

LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
ON THE FUTURE  
ELECTORAL  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR  
NORTH  
HERTFORDSHIRE

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

*February 1998*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire.

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Professor Michael Clarke

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## Local Government Commission for England

3 February 1998

Dear Secretary of State

On 10 December 1996, the Commission began a periodic electoral review of the district of North Hertfordshire under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 13 August 1997 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 84-85) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in North Hertfordshire.

We recommend that North Hertfordshire District Council should be served by 49 councillors representing 26 wards, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that elections should continue to take place by thirds.

I would like to thank members and officers of the District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



# SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of North Hertfordshire on 10 December 1996. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 13 August 1997, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in North Hertfordshire because:

- **in 19 of the 25 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district;**
- **in nine wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **this level of electoral equality is not expected to improve over the next five years.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figure 1 and paragraphs 84 to 86) are that:

- **North Hertfordshire District Council should be served by 49 councillors, one fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, one more than at present;**
- **the boundaries of 21 wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 22 of the 26 wards, the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **By 2001, the number of electors per councillor is projected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in 23 wards, one would have an electoral variance over 20 per cent from the average.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements for Royston Town Council;**
- **new warding arrangements for Codicote, St Ippolyts and Kings Walden parish councils.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 17 March 1998:

**The Secretary of State  
Local Government Review  
Department of the Environment,  
Transport and the Regions  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU**

*Figure 1:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Constituent areas*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1 Arbury	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ashwell, Bygrave, Caldecote, Hinxworth and Newnham parishes)	Map 2
2 Baldock East	1	Baldock ward (part)	Large map
3 Baldock Town	3	Baldock ward (part); Letchworth South East ward (part)	Large map
4 Cadwell	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Holwell and Ickleford parishes)	Large map
5 Codicote	1	Codicote ward (part – Village ward of Codicote parish as proposed)	Maps 2 and A4
6 Ermine	1	Newsells ward (Barley, Barkway, Nuthampstead and Reed parishes); Sandon ward (part – Kelshall and Therfield parishes)	Map 2
7 Graveley & Wymondley	1	Ashbrook ward (part – Wymondley parish); Weston ward (part – Graveley parish)	Map 2
8 Hitchin Bearton	3	Bearton ward; Walsworth ward (part); Priory ward (part)	Large map
9 Hitchin Highbury	3	Highbury ward; Walsworth ward (part)	Large map
10 Hitchin Oughton	2	Oughton ward (part)	Large map
11 Hitchin Priory	2	Priory ward (part); Ashbrook ward (part – Broadmeadow ward of St Ippolyts parish as proposed); Oughton ward (part)	Large map
12 Hitchin Walsworth	3	Walsworth ward (part)	Large map
13 Hitchwood	1	Hitchwood ward (part – Langley and St Paul's Walden parish); Ashbrook ward (part – Gosmore and Ippolyts ward of St Ippolyts parish as proposed)	Map 2
14 Hoo	1	Hoo ward (Hexton, Lilley and Kings Walden parishes and Cockernhoe ward of Offley parish); Hitchwood ward (part – Preston parish)	Map 2
15 Kimpton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Kimpton parish)	Map 2
16 Knebworth	2	Knebworth ward (Knebworth parish); Codicote ward (part – East ward of Codicote parish as proposed)	Maps 2 and A4



Figure 1 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Constituent areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
17 Letchworth East	3	Letchworth East ward (part); Wilbury ward (part)	Large map
18 Letchworth Grange	3	Grange ward; Letchworth East ward (part)	Large map
19 Letchworth South East	3	Letchworth South East ward (part)	Large map
20 Letchworth South West	3	Letchworth South West ward; Letchworth South East ward (part)	Large map
21 Letchworth Wilbury	2	Wilbury ward (part); Walsworth ward (part)	Large map
22 Offa	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Pirton parish and Offley ward of Offley parish)	Map 2
23 Royston Heath	2	Royston West ward (part); Royston East ward (part)	Map A2
24 Royston Meridian	2	Royston East ward (part)	Map A2
25 Royston Palace	2	Royston West ward (part)	Map A2
26 Weston and Sandon	1	Sandon ward (part – Rushden, Sandon and Wallington parishes); Weston ward (part – Clothall and Weston parishes)	Map 2

Note: The large map inserted in the back of this report shows the ward boundaries in Baldock, Hitchin and Letchworth. These are the only unparished areas in the district.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North Hertfordshire. We have now reviewed all the districts of Hertfordshire as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England.

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

- the statutory criteria in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992; and
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

3 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 10 December 1996, when we invited proposals for the future electoral arrangements from North Hertfordshire District Council, and copied the letter to Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Police Authority, the Metropolitan Police, the local authority associations, Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we published a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review more widely. The closing date for receipt of representations was 10 March 1997. At Stage Two, we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

5 Stage Three began on 13 August 1997 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for North Hertfordshire in Hertfordshire*, and ended on 14 October 1997. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, and now publish our final recommendations.



## 2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

<sup>6</sup> North Hertfordshire district covers an area of 37,500 hectares in a broad band of country following the chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills, from the Bedfordshire boundary in the south-west to the Cambridgeshire and Essex boundaries in the north-east. The main towns of Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston all lie astride the A505 and the Hitchin to Cambridge railway line. The district is linked to London by the A1(M), the A10 trunk road and the East Coast main railway line.

<sup>7</sup> To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards we have 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'.

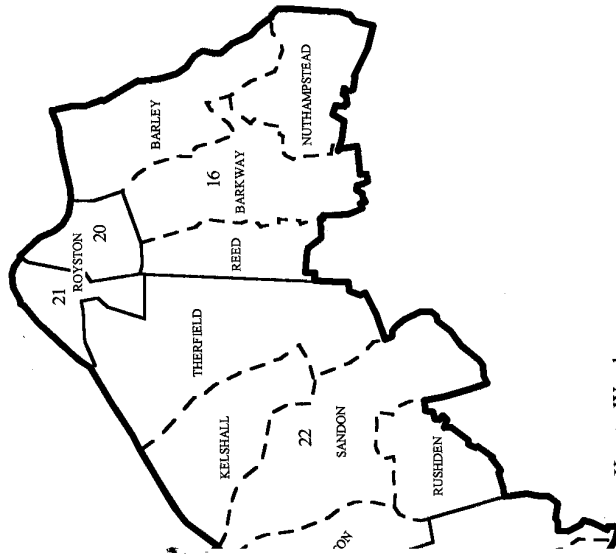
<sup>8</sup> The District Council has 50 councillors elected from 25 wards (Map 1 and Figure 2). Of these, 11 wards are represented by three councillors, three wards by two councillors and 11 wards by a single councillor. Elections are held by thirds, with the next elections due to take place in May 1998. The electorate of the district is 88,602 (February 1996), and each councillor represents an average of 1,772 electors. The District Council forecasts that the electorate will increase to 92,390 by the year 2001, which would change the average number of electors per councillor to 1,848. The most significant areas of development are expected to be in Hitchin Walsworth ward and Graveley parish (part of Weston ward).

<sup>9</sup> Since the last electoral review was completed in 1976, changes in population and electorate have not been evenly spread across the district. As a result, the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average in 19 of the 25 wards, nine of which vary by more than 20 per cent. The highest electoral imbalances are in Ashbrook, Baldock and Codicote wards (with some 38 per cent, 39 per cent and 41 per cent more

electors per councillor than the average respectively). In other words, the councillor for Codicote ward represents 2,499 electors, compared to the district average of 1,772.

<sup>10</sup> As part of this review, the Commission may also make recommendations relating to the electoral arrangements of the 32 parish and town councils in the district. Only Baldock, Hitchin and Letchworth are unparished.

Map 1:  
Existing Wards in North Hertfordshire



Key to Wards

- |    |                 |    |                       |
|----|-----------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1  | Arbury          | 14 | Letchworth South East |
| 2  | Ashbrook        | 15 | Letchworth South West |
| 3  | Baldock         | 16 | Newsells              |
| 4  | Bearton         | 17 | Offa                  |
| 5  | Cadwell         | 18 | Oughton               |
| 6  | Codicote        | 19 | Priory                |
| 7  | Grange          | 20 | Royston East          |
| 8  | Highbury        | 21 | Royston West          |
| 9  | Hitchwood       | 22 | Sandon                |
| 10 | Hoo             | 23 | Walsworth             |
| 11 | Kimpton         | 24 | Weston                |
| 12 | Knebworth       | 25 | Wilbury               |
| 13 | Letchworth East |    |                       |

