

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Colchester 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 Colchester town is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

SUMMARY

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

- **in 11 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 six wards vary 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 12 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Colchester Borough Council recently undertook a review of the parishing arrangements in the borough in order to establish a new Myland Parish Council. The order executing the proposed changes was implemented in April 1999. The draft recommendations presented here are therefore based on the new parish boundaries.

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 89-90) are that:

- **Colchester Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 27 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, and five wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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 19 of the proposed 27 wards the number of electors per councillor would initially vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with only one ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average by 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 parish of Tiptree;**
- **new warding arrangements for the parishes of Myland and Stanway and the town of Wivenhoe.**

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	Berechurch	3	Berechurch ward; New Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Birch & Winstree	2	Birch, Messing & Copford ward (part – the parishes of Birch, Layer Marney, Layer Breton and Messing-cum-Inworth); Tiptree ward (part – the proposed Grove parish ward of Tiptree parish); Winstree ward (the parishes of Great and Little Wigborough, Layer de la Haye, Salcott and Virley)	Map 2
3	Castle	3	Castle ward; St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Christchurch	2	St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
5	Copford & West Stanway	1	Birch, Messing & Copford ward (part – the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe); Stanway ward (part – the proposed Copford & West Stanway parish ward of Stanway parish)	Map 2
6	Dedham & Langham	1	Boxted & Langham ward (part – the parishes of Dedham and Langham)	Map 2
7	East Donyland	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of East Donyland	Map 2
8	Great Tey	1	Great Tey ward (the parishes of Chappel, Great Tey, Mount Bures and Wakes Colne); Fordham ward (part – the parish of Aldham)	Map 2
9	Highwoods	3	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Highwoods parish ward of Myland parish)	Map 2 and large map
10	Lexden	2	Lexden ward (part); St Mary's ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11	Marks Tey	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of Marks Tey	Map 2
12	Mile End	3	Mile End ward (part – the proposed Mile End parish ward of Myland parish)	Map 2 and large map
13	New Town	3	New Town ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
14	Old Heath	2	Harbour ward (part); New Town ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15	Prettygate	3	Lexden ward (part); Prettygate ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
16	Pyefleet	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Abberton, Langenhoe, East Mersea, Fingringhoe and Peldon	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17	Shrub End	3	Shrub End ward; St Mary's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
18	St Andrew's	3	St Andrew's ward; St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	St Anne's	3	St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part); St John's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	St John's	2	St John's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Stanway	3	Stanway ward (part – the proposed parish ward of Stanway East)	Maps 2 and A2
22	The Horkesleys	2	Boxted & Langham (part – the parish of Boxted); Fordham ward (part – the parishes of Fordham and Wormingford); Great & Little Horkesley ward (the parishes of Great Horkesley and Little Horkesley)	Map 2
23	Tiptree	3	Tiptree ward (part – the parish wards of Church, Heath and Maypole of Tiptree parish)	Maps 2 and A3
24	West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parishes of Eight Ash Green and West Bergholt	Map 2
25	West Mersea	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – the parish of West Mersea	Map 2
26	Wivenhoe Cross	2	Wivenhoe ward (part – the proposed Wivenhoe Cross parish ward of Wivenhoe parish); St Andrew's ward (part)	Maps 2 and A4
27	Wivenhoe Quay	2	Wivenhoe ward (part – the proposed Wivenhoe Quay parish ward of Wivenhoe parish)	Maps 2 and A4

Notes: 1 Colchester town is the only unparished part of the borough.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Colchester

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 Berechurch	3	6,044	2,015	1	6,270	2,090	-4
2 Birch & Winstree	2	3,633	1,817	-9	4,424	2,212	2
3 Castle	3	5,803	1,934	-3	6,414	2,138	-1
4 Christchurch	2	3,973	1,987	0	4,501	2,251	4
5 Copford & West Stanway	1	1,435	1,435	-28	2,104	2,104	-3
6 Dedham & Langham	1	2,344	2,344	18	2,408	2,408	11
7 East Donyland	1	1,735	1,735	-13	2,215	2,215	2
8 Great Tey	1	2,201	2,201	10	2,246	2,246	4
9 Highwoods	3	5,475	1,825	-8	6,393	2,131	-2
10 Lexden	2	4,314	2,157	8	4,355	2,178	1
11 Marks Tey	1	2,092	2,092	5	2,115	2,115	-2
12 Mile End	3	4,810	1,603	-20	6,201	2,067	-5
13 New Town	3	6,039	2,013	1	6,909	2,303	6
14 Old Heath	2	4,507	2,254	13	4,530	2,265	5
15 Prettygate	3	6,206	2,069	4	6,225	2,075	-4
16 Pyefleet	1	2,047	2,047	3	2,120	2,120	-2
17 Shrub End	3	6,475	2,158	8	6,627	2,209	2
18 St Andrew's	3	6,604	2,201	11	6,732	2,244	4
19 St Anne's	3	6,703	2,234	12	6,723	2,241	3
20 St John's	2	4,271	2,136	7	4,347	2,174	0
21 Stanway	3	5,822	1,941	-3	6,424	2,141	-1
22 The Horkesleys	2	4,035	2,018	1	4,269	2,135	-1
23 Tiptree	3	5,958	1,986	0	6,326	2,109	-3

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 %
24 West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	3,898	1,949	-2	4,075	2,038	-6
25 West Mersea	3	5,857	1,952	-2	6,147	2,049	-5
26 Wivenhoe Cross	2	3,438	1,719	-14	4,488	2,244	4
27 Wivenhoe Quay	2	3,808	1,904	-4	4,385	2,193	1
Totals	60	119,527	–	–	129,973	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,992	–	–	2,166	–

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Colchester 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 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, 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 C).

