

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
SOUTH HOLLAND IN
LINCOLNSHIRE

*Report to the Secretary of State for
the Environment*

March 1997

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for South Holland in Lincolnshire.

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Local Government Commission for England

25 March 1997

Dear Secretary of State

On 19 March 1996 the Commission commenced a periodic electoral review of the district of South Holland under the Local Government Act 1992. It published its draft recommendations in October 1996 and undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

In the light of the consultation the Commission has decided to confirm its draft recommendations as final. This report sets out the Commission's recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in the area.

The Commission is recommending to you that South Holland should be served by 38 councillors representing 22 wards, and that some changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the Commission's statutory criteria. It is recommended that the whole Council should continue to be elected together every four years.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of South Holland on 19 March 1996. It published its draft recommendations on electoral arrangements on 31 October 1996, after which it undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the submissions received by the Commission during consultation on its draft recommendations, and offers its final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

The Commission found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in South Holland because:

- **in 13 of the 23 wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district;**
- **in three of these wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 30 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2001, the number of electors per councillor is likely to vary by over 10 per cent from the average in 16 of the wards.**

The Commission's final recommendations for the District Council's electoral arrangements (Figure 1) are that:

- **South Holland should continue to be served by 38 councillors;**
- **there should be 22 wards, rather than 23 as at present;**
- **the ward boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified while nine wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years, with the next elections taking place in 1999.**

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 17 of the 22 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 would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements:

- **they provide for changes to the warding arrangements of Holbeach Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 5 May 1997.

*Figure 1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Crowland	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Crowland parish)	Map 2
2 Deeping St Nicholas	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Deeping St Nicholas parish)	Map 2
3 Donington	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Donington and Quadring parishes)	Map 2
4 Fleet	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Fleet parish)	Map 2
5 Gedney	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Gedney parish)	Map 2
6 Gosberton Village	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Gosberton Village ward of Gosberton parish)	Map 2
7 Holbeach Hurn	1	Holbeach Hurn district and parish ward (part); Holbeach Town district and parish ward (part)	Maps 2 and A2
8 Holbeach St John's	1	Holbeach St John's district and parish ward (part)	Maps 2 and A3
9 Holbeach Town	3	Holbeach Town district and parish ward (part); Holbeach Hurn district and parish ward (part); Holbeach St John's district and parish ward (part)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
10 Long Sutton	3	Long Sutton ward (Lutton, Little Sutton parishes); Sutton Bridge ward (part - Tydd St Mary parish)	Map 2
11 Pinchbeck	3	Pinchbeck East district and parish ward; Pinchbeck West district and parish ward	Map 2
12 Spalding Castle	1	Spalding North ward (part); Spalding Central ward (part); Spalding West ward (part)	large map
13 Spalding Monks House	2	Spalding West ward (part)	large map
14 Spalding St John's	2	Spalding South ward (part); Spalding Central ward (part); Spalding West ward part	large map
15 Spalding St Mary's	2	Spalding South ward (part); Spalding East ward (part)	large map
16 Spalding St Paul's	2	Spalding East ward (part)	large map
17 Spalding Wygate	2	Spalding West ward (part)	large map

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18 Surfleet	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Surfleet parish, Gosberton Risegate ward of Gosberton parish)	Map 2
19 Sutton Bridge	2	Sutton Bridge ward (part - Sutton Bridge parish)	Map 2
20 The Saints	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Gedney Hill, Sutton St Edmund and Sutton St James parishes)	Map 2
21 Weston & Moulton	3	Weston ward (Weston and Cowbit parishes); Moulton ward (Moulton parish)	Map 2
22 Whaplode	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (part of Whaplode parish)	Map 2

Notes: 1 *Constituent areas are unparished except where indicated.*

2 *The large map inserted at the back of the report details the proposed ward boundaries in the town of Spalding.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of South Holland in Lincolnshire.

2 The Commission has now reviewed the districts in Lincolnshire as part of its programme of periodic electoral reviews of all principal local authority areas in England. This is the Commission's first review of the electoral arrangements for South Holland. The last such review was undertaken by the Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in December 1977 (Report No. 265). The electoral arrangements for Lincolnshire County Council were last reviewed in September 1980 (Report No. 396). It is intended that a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements will follow in due course.

3 In undertaking the periodic reviews, the Commission is required to have regard to:

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

4 The Commission has also had regard to its own *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (published in March 1996 and supplemented in September 1996). This sets out its approach to the reviews.

5 The review of South Holland was in four stages (Figure 2).

6 Stage One commenced on 19 March 1996. The Commission wrote to South Holland District Council inviting it to make proposals for its future electoral arrangements. Copies of that letter were sent to Lincolnshire County Council, the other borough and district councils in Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the area, Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the district, and the headquarters of the main political parties. The Commission also placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council itself to publicise the review.

7 At Stage Two the Commission considered all the representations received during Stage One and formulated its draft recommendations.

8 Stage Three began on 31 October 1996 with the publication of the Commission's report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for South Holland in Lincolnshire*. Copies were sent to all those to whom the Commission wrote at the start of the review as well as to those who had written to the Commission during Stage One, inviting comments on the Commission's preliminary conclusions. Again the Commission placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the report more widely.

9 Finally, during Stage Four, the Commission reconsidered its draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation.

*Figure 2:
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
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State for the Environment

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 South Holland extends across an area of over 70,000 hectares, almost all of which comprises fenland landscape. Some 87 per cent of the land in the district is classified as Grade I or II farm land, and it is estimated that more than 60 per cent of the workforce is employed in the growing, processing and distribution of agricultural produce. The town of Spalding accommodates approximately 30 per cent of the district's total population. The reclamation from the sea of what is now agricultural land and the road pattern (which tends to follow drainage dykes) has dictated an unusual settlement pattern. The district's population has been steadily growing, with an increase of over 9 per cent over the last 10 years.