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Figure 2:  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Arbury	1	1,970	1,970	11	2,008	2,008	9
2 Ashbrook	1	2,447	2,447	38	2,500	2,500	35
3 Baldock	3	7,402	2,467	39	7,635	2,545	38
4 Bearton (in Hitchin)	3	4,677	1,559	-12	4,774	1,591	-14
5 Cadwell	1	1,825	1,825	3	1,825	1,825	-1
6 Codicote	1	2,499	2,499	41	2,499	2,499	35
7 Grange (in Letchworth)	3	5,127	1,709	-4	5,127	1,709	-8
8 Highbury (in Hitchin)	3	5,122	1,707	-4	5,253	1,751	-5
9 Hitchwood	1	1,567	1,567	-12	1,632	1,632	-12
10 Hoo	1	1,480	1,480	-17	1,480	1,480	-20
11 Kimpton	1	1,723	1,723	-3	1,768	1,768	-4
12 Knebworth	2	3,442	1,721	-3	3,467	1,734	-6
13 Letchworth East	3	4,931	1,644	-7	4,931	1,644	-11
14 Letchworth South East	3	6,294	2,098	18	6,336	2,112	14
15 Letchworth South West	3	4,625	1,542	-13	4,711	1,570	-15
16 Newsells	1	1,365	1,365	-23	1,394	1,394	-25
17 Offa	1	1,421	1,421	-20	1,448	1,448	-12
18 Oughton (in Hitchin)	3	4,094	1,365	-23	4,160	1,387	-25
19 Priory (in Hitchin)	2	2,894	1,447	-18	2,914	1,457	-21
20 Royston East	2	4,408	2,204	24	4,841	2,421	31
21 Royston West	3	6,465	2,155	22	6,783	2,261	22

*continued overleaf*

Figure 2 (continued):  
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Sandon	1	1,177	1,177	-34	1,177	1,177	-36
23 Walsworth (in Hitchin)	3	6,073	2,024	14	6,648	2,216	20
24 Weston	1	1,246	1,246	-30	2,520	2,520	36
25 Wilbury (in Letchworth)	3	4,328	1,443	-19	4,559	1,520	-18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>88,602</b>	—	—	<b>92,390</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,772</b>	—	—	<b>1,848</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Hertfordshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, electors in Wilbury ward are relatively over-represented by 19 per cent, while electors in Royston East ward are relatively under-represented by 24 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

<sup>11</sup> During Stage One, we received representations from North Hertfordshire District Council, North Hertfordshire District Council Conservative Group, North Hertfordshire District Council Liberal Democrat Group and the North Hertfordshire Local Government Committee of the Labour Party on electoral arrangements for the whole district. Representations were also received from 12 parish and town councils, the Sandon, Rushden and Wallington Branch of the North-East Hertfordshire Conservative Association, Councillor Faure-Walker and 97 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in the report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for North Hertfordshire in Hertfordshire*. We proposed that:

- (a) North Hertfordshire District Council should be served by 49 councillors, representing 26 wards;
- (b) the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- (c) there should be modifications to the warding arrangements of Royston Town Council;
- (d) there should be new warding arrangements for Codicote, St Ippolyts and Kings Walden parish councils.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

North Hertfordshire District Council should comprise 49 councillors, serving 26 wards. Elections should continue to take place by thirds.

<sup>12</sup> Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average in 22 of the 26 wards. This level of electoral equality

was expected to improve over the next five years, with 23 of the 26 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average number of electors per councillor, one of which would exceed 20 per cent from the average.

<sup>13</sup> Our draft recommendations are summarised in Appendix B.



## 4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

14 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 18 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission's offices.

### **North Hertfordshire District Council**

15 The District Council welcomed our draft recommendations, which largely reflected its initial submission at Stage One. In particular, it reaffirmed its support for the recommended reduction in council size from 50 to 49.

16 However, there were certain areas where it considered minor amendments could be made that, in its view, would better reflect community identities and create more clearly defined ward boundaries. In Letchworth, the Council sought two amendments to the proposed Letchworth Wilbury ward. Firstly, while it supported our draft recommendation to include the entire Fearnhill School site within the ward, it recommended that the boundary be realigned with the centre of Stotfold Road north of the Hitchin to Cambridge railway line. Secondly, it argued that the electors in Redhoods Way East, Rowan Crescent, Cowslip Hill (south of the Pix Brook) and Bedford Road should remain linked with the rest of the current Wilbury ward rather than, as proposed, being transferred to Letchworth East ward.

17 The Council proposed transferring a small area at the end of Millfield Lane in St Ippolyts parish which has no properties, from Hitchwood ward to Hitchin Priory ward. It argued that if this area were to be developed any access would be via Millfield Lane, the rest of which it has been proposed should form part of a new Broadmeadow parish ward and Hitchin Priory ward.

18 In relation to the proposed Codicote ward, the Council supported our draft recommendations subject to a minor boundary realignment which involved an additional six electors being transferred from Codicote ward to Knebworth ward. It also proposed that the parish councillors representing Codicote parish be redistributed so that Village and

East parish wards be represented by eight and two parish councillors respectively. The Council also proposed a redistribution of parish councillors for the new Breachwood Green and Kings Walden parish wards of Kings Walden parish to six and two councillors respectively and that Kings Walden parish ward be renamed Ley Green. The Council supported our draft recommendation to increase the number of parish councillors for Pirton Parish Council from eight to nine.

### **North Herts Local Government Committee of the Labour Party**

19 North Herts Local Government Committee of the Labour Party ("the Labour Party") largely supported our draft recommendations, in particular our recommendations to include part of St Ippolyts parish in a new Hitchin Priory ward and the retention of the current Cadwell ward. There were, however, two exceptions. It argued that Redhoods Way East, Rowan Crescent, Cowslip Hill and Bedford Road should not be transferred from Wilbury ward to Letchworth East ward as it considered the area has a "natural link with the Wilbury estate".

20 The Labour Party also proposed that the properties on the south side of Fishponds Road be transferred from the proposed Hitchin Priory ward to Hitchin Bearton ward. It argued that "these electors live just across the road from the Bearton polling station so they would gain considerably from this change".

### **North Hertfordshire District Council Conservative Group**

21 North Hertfordshire District Council Conservative Group ("the Conservative Group") welcomed our draft recommendations with two exceptions. Firstly, it reiterated its Stage One proposal for two wards for Baldock – Baldock East and Baldock West, each represented by two councillors. It argued that the "principle of creating a ward consisting solely of the Clothall Common estate would tend to reinforce the isolation of the

estate as a dormitory part of the town. The population of this eastern area is already considered by many as a detached community and making it a separate ward would perpetuate this view". It understood this option was also supported by the Clothall Common Residents' Association.

22 In relation to Codicote ward, it agreed with the District Council that three houses on the eastern side of Codicote Road should be transferred to East parish ward and Knebworth ward. However, it also argued that Sissevernes Farm and properties on Rabley Heath Road are an integral part of the Codicote community, and should remain part of Codicote ward.

## Parish and Town Councils

23 Representations were received from seven parish and town councils during Stage Three. Of these, two (Pirton Parish Council and Royston Town Council) supported our draft recommendations. Kings Walden Parish Council supported our draft recommendation to divide the parish between two parish wards, but suggested that the two wards of Breachwood Green and Kings Walden be represented by six and two parish councillors respectively. Codicote Parish Council argued that it "could see no merit in allocating a split of councillors to represent the two wards of Codicote parish".

24 Preston Parish Council opposed our draft recommendation for a revised Hoo ward, and expressed support for the Conservative Group's Stage One proposal to form a new three-member Hitchwood ward, comprising the parishes of St Ippolyts, Preston, Langley and St Paul's Walden, together with Cockernhoe ward of Offley parish. St Ippolyts and Knebworth parish councils opposed our draft recommendations and requested to remain unchanged. St Ippolyts Parish Council argued that our draft recommendations were based on incorrect projected electorate figures, and stated that by 2001 the parish would be large enough to form its own single-member ward.

## Other Representations

25 We received a further eight submissions from local groups and individuals. Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations for the whole of the

parliamentary constituency of Hitchin and Harpenden. It opposed the draft recommendations for Baldock and supported the Conservative Group's proposals for two wards each represented by two councillors. Baldock Branch of the North East Hertfordshire Conservative Association also supported the Conservative Group's proposals for Baldock.

26 Hitchin Forum argued that Hitchin has a strong sense of its historic identity, and endorsed using the town name to prefix the five ward names for the town. It also argued that the creation of a Town Council for Hitchin was a priority. Icknield Branch Labour Party supported our draft recommendations for the warding of Kings Walden parish, but argued that the two new parish wards of Kings Walden and Breachwood Green should be represented by two and six parish councillors respectively. It further suggested that the new Kings Walden parish ward be renamed Ley Green parish ward.

27 A resident of Hitchin supported our draft recommendations for the town, and in particular the proposal to unite the whole of Black Horse Lane and the Broadmeadow Estate in Hitchin Priory ward. He also argued that a parish review was required for the town. One resident argued that Newsells and Sandon wards be combined with Weston and Clothall parishes, as proposed by Councillor Faure-Walker at Stage One.

28 Two local residents opposed our draft recommendation to combine the northern part of St Ippolyts parish with part of Hitchin for district warding purposes. However, both argued that if the proposal should happen then the proposed Gosmore and Ippolyts parish ward should be represented by six councillors, while the proposed Broadmeadow parish ward should be renamed New England parish ward and be represented by three councillors.

29 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North Hertfordshire is to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the ratio of electors to councillors being "as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough".

30 However, our function is not merely arithmetical for three reasons. First, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. Second, we must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, we must consider the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities.