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 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 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 Colchester Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Essex Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 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 Colchester lies some 54 miles north east of London, boasting a thriving commercial centre which is surrounded by rural parishes. Two-thirds of the borough's population live within the town of Colchester, the remainder in the surrounding towns and villages. The borough of Colchester is also home to Essex University. The population of the borough is approximately 143,000. Significant housing development proposals have been approved within the town of Colchester itself, which accounts for the majority of the projected growth, although there are other significant areas of development within the borough, including Tiptree and Stanway parishes.

17 The borough contains 33 parishes, including the newly established Myland parish. With the exception of Myland parish, the Colchester town area is unparished and comprises some 60 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 borough 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 119,527 (February 1999). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 27 wards, 12 of which are relatively urban, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Sixteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, one is represented by two councillors and ten are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Colchester borough, with around 8 per cent more electors than at the last review a decade ago, as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Mile End and Birch, Messing & Copford wards.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,992 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,166 by the year 2004 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past decade, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 27 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, with six wards varying by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Mile End ward where each councillor represents 72 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Colchester

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 Berechurch	3	5,773	1,924	-3	5,999	2,000	-8
2 Birch, Messing & Copford	1	2,560	2,560	29	2,732	2,732	26
3 Boxted & Langham	1	1,918	1,918	-4	1,969	1,969	-9
4 Castle	3	5,932	1,977	-1	6,568	2,189	1
5 Dedham	1	1,538	1,538	-23	1,569	1,569	-28
6 East Donyland	1	1,735	1,735	-13	2,215	2,215	2
7 Fordham	1	1,434	1,434	-28	1,468	1,468	-32
8 Great & Little Horkesley	1	1,923	1,923	-3	2,105	2,105	-3
9 Great Tey	1	1,767	1,767	-11	1,812	1,812	-16
10 Harbour	3	6,295	2,098	5	6,709	2,236	3
11 Lexden	3	4,248	1,416	-29	4,289	1,430	-34
12 Marks Tey	1	2,092	2,092	5	2,115	2,115	-2
13 Mile End	3	10,285	3,428	72	12,594	4,198	94
14 New Town	3	5,137	1,712	-14	5,598	1,866	-14
15 Prettygate	3	5,951	1,984	0	5,970	1,990	-8
16 Pyfleet	1	2,047	2,047	3	2,120	2,120	-2
17 Shrub End	3	5,687	1,896	-5	5,757	1,919	-11
18 St Andrew's	3	5,935	1,978	-1	5,942	1,981	-9
19 St Anne's	3	5,017	1,672	-16	5,151	1,717	-21
20 St John's	3	5,633	1,878	-6	5,709	1,903	-12
21 St Mary's	3	5,331	1,777	-11	5,941	1,980	-9
22 Stanway	3	6,032	2,011	1	7,178	2,393	10
23 Tiptree	3	6,303	2,101	5	7,387	2,462	14
24 West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	3,898	1,949	-2	4,075	2,038	-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 %
25 West Mersea	3	5,857	1,952	-2	6,147	2,049	-5
26 Winstree	1	1,953	1,953	-2	1,981	1,981	-9
27 Wivenhoe	3	7,246	2,415	21	8,873	2,958	37
Totals	60	119,527	-	-	129,973	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,992	-	-	2,166	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Colchester 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 Fordham ward were relatively over-represented by 28 per cent, while electors in Mile End ward were substantially under-represented by 72 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 Colchester 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 43 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Colchester Conservative Association, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

Colchester Borough Council

24 The Borough Council proposed a council size of 60 members, the same as at present, serving 26 wards, compared to the existing 27. The Borough Council also submitted all correspondence which it had received during its consultation exercise.

25 The Borough Council proposed that the boundaries of Berechurch, East Donyland, Marks Tey, Pyefleet and West Mersea wards should remain unchanged, while the remaining existing rural wards should be reconfigured. The Borough Council proposed modifications to all of the existing wards of Colchester town apart from Berechurch ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals, no ward would vary by more than 8 per cent from the borough average by 2004. The Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

Colchester Conservative Association

26 Colchester Conservative Association (the Conservatives) proposed a borough-wide scheme, which supported the Borough Council's scheme for the wards of the borough outside the town but proposed alternative warding arrangements for the town itself. The Conservatives' proposals wholly retained the Braiswick area within the town, resulting in an unchanged West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. Its proposals mainly affected the existing Highwoods, Mile End, St John's, St Anne's, St Andrew's and Harbour wards. It stated that its proposals for the south, west and centre of the town showed only minor differences from the Borough Council's proposals for the areas.

North Essex Conservative Association

27 The North Essex Conservative Association opposed the Borough Council's proposed three-member Constable ward. The Association proposed that Dedham and Langham parishes should form a single-member ward and the remaining parishes of Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley and Wormingford should form a two-member ward. It also opposed the proposal to add part of Braiswick to West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, and proposed that West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should remain unmodified.

Mile End Liberal Democrats

28 The Mile End Liberal Democrats supported the majority of the Borough Council's proposed warding configurations, but proposed alternative arrangements for the town wards of Berechurch, Harbour, Mile End, Highwoods, New Town, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's. They also proposed no change to the ward of West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green.