11 The District Council has 38 councillors elected from 23 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Five wards are represented by three councillors, five are represented by two councillors and 13 by a single councillor. The whole council is elected every four years, with the next elections taking place in May 1999. The current electorate of the district is 57,807 (February 1996) and each councillor represents an average of 1,521 electors. The District Council forecasts that the electorate will increase to 61,883 by the year 2001, increasing the average number of electors per councillor to 1,629.

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

13 South Holland is characterised by localised growth. While the electorate is projected by the District Council to rise by some 7 per cent over the next five years, this growth is concentrated in relatively few urban areas: west Spalding, Holbeach and Sutton Bridge. Other areas which are experiencing minimal growth are therefore increasingly at variance from the average number

of electors per councillor. In order to achieve improved electoral equality in the rural wards, the Commission would have to consider merging large fenland parishes potentially at the expense of community identities. The character of the area therefore constrains the Commission's options to a greater degree than in many other districts.

14 Since the last review by the LGBC in 1977, changes in population and electorate have not been evenly spread across the district and, as a result, in many of the wards the number of electors per councillor varies significantly from the average. In particular, there are currently 13 wards in which the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, and five wards which vary by more than 20 per cent. Currently, Deeping St Nicholas ward has 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average so that the councillor for this ward represents 953 electors compared to the average of 1,521 electors.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in South Holland



KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

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Key to Wards

1	Crowland	9	Holbeach Town	17	Spalding South
2	Deeping St Nicholas	10	Long Sutton	18	Spalding West
3	Donington	11	Moulton	19	Surfleet
4	Fleet	12	Pinchbeck East	20	Sutton Bridge
5	Gedney	13	Pinchbeck West	21	The Saints
6	Gosberton Village	14	Spalding Central	22	Weston
7	Holbeach Hurn	15	Spalding East	23	Whaplode
8	Holbeach St John's	16	Spalding North		

Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Crowland	2	2,634	1,317	-13	2,816	1,408	-14
2 Deeping St Nicholas	1	953	953	-37	960	960	-41
3 Donington	2	3,093	1,547	2	3,172	1,586	-3
4 Fleet	1	1,583	1,583	4	1,656	1,656	2
5 Gedney	1	1,702	1,702	12	1,851	1,851	14
6 Gosberton Village	1	1,412	1,412	-7	1,587	1,587	-3
7 Holbeach Hurn	1	1,493	1,493	-2	1,638	1,638	1
8 Holbeach St John's	1	1,424	1,424	-6	1,455	1,455	-11
9 Holbeach Town	3	4,849	1,616	6	5,636	1,879	15
10 Long Sutton	3	4,318	1,439	-5	4,448	1,483	-9
11 Moulton	2	2,479	1,240	-19	2,561	1,281	-21
12 Pinchbeck East	2	3,102	1,551	2	3,161	1,581	-3
13 Pinchbeck West	1	1,023	1,023	-33	1,022	1,022	-37
14 Spalding Central	1	1,296	1,296	-15	1,352	1,352	-17
15 Spalding East	3	3,986	1,329	-13	4,079	1,360	-17
16 Spalding North	1	1,338	1,338	-12	1,338	1,338	-18
17 Spalding South	3	3,992	1,331	-13	4,046	1,349	-17
18 Spalding West	3	6,537	2,179	43	7,771	2,590	59
19 Surfleet	1	1,638	1,638	8	1,842	1,842	13
20 Sutton Bridge	2	3,711	1,856	22	4,017	2,009	23
21 The Saints	1	1,602	1,602	5	1,694	1,694	4
22 Weston	1	1,783	1,783	17	1,922	1,922	18
23 Whaplode	1	1,859	1,859	22	1,859	1,859	14
Totals	38	57,807	—	—	61,883	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,521	—	—	1,629	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on South Holland 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 Weston ward are relatively under-represented by 17 per cent, while Spalding East ward is relatively over-represented by 13 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

¹⁵ During Stage One, the Commission received a submission from South Holland District Council on electoral arrangements in the district. It also received a further six submissions from parish councils, local organisations and councillors. In the light of these representations, the Commission formulated its preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for South Holland in Lincolnshire*. The Commission proposed that South Holland should be served by 38 councillors, as at present, and should have 22 wards instead of the current 23. It also proposed that:

- (a) in the town of Spalding, there should be six district wards instead of the current five. The new wards would be Spalding Castle, Spalding Monks House, Spalding St John's, Spalding St Mary's, Spalding St Paul's and Spalding Wygate. Eleven district councillors would be retained for the town;
- (b) the present wards of Moulton and Weston should be merged into one new ward, Moulton and Weston, represented by three councillors;
- (c) the present ward boundary between Holbeach Town and Holbeach St John's should be modified in order to unite the whole of Farrow Avenue Estate within Holbeach Town ward;
- (d) the present ward boundary between Holbeach Town and Holbeach Hurn wards should be modified to follow the recently constructed A17 bypass;
- (e) the present wards of Pinchbeck East and Pinchbeck West should be merged into one new ward, Pinchbeck, represented by three councillors;
- (f) the present wards of Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge should be modified, transferring Tydd St Mary parish from Sutton Bridge ward to Long Sutton ward;
- (g) there should be no change to the existing arrangements for the wards of Crowland, Deeping St Nicholas, Donington, Fleet, Gedney, Gosberton Village, Surfleet, The Saints and Whaplode.