31 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.

37 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, the Commission has concluded that its statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a reduction in council size from 50 to 49. The Commission has not received evidence during Stage Three to persuade it to move away from this view.

## Electoral Arrangements

38 Having considered all representations received during Stage Three of the review, we have further considered our draft recommendations. We are encouraged that the majority of our draft recommendations have received local support in representations to us, and as a result we are largely confirming them. The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

### The four towns:

- (a) Hitchin (five wards);
- (b) Letchworth (five wards);
- (c) Baldock (one ward);
- (d) Royston (two wards).

### The rural areas:

- (e) Ashbrook and Hitchwood wards;
- (f) Cadwell, Offa and Hoo wards;
- (g) Weston, Sandon, Arbury and Newsells wards;
- (h) Knebworth and Codicote wards;
- (i) Kimpton ward.

39 Details of our final recommendations are summarised in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in Map 2, at Appendix A, and in the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## Hitchin

40 Hitchin currently comprises the wards of Bearton, Highbury, Oughton, Priory and Walsworth. The town has an electorate of some 22,860 and is currently represented by 14 district councillors. The average number of electors per councillor is 1,633, compared to the district average of 1,772. In other words, as a whole

the town is relatively over-represented. Under current arrangements, four of the five wards have electoral variances in excess of 10 per cent from the district average. Oughton ward, for example, has 23 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average.

41 At Stage One, the District Council, the Hitchin Society and the Labour Party proposed that the northern part of St Ippolyts parish be transferred from the present Ashbrook ward to Hitchin Priory ward. The Council argued that this part of St Ippolyts is distinctively urban in character and is, in fact, an extension of the built-up part of southern Hitchin. However, the Liberal Democrat Group, while proposing the change as an alternative option, preferred that St Ippolyts parish remain separate from Hitchin.

42 In our draft recommendations report, we considered that, as a result of recent development, the current boundary between St Ippolyts parish and Priory ward has become obscured and the area appears to relate more closely to the town of Hitchin than the rest of St Ippolyts parish. In addition, we noted that any change to the district warding would not affect the areas remaining associated with St Ippolyts parish. We therefore proposed that part of St Ippolyts parish be transferred to Hitchin Priory ward.

43 At Stage Three, the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Group and the Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations. However, the District Council put forward one minor alteration. It proposed that a small area at the end of Millfield Lane be transferred from the current Ashbrook ward to Hitchin Priory ward which it argued would have access via Millfield Lane which is already proposed as part of Hitchin Priory ward. One resident argued that "it does not make sense to have one side of Blackhorse Lane in one ward and the other in a different one."

44 St Ippolyts Parish Council opposed the division of the parish between two district wards. It argued that the District Council's electorate projections for the parish were conservative, and that by 2001 the parish would be large enough to form a ward in its own right. Two residents also opposed our draft recommendation, and argued that many people in the northern part of the parish look towards Gosmore and St Ippolyts.

45 We have carefully considered the responses received during Stage Three. We note that while this draft recommendation is opposed by St Ippolyts Parish Council and two residents, the proposal was supported by the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Group, Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association and one resident. We considered the Parish Council's argument that the District Council has underestimated the parish's electorate. The District Council argued that all the properties in the main area of development, Broadmeadow Rise, are now occupied and that in its view the electorate of the parish should remain relatively stable over the period up to 2001. The Parish Council also argued that by 2001, the parish on its own would be large enough to form a ward in its own right. While this may be the case, we must consider how the statutory criteria and electoral equality can be best balanced across the whole district, and the division of St Ippolyts provides minimal change for much of the rural area as well as southern Hitchin.

46 We have not been persuaded in the light of the comments received to change our draft recommendation. We consider that this area has some similarity with Hitchin to its north, and that as any change to district warding would not affect parish boundaries, residents of the northern part of St Ippolyts parish will be able to play as active a part in the affairs of the parish as at present.

47 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Ickleford parish, which is at present situated in Cadwell ward, be merged with Oughton ward. The Labour Party, however, concluded that in terms of community of interest, the case for a merger is not clear cut and argued that Cadwell and Oughton wards should be retained, but that Oughton ward should be expanded to include parts of Priory and Bearton wards. The Liberal Democrat Group also opposed any merger between Ickleford and part of Hitchin, and argued that electoral equality could be better secured by realigning the boundary between Priory and Oughton wards to the edge of Westmill Estate, and reducing the number of councillors for Oughton ward to two.

48 In our draft recommendations, we put forward the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary of Oughtonhead Lane, together with the aforementioned boundary change between

Priory and Hitchwood wards. The draft recommendations would provide Hitchin Oughton and Hitchin Priory wards with strong, clear boundaries and a reasonable level of electoral equality with 3 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent and 5 per cent more than average by 2001). At Stage Three, our proposals drew the support of the District Council, Labour Party, the Conservative Group and Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association. No other comments were received. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

49 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that Bearton ward be combined with that part of Walsworth ward which lies between the East Coast and Hitchin to Cambridge railway lines, as proposed by the District Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group. At Stage Three, the District Council, Conservative Group and Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association supported our draft recommendations. The Labour Party supported our draft recommendations but requested that the south side of Fishponds Road be transferred from the proposed Hitchin Priory ward to Hitchin Bearton ward as these electors live close to the polling station for Hitchin Bearton ward. We have considered this minor modification, and note that Fishponds Road is relatively separated from the rest of the proposed Hitchin Priory ward, and that such a change (transferring 35 electors to Hitchin Bearton ward) would marginally improve electoral equality in both wards. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to this change.

50 In order to improve the level of electoral equality in Highbury ward, in our draft recommendations report we adopted the alternative warding arrangements proposed by the District Council. We recommended that the area of residential development currently under construction between the East Coast railway line and St Michael's Road be transferred from Walsworth ward to Highbury ward. We consider that, while the area between the railway line and St Michael's Road would appear to have greater affinity with Walsworth ward, it does have some links with Highbury ward and that such a change would lead to significantly improved electoral equality. At Stage Three, our draft recommendation drew the support of the District

Council, the Conservative Group, the Labour Party and Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association. The District Council noted that under our draft recommendations, we transferred properties on Wymondley Road east of the East Coast railway line to Hitchin Highbury ward, and supported such a change. Accordingly, we confirm our draft recommendations as final.

51 To conclude, we note that our final recommendations would produce much improved level of electoral equality for the town of Hitchin. The proposed wards of Hitchin Bearton, Hitchin Highbury, Hitchin Oughton, Hitchin Priory and Hitchin Walsworth would have 5 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (5 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer than average by 2001). These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

## Letchworth

52 Letchworth currently comprises five wards – Grange, Letchworth East, Letchworth South East, Letchworth South West and Wilbury. The total electorate of some 25,305 is currently represented by 15 district councillors. The average number of electors per councillor in the town is therefore 1,687 compared with the district average of 1,772. The town is therefore over-represented as a whole, and is entitled to only 14 councillors. Four of the five wards are over-represented - Grange ward by 4 per cent (8 per cent by 2001), Letchworth South West ward by 13 per cent (15 per cent by 2001), Letchworth East ward by 7 per cent (11 per cent by 2001) and Wilbury ward by 19 per cent (18 per cent by 2001) - while Letchworth South East ward is relatively under-represented by 18 per cent (14 per cent by 2001).

53 At Stage One, we received five submissions for Letchworth. All five proposed a reduction in the number of councillors representing the town from 15 to 14. Within the town, however, each proposed an alternative configuration: the District Council, Liberal Democrat Group, Conservative Group and Labour Party all proposed a mixture of two and three-member wards, while a local resident proposed a pattern of 14 single-member wards.

54 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed to respect the view of the majority of

representations favouring multi-member wards in the town, which would be consistent with other towns in the district. We proposed a number of alterations to ward boundaries in the area, reflecting these submissions with minor modifications as the basis for our draft recommendations. Letchworth East ward would comprise the present ward with the addition of an area bounded by Pix Brook, Bedford Road and Cowslip Hill and the area to the east of Bridge Road, less Norton village which would be combined with Letchworth Grange ward. Letchworth South East ward would comprise the present ward, less the area bounded by Baldock Road, Letchworth Gate, Howard Drive, to the rear of properties on Whitethorn Lane and Willian Way, which would be transferred to Letchworth South West ward. In addition, a small area to the east of the A1 (M) motorway would be transferred to Baldock (as discussed below). Letchworth Wilbury ward would comprise the present ward, subject to the changes outlined above, but with the addition of an area to its west, so the ward encompasses the whole of Fearnhill School. All five wards would have electoral variances of no more than 3 per cent from the district average currently, and 7 per cent by 2001.

55 At Stage Three, our draft recommendations drew the support of the Conservative Group and a local resident. The District Council and the Labour Party supported our recommendations subject to minor amendments. Both opposed the transfer of Redwoods Way East, Rowan Crescent, Cowslip Hill (south of Pix Brook) and Bedford Road from Wilbury ward to Letchworth East ward. The Council argued that this area has a greater affinity with the proposed Letchworth Wilbury ward than Letchworth East ward. This proposal would increase the electorate of Letchworth Wilbury ward by 234 electors. The Council also proposed that the boundary between Letchworth Wilbury ward and Hitchin Bearton ward be realigned to follow the centre of Stotfold Road to provide a stronger western boundary for Letchworth Wilbury ward. This change would not transfer any electors.