Members of Parliament

29 Mr Bob Russell, the Member of Parliament for Colchester, stated that while many of the Borough Council's proposed wards were acceptable, he opposed a number of the Borough Council's proposals, particularly those for the north of the town.

Colchester Association of Local Councils

30 The Colchester Association of Local Councils opposed the Borough Council's proposal to merge urban and rural areas to balance numbers. The Association contended that the strong sense of community interest would be lost. It stated that "it is our belief that the coherence of a ward is of vital importance to providing a proper representation of the views of the electorate represented by the ward member".

Parish and Town Councils

31 We received representations from nine parish and town councils and one parish meeting. Birch Parish Council was initially concerned at the Borough Council's proposals. However, it stated that the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree ward would be acceptable. Boxted Parish Council opposed the proposed three-member Constable ward. Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council proposed that the existing ward should remain unchanged. In particular it opposed adding the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe to Stanway parish. East Donyland Parish Council proposed alternative parish ward names and also proposed renaming the parish itself. Layer Breton Parish Council supported the retention of the existing warding arrangements for Birch, Messing & Copford ward. Layer Marney Parish Meeting supported the proposed Birch & Winstree ward since it would remain a predominantly rural ward. Messing-cum-Inworth Parish Council also supported the proposed Birch & Winstree ward.

32 Tiptree Parish Council opposed the proposal to include the proposed Grove parish ward in a new Birch & Winstree ward. The Parish Council stated that it was of the view that the present borough councillors "could cope even with extra houses" and therefore the parish should remain a three-member ward until such time as the parish expands to merit four borough councillors. West Bergholt Parish Council opposed the Braiswick area of Colchester being transferred to West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. Wivenhoe Town Council opposed the proposal to ward the town council for the first time. It stated that, if the Commission was minded to increase the level of representation for the current Wivenhoe ward, the Town Council would prefer to remain unwarded and be represented by four councillors.

Other Representations

33 We received a further 27 representations during Stage One, from six councillors, two residents' associations and 19 local residents. Councillor Blundell, representing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, opposed the rural parishes of Copford and Easthorpe joining with the urban parish of Stanway and proposed that the two parishes should join with Eight Ash Green parish. Councillor Crowe, representing Birch, Messing & Copford ward, originally opposed the Borough Council's initial proposals for his ward. He also forwarded correspondence which he had received from residents opposing the Borough Council's initial proposals.

34 Councillor Frame, representing St Mary's ward, proposed modifications to the existing Shrub End, Castle, and Lexden wards. Councillor Gamble, representing St John's ward, writing on behalf of the St John's Liberal Democrats, opposed the Borough Council's proposal to transfer part of the existing St John's ward to the proposed Highwoods and St John's (north) ward. Councillor Garnett, representing Boxted & Langham ward, opposed the Borough Council's proposed three-member Constable ward and suggested that the area should be divided into three single-member wards. Councillor Smith, representing St John's ward, supported the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which opposed the Borough Council's proposals to divide the St John's and Braiswick areas as well as stating that the Borough Council's proposed modifications to St Andrew's and St Anne's wards would be "unwelcome".

35 The Braiswick Residents' Association opposed the proposal to transfer part of the area to the proposed West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. The St John's Residents' Association opposed the Borough Council's proposal to transfer polling district BH from the existing St John's ward to the proposed Highwoods & St John's (north) ward. Fifteen local residents opposed the proposed three-member Constable ward, nine of whom proposed that the parishes of Dedham and Langham should form a single-member ward. Lord Ironside opposed the proposed three-member Constable ward, contending that rural areas cannot be considered on population figures alone. One local resident wrote concerning the proposals for the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward. One local resident contended that Braiswick should remain a united community and should incorporate all of the properties within the Braiswick Residents' Association area, while another local resident opposed the Borough Council's proposals for the St Andrew's/St Anne's boundary which would divide the Longridge estate between the two modified wards.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

37 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.

38 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.

39 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

40 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 8 per cent from 119,527 to 129,973 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Mile End and Wivenhoe wards, although a significant amount is also expected in Stanway and Tiptree wards. The Borough 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.

41 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

42 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.

43 Colchester Borough Council presently has 60 members. The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size. The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats supported this proposal. No other comments on proposed council size were received during Stage One. Therefore, 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 60 members.

Electoral Arrangements

44 During Stage One, Colchester Conservative Association and Mile End Liberal Democrats expressed their general support for the Borough Council's proposals in the parished areas of the borough. However, in Colchester town both proposed alternative warding configurations to those submitted by the Borough Council. In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme in the parished areas. However, having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in the proposed Constable and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards. After careful consideration of the evidence received during Stage One, we have concluded that we should build upon the schemes submitted by the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats for Colchester town. We consider that these proposals would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the Borough Council's scheme. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards;
- (b) Birch, Messing & Copford, Tiptree, Stanway and Winstree wards;
- (c) Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards;
- (d) Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards;
- (e) Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town wards;
- (f) Lexden, Prettygate, Shrub End and St Mary's wards.

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

East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards

46 The four wards of East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe are located in the south-eastern corner of the borough and vary by 13 per cent below, 3 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 21 per cent above the borough average respectively (2 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 5 per cent below and 37 per cent above the borough average by 2004). East Donyland and West Mersea wards constitute the parishes of the same name, Wivenhoe ward comprises the parish of Wivenhoe and the area around Essex University campus (polling district FW) whilst Pyfleet ward comprises the parishes of Abberton, East Mersea, Fingringhoe, Langenhoe and Peldon.