Draft Recommendation

South Holland District Council should comprise 38 councillors, serving 22 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

¹⁶ The Commission's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 17 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the average. By 2001, the number of electors per councillor would be no more than 10 per cent from the average in 13 wards.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on the Commission's draft recommendations report, 45 submissions were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission.

South Holland District Council

18 The District Council welcomed the Commission's draft recommendations for 38 members serving 23 wards, which greatly reflected its Stage One proposal.

19 However, the District Council opposed the Commission's draft recommendations for the merger of the existing wards of Weston and Moulton. It argued that the settlement pattern within the wards is scattered, and that a merged ward would contain six villages and numerous settlements. It further argued that residents of Moulton and Weston did not regard themselves as having any common identity. A merged ward would, it argued, result in a ward covering an area of over 8,500 hectares, which would be by far the largest ward in the district. It believed that "the creation of such a large ward would place an unrealistic and unnecessary burden on elected representatives who would find it difficult to adequately represent electors spread over such a large area."

20 It argued that the Commission should reconsider the Council's original proposal for retaining two separate wards of Moulton and Weston.

Lincolnshire County Council

21 The County Council commented "on areas where the draft recommendations differ from the original District Council submission... based on the premise that the County Council, in general terms and notwithstanding the issue of electoral equality, is minded to support the District Council where the Council considers that such arrangements can be justified on community identity/interest grounds".

22 The Council expressed concern over the Commission's draft recommendation that the

existing Moulton and Weston wards should be merged. While it recognised that the creation of a new Moulton and Weston ward represented by three councillors would resolve the current electoral inequalities in the two present wards, it supported the District Council's argument that the retention of the present arrangements would be preferable, on the grounds that Moulton and Weston are two distinct communities.

The Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils

23 The Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils commented on the reviews of the Lincolnshire districts as a whole. It considered that the views of parish councils should be paramount when evaluating any proposal for change to electoral arrangements as they are the foundation of the electoral system. The Association expressed concern over any large village being merged with one or more much smaller villages within the same district ward, as it considered that the concerns of the larger community would be likely to dominate. It also advised that the Commission should have regard to road communications as well as numbers of electors when considering ward boundaries. The Association particularly cited the Commission's proposal to merge Moulton and Weston, arguing that while the communities are seemingly close geographically, travelling between them is difficult.

Parish Councils

24 Representations were received from seven parish councils during the Stage Three consultation period. Of these, three parish councils (Long Sutton, Gedney and Sutton St James) supported the Commission's recommendations in relation to the district wards for their own areas.

25 However, Weston, Moulton and Cowbit parish councils expressed their opposition to the Commission's proposed Weston and Moulton ward, preferring no change. All three parish councils argued that the wards of Moulton and Weston reflect two distinct communities. Weston Parish Council further argued that "Weston is more suited to a single-member representative than as

part of a multi-member ward... If arrangements are changed, it will be a long way to travel for an independent councillor and it will not be possible to cover the area in an efficient manner”.

26 Tydd St Mary Parish Council expressed opposition to the Commission's draft recommendation that Tydd St Mary parish form part of Long Sutton ward, rather than Sutton Bridge ward as at present, preferring no change.

Other Representations

27 The Commission received a further 36 submissions in respect of its draft recommendations from local groups, local councillors and residents. Of these, 32 were in respect of the proposal that Tydd St Mary parish forms part of Long Sutton ward, rather than Sutton Bridge. These included 26 pro forma letters from local residents. A number of the submissions noted that the parish had been joined with Sutton Bridge since the formation of the district and argued that a link with Sutton Bridge was preferable to one with Long Sutton. Councillor Brewis, who represents Sutton Bridge ward on the District Council, argued that the current arrangements worked well, and that the Commission should “reconsider the recommendation with regard to Tydd St Mary, and leave Tydd in the Sutton Bridge District Council ward”.

28 The Co-operative Party of South Holland supported the Commission's draft recommendations and, in particular, its proposal to merge the existing Moulton and Weston wards. However, Councillor Barker argued that, as the District Councillor currently representing Weston ward, he is currently able “to deal with any problems personally, whereas if there were six villages to represent it would be impossible to do this properly”. In addition, a resident of Weston argued that the Commission had not recognised the size and diversity of the two areas, and argued that the area should remain separate from Moulton.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As indicated previously, the Commission's prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for South Holland was to achieve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria and to 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, the Commission's function is not merely arithmetical, for three reasons. First, its 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, it must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries, and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken. Third, the Commission has had to consider the desirability of servicing effective and convenient local government, and reflecting 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. In conducting its electoral reviews, the Commission's predecessor, the LGBC, considered that variations from the average number of electors per councillor for an authority as a whole should be kept to the absolute minimum: a variation of up to plus or minus 10 per cent in a particular ward may be regarded as being "acceptable", but variations in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent were generally accepted only in very exceptional circumstances.

32 The Commission's view is that the LGBC's approach to this issue had merit insofar as it combined a clearly defined tolerance threshold with the degree of flexibility necessary to achieve reasonable levels of electoral equality across a local authority's area. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to adopt this approach for the purposes of its reviews.

33 In its March 1996 *Guidance*, the Commission expressed the view that "proposals for changes in electoral arrangements should therefore be based on variations in each ward of no more than plus or minus 10 per cent from the average councillor:elector ratio for the authority, having regard to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. Imbalances in excess of plus or minus 20 per cent may be acceptable, but only in highly exceptional circumstances... and will have to be justified in full." However, as the Commission emphasised in its September 1996 supplement to the *Guidance*: "While the Commission accepts that absolute equality of representation is likely to be unattainable, it considers that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such equality should be the starting point in any electoral review".

Electorate Projections

34 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2001, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 7 per cent over the five-year period from 57,807 to 61,883. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of ward boundary changes has been obtained.