56 Having given careful consideration to the warding arrangements for this area, we have concluded that we should confirm our draft recommendations subject to some minor amendments. We propose to amend the proposed ward boundary between Letchworth Wilbury and Hitchin Bearton wards to follow the centre of Stotfold Road. This would create a stronger ward



boundary for Letchworth Wilbury ward and would have no effect on electoral variances. We further propose to retain the current ward boundary for Letchworth Wilbury ward to the south of Pix Brook. While this would result in the proposed Letchworth East and Letchworth Wilbury wards having larger electoral variances, we consider that the proposed change would better reflect community ties in the area. We consider that these proposals would strike the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Our final recommendations are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

## **Baldock**

57 Baldock town is currently covered by one district ward represented by three councillors and has 39 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. At Stage One, each of the main submissions proposed dividing the town into two new wards represented by a total of four district councillors to reduce the current level of electoral imbalance. The District Council, Liberal Democrat Group and Labour Party proposed that two wards be created – Baldock Town represented by three councillors and Baldock East by one councillor. The boundary between the two proposed wards would largely follow the A507, and Baldock East ward would largely consist of the Clothall Common Estate. The Conservative Group proposed two wards each represented by two councillors, Baldock East and Baldock West.

58 In our draft recommendations report, we adopted the warding arrangements proposed by the District Council, Liberal Democrat Group and the Labour Party. We recommended that Baldock East ward should largely cover the Clothall Common Estate, which we considered to be physically detached from the rest of the town and of a different character, being a modern estate built up since the early 1980s. The proposed Baldock Town ward would be based on the older more established parts of Baldock town. We further proposed minor boundary changes with the current Letchworth South East ward to bring in two properties (the Water Works Cottage, Willian Road and the George IV Public House, London Road), which are close to Baldock and lie east of the A1 (M) motorway from Letchworth.

59 At Stage Three, the District Council and the Labour Party supported our draft recommendations. The Conservative Group reiterated its Stage One proposal for two two-member wards. It argued that a separate ward for Clothall Common as proposed by the District Council “would tend to reinforce the isolation of the estate as a dormitory part of the town”. North East Hertfordshire Conservative Association and Hitchin & Harpenden Conservative Association supported the Conservative Group’s proposals, and the latter noted that our proposed Baldock East ward would be the only single-member ward in the four towns in the district.

60 We have carefully considered the responses received during Stage Three. We recognise the concern expressed about the relative isolation of Clothall Common from the rest of Baldock, which is not uncommon among new housing estates. We consider, however, that the area is a distinct part of the town and that separate representations would provide a focus for its continued development. While it would be the only single-member ward in the four towns, we have proposed wards based almost entirely on housing estates elsewhere in the district – Letchworth Grange and Hitchin Oughton wards are particular examples. The Conservatives’ alternative proposal, while providing reasonable electoral equality would not appear to recognise community ties, since it uses minor roads such as Pinnox Lane and Pembroke Road as a boundary between its two proposed wards. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. Our final recommendations would provide for two new wards, Baldock East and Baldock Town with 3 per cent fewer and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (4 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average by 2001).

## **Royston**

61 The town of Royston lies in the north-east of the district and is currently divided into two wards, Royston East and Royston West, and is represented by five district councillors. Royston East and Royston West currently have 24 per cent and 22 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively.

62 In our draft recommendations report, we adopted the alternative warding arrangements

proposed by the District Council. These divide the town into three new wards, each represented by two councillors – Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace. Royston Heath ward would cover most of the current Royston West ward and a smaller part of the current Royston East ward. The Council argued that this area would consist of established residential areas with clearly defined boundaries. Royston Palace ward would be formed from a clearly defined area currently part of Royston West ward, and Royston Meridian ward would be formed from part of the current Royston East ward. These recommendations would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality for the area. Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace would have 9 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more by 2001).

63 Our draft recommendations drew the support of the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Group, Royston Town Council and a local resident. No other comments were received. Accordingly, having given careful consideration to the warding arrangements for this area, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. The proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in Map A2 at Appendix A.

### **Ashbrook and Hitchwood wards**

64 Ashbrook ward, comprising St Ippolyts and Wymondley parishes, currently has 38 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, while Hitchwood ward, comprising the parishes of Preston, Langley and St Paul's Walden has 20 per cent fewer than average. As discussed above, as part of our final recommendations we proposed the transfer of the northern area of St Ippolyts parish to the adjacent Hitchin Priory ward. In our draft recommendations, we proposed combining the southern area of St Ippolyts parish with the adjacent parishes of Langley and St Paul's Walden to form a new Hitchwood ward represented by a single councillor. The new Hitchwood ward would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average.

65 At Stage Three, our proposal drew the support of the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Group and a local resident. Accordingly, having given further consideration to the warding

arrangements for the area, we remain satisfied that our draft recommendations appear to strike the best balance between securing electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

66 In our draft recommendations, we adopted the alternative warding arrangements proposed by the District Council that Wymondley parish be combined with part of the adjacent Weston ward, namely Graveley parish to form a new Graveley and Wymondley ward, represented by one councillor. The Council argued that while this ward would initially be under-represented, that part of Graveley parish to the north-east of Stevenage is projected to undergo extensive development over the next ten years. Under this proposal the new ward would initially have some 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. However, by 2001 it is projected to have 35 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. The Council argued that this area of development will in due course be the subject of a joint application from the Council and Stevenage Borough Council to cede the developed land to Stevenage. For this reason, the Council considered that this particular part of the district is exceptional and justifies the initial over-representation and anticipated under-representation by 2001.

67 At Stage Three, our draft recommendation drew the support of the District Council, the Labour Party and the Conservative Group. Having given careful consideration to the warding arrangements for this area, we remain satisfied that Graveley is an exceptional case, and consider that our draft recommendation best meets our statutory criteria. We therefore confirm it as final. Our final recommendations are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in Map 2.

### **Cadwell, Hoo and Offa wards**

68 The existing Offa and Hoo wards are significantly over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor 20 per cent and 17 per cent below the district average respectively. The level of electoral equality in Cadwell ward, on the other hand, is relatively good, with some 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the average.

69 In our draft recommendations report, we adopted the alternative warding arrangements proposed by the Liberal Democrats and the Labour

Party. Both stated a preference for Ickleford parish to remain separate from Hitchin, and proposed retaining the current arrangements, with the exception of transferring Preston parish from Hitchwood ward to Hoo ward. Under this proposal Cadwell, Hoo and Offa wards would have 1 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 13 per cent fewer than average by 2001).

70 Our draft recommendations drew the support of the District Council, the Labour Party and a local resident. Preston Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for a revised Hoo ward and expressed support for the Conservative Group's Stage One proposal to form a new three-member Hitchwood ward comprising the parishes of St Ippolyts, Preston, Langley, St Pauls Walden and Cockernhoe ward of Offley parish. No other comments were received.

71 Having given further consideration to the warding arrangements for the area, we remain satisfied that our draft recommendations appear to strike the best balance between securing electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final. These proposals are detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in Map 2.

### **Arbury, Newsells, Sandon and Weston wards**

72 The wards of Arbury, Newsells, Sandon and Weston cover a large area east of the towns of Letchworth and Baldock. The area is subject to a significant degree of over-representation. Newsells, Sandon and Weston wards have 23 per cent, 34 per cent and 30 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Only Arbury ward, which lies to the north of the Hitchin to Cambridge railway line and A505 trunk road, has a degree of under-representation with 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average.

73 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that the current Newsells ward be expanded by the inclusion of Kelshall and Therfield parishes from Sandon ward to form a single-member Ermine ward. The remainder of the current Sandon ward would merge with Weston and Clothall parishes from Weston ward to form a new Weston and Sandon ward. We further proposed that the current Arbury ward remain unchanged.

74 During Stage Three, our draft recommendations were supported by the District Council, the Labour Party, the Conservative Group and a local resident. One resident, proposed that Newsells and Sandon wards be combined with Weston and Clothall parishes.

75 Having given careful consideration to the warding arrangements for this area, we have concluded that we should confirm our draft recommendations for Weston and Sandon, Ermine and Arbury wards. Our final recommendations would provide Weston and Sandon ward with 14 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (18 per cent by 2001), while Ermine and Arbury wards would have 4 per cent and 9 per cent more electors per councillor than average respectively (1 per cent and 7 per cent by 2001).

### **Knebworth and Codicote wards**

76 The wards of Knebworth and Codicote are situated in the south of the district bordering the towns of Stevenage and Welwyn. Codicote ward is currently represented by one councillor, and has some 41 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (35 per cent more than average by 2001). Knebworth ward is represented by two councillors and has 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent fewer than average by 2001).