47 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed no change to East Donyland, Pyfleet and West Mersea wards and that the existing Wivenhoe ward should be divided into two new two-member wards; Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay, thereby awarding the area an additional borough councillor. Both the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe wards without modification.

48 East Donyland Parish Council proposed that the existing parish wards of Cherry Tree and Rowhedge should be renamed West Donyland and East Donyland respectively and that the parish itself could then be renamed East and West Donyland Parish Council. The Borough Council supported the Parish Council's proposal. However, recent legislation has returned many of their former powers to district (and borough) councils, in relation to civil parishes. Under the current legislation the Commission does not have the power to modify the parish name, but we do have the authority to modify the parish ward names. However, we are concerned that confusion may arise with a parish ward and parish both being named "East Donyland". We have therefore decided not to modify the parish ward names of East Donyland parish.

49 Wivenhoe Town Council opposed the proposed warding of the town. It recognised the need for change, but feared that warding would have a detrimental effect on the community. It proposed an alternative arrangement which would not include Essex University Campus in the ward. The Town Council argued that the proposed Wivenhoe Cross ward would include some 2,700 electors from the campus by 2004, noting that fewer than 100 electors on campus had voted at local elections in recent years.

50 We have noted the points raised by Wivenhoe Town Council concerning elector turn-out at the university, however, the Commission is duty bound to consider both the current electorate and five-year electorate forecasts when forming its recommendations. Therefore, we must consider all local government electors that appear on the current electoral register (as stipulated in the 1972 Local Government Act); including students, seasonal workers or members of the armed services. While we have noted the views expressed by Wivenhoe Town Council, no viable alternative to the warding of Wivenhoe Town Council has been presented during Stage One.

51 We have examined all submissions received during Stage One of the review, including those forwarded to us by the Borough Council. We consider the boundaries for the proposed Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay wards are sound and a fair reflection of local communities. However, we propose a modification to the boundary proposed by the Borough Council between the proposed Wivenhoe Cross ward and the proposed St Andrew's ward. Currently the boundary forms a 'dog leg'; we propose moving it slightly northwards, in order to achieve a more clearly defined boundary between the two wards. The proposed modification would not affect any electors. We consider that the Borough Council's proposals to retain the existing East Donyland, Pyfleet and West Mersea wards are reasonable given the good levels of electoral equality achieved and that they have been supported by the parishes during consultation by the Borough Council. Subject to the minor modification proposed between St Andrew's and Wivenhoe Cross wards, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

52 The proposed East Donyland, Pyfleet, West Mersea and Wivenhoe Cross and Wivenhoe Quay wards would initially vary by 13 per cent below, 3 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 14 per cent below and 4 per cent below the borough average (2 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 4 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2, Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

Birch, Messing & Copford, Tiptree, Stanway and Winstree wards

53 The four wards of Birch, Messing & Copford, Tiptree, Stanway and Winstree are located in the south-western corner of the borough and are represented by one, three, three and one councillor(s) respectively. The four wards vary by 29 per cent above, 5 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (26 per cent above, 14 per cent above, 10 per cent above and 9 per cent below by 2004). Birch, Messing & Copford ward comprises the parishes of Birch, Copford, Easthorpe, Inworth Layer Bretton, Layer Marney and Messing; Winstree ward comprises the parishes of Great Wigborough, Layer de la Haye, Little Wigborough, Salcott and Virley. Tiptree and Stanway wards comprise the parishes of the same name.

54 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifying all four of these existing wards to improve electoral equality. The Borough Council proposed that an additional (fourth) parish ward should be created for Tiptree from part of the existing Church parish ward. The new Grove parish ward would be included in a new Birch & Winstree ward with the parishes of Birch, Messing-cum-Inworth, Layer Marney and Layer Breton from the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward, and all of the parishes from the existing Winstree ward (Layer de la Haye, Great and Little Wigborough, Salcott and Virley).

55 It also proposed modifying the existing Stanway ward, by dividing it into two parish wards; Stanway East and Stanway West. The proposed Stanway East parish ward would form a modified three-member Stanway ward and Stanway West parish ward would form part of a new Copford & West Stanway ward with the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe.

56 During Stage One we received submissions from Birch, Copford with Easthorpe, Layer Breton and Tiptree Parish Councils and Layer Marney Parish Meeting. Birch Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree ward. Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council proposed no change to the existing Birch, Messing & Copford ward and opposed any proposal which would include the parishes of Copford and Easthorpe in a modified Stanway ward. Layer Breton Parish Council did not support a proposal which would create a new borough ward incorporating the parishes of Birch, Copford, Messing-cum-Inworth and Layer Marney. Layer Marney Parish Meeting supported the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree ward as it would remain largely rural in character.

57 We also received submissions from Councillor Crowe, member for Birch, Messing & Copford ward and Councillor Blundell, member for West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. Councillor Crowe opposed the Borough Council's initial proposals for his ward, and copied to the Commission correspondence which he had received regarding the Periodic Electoral Review. Councillor Blundell opposed the Borough Council's proposed Copford & West Stanway ward.

She accepted, in principle, that part of Stanway parish might form part of a new ward, but proposed the transfer of electors from the area known as Stanway Green rather than part of the new Lakelands estate. A local resident also expressed concern that the Commission did not consider rural identities as part of a Periodic Electoral Review.

