

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Ashford in Kent

*October 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

© Crown Copyright 2000

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

# CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	<i>v</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	<i>29</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Ashford: Detailed Mapping	<i>31</i>
B Ashford Liberal Democrats' Proposed Electoral Arrangements	<i>35</i>
C The Statutory Provisions	<i>39</i>

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Ashford town is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Ashford on 9 May 2000.

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

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

- **in 34 of the 45 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and 23 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 38 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 29 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 97-98) are that:

- **Ashford Borough Council should have 43 councillors, six fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 34 wards, instead of 45 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 42 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of 11, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 14 of the proposed 34 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all 34 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Great Chart with Singleton, Kingsnorth, Sevington, Stanhope and Tenterden.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 17 October 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 11 December 2000:

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

**Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Beaver	2	Ashford Brookfield ward (part); Ashford Hampden ward (part); Ashford Musgrove ward (part); Ashford Singleton ward (part); Ashford Woolreeds ward	Map 2 and large map
2 Biddenden	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Biddenham parish)	Map 2
3 Bockhanger	1	Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4 Boughton Aluph & Eastwell	1	Ashford Kennington Lees ward (part); Boughton Aluph ward (part - the parishes of Boughton Aluph and Eastwell)	Map 2 and large map
5 Bybrook	1	Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Bybrook ward (part); Ashford Henwood ward (part); Ashford Queens ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6 Central	2	Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Eastmead ward (part); Ashford Musgrove ward (part); Ashford Victoria Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
7 Charing	1	Charing ward (part - proposed Charing parish ward of Charing parish)	Map 2 and map A3
8 Downs South	1	Boughton Aluph ward (part - Molash parish); Chilham ward	Map 2
9 Downs West	1	Ashford Bockhanger (part); Boughton Aluph ward (part - Challock parish); Hothfield ward	Map 2 and large map
10 Eastmead	1	Ashford Eastmead ward (part); Ashford Hampden ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11 Godinton	2	Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Queens ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
12 Great Chart & Singleton	2	Great Chart ward (part - the proposed Great Chart parish ward of Great Chart with Singleton parish); Singleton ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
13 Highfield	1	Ashford Willesborough Lees ward (part); Mersham ward (part - proposed North parish ward of Sevington parish)	Map 2 and large map
14 Isle of Oxney	1	Appledore ward (the parishes of Kenardington and Appledore); Wittersham ward (the parishes of Stone-cum-Ebony and Wittersham)	Map 2
15 Kennington	1	Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Bybrook ward (part); Kennington Lees ward (part); Ashford Spearpoint ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
16 Little Burton Farm	1	Ashford Spearpoint ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
17 Newtown	1	Ashford South Willesborough ward (part); Ashford North Willesborough ward (part); Ashford Twelve Acres ward	Map 2 and large map
18 North Willesborough	2	Ashford Waterside ward (part); Ashford Willesborough Lees ward; Ashford Windmill ward	Map 2 and large map
19 Park Farm North	1	Kingsnorth ward (part - proposed Park Farm North parish ward of Kingsnorth parish)	Map 2 and large map
20 Park Farm South	1	Kingsnorth ward (part - proposed Park Farm South parish ward of Kingsnorth parish)	Map 2 and large map
21 Queens	2	Ashford Queens ward (part); Ashford Henwood ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
22 Rolvenden & Tenterden West	1	Rolvenden ward (the parishes of Newenden and Rolvenden); Tenterden South East ward (part - part of Tenterden South East parish ward of Tenterden parish); Tenterden West ward (part - part of Tenterden West parish ward of Tenterden parish)	Map 2 and map A2
23 Saxon Shore	2	Aldington ward (the parishes of Aldington, Bilsington and Bonnington); Brabourne ward (the parishes of Brabourne and Brook); Hamstreet ward (part - Ruckinge parish); Mersham ward (part - Smeeth parish)	Map 2
24 South Willesborough	1	Ashford South Willesborough ward (part); Ashford Twelve Acres ward (part); Ashford Willesborough Lees ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
25 St Michaels	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (St Michaels ward)	Map 2 and Map A2
26 Stanhope	1	Ashford Stanhope (part)	Map 2 and large map
27 Tenterden North	1	Tenterden East ward (part); Tenterden West ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
28 Tenterden South	1	Tenterden South East ward (part - part of Tenterden South East parish ward of Tenterden parish)	Map 2 and map A2
29 Washford	1	Great Chart ward (part - Chilmington Green parish ward of Great Chart with Singleton parish); Kingsnorth ward (part - Washford Farm parish ward of Kingsnorth parish); Stanhope ward (part - proposed Speldhurst parish ward of Stanhope parish)	Map 2 and large map
30 Weald Central	2	Bethersden ward (Bethersden parish); Charing ward (part - proposed Charing Heath parish ward of Charing parish); High Halden ward (High Halden parish); Pluckley ward (the parishes of Little Chart and Pluckley)	Map 2 and map A3



