of Goat Hall, Moulsham & Central, The Lawns and Trinity would have electoral variances above the borough average of 7 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (5 per cent above in Goat Hall ward, 2 per cent above in Moulsham & Central ward, and equal with the borough average in The Lawns ward and Trinity ward by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

All Saints, Patching Hall, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards

50 These four wards are situated in the north and west of Chelmsford town. All Saints and Waterhouse Farm wards are currently represented by two councillors each while the wards of Patching Hall and St Andrews return three councillors each. The ward of Patching Hall is currently over-represented by 9 per cent (8 per cent by 2004). All Saints, St Andrews and Waterhouse Farm wards are all under-represented, by 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively (6 per cent, 2 per cent and 15 per cent by 2004).

51 The Borough Council proposed that no alterations should be made to the electoral arrangements of St Andrews ward. It proposed boundary modifications to the wards of All Saints, Patching Hall and Waterhouse Farm to improve electoral equality. It proposed transferring the two properties, currently in Waterhouse Farm ward, south of the A414 into Goat Hall ward, as the seven electors are currently separated from the rest of Waterhouse Farm ward by Widford Industrial Estate. In the north of Waterhouse Farm ward the Council proposed transferring the 597 electors situated to the west of Rainsford Road and to the north of Andrews Place and Nelson Grove into All Saints ward. The Council further suggested a transfer of 683 electors from All Saints ward into Patching Hall ward. It proposed transferring the electors of Corporation Road, the eastern half of Kings Road, Browning Avenue and all the electors to the east of these roads into Patching Hall ward. It proposed that the whole of the Keene Homes development (mainly

an elderly persons' dwelling), which is currently divided between All Saints ward and Patching Hall ward, should be included in Patching Hall ward. It also proposed that All Saints ward should be renamed Marconi to reflect "a very long and well-known association with Chelmsford". The Council suggested that the wards of Marconi and Waterhouse Farm should be represented by two councillors each and Patching Hall and St Andrews wards by three councillors each.

52 Under the Borough Council's proposals Waterhouse Farm ward would have an electoral variance 4 per cent below the borough average (4 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Marconi, Patching Hall and St Andrews would all have electoral variances above the borough average, by 2 per cent, 4 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004 respectively (5 per cent, 5 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). The Borough Council's proposals for these wards are outlined in Appendix A.

53 We have carefully considered all representations received and we propose basing our recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals; however, we propose making minor boundary modifications between Waterhouse Farm ward and Marconi ward, and between Marconi ward and Patching Hall ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals for the boundary between Marconi ward and Waterhouse Farm ward, the electors of Nelson Grove would have no direct access to the ward of Waterhouse Farm in which they are to vote. We consider that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for the electors of Nelson Grove. We therefore intend to transfer the 83 electors of Nelson Grove into Marconi ward in addition to the transfer proposed by the Borough Council. A similar situation has arisen from the Borough Council's proposals for the boundary between Marconi ward and Patching Hall ward which would leave the 53 electors of Milton Place with no direct access to Marconi ward in which they are to vote. We consider that this would not offer convenient and effective local government for the electors of Milton Place. We therefore intend to transfer the 53 electors of Milton Place into Patching Hall ward, in addition to the transfer proposed by the Borough Council. We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposal to include the Keene Homes development in Patching Hall ward, its proposal for the transfer of electors from Waterhouse Farm ward into Goat Hall ward and to retain the existing electoral arrangements in St Andrews ward. We conclude that our proposals will provide clear boundaries while providing convenient and effective local government and marginally improved electoral equality.