58 We have examined all submissions received at Stage One, including those sent by Councillor Crowe and the Borough Council which they had received as part of their own consultations. We have examined the alternative possibility of not creating an additional Grove parish ward for Tiptree and thereby not transferring electors to the proposed Birch & Winstree ward. This would result in a variance of some 14 per cent for Tiptree ward by 2004, while the proposed Birch & Winstree ward would be 22 per cent below the borough average by 2004. We consider these levels of electoral inequality to be unacceptable when a satisfactory alternative is available. We are aware that the Borough Council's proposal is not ideal, however we are content that the Borough Council's proposals give due consideration to the concerns voiced locally and currently provide the best proposal for the area. We therefore propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Birch & Winstree and Tiptree wards as part of our draft recommendations.

59 We have examined the proposal presented by Councillor Blundell regarding the transfer of the area known as Stanway Green into the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward. Officers from the Commission have visited the area, and consider that Councillor Blundell's proposals have merit, given the similarly rural character of the area. However, we note that the electors of Stanway Green would not have direct access to the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward, but would need to travel through Stanway ward. Given that there would be no direct access to the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward from Stanway Green, we cannot support Councillor Blundell's proposal to include the area within the proposed Copford & West Stanway ward, as we do not believe this would facilitate convenient and effective local government.

60 We have noted the concerns of Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council regarding the impact that the Borough Council's proposals could have on community identities in the area. However, we have been unable to identify a suitable alternative that would not necessitate further parish warding, which we consider could have a detrimental effect on neighbouring parishes. We therefore propose adopting the Borough Council's proposed Copford & West Stanway and Stanway wards as part of our draft recommendations. We would welcome further comments on these recommendations during Stage Three.

61 The proposed Birch & Winstree, Copford & West Stanway, Stanway and Tiptree wards would initially be 9 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 3 per cent below and be equal to the borough average (2 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 1 per cent below and 3 per cent below the borough average by 2004). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2 and in Appendix A.

Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards

62 The existing seven wards are located in the north and north-west of the borough. Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Fordham, Great & Little Horkesley, Great Tey and Marks Tey wards are all

single-member wards, West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward is represented by two members. The wards currently vary by 4 per cent below, 23 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 11 per cent below, 5 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (9 per cent below, 28 per cent below, 32 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 16 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004). Fordham ward comprises the parishes of Aldham, Fordham and Wormingford; Great & Little Horkesley ward comprises the parishes of Great Horkesley and Little Horkesley; Great Tey ward comprises the parishes of Chappel, Great Tey, Mount Bures and Wakes Colne. The remaining wards of Boxted & Langham, Dedham, Marks Tey and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green all comprise the parishes of the same name.

63 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Marks Tey ward which would vary by 2 per cent from the borough average by 2004. It proposed modifying West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward to include electors from Mile End ward, to improve electoral equality. The Borough Council's proposed West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent, improving to 3 per cent by 2004. The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed no change to the existing West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. The Borough Council proposed including the parish of Aldham (part of the existing Fordham ward) in Great Tey ward, which would otherwise remain unchanged. It also proposed that the remainder of Fordham ward be included in a new three-member Constable ward with Boxted & Langham, Debden and Great & Little Horkesley wards. In examining the proposals submitted during Stage One, we propose incorporating the Borough Council's proposed Great Tey and Marks Tey wards as part of our draft recommendations. The Borough Council proposed that Marks Tey ward should remain unmodified and that the parish of Aldham should be added to the otherwise unmodified Great Tey ward. We are of the view that the proposed wards would be a good reflection of local communities and meet the Commission's statutory criteria providing convenient and effective local government.

64 In examining the Borough Council's modified West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward, we are of the view that although the Borough Council's proposal would improve electoral equality within the ward, it would not improve upon its existing boundary which utilises the A12. We have examined the alternatives proposed by the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats, which do not modify the existing ward boundary between West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward and the existing Mile End ward. We have also taken into consideration all other proposals which were submitted to the Commission during Stage One regarding West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward which opposed the Borough Council's proposal. We have concluded that in order to reflect the identities and interests of the local community, the existing boundary of West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should not be modified.

65 We received direct representations from the North Essex Conservative Association, Boxted Parish Council, Councillor Garnett, member for Boxted & Langham ward, Lord Ironside and 18 local residents, all opposing the Borough Council's proposed three-member Constable ward on the grounds that it would be a very large rural ward. Councillor Garnett proposed that this area form three single-member wards; Dedham & Langham; Great Horkesley; Boxted, Little Horkesley, Wormingford & Fordham. The proposal for three single-member wards would not be acceptable given that the proposed ward of Boxted, Little Horkesley, Fordham and Wormingford would result in the parish of Boxted being separated from the three other parishes in the proposed

ward. The Commission does not consider this would best reflect community identities or provide convenient and effective local government. The North Essex Conservative Association proposed that Dedham & Langham form a single-member ward and a two-member ward should include the parishes of Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley and Wormingford. This proposal would result in the two wards having an electoral variance of 11 per cent and 1 per cent respectively by 2004. The Commission considers that this proposal would strike the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, whilst commanding some local support and consequently proposes adopting this as part of its draft recommendations. We concur with the views that the proposed Constable ward would be very large and would not best reflect local community identities.

66 The North Essex Conservative Association did not propose names for its two wards in this area. The Commission, therefore, proposes the names of Dedham & Langham (single-member ward) and The Horkesleys (two-member ward). We would welcome further comments on these proposals at Stage Three.