35 At Stage Three, the County Council noted that the District Council had used a different methodology to its own in projecting changes in electorate, using past population trends in preference to likely house building. While the overall projections were similar, it noted that it was possible that there could be significant differences at ward level between the two sets of projections. The Commission accepts that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to projected electorates, is content to use the District Council's estimates at this time.

Council Size

36 The Commission indicated in its March 1996 *Guidance* that it would normally expect the number of councillors serving a district council to be in the range of 30 to 60.

37 South Holland District Council is at present served by 38 councillors. At Stage One, the Council did not propose any changes to council size. However, Councillor Brewis and the Spalding and Crowland Labour Party requested an additional councillor. In its draft recommendations report the Commission considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. The Commission concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be served by a council of 38 members. The Commission has not received evidence during Stage Three to persuade it to depart from this view.

Electoral Arrangements

38 Having considered all representations received during both Stage One and Stage Three of the review, the Commission has further considered to its draft recommendations. The following areas are covered in turn:

- (a) Deeping St Nicholas and Crowland wards;
- (b) the five wards of Spalding;
- (c) Weston and Moulton wards;
- (d) Whaplode ward;
- (e) the three wards of Holbeach;
- (f) Fleet, Gedney and The Saints wards;
- (g) Sutton Bridge and Long Sutton wards;
- (h) Pinchbeck East and Pinchbeck West wards;
- (i) Donington, Gosberton Village and Surfleet wards.

Deeping St Nicholas and Crowland

39 At Stage One, the District Council argued that Deeping St Nicholas ward was a distinct community, with its own primary school, post office, church and two village halls, and that the Commission should leave the ward unchanged. The Commission noted that there is a significant level of electoral inequality in the ward, as currently it has some 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor than average, a figure which was

projected to increase to 41 per cent by 2001. In Crowland ward, the number of electors per councillor was also below the average - at 13 per cent - and projected to decline (to 14 per cent below average).

40 The Commission evaluated various options for Deeping St Nicholas, including its merger with the neighbouring Crowland ward, in order to achieve a better level of electoral equality. However, it noted that the settlements of Deeping St Nicholas and Crowland are some five miles apart and that road links are poor. The Commission also considered the option proposed by the Spalding and Crowland Labour Party for the merger of Deeping St Nicholas with Pinchbeck East and Pinchbeck West wards. The Commission noted that although a merger of these three wards would create a ward in which the number of electors per councillor would be only 5 per cent from the district average, the wards appeared to have little community affinity and their merger would create a geographically large ward covering 12,255 hectares, equivalent to almost 17 per cent of the district. The Commission also considered a merger of part of Spalding (Pode Hole) with Deeping St Nicholas ward. However, the Commission noted that this area is not well served by road communication between the two wards.

41 The Commission recognised that Deeping St Nicholas is a distinctive, linear, fenland settlement with most housing situated on the Peterborough to Spalding road, and that it has poor communication links with neighbouring parishes. It therefore concluded in its draft recommendations report, that Deeping St Nicholas ward is exceptional in terms of its geography and transport links, and that, having evaluated all the options available, the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining the present electoral arrangements. It also recommended no change for Crowland ward, on community identity grounds.

42 The Commission's draft recommendations were supported by the District Council. No other comments were received. The Commission notes that while its draft recommendations would not achieve a good level of electoral equality, Deeping St Nicholas is a distinctive community with fewer links with other parts of the district. It is some 6,685 hectares in area (which is larger than 25 of the 32 London boroughs), is some three miles from the centre of Spalding and five miles from the village of Crowland. It also considered that the area appeared to have a greater affinity with its neighbouring parishes in South Kesteven district (the Deepings) than with the other parishes in

South Holland and noted that the recent parliamentary review had placed the Deepings together within one constituency. It concluded that a merger of Deeping St Nicholas with any of the neighbouring wards would not reflect community identities in the area. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm as final its draft recommendations for the wards of Deeping St Nicholas and Crowland.

Spalding

⁴³ Spalding currently comprises the wards of Spalding Central, Spalding East, Spalding North, Spalding South and Spalding West, and has an electorate of 17,149 represented by 11 district councillors. In each of the five wards, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by

South and Spalding East, Monkmission has
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scattered and that there are a total of six villages and numerous other settlements. The three parish councils of Cowbit, Weston and Moulton concurred with the District Council's view, as did Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils, Councillor Barker and a local resident. All proposed that the wards of Moulton and Weston should remain unchanged. However, the draft recommendation was supported by the Co-operative Party of South Holland.

50 The Commission has carefully considered the responses received during Stage Three, and acknowledges that any proposal to change the warding arrangements in these two wards is likely to prove contentious. It notes that almost half of the new ward's electorate would be contained within the two main settlements of Weston and Moulton, villages which are very close geographically. While the ward is relatively large at just over 8,500 hectares it would be represented by three councillors, whereas Deeping St Nicholas and Holbeach Hurn wards each cover areas in excess of 6,500 hectares and are only represented by one councillor. In addition, it considers that the current level of electoral inequality in Weston and Moulton wards is significant and should be addressed. Accordingly, having considered all the evidence submitted to it, the Commission has decided to confirm as final its draft recommendations that the present Weston and Moulton wards be merged to form a single two-member ward.

Holbeach

51 The Holbeach area contains the wards of Holbeach St John's, Holbeach Town and Holbeach Hurn, and comprises the parish of Holbeach and the Whaplode parish ward of Drove. The number of electors per councillor in the two single-member wards of Holbeach St John's and Holbeach Hurn currently varies by 2 per cent and 6 per cent respectively from the district average. In the three member Holbeach Town ward the electoral variance is 6 per cent. On the basis of projected electorates, Holbeach St John's and Holbeach Town wards are projected to become increasingly at variance from the district average, so that by 2001 they would have 11 per cent fewer, and 15 per cent more, electors per councillor than average respectively. However, Holbeach Hurn ward is projected to have a marginally improved level of electoral equality by 2001, at 1 per cent above the district average.