54 Under our proposals Waterhouse Farm ward would have an electoral variance 6 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent above by 2004). The wards of Marconi, Patching Hall and St Andrews would all have electoral variances above the borough average, by 3 per cent, 5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (6 per cent, 6 per cent and 4 per cent by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Rothmans, Springfield North and Springfield South wards

55 The parish of Great Baddow is divided into two borough wards, Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village and Rothmans. The parish of Springfield is covered by the borough wards of Springfield North and Springfield South. These four wards lie directly to the east of Chelmsford town and are predominantly urban. Rothmans ward is represented by two councillors, while Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village, Springfield North and Springfield South wards are each

represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward and Springfield South ward are over-represented, by 7 per cent and 17 per cent respectively (9 per cent and 10 per cent by 2004). Rothmans and Springfield North wards are under-represented, by 2 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (1 per cent over-represented and 11 per cent under-represented by 2004).

56 The Borough Council proposed that there should be minor boundary amendments between these wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed that the 287 electors of Foxholes Road, Reynards Court, Snelling Grove and The Dell, which are currently in Rothmans ward, should be transferred into Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward. It put forward new ward names: Baddow Road & Great Baddow Village ward should be renamed Great Baddow East, and Rothmans ward should be renamed Great Baddow West. It proposed that Great Baddow East ward should return three councillors and that Great Baddow West ward should return two councillors. Great Baddow Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposals, while it also put forward proposals for changes to its parishing arrangements, which are outlined later in the chapter.

57 The Council proposed that the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North ward, should be included in Springfield South ward. Beaulieu Park is a new housing development currently under construction which will have a projected electorate of 756 by 2004. It proposed that the ward of Springfield South should be renamed Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park. Both wards should continue to be represented by three councillors each. Springfield Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposals and outlined the subsequent parish warding which would take place, outlined later in the chapter.

58 Under the Borough Council's proposals Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward, Great Baddow East ward and Great Baddow West ward would have electoral variances below the borough average, varying by 15 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (3 per cent above, 3 per cent below and 5 per cent below the borough average by 2004). Springfield North would have an electoral variance of 6 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent by 2004).

59 We have carefully considered all representations received, and conclude that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provide the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Margaretting & Stock, Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards

60 These five wards lie in the south of the borough and include the town of South Woodham Ferrers, which is covered by the wards of South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville, which both return three councillors. The wards of Margaretting & Stock and South Hanningfield are represented by one councillor each, while Rettendon & Runwell ward returns two councillors. Under the existing arrangements the ward of Margaretting & Stock is under-represented by 10 per cent (remaining at 10 per cent by 2004).

Rettendon & Runwell, South Hanningfield, South Woodham – Collingwood East & West and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville wards are all over-represented, by 6 per cent, 14 per cent, 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (1 per cent, 16 per cent, 8 per cent and 8 per cent by 2004).

61 The Borough Council proposed that there should be no alterations to the electoral arrangements in the wards of Rettendon & Runwell and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville. It proposed that the boundaries and number of councillors in South Woodham – Collingwood East & West ward should remain unaltered; however, it put forward the new ward name of South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood. It also proposed that the existing wards of Margaretting & Stock and South Hanningfield should be combined in a new ward. It put forward South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting as the new ward name and proposed that the ward be represented by two councillors.

62 Under the Borough Council's proposals the ward of South Hanningfield, Stock & Margaretting would have an electoral variance equal to the borough average (1 per cent below by 2004). The wards of Rettendon & Runwell, South Woodham – Chetwood & Collingwood and South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville would all have electoral variances below the borough average, of 4 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (1 per cent above, 6 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

63 We received representations from South Hanningfield Parish Council, South Woodham Ferrers Town Council and Stock Parish Council. Stock Parish Council stated that they had no further comments to add to the Borough Council's district warding arrangements, and all three councils put forward proposals for their own parishes, which are outlined later in the chapter.

64 We have carefully considered all the representations received and conclude that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provide the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

East & West Hanningfield; Galleywood; Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre wards

65 These four wards lie to the east of the borough. The wards of East & West Hanningfield and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre are currently represented by one councillor each, Galleywood ward returns two councillors and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon ward returns three councillors. Under the existing arrangements East & West Hanningfield ward is over-represented by 16 per cent (19 per cent by 2004). The wards of Galleywood; Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre are under-represented, by 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (under-represented by 4 per cent, over-represented by 2 per cent and under-represented by 7 per cent by 2004).