67 The proposed Dedham & Langham, Great Tey, Marks Tey, The Horkesleys and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green wards would have electoral variances of 18 per cent above, 10 per cent above, 5 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (11 per cent, 4 per cent, 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 6 per cent respectively by 2004). These recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and in Appendix A at the back of this report.

Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards

68 The four three-member wards of Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's are located in the northern part of the Colchester town area. In April 1999 a new urban parish of Myland was established within Mile End ward. The four wards currently vary by 72 per cent above, 1 per cent below, 16 per cent below and 6 per cent below the borough average respectively. This level of electoral inequality is projected to deteriorate, so that by 2004 the four wards are projected to vary by 94 per cent above, 9 per cent below, 21 per cent below and 12 per cent below the borough average respectively.

69 Colchester Borough Council proposed modifications to all four existing wards. However, it stated that it felt that the newly established parish of Myland should not be warded, which would in its view, complicate electoral matters further. The Borough Council proposed transferring some 393 electors from the Braiswick area to West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward in order to improve electoral equality within West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward. The Borough Council's proposed wards of Mile End and West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green would vary by 2 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average by 2004.

70 During Stage One, the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats opposed the Borough Council's proposal to transfer electors from the Braiswick area. It was also opposed by West Bergholt Parish Council, the Braiswick Residents' Association and the Colchester Association of Local Councils on the basis that it would mix urban and rural settlements in single wards. The Residents' Association stated that it was "dismayed" to see that the area covered by the Residents' Association would be divided between two wards. A local resident also opposed the

Borough Council's proposal contending that the whole of Braiswick should remain a united community. As previously discussed, the Commission supports this view, and proposes that West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should remain unmodified.

71 The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed alternative warding configurations for Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards. Both groups proposed retaining polling district AR within the town area. Similarly, both submissions proposed the retention of the Ipswich Road as the north-western boundary for a modified St John's ward. The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats proposed warding Myland parish for the first time and thereby transferring some 249 electors to a new Highwoods ward. The proposed three-member Mile End ward would initially vary by 20 per cent below the borough average, however, due to substantial housing development in the area, the electoral variance would improve to 5 per cent below the borough average by 2004.

72 The Borough Council also proposed that two new wards should be established; Highwoods & St John's (north) and Parsons Heath & St John's (south). During Stage One we received comments from Bob Russell, MP for Colchester, stating that although he felt that a number of the Borough Council's proposed wards had merit, a number also failed, in his view, to meet the Commission's statutory criteria and that in particular the boundaries proposed in the north of the town could be improved upon. The Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats both opposed the Borough Council's proposed wards, and proposed modifications to the existing St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards. Councillor Gamble, writing on behalf of the St John's ward Liberal Democrats, also opposed the transfer of the eastern part of St John's ward to a new Highwoods & St John's (north) ward. In particular he opposed the Borough Council's proposal to divide the Longridge Estate between the modified St Anne's and St Andrew's wards. Councillor Gamble enclosed correspondence which he had received from local residents, also opposing the Borough Council's proposed modifications. The St John's Residents' Association opposed the Borough Council's proposed Highwoods & St John's (north) and Parsons Heath & St John's (south) wards. The Residents' Association stated that the Highwoods and St John's areas were physically detached from one another by a major road (the Ipswich Road) and that such a major feature was difficult for pedestrians to cross. It also contended that the two areas were significantly different to one another. It stated that "both communities [Highwoods and St John's] have certain socio-economic characteristics giving rise to very different perceptions and priorities" and concluded that it wished to retain the status quo for the ward.

73 Councillor Smith, representing St John's ward, supported the Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposals which opposed the division of Braiswick and St John's ward. Councillor Smith also opposed the Borough Council's proposed boundary between the modified St Andrew's and St Anne's wards, which he contended appeared illogical and split Goldcrest Close and Sheerwater Mews between wards.

74 We have considered carefully all submissions received during Stage One and on balance we have concluded that those submissions which retained the Ipswich Road as a boundary have merit. On this basis, we propose supporting the Conservatives' and Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposals, which retain polling district AR within Mile End ward. We are aware that this would necessitate warding Myland parish for the first time however, we have concluded that the

Conservatives' proposed boundary has considerable merit. We propose that Myland parish should have two parish wards, Mile End and Highwoods. The proposed Highwoods parish ward would form part of the proposed Highwoods ward. The Conservatives' and Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposed St John's ward would retain the Ipswich Road as a boundary, which, in our view, provides for a clearer boundary than the Borough Council's proposed Highwoods & St John's (north) ward. All three proposals would result in improved levels of electoral equality for the area; however, in our view, the Conservatives' proposed St John's ward would better reflect the local community. We therefore propose adopting the Conservatives' proposed St John's ward as part of our draft recommendations.

75 We have examined the boundaries proposed by the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Mile End Liberal Democrats for St Andrew's and St Anne's wards. We have based our proposals for St John's ward on the Conservatives' proposals, but propose transferring some 32 electors south of the Bromley Road to the proposed St John's ward from St Anne's ward in order to further improve the boundary between the two wards.

76 As stated previously, Councillor Gamble expressed concern that under the Borough Council's proposals Sheerwater Mews would be divided between St Anne's and St Andrew's wards. We were not convinced by the boundaries proposed by the Borough Council, the Mile End Liberal Democrats or the Conservatives. Although the proposals from both the Conservatives and Mile End Liberal Democrats would not result in the Longridge estate being divided between St Andrew's and St Anne's wards, we were of the view that a better boundary could be attained by modifying the Conservatives's proposed wards, particularly St Anne's ward. We propose transferring part of polling district BG to the modified St Andrew's ward, in order to improve the boundary between the two proposed wards. This would also enable the whole of the Longridge estate to remain united within the proposed St Andrew's ward.