77 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the electoral imbalance in Codicote ward be reduced by transferring part of its rural eastern area to Knebworth ward. This would result in Codicote ward having 3 per cent more electors per councillor than average, and Knebworth ward having some 13 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (1 per cent and 8 per cent more by 2001 respectively).

78 In our draft recommendations report, we adopted the District Council's proposal subject to a minor alteration which we considered would provide stronger, clearer boundaries to both wards and secure a better level of electoral equality. The proposed change would retain Codicote village within Codicote ward but would in addition include the area south of Codicote Road within one ward.

79 At Stage Three, the Council supported our draft recommendation subject to a minor boundary change. It proposed transferring three houses on the east side of Codicote Road (numbers 49, 51

and 53) from Codicote ward to Knebworth ward to unite the whole of the east side of Codicote Road in one ward. This proposal was supported by the Labour Party and the Conservative Group. However, the Conservative Group also proposed that Sisseverness Farm and houses on Rabley Heath Road remain in Codicote ward, rather than become part of a revised Knebworth ward. Knebworth Parish Council requested to remain unchanged.

80 Having given careful consideration to the warding arrangements for this area, we have concluded that we should confirm our draft recommendations for Knebworth and Codicote wards subject to the amendment proposed by the District Council. The change proposed by the Conservative Group would mean separating the Codicote Road area from the rest of the proposed East Parish ward, which would require the creation of a third parish ward. We have therefore decided that we should not make this change as part of our final recommendations. We consider that these proposals would strike the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Our final recommendations would provide Knebworth ward with 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (6 per cent by 2001), and Codicote ward with 9 per cent more electors per councillor (5 per cent by 2001). This proposal is detailed in Figures 1 and 4 and illustrated in map A4 at Appendix A.

### **Kimpton ward**

81 With a council size of 49, Kimpton ward would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average (and 6 per cent fewer than average by 2001). At Stage One, the District Council, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups and the Labour Party all proposed no change. Accordingly, our draft recommendation was that there should be no change to the existing arrangements.

82 Our draft recommendations drew the support of the District Council and the Conservative Group. No other comments were received. We remain satisfied that retaining the existing arrangements appears to strike the best balance between securing electoral equality and the need to reflect community identities. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

## **Electoral Cycle**

83 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that the present system of elections by thirds in North Hertfordshire be retained. At Stage Three, the District Council and one resident supported this proposal. No other representations were received on this issue, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

84 Having considered carefully all the evidence and representations received in response to our consultation report, we have concluded that:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 50 to 49;
- (b) there should be 26 wards, one more than at present;
- (c) the boundaries of 21 of the existing wards should be modified;
- (d) elections should continue to take place by thirds.

85 We have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the amendments indicated in the following areas:

- (a) Redhoods Way East, Rowan Crescent, Cowslip Hill (south of Pix Brook) and Bedford Road should remain in Letchworth Wilbury ward rather than be transferred to Letchworth East ward;
- (b) the boundary between Letchworth Wilbury ward and Hitchin Bearton ward should be realigned to follow the centre of Stotfold Road;
- (c) the proposed Village and East wards of Codicote parish should be represented by eight and two councillors respectively;
- (d) three houses on the east side of Codicote Road should be transferred from Codicote ward to Knebworth ward and from Village ward of Codicote parish to East ward;
- (e) Breachwood Green and Kings Walden parish wards of Kings Walden parish should be represented by six and two councillors respectively.

86 Figure 3 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1996 and 2001 electorate figures.

87 As Figure 3 shows, our recommendations would reduce the number of wards with electoral variances of more than 10 per cent from the district average from 19 to four with a further reduction to three by 2001. Under these proposals, the average number of electors per councillor would increase from 1,772 to 1,808. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

### Final Recommendation

North Hertfordshire District Council should comprise 49 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 4, and illustrated in Map 2 and Appendix A to this report. The Council should continue to be elected by thirds.

## Parish and Town Council electoral arrangements

88 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable 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 district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose a number of consequential parish ward changes, as detailed below.

89 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed that parish wards be created for St Ippolyts and Codicote parishes to reflect the proposed district ward boundary changes. We also proposed that the warding arrangements of Royston Town Council be modified to reflect the proposed district ward boundary changes, and that the number of councillors for each ward should be modified accordingly. Royston Town Council supported our draft recommendation.

90 In our draft recommendations report, upon request from the parish council, we proposed to increase the number of parish councillors for Pirton parish from eight to nine. However, we welcomed further evidence in support of the proposal during Stage Three.

91 At Stage Three, the District Council and Pirton Parish Council both supported our draft recommendation. Both argued that an additional parish councillor was justified in order to spread the Council's workload between members. Pirton Parish Council argued that new developments had increased population and that parish councillors are expected to represent the Council on many local

Figure 3:  
*Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1996 electorate		2001 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	50	49	50	49
Number of wards	25	26	25	26
Average number of electors per councillor	1,772	1,808	1,848	1,886
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	19	4	19	3
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	9	1	11	1

committees and organisations. Having considered these views, we are content to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

Pirton Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, instead of eight as at present.

92 In our draft recommendations report, as a result of a request from Kings Walden Parish Council, we proposed warding the parish for electoral purposes. At Stage Three, the District Council, Icknield Branch Labour Party and Kings Walden Parish Council all supported our proposals but requested that Breachwood Green and Kings Walden parish wards be represented by six and two councillors respectively (rather than four each). We acknowledge the comments by the District Council and Kings Walden Parish Council that our draft recommendations fail to treat each parish ward equitably. We have therefore decided to modify our draft recommendations, increasing the number of parish councillors for Breachwood Green parish ward from four to six and reducing the number for Kings Walden parish from four to two.

93 At Stage Three, Icknield Branch Labour Party also proposed renaming Kings Walden parish ward Ley Green. While we note that Ley Green is the largest settlement in the ward we note that Kings Walden Parish Council supported our draft recommendation to name the two new parish wards Kings Walden and Breachwood Green, and have therefore decided to make no change to ward names.

### **Final Recommendation**

Kings Walden Parish Council should continue to comprise eight parish councillors. The warding arrangements should be altered to provide two parish wards, Breachwood Green and Kings Walden, to be represented by six and two councillors respectively. This proposal is illustrated in Map A3 at Appendix A.

94 In our draft recommendations, we recommended that there should be new warding arrangements for Royston Town Council to reflect changes at district warding level. We have not received any evidence at Stage Three to persuade us to move away from this proposal.

### **Final Recommendation**

Royston Town Council should continue to comprise 15 councillors. The town council should be divided into three new wards of Royston Heath, Royston Palace and Royston Meridian, coterminous with the district wards, and be represented by five councillors each. This proposal is illustrated in Map A2 at Appendix A.

95 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that the parish of St Ippolyts be warded to reflect the proposed district wards, with the Broadmeadow area becoming part of Hitchin Priory ward and Gosmore and Ippolyts area becoming part of a revised Hitchwood ward. At Stage Three, two local residents proposed that if St Ippolyts were to be warded, that the proposed Broadmeadow parish ward should be renamed New England parish ward, and that the parish should have nine councillors instead of eight. While we acknowledge New England to be a historic name we consider community identity would be better reflected by naming the parish ward Broadmeadow after the new Broadmeadow Rise development that forms much of the ward. In the absence of support for an increase in parish councillors by the Parish Council itself, we have decided to propose no change. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

### **Final Recommendation**

St Ippolyts Parish Council should continue to comprise eight parish councillors. Two parish wards should be created in order to reflect the proposed District Council wards. Gosmore and Ippolyts ward should in future be represented by five councillors and Broadmeadow ward by three councillors. This proposal is illustrated in the large map at the back of this report.

96 In our draft recommendations report, we proposed warding Codicote parish for electoral purposes, and that the number of councillors for each ward should be modified accordingly.

97 At Stage Three, Codicote Parish Council requested that parish councillors continue to represent the whole parish rather than be elected from separate wards. As we are dividing the parish between two district wards, however, such a change would also be required at parish level. The District Council proposed a minor amendment to the parish ward boundaries so that all properties on the east side of Codicote Road would form part of the East parish ward. Also, in order to provide better electoral equality at parish level, it proposed that Village ward be represented by eight councillors instead of seven, and that East ward be represented by two councillors instead of three. Having given consideration to representations received, we propose to confirm our draft recommendation subject to modifications proposed by the District Council.