66 The Borough Council proposed that there should be no alterations to the electoral arrangements in the wards of Galleywood and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon. It also proposed that the wards of East & West Hanningfield and Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre should

be combined in a new ward, returning two councillors. It proposed that this new ward should be renamed Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield.

67 Under the Borough Council's proposals the wards of Galleywood and Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon would have electoral variances above the borough average of 10 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (6 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2004). The proposed ward of Bicknacre & East & West Hanningfield would have an electoral variance 1 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2004).

68 Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council put forward a submission opposed to the Borough Council's proposals. It stated that the electoral arrangements for the ward of Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre should remain unchanged. This proposal would result in Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre ward having an electoral variance of 12 per cent above the borough average (9 per cent by 2004). This proposal would also have an effect on the electoral equality of East & West Hanningfield ward, which would have an electoral variance of 15 per cent below the borough average (18 per cent by 2004).

69 We have carefully considered all the representations received and conclude that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provide the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. The proposal from Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council, although providing reasonable levels of electoral equality in its own ward, would result in poor electoral equality in the neighbouring ward of East & West Hanningfield. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Boreham; Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham; Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell; Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham and Writtle wards

70 These five wards are situated in the north and west of the borough. Boreham ward, Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward and Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward are each currently represented by one councillor. Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward and Writtle ward are each represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements Boreham ward, Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward, Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward and Writtle ward are all under-represented, by 27 per cent, 20 per cent, 5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (28 per cent, 18 per cent, 20 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004). Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward is currently over-represented by 11 per cent (14 per cent by 2004).

71 The Borough Council proposed that there should be no alterations to the electoral arrangements of Writtle ward. Writtle Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal for Writtle ward. The Borough Council proposed transferring whole parishes between the existing wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed that the parish of Pleshey should be transferred from Broomfield, Pleshey & Great Waltham ward into Chignall, Good Easter, Mashbury, Highwood & Roxwell ward and that this proposed ward should be renamed Chelmsford Rural West, returning one councillor.

72 The Council proposed that the parish of Little Waltham, currently in Great & Little Leighs & Little Waltham ward, should be included in a ward with the parishes of Broomfield and Great Waltham. It proposed that this modified ward should be renamed Broomfield & The Walthams and should return three councillors. Finally the Borough Council proposed that Boreham ward should be included in a new ward with the parish of Great & Little Leighs. It proposed that this new ward should be renamed Boreham & The Leighs and should be represented by two councillors.

73 Under the Borough Council's proposals the wards of Boreham & The Leighs and Broomfield & The Walthams will have electoral variances below the borough average of 6 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (3 per cent above and 8 per cent below by 2004). The wards of Chelmsford Rural West and Writtle would have electoral variances above the borough average of 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (2 per cent below and 3 per cent above by 2004).

74 We have carefully considered all representations received, and conclude that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provide the best electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. We therefore intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals without modification and consequently our recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's proposals. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

75 At Stage One we received one proposal from the Borough Council regarding the electoral cycle. It proposed that no change should be made to the current arrangement of elections every four years. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- (a) there should be an increase in council size from 56 to 57;
- (b) there should be 24 wards;
- (c) the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three wards;
- (d) elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

77 Our draft recommendations are based on the proposals put forward by Chelmsford Borough Council and would involve modifications to 20 of the existing wards in Chelmsford borough, as summarised below:

- (a) we propose adopting Chelmsford Borough Council’s proposals in full in the parished areas of the borough;
- (b) we have proposed modifications to the Borough Council’s proposals in the unparished Chelmsford town area;
- (c) there should be no change to the wards of Galleywood, Little Baddow, Danbury & Sandon, Moulsham Lodge, Rettendon & Runwell, South Woodham – Elmwood & Woodville, St Andrews and Writtle.