77 The proposed Mile End, St Andrew's, St Anne's and St John's wards would initially vary by 20 per cent below, 11 per cent above, 12 per cent above and 7 per cent above the borough average respectively (15 per cent below, 4 per cent above, 3 per cent above and equal to the borough average respectively by 2004). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Berechurch, Castle, Harbour and New Town wards

78 The four three-member wards of Berechurch, Castle Harbour and New Town are located directly east of the River Colne and currently vary by 3 per cent below, 1 per cent below, 5 per cent above and 14 per cent below the borough average respectively (8 per cent below, 1 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 14 per cent below by 2004).

79 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifications to Castle, Harbour and New Town wards and proposed that Berechurch ward should remain unmodified. The Borough Council generally proposed only minor modifications to the three other wards, in order to improve electoral equality. Both the Conservatives' and Mile End Liberal Democrats' Stage One submissions proposed modifications to all four existing wards. The Conservatives stated that its proposed modifications to the south, west and centre of Colchester town showed only minor

differences from the Borough Council's submission. Both submissions proposed transferring polling district AM from Harbour ward to St Andrew's/St Anne's wards, thereby establishing the River Colne as a boundary, and renaming the ward Old Heath. The Conservatives proposed that polling district AL should form part of a modified New Town ward and that part of polling district AY should be transferred to Berechurch ward, which would otherwise remain unchanged.

80 The Borough Council proposed realigning the southern boundary of Castle ward to the Lexden Road/Southway. We are of the view that this modification would establish a far clearer boundary to Castle ward. Additionally, the Borough Council proposed transferring part of polling district AE to the modified New Town ward. The Mile End Liberal Democrats broadly supported the Borough Council's proposed Castle ward, although they proposed that the whole of polling district AE should be transferred to its proposed New Town ward.

81 We broadly support the proposals from the Borough Council, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats for these four wards. In particular, we support the Borough Council's proposal to utilise Lexden Road/Southway as the southern boundary for Castle ward. We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposed Castle ward as part of our draft recommendations for Colchester. However, we propose a minor modification to their boundary between Castle and Lexden wards. The Borough Council proposed that the boundary between the modified Lexden and Castle wards should follow the centre of Highfield Drive. However, we propose that the whole of Highfield Drive should be transferred to Lexden ward and follow the eastern edge of the former Roman pottery kilns, in order to establish a clearer boundary between the two proposed wards. The modification would affect some six electors.

82 The proposed Berechurch, Castle, New Town and Old Heath wards would initially vary by 1 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 13 per cent above the borough average respectively (4 per cent below, 1 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 5 per cent above by 2004). These recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Lexden, Prettygate, Shrub End and St Mary's wards

83 The four three-member wards of Lexden, Prettygate, Shrub End and St Mary's are located in the west of Colchester town and are currently 29 per cent below, equal to, 5 per cent below and 11 per cent below the borough average respectively (34 per cent below, 8 per cent below, 11 per cent below and 9 per cent below the borough average by 2004).

84 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifications to all four wards, proposing that Lexden ward should be represented by two councillors rather than three as at present. It also proposed that some boundary anomalies should be rectified by transferring electors from St Mary's and Prettygate wards to Lexden ward, and transferring part of AP polling district from Lexden ward to Prettygate ward. The Borough Council proposed that Shrub End ward (which is currently under-represented) should be modified to incorporate part of polling district BN from the existing St Mary's ward. The Borough Council further proposed that the modified ward should be renamed Christchurch and be represented by two councillors rather than three as at present.

85 The Conservatives also proposed modifications to Shrub End ward. They proposed transferring part of BN polling district from St Mary's ward to Shrub End, but also proposed transferring additional electors from polling district BQ. They also proposed that the modified two-member St Mary's ward should be renamed Christchurch. The Mile End Liberal Democrats supported the Borough Council's proposals for Christchurch, Lexden, Shrub End and Prettygate wards, while noting that it had reservations regarding the proposed Christchurch ward. Councillor Frame, representing St Mary's ward, opposed the proposed Christchurch ward and proposed modifications to the ward. Councillor Frame's modifications recognised that his proposals would impact negatively on Castle ward. However, as previously discussed, we support the proposal to utilise Southway as a boundary.

86 As stated previously, the Conservatives proposed only minor modifications to the Borough Council's proposed wards in the south, west and centre of the town area. The Borough Council proposed minor adjustments to Prettygate ward to improve boundaries through modifications to the boundary with Lexden ward. The Conservatives proposed that part of polling district BQ should be transferred from Shrub End ward to Prettygate ward, however, this would not retain the Shrub End Road as a boundary, which we consider to be a strong boundary between the two proposed wards.

87 We propose including the Borough Council's proposed Shrub End and Prettygate wards as part of our draft recommendations, which we consider provide good boundaries within the area. We have noted the comments made by the Mile End Liberal Democrats and Councillor Frame; however, we consider that, within the context of the town as a whole, the proposal for a new two-member Christchurch ward should be supported, given the good boundaries and improved level of electoral equality which the Borough Council's and Conservatives' proposals would achieve.