### **Final Recommendation**

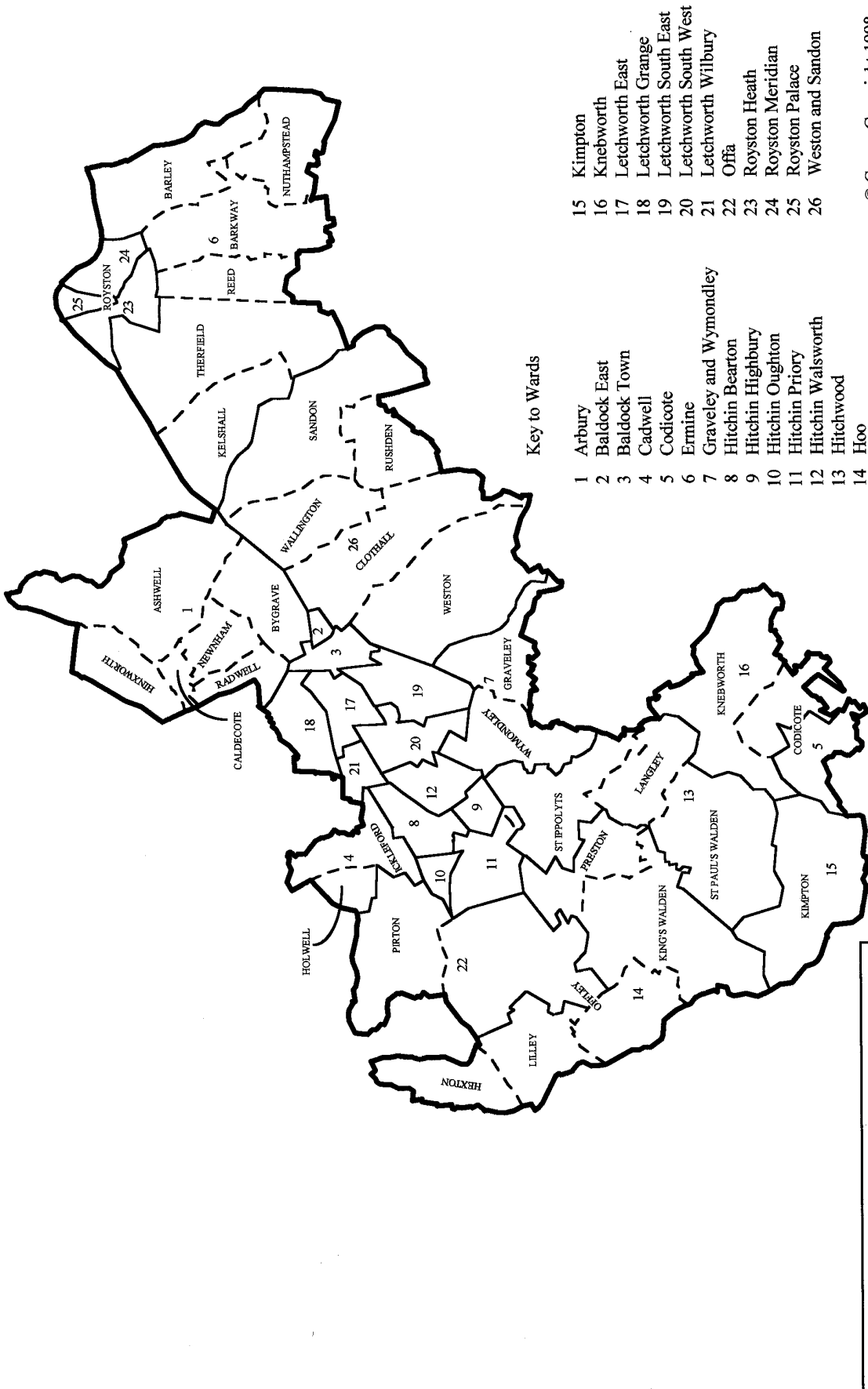
Codicote Parish Council should continue to comprise ten parish councillors. Two parish wards should be created in order to reflect the proposed district wards. Village ward (the area coterminous with Codicote district ward) should be represented by seven councillors and East ward (the area merged with Knebworth parish for District Council purposes) by three councillors. This proposal is illustrated in Map A4 at Appendix A.

98 In our draft recommendation report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district. We have not received any evidence to persuade us to move away from this proposal.

### **Final Recommendation**

Elections for town and parish councils should take place at the same time as elections for principal authorities.

Map 2:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Hertfordshire



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Figure 4:  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Hertfordshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Arbury	1	1,970	1,970	9	2,008	2,008	7
2 Baldock East	1	1,760	1,760	-3	1,820	1,820	-4
3 Baldock Town	3	5,642	1,881	4	5,815	1,938	3
4 Cadwell	1	1,825	1,825	1	1,825	1,825	-3
5 Codicote	1	1,983	1,983	9	1,983	1,983	5
6 Ermine	1	1,880	1,880	4	1,909	1,909	1
7 Graveley and Wymondley	1	1,273	1,273	-30	2,547	2,547	35
8 Hitchin Bearton	3	5,173	1,724	-5	5,372	1,791	-5
9 Hitchin Highbury	3	5,132	1,711	-5	5,736	1,912	1
10 Hitchin Oughton	2	3,732	1,866	3	3,798	1,899	1
11 Hitchin Priory	2	3,856	1,928	7	3,929	1,965	4
12 Hitchin Walsworth	3	5,602	1,867	3	5,602	1,867	-1
13 Hitchwood	1	2,013	2,013	11	2,040	2,040	8
14 Hoo	1	1,780	1,780	-2	1,780	1,780	-6
15 Kimpton	1	1,723	1,723	-5	1,768	1,768	-6
16 Knebworth	2	3,958	1,979	9	3,983	1,992	6
17 Letchworth East	3	5,313	1,771	-2	5,313	1,771	-6
18 Letchworth Grange	3	5,256	1,752	-3	5,256	1,752	-7
19 Letchworth South East	3	5,418	1,806	0	5,460	1,820	-4
20 Letchworth South West	3	5,501	1,834	1	5,587	1,862	-1
21 Letchworth Wilbury	2	3,817	1,909	6	4,048	2,024	7
22 Offa	1	1,567	1,567	-13	1,632	1,632	-13

*continued overleaf*

Figure 4 (continued):  
The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Hertfordshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Royston Heath	2	3,938	1,969	9	4,026	2,013	7
24 Royston Meridian	2	3,284	1,642	-9	3,718	1,859	-1
25 Royston Palace	2	3,651	1,826	1	3,880	1,940	3
26 Weston and Sandon	1	1,555	1,555	-14	1,555	1,555	-18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>88,602</b>	—	—	<b>92,390</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,808</b>	—	—	<b>1,886</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Hertfordshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

## 6. NEXT STEPS

<sup>99</sup> Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in North Hertfordshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

<sup>100</sup> It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

<sup>101</sup> All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

The Secretary of State  
Local Government Review  
Department of the Environment,  
Transport and the Regions  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



# APPENDIX A

## Final Recommendations for North Hertfordshire: Detailed Mapping

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

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries for North Hertfordshire and indicates the areas shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3, A4 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

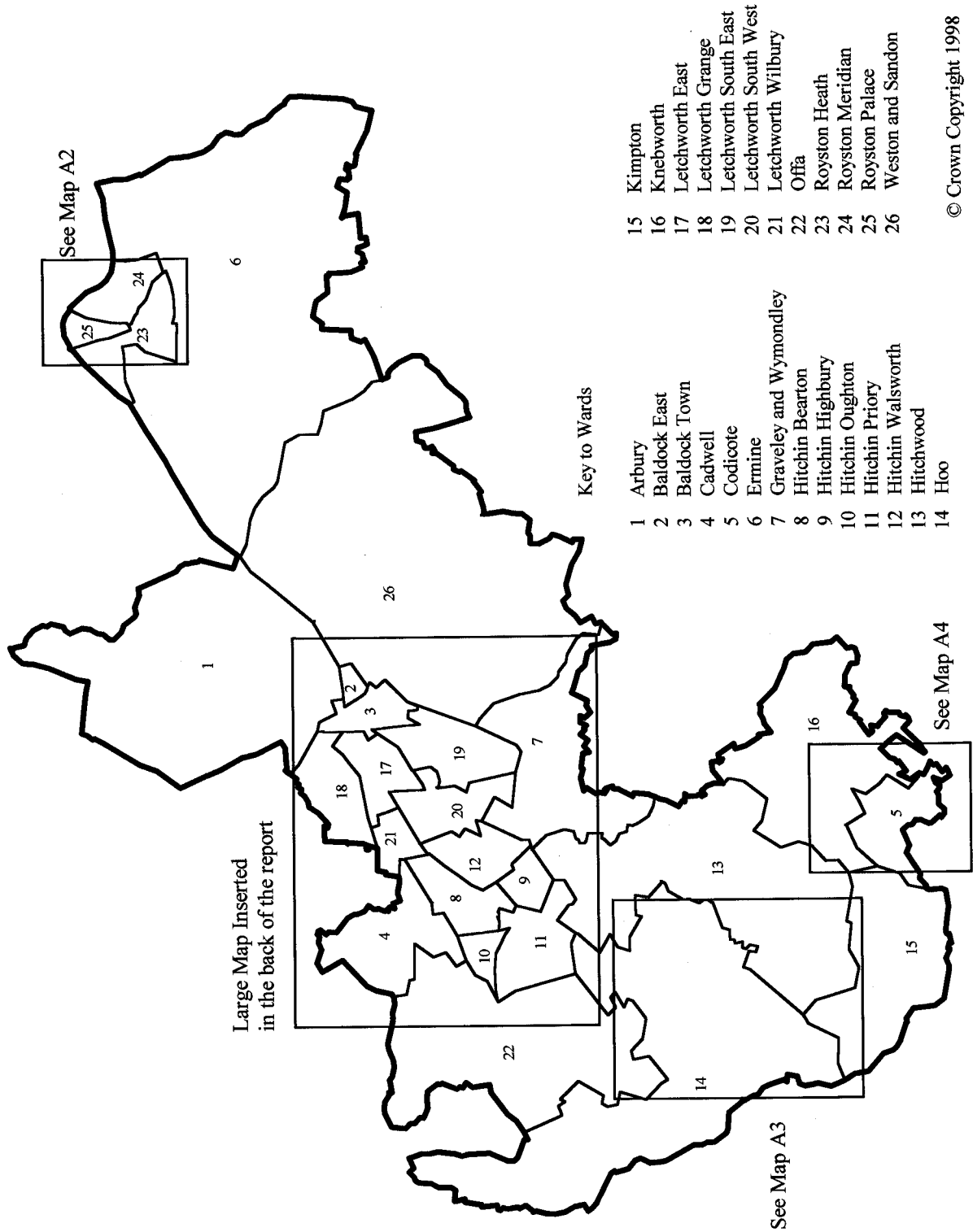
**Map A2** illustrates the proposed ward boundaries between Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace wards.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed parish warding arrangements for Kings Walden parish.