52 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the boundary between Holbeach Town ward and Holbeach St John's ward should be redrawn to unite the Farrow Avenue Estate in Holbeach Town ward, transferring 90 electors from Holbeach St John's ward. It noted, however, that the proposal would result in a slightly higher level of electoral inequality, with the number of electors per councillor in Holbeach St John's and Holbeach Town wards increasing to 14 per cent from the district average by 2001. The Commission adopted the proposal as its draft recommendation, but requested further views on the matter. The Commission's draft recommendations also proposed that the boundary between Holbeach Town and Holbeach Hurn wards should be redrawn to follow the line of the recently constructed A17 bypass, producing a net transfer of 142 electors from Holbeach Town ward to Holbeach Hurn ward. This would result in a worse level of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in the modified Holbeach Hurn varying by 9 per cent from the average by 2001. However, the road is a clear delineation between the town and its rural hinterland, and it was considered that this change would best reflect community identities.

53 The Commission's draft recommendations were supported by the District Council. No other comments were received during the Stage Three consultation period. Having given further consideration to its proposed warding arrangement, the Commission has concluded that its draft recommendations would appear to strike the best balance between securing equality of representation and serving the statutory criteria. It has therefore decided to confirm them as final.

Fleet, Gedney and The Saints

54 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Fleet, Gedney and The Saints wards should remain unchanged. The three wards currently have 4 per cent, 12 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively and on the basis of projected electorates, these imbalances are expected to remain fairly constant. The Commission considered merging the three wards but noted that this would result in a geographically large ward stretching from The Wash to the Cambridgeshire border, covering an area in excess of 12,000 hectares which may not reflect community identities. In view of the lack of an appropriate alternative, the Commission proposed no change for these three wards.

55 During Stage Three, the Commission's draft recommendations for these areas were supported by the District Council, Gedney Parish Council and Sutton St James Parish Council. No other comments were received. The Commission therefore confirms its draft recommendations as final.

Sutton Bridge and Long Sutton

56 At present, Sutton Bridge ward has 22 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average, while Long Sutton ward has 5 per cent fewer than the district average. In both cases, electoral imbalance is projected to increase over the next five years to 23 per cent above and 9 per cent below average respectively.

57 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Tydd St Mary parish be transferred from Sutton Bridge ward to the adjacent Long Sutton ward. It stated that this would have the advantage of strengthening the community identity of Sutton Bridge, a view which was supported by Sutton Bridge Parish Council. Three other submissions, including one from Tydd St Mary Parish Council, proposed no change to Sutton Bridge ward. However, the Commission was concerned about the relatively high level of electoral inequality which would result were the current wards to remain unchanged. It therefore proposed the transfer of Tydd St Mary parish from Sutton Bridge ward to Long Sutton ward. It noted that this would significantly improve electoral equality in Sutton Bridge ward, in which there would be only 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the average, while leading to a less significant electoral inequality for Long Sutton ward, which would have 9 per cent more electors per councillor than the average. By 2001, the number of electors per councillor for the two wards, as modified, was projected to be 3 per cent and 5 per cent above average respectively.

58 During Stage Three, the Commission's draft recommendations were supported by both the District Council and Long Sutton Parish Council. However, opposition was expressed by Tydd St Mary Parish Council, Councillor Brewis, five local residents and a further 26 individuals who submitted pro forma letters. All these submissions requested no change to Tydd St Mary parish, arguing that the parish had been linked with Sutton Bridge since the formation of the district. Tydd St Mary Parish Council argued that by "joining Long Sutton ward... they will not have the same quality of representation." A local resident from Tydd St

Mary stated that "Tydd St Mary and Tydd Gote people have found the present arrangements for wards quite satisfactory... and believe that change for changes sake even to make numbers more convenient will be a backward step".

59 The Commission has carefully considered the responses received during Stage Three. However, while it acknowledged the concerns expressed about Tydd St Mary parish being transferred to Long Sutton ward, it notes that its draft recommendation would result in a high level of electoral equality in both Sutton Bridge and Long Sutton wards. In addition, it notes the relatively poor communication links between Tydd St Mary and Sutton Bridge. While it notes the arguments that change would be disruptive, it is not persuaded that there is a greater degree of affinity between Tydd St Mary and Sutton Bridge than between Tydd St Mary and Long Sutton, which would justify the cost to electoral equality. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to confirm its draft recommendation that Tydd St Mary parish be transferred from Sutton Bridge ward to Long Sutton ward as final.

Pinchbeck East and Pinchbeck West

60 The wards of Pinchbeck East and Pinchbeck West currently have 2 per cent more and 33 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. In its draft recommendation report, the Commission considered that a better level of electoral equality would be achieved through a merger of the two wards, as proposed by the District Council. The Commission noted that this proposal would provide a ward coterminous with Pinchbeck parish and result in an improved level of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor some 10 per cent below the district average currently, and projected to decline to 14 per cent below average by 2001.

61 During Stage Three, the District Council expressed support for the Commission's draft recommendation. No other comments were received during Stage Three of the review. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendation as final.

Donington, Gosberton Village and Surfleet

62 The wards of Donington and Surfleet currently have 2 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than average respectively, while

Gosberton Village has 7 per cent fewer. On the basis of projected electorates, only Surfleet ward is expected to witness a significant deterioration in the level of electoral equality to some 13 per cent more electors per councillor than average by 2001. The Commission considered reducing the level of imbalance by merging Surfleet and Gosberton Village wards, but concluded that the statutory criteria would be best served by no change in these three wards.