78 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	56	57	56	57
Number of wards	27	24	27	24
Average number of electors per councillor	2,162	2,124	2,247	2,207
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	1	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	1	0

79 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Chelmsford Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from six to one. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation
 Chelmsford Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

80 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Great Baddow and Springfield to reflect the proposed borough wards.

81 The parish of Great Baddow is currently served by 12 councillors representing three wards: Baddow Road, Village and Rothmans. Great Baddow Parish Council submitted a proposal for an increase in its council size of one councillor. The Borough Council proposed the transfer of electors from the proposed Great Baddow West borough ward into the proposed Great Baddow East borough ward, which would result in a need to modify the parish wards such that they are coterminous with the borough wards. This was supported by Great Baddow Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation
Great Baddow Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Baddow Road ward (returning three councillors), Rothmans ward (returning five councillors) and Village ward (returning five councillors). The boundary between the parish ward of Rothmans and the remaining two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map.

82 The parish of South Hanningfield is currently served by 11 councillors representing three wards: Downham, Ramsden Heath and South Hanningfield. We received a submission from South Hanningfield Parish Council, stating that due to housing development in recent years it would be desirable to increase the number of councillors representing Ramsden Heath. It suggested an increase of one or two councillors, stating that any greater increase would “swamp the two small villages”. We concur with this proposal.

Draft Recommendation
South Hanningfield Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: Downham ward (returning three councillors), Ramsden Heath ward (returning seven councillors) and South Hanningfield ward (returning two councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

83 The parish of South Woodham Ferrers is currently served by 26 councillors representing four wards: Chetwood, Collingwood, Elmwood and Woodville. South Woodham Ferrers Town Council submitted a proposal for a decrease in council size of six members to 20 councillors. We concur with this proposal.

Draft Recommendation

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, six fewer than at present, representing four wards: Chetwood ward, Collingwood ward, Elmwood ward and Woodville ward (each ward returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

84 The parish of Springfield is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards: Springfield North and Springfield South. Springfield Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal that the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North ward, should be included in Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward and that the parish warding arrangements should be modified accordingly. We concur with this proposal.

Draft Recommendation

Springfield Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present. The parish ward of Springfield South should be renamed Chelmer Village & Beaulieu Park ward and should include the Beaulieu Park area, currently in Springfield North. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map.

85 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the Borough.

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the Borough Council.

86 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Chelmsford and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. 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 Chelmsford

5 NEXT STEPS

87 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.

88 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

89 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

Chelmsford Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council only in eight wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure A1: Chelmsford Borough Council's Proposals: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Goat Hall	Goat Hall ward (part); Waterhouse Farm ward (part)
Marconi	All Saints ward (part); Waterhouse Farm ward (part)
Moulsham & Central	Cathedral ward (part); Old Moulsham ward
Moulsham Lodge	Goat Hall ward (part); Moulsham Lodge ward
Patching Hall	All Saints ward (part); Patching Hall ward
The Lawns	The Lawns ward (part)
Trinity	Cathedral ward (part); The Lawns ward (part)
Waterhouse Farm	Waterhouse Farm ward (part)

Figure A2: Chelmsford 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 %
Goat Hall	2	4,351	2,176	2	4,460	2,230	1
Marconi	2	4,329	2,165	2	4,635	2,318	5
Moulsham & Central	3	6,429	2,143	1	6,497	2,166	-2
Moulsham Lodge	2	4,144	2,072	-2	4,476	2,238	1
Patching Hall	3	6,623	2,208	4	6,939	2,313	5
The Lawns	2	4,530	2,265	7	4,593	2,297	4
Trinity	2	4,447	2,224	5	4,478	2,239	1
Waterhouse Farm	2	4,081	2,041	-4	4,577	2,289	4

Source: Electorate figures are based on Chelmsford 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.

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 districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district 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 district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

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.