88 The proposed Christchurch, Lexden, Prettygate and Shrub End wards would initially be equal to the borough average, 8 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 8 per cent above respectively (4 per cent above, 1 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively by 2004). These recommendations are outlined on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- a council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 27 wards;

- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in the retention of 27 wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

90 Our draft recommendations would involve modifications to all but five of the existing wards in Colchester borough, as summarised below:

- within Colchester town, we have based our scheme on the Colchester Conservative Association's and Mile End Liberal Democrats' proposals for Highwoods, Mile End and St John's wards. For the remainder of the town, we have broadly based our proposals on the schemes from the Borough Council and Colchester Conservative Association;
- we propose that West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward should remain unmodified;
- the parishes of Dedham and Langham should form a new single-member ward;
- the parishes of Boxted, Fordham, Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley and Wormingford should form a new two-member ward named The Horkesleys.

91 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	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	27	27	27	27
Average number of electors per councillor	1,992	1,992	2,166	2,166
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	11	8	12	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	1	7	0

92 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Colchester Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough

average from 11 to eight. By 2004 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation
Colchester Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 27 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

93 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 Myland, Stanway, Tiptree and Wivenhoe to reflect the proposed borough wards.

94 The parish of Myland is currently served by 13 councillors and is unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations we propose warding the parish for the first time and creating two new parish wards: Highwoods and Mile End.

Draft Recommendation
Myland Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Highwoods (returning two councillors) and Mile End (returning 11 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

95 The parish of Stanway is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations we propose warding the parish for the first time and creating two new parish wards: Stanway East and Stanway West. Stanway West parish ward would form part of the proposed Copford & West Stanway borough ward, and Stanway East parish ward would form the modified Stanway borough ward.

Draft Recommendation
Stanway Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stanway East (returning 14 councillors) and Stanway West (returning one councillor). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

96 The parish of Tiptree is currently divided into three parish wards: Church, Heath and Maypole and is served by 15 councillors. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose dividing the current Maypole ward to create a new Grove parish ward which would form part of the Birch & Winstree borough ward.

Draft Recommendation

Tiptree Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, representing four wards: Church (returning three councillors), Grove (returning three councillors), Heath (returning four councillors) and Maypole (returning five councillors). The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

97 Wivenhoe Town Council is currently served by 11 town councillors and is unwarded. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose that the town should be warded for the first time to form Wivenhoe Cross parish ward (returning five councillors) and Wivenhoe Quay parish ward (returning six councillors).

Draft Recommendation

Wivenhoe Town Council should comprise 11 town councillors, representing two wards: Wivenhoe Cross (returning five councillors) and Wivenhoe Quay (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two town council wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

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

99 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Colchester 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 Colchester

5 NEXT STEPS

100 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.

101 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Colchester 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

102 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

Draft Recommendations for Colchester: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Stanway parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Tiptree parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Wivenhoe town.

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates this existing and proposed warding arrangements for Colchester town.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Colchester: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Stanway Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Tiptree Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Wivenhoe Town

APPENDIX B

Colchester 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 ten wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Colchester Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Constable	Boxted & Langham ward; Fordham ward (part – the parishes of Fordham and Langham); Great & Little Horkeley ward
Berechurch	<i>Unchanged</i> – Berechurch ward
Harbour	Harbour ward (part)
Mile End	Mile End ward (part)
Highwoods & St John's (North)	Mile End ward (part); St John's ward (part)
New Town	New Town ward; Harbour ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)
St Andrew's	St Andrew's ward (part); St Anne's ward (part)
St Anne's	St Anne's ward (part)
Parsons Heath & St John's (South)	Mile End ward (part); St John's ward (part)
West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	Mile End ward (part); West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green ward

Figure B2: Colchester 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 %
Constable	3	6,379	2,126	7	6,677	2,226	3
Berechurch	3	5,773	1,924	-3	5,999	2,000	-8
Harbour	3	6,024	2,008	1	6,434	2,145	-1
Mile End	3	4,764	1,588	-20	6,601	2,200	2
Highwoods & St John's (North)	3	6,437	2,146	8	6,869	2,290	6
New Town	3	5,786	1,929	-3	6,276	2,092	-3
St Andrew's	3	6,615	2,205	11	6,622	2,207	2
St Anne's	2	4,337	2,169	9	4,471	2,236	3
Parsons Heath & St John's (South)	2	4,422	2,211	11	4,440	2,220	2
West Bergholt & Eight Ash Green	2	4,193	2,097	5	4,468	2,234	3

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

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

Colchester Conservative Association's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B3: Colchester Conservative Association's Proposals: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent area
Constable	Boxted & Langham ward; Fordham ward (part – the parishes of Fordham and Langham); Great & Little Horkeley ward
Lexden	Lexden ward (part); St Mary's ward (part)
New Town	Harbour ward (part); New Town ward (part)
Prettygate	Lexden ward (part); Shrub End ward (part)
St Andrew's	St Andrew's ward (part); St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part)
St Anne's	St Andrew's ward (part); St Anne's ward (part); Harbour ward (part)

Figure B4: Colchester 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 %
Constable	3	6,379	2,126	7	6,677	2,226	3
Lexden	2	4,345	2,173	9	4,386	2,193	1
New Town	3	5,661	1,887	-5	6,506	2,169	0
Prettygate	3	6,594	2,198	10	6,665	2,222	3
St Andrew's	3	6,621	2,207	11	6,628	2,209	2
St Anne's	3	6,718	2,239	12	6,859	2,286	6

APPENDIX C

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 districts 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.

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

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

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.