63 During Stage Three of the review, the District Council indicated that it accepted the Commission's draft recommendations. No other comments were received. The Commission has therefore decided to confirm its draft recommendations as final.

Electoral Cycle

64 The Commission proposed in its draft recommendations report that the present system of whole-council elections be retained. No submissions were received on this issue during Stage Three. Accordingly, the Commission has decided to confirm as final its draft recommendation to retain whole council elections.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

65 As indicated below, the Commission recommends that the warding arrangements of Holbeach parish be altered to reflect the new district warding arrangements in that area.

Conclusions

66 Having considered all the evidence and representations it has received on its draft recommendations, the Commission has concluded that the present council size of 38 should be retained; that there should be 22 wards instead of 23 as at present; that elections should remain on a whole-council basis; and that the boundaries of 14 of the existing wards should be modified. Figure 4 shows the impact of the Commission's final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, as based on 1996 electorate figures and projected electorates in the year 2001.

67 As Figure 4 shows, the Commission's recommendations would result in a reduction from 13 to five in the number of wards in which the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average, increasing to nine by 2001. The Commission concludes that its recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

South Holland should comprise 38 councillors serving 22 wards as detailed and named in Map 2, Figures 1, 5 and Appendix A to this report. The whole Council should continue to be elected every four years.

68 As indicated above, changes in parish electoral arrangements will be required as a consequence of the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the District Council.

69 In Holbeach, the Commission confirmed its draft recommendations to modify the boundaries between district wards. Consequently, the warding arrangements of the parish council should be altered to reflect those changes.

Final Recommendation

Holbeach Parish Council should continue to comprise 18 councillors. The parish wards of Holbeach St John's, Holbeach Hurn and Holbeach Town should be represented by five councillors, three councillors, and ten councillors respectively. The boundaries of the parish wards should be modified to reflect the proposed District Council wards illustrated in Maps A2 and A3 at Appendix A.

70 The Commission also proposes that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district.

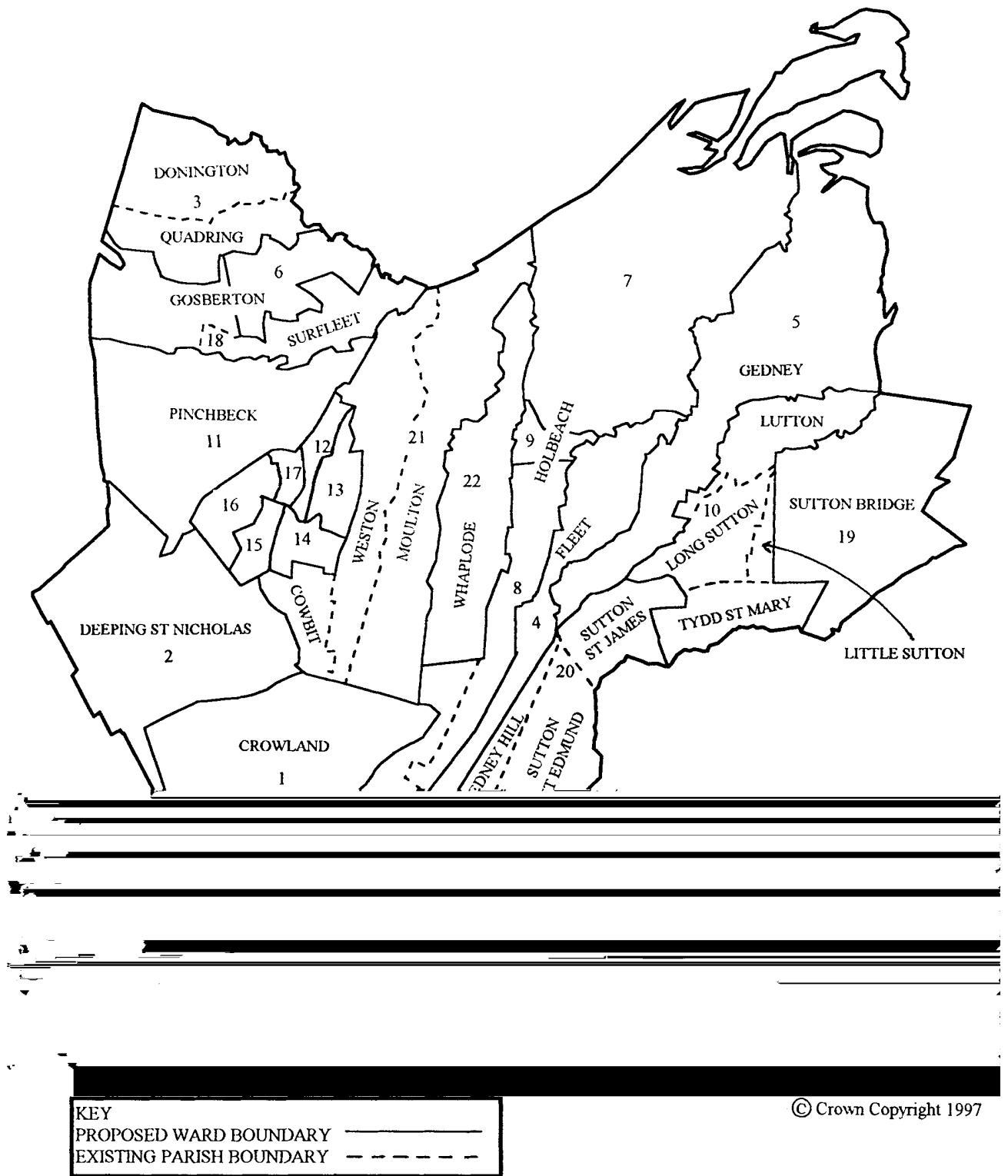
Final Recommendation

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

Figure 4:
Comparison of Current and Recommended Arrangements

	1996 electorate		2001 projected electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	38	38	38	38
Number of wards	23	22	23	22
Average number of electors per councillor	1,521	1,521	1,629	1,629
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	5	16	9
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	5	2	5	1