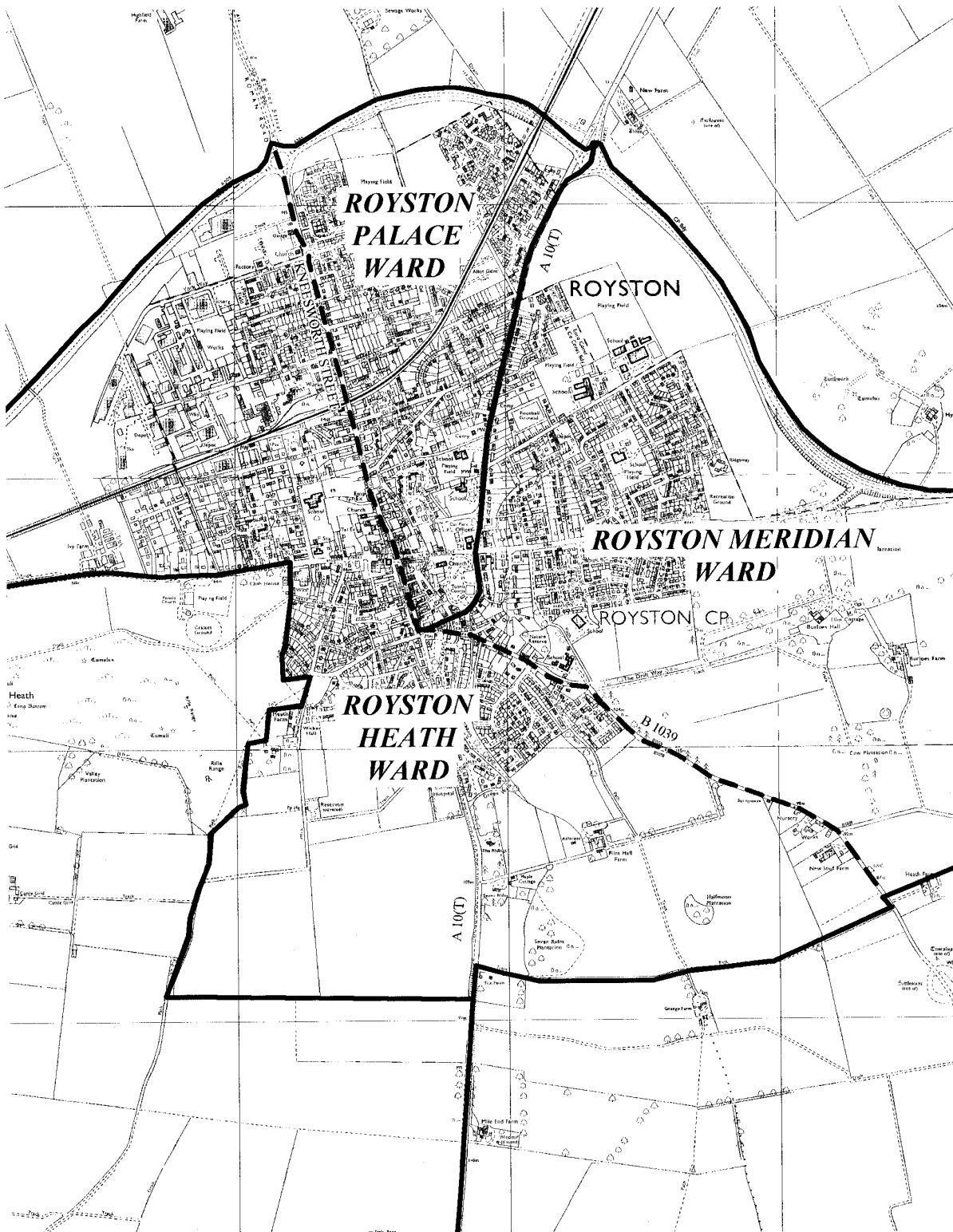
**Map A4** illustrates the proposed ward boundary changes between Codicote and Knebworth wards.

The **large map** inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed ward boundaries in Letchworth, Hitchin and Baldock.

Map A1:  
 The Commission's Final Recommendations for North Hertfordshire: Key Map



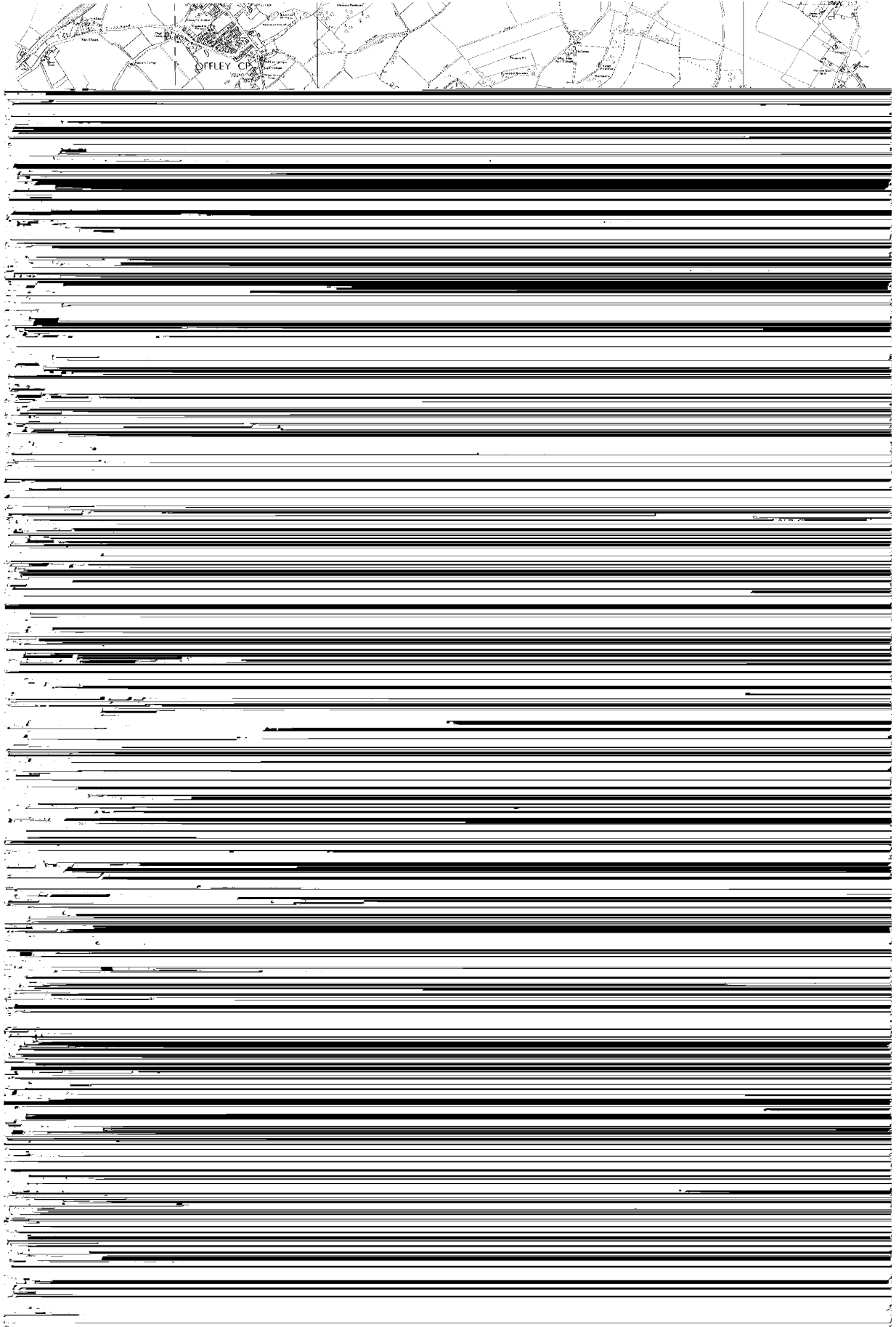
Map A2:  
 Proposed Wards of Royston Heath, Royston Meridian and Royston Palace



KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY	- - - - -
PROPOSED WARD NAME	ROYSTON HEATH WARD

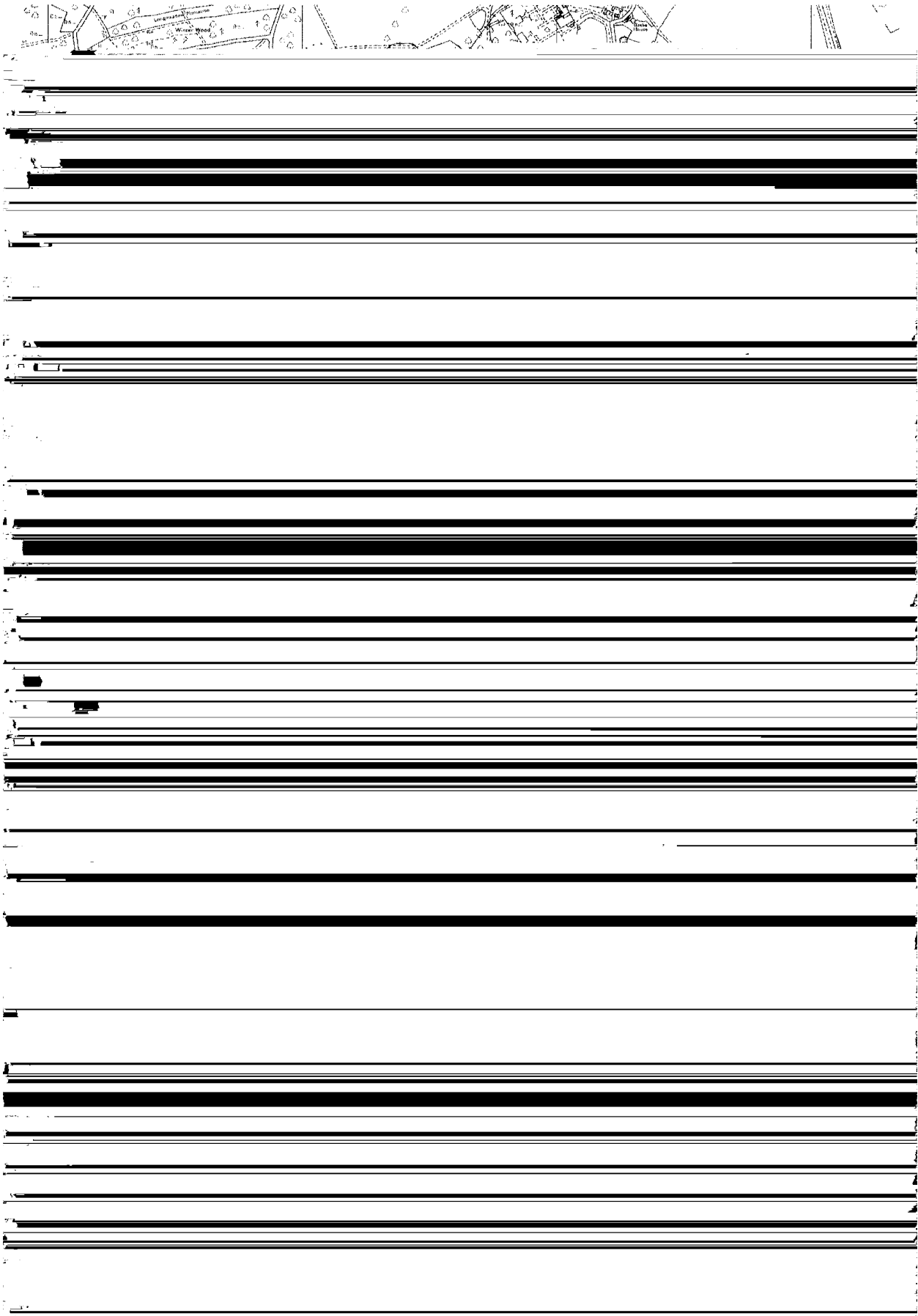
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*Map A3:  
Proposed Warding Arrangements for Kings Walden Parish*





*Map A4:  
Proposed Ward Boundary Changes Between Codicote and Knebworth Wards*





# APPENDIX B

## Draft Recommendations for North Hertfordshire:

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

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1 Arbury	<i>Unchanged</i> (Ashwell, Bygrave, Caldecote, Hinxworth and Newnham parishes)
2 Baldock East	Baldock ward (part)
3 Baldock Town	Baldock ward (part); Letchworth South East ward (part)
4 Cadwell	<i>Unchanged</i> (Holwell and Ickleford parishes)
5 Codicote	Codicote ward (part – Village ward of Codicote parish as proposed)
6 Ermine	Newsells ward (Barley, Barkway, Nuthampstead and Reed parishes); Sandon ward (part – Kelshall and Therfield parishes)
7 Graveley & Wymondley	Ashbrook ward (part – Wymondley parish); Weston ward (part – Graveley parish)
8 Hitchin Bearton	Bearton ward; Walsworth ward (part)
9 Hitchin Highbury	Highbury ward; Walsworth ward (part)
10 Hitchin Oughton	Oughton ward (part)
11 Hitchin Priory	Priory ward; Ashbrook ward (part – Broadmeadow ward of St Ippolyts parish as proposed); Oughton ward (part)
12 Hitchin Walsworth	Walsworth ward (part)
13 Hitchwood	Hitchwood ward (part – Langley and St Paul's Walden parish); Ashbrook ward (part – Gosmore and Ippolyts ward of St Ippolyts parish as proposed)
14 Hoo	Hoo ward (Hexton, Lilley and Kings Walden parishes and Cockernhoe ward of Offley parish); Hitchwood ward (part – Preston parish)
15 Kimpton	<i>Unchanged</i> (Kimpton parish)
16 Knebworth	Knebworth ward (Knebworth parish); Codicote ward (part – East ward of Codicote parish as proposed)
17 Letchworth East	Letchworth East ward (part); Wilbury ward (part)

*continued overleaf*

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
18	Letchworth Grange	Grange ward; Letchworth East ward (part)
19	Letchworth South East	Letchworth South East ward (part)
20	Letchworth South West	Letchworth South West ward; Letchworth South East ward (part)
21	Letchworth Wilbury	Wilbury ward (part); Walsworth ward (part)
22	Offa	<i>Unchanged</i> (Pirton parish and Offley ward of Offley parish)
23	Royston Heath	Royston West ward (part); Royston East ward (part)
24	Royston Meridian	Royston East ward (part)
25	Royston Palace	Royston West ward (part)
26	Weston and Sandon	Sandon ward (part – Rushden, Sandon and Wallington parishes); Weston ward (part – Clothall and Weston parishes)

Figure B2:  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for North Hertfordshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Arbury	1	1,970	1,970	9	2,008	2,008	7
2 Baldock East	1	1,760	1,760	-3	1,820	1,820	-4
3 Baldock Town	3	5,642	1,881	4	5,815	1,938	3
4 Cadwell	1	1,825	1,825	1	1,825	1,825	-3
5 Codicote	1	1,977	1,977	9	1,977	1,977	5
6 Ermine	1	1,880	1,880	4	1,909	1,909	1
7 Graveley and Wymondley	1	1,273	1,273	-30	2,547	2,547	35
8 Hitchin Bearton	3	5,138	1,713	-5	5,337	1,779	-6
9 Hitchin Highbury	3	5,132	1,711	-5	5,736	1,912	1
10 Hitchin Oughton	2	3,732	1,866	3	3,798	1,899	1
11 Hitchin Priory	2	3,891	1,946	8	3,964	1,982	5
12 Hitchin Walsworth	3	5,602	1,867	2	5,602	1,867	-1
13 Hitchwood	1	2,013	2,013	11	2,040	2,040	8
14 Hoo	1	1,780	1,780	-2	1,780	1,780	-6
15 Kimpton	1	1,723	1,723	-5	1,768	1,768	-6
16 Knebworth	2	3,964	1,982	10	3,989	1,955	6
17 Letchworth East	3	5,547	1,849	2	5,547	1,849	-2
18 Letchworth Grange	3	5,256	1,752	-3	5,256	1,752	-7
19 Letchworth South East	3	5,418	1,806	0	5,460	1,820	-4
20 Letchworth South West	3	5,501	1,834	1	5,587	1,862	-1
21 Letchworth Wilbury	2	3,583	1,792	-1	3,814	1,907	1
22 Offa	1	1,567	1,567	-13	1,632	1,632	-13

*continued overleaf*

Figure B2 (continued):  
The Commission's Draft Recommendations for North Hertfordshire

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1996)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Royston Heath	2	3,938	1,969	9	4,026	2,013	7
24 Royston Meridian	2	3,284	1,642	-9	3,718	1,859	-1
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<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>88,602</b>	—	—	<b>92,390</b>	—	—
<b>Averages</b>	—	—	<b>1,808</b>	—	—	<b>1,886</b>	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on North Hertfordshire District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