Map 2:
 The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Holland



Key to Wards

- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|---------------|----|-----------------|
| 1 | Crowland | 9 | Holbeach Town | 17 | Spalding Wygate |
| 2 | Deeping St Nicholas | 10 | Long Sutton | 18 | Surfleet |

Figure 5:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Holland

Ward name	1996				2001 (Projected)		
	Number of councillors	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Crowland	2	2,634	1,317	-13	2,816	1,408	-14
2 Deeping St Nicholas	1	953	953	-37	960	960	-41
3 Donington	2	3,093	1,547	2	3,172	1,586	-3
4 Fleet	1	1,583	1,583	4	1,656	1,656	2
5 Gedney	1	1,702	1,702	12	1,851	1,851	14
6 Gosberton Village	1	1,412	1,412	-7	1,587	1,587	-3
7 Holbeach Hurn	1	1,635	1,635	8	1,780	1,780	9
8 Holbeach St John's	1	1,372	1,372	-10	1,403	1,403	-14
9 Holbeach Town	3	4,759	1,586	4	5,546	1,849	14
10 Long Sutton	3	4,969	1,656	9	5,110	1,703	5
11 Pinchbeck	3	4,125	1,375	-10	4,183	1,394	-14
12 Spalding Castle	1	1,513	1,513	-1	1,713	1,713	5
13 Spalding Monks House	2	2,997	1,499	-1	3,467	1,734	6
14 Spalding St John's	2	3,551	1,776	17	3,607	1,804	11
15 Spalding St Mary's	2	3,049	1,525	0	3,103	1,552	-5
16 Spalding St Paul's	2	3,131	1,566	3	3,224	1,612	-1
17 Spalding Wygate	2	2,908	1,454	-4	3,472	1,736	7
18 Surfleet	1	1,638	1,638	8	1,842	1,842	13
19 Sutton Bridge	2	3,060	1,530	1	3,355	1,678	3
20 The Saints	1	1,602	1,602	5	1,694	1,694	4
21 Weston & Moulton	3	4,262	1,421	-7	4,483	1,494	-8
22 Whaplode	1	1,859	1,859	22	1,859	1,859	14
Totals	38	57,807	—	—	61,883	—	—
Averages	—	—	1,521	—	—	1,629	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on South Holland 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

71 Having completed its review of electoral arrangements in South Holland and submitted its final recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Commission has fulfilled its statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

72 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to the Commission's 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 the Commission's recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

73 All further correspondence concerning the Commission's recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State at the following address:

The Secretary of State for the Environment
Local Government Review
Department of the Environment
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

APPENDIX

Final Recommendations for South Holland: Detailed Mapping

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

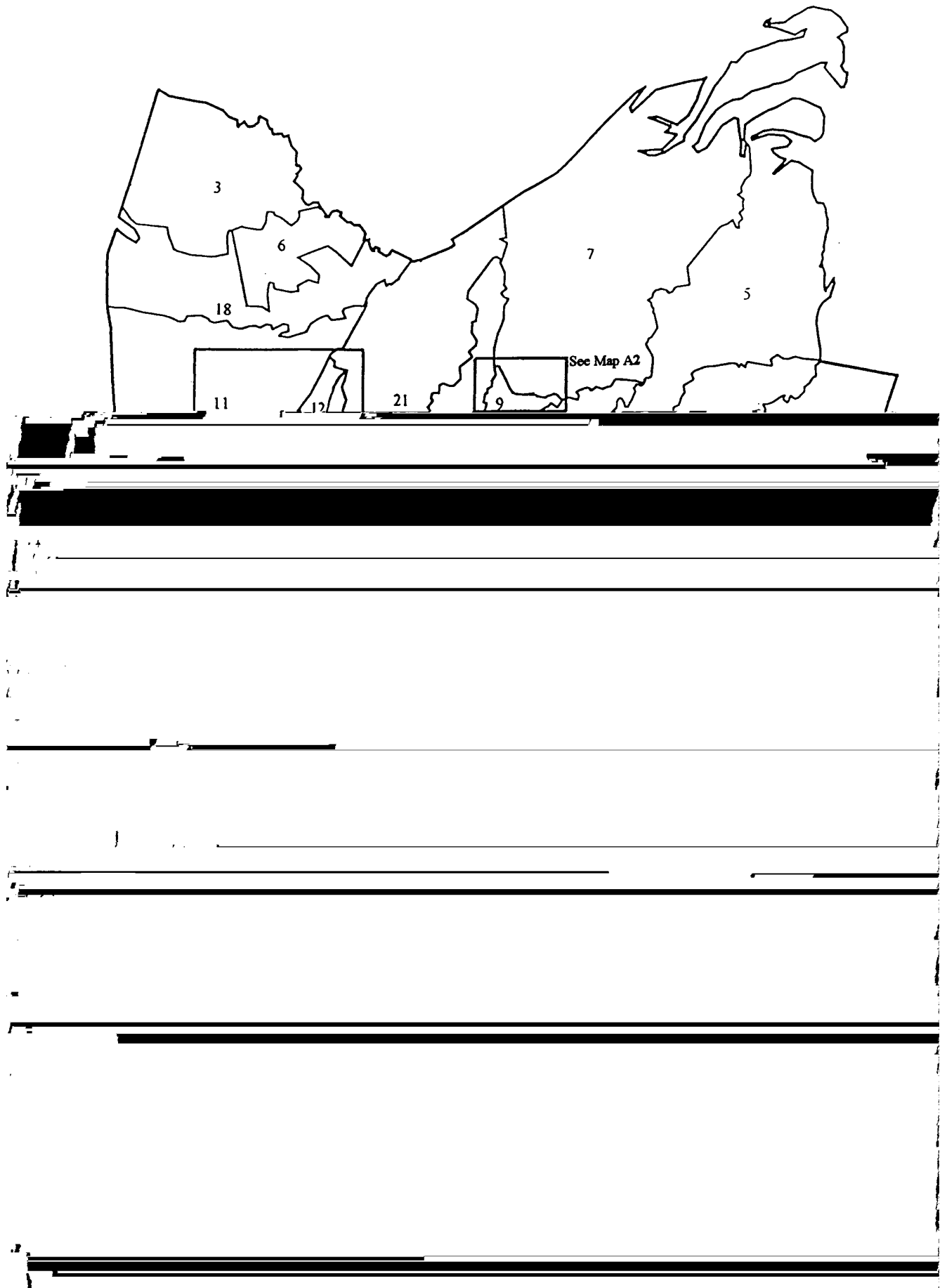
Map A1 illustrates in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries for South Holland and indicates those areas shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3 and the map inserted at the rear of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed boundary change between Holbeach Town and Holbeach Hurn wards.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed boundary change between Holbeach Town and Holbeach St John's wards.

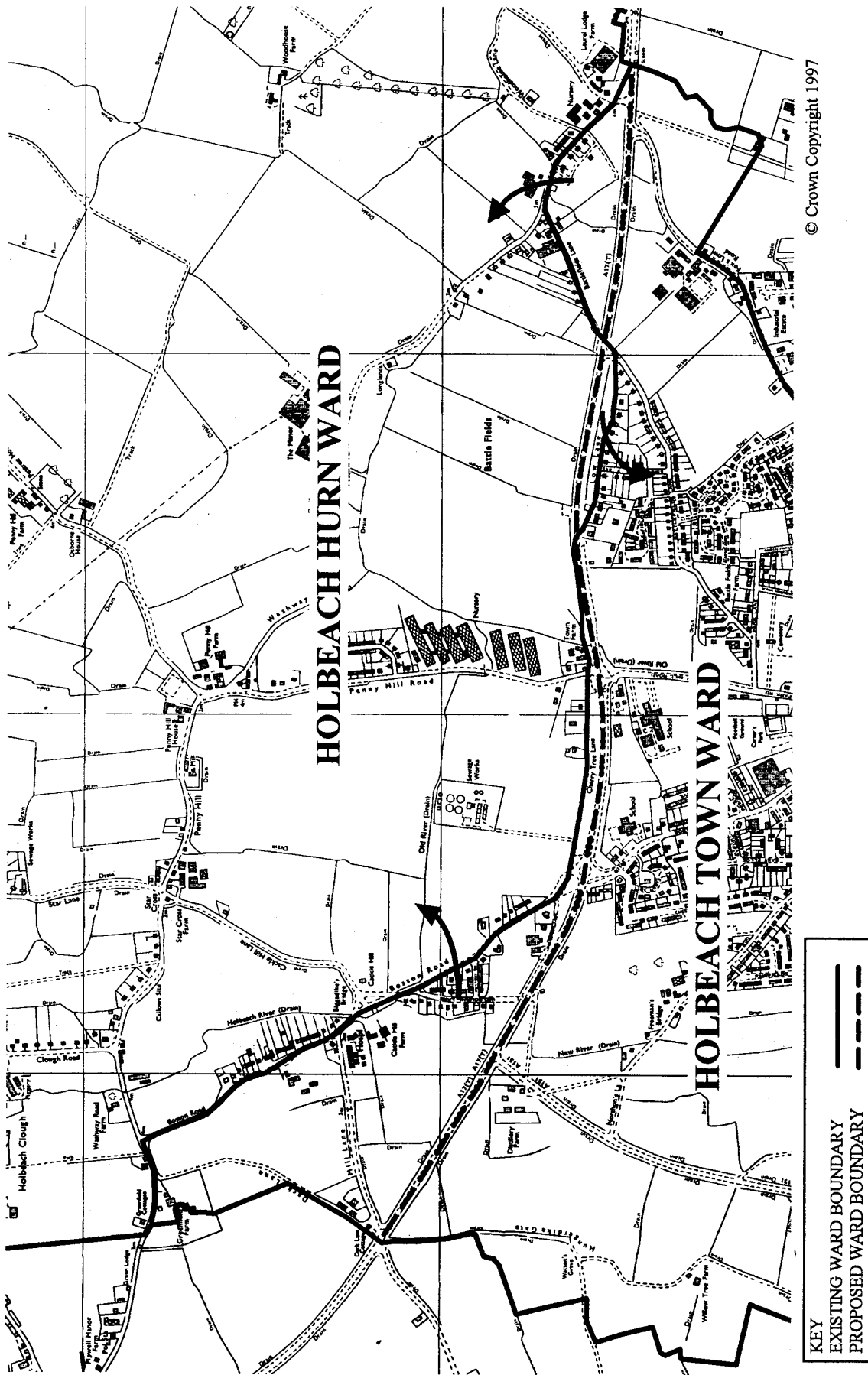
The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the ward boundaries in Spalding Town.

Map A1:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for South Holland: Key Map



Map A2:

Proposed Boundary Change Between Holbeach Town and Holbeach Hurn Wards



Map A3:
Proposed Boundary Change Between Holbeach Town and Holbeach St John's wards