	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
31	Weald East	1	Kingsnorth ward (part - Kingsnorth Village parish ward of Kingsnorth parish); Mersham ward (part - Mersham parish and the proposed South East parish ward of Sevington parish; part of Wye with Hinxhill parish)	Map 2 and large map
32	Weald North	1	<i>Unchanged boundary</i> - Smarden ward (the parishes of Egerton & Smarden)	Map 2
33	Weald South	2	Hamstreet ward (part - the parishes of Orlestone and Warehorne); Kingsnorth ward (part - Stubbs Cross parish ward of Kingsnorth parish and Shadoxhurst parish); Woodchurch ward (Woodchurch parish)	Map 2 and large map
34	Wye	1	Wye ward (part - part of Wye with Hinxhill parish), Mersham ward (part - part of Wye with Hinxhill parish)	Map 2

*Notes: The borough is parished except Ashford town where only Stanhope ward is parished.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Ashford

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Beaver	2	4,204	2,102	17	4,231	2,116	5
2 Biddenden	1	1,949	1,949	9	1,978	1,978	-2
3 Bockhanger	1	1,942	1,942	8	1,942	1,942	-3
4 Boughton Aluph & Eastwell	1	1,115	1,115	-38	1,936	1,936	-4
5 Bybrook	1	1,957	1,957	9	1,961	1,961	-2
6 Central	2	3,927	1,964	10	4,259	2,130	6
7 Charing	1	1,899	1,899	6	1,971	1,971	-2
8 Downs South	1	1,922	1,922	7	1,951	1,951	-3
9 Downs West	1	1,931	1,931	8	1,966	1,966	-2
10 Eastmead	1	2,027	2,027	13	2,043	2,043	2
11 Godinton	2	2,667	1,334	-26	4,323	2,162	8
12 Great Chart & Singleton	2	3,247	1,624	-9	4,291	2,146	7
13 Highfield	1	1,937	1,937	8	1,937	1,937	-4
14 Isle of Oxney	1	2,024	2,024	13	2,073	2,073	3
15 Kennington	1	1,884	1,884	5	1,911	1,911	-5
16 Little Burton Farm	1	1,363	1,363	-24	1,993	1,993	-1
17 Newtown	1	1,946	1,946	9	1,946	1,946	-3
18 North Willesborough	2	3,983	1,992	11	4,057	2,029	1
19 Park Farm North	1	1,283	1,283	-28	1,945	1,931	-4
20 Park Farm South	1	594	594	-67	1,944	1,944	-3
21 Queens	2	3,578	1,789	0	4,021	2,011	0
22 Rolvenden & Tenterden West	1	1,971	1,971	10	1,986	1,986	-1
23 Saxon Shore	2	3,935	1,968	10	3,998	1,999	0
24 South Willesborough	1	1,564	1,564	-13	1,920	1,920	-4
25 St Michaels	1	1,932	1,932	8	1,937	1,937	-4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26 Stanhope	1	2,104	2,104	18	2,106	2,106	5
27 Tenterden North	1	1,713	1,713	-4	1,890	1,890	-6
28 Tenterden South	1	1,832	1,832	2	1,902	1,902	-5
29 Washford	1	1,478	1,478	-17	1,928	1,928	-4
30 Weald Central	2	3,728	1,864	4	3,782	1,891	-6
31 Weald East	1	1,509	1,509	-16	2,153	2,153	7
32 Weald North	1	1,877	1,877	5	1,915	1,915	-5
33 Weald South	2	4,044	2,022	13	4,214	2,107	5
34 Wye	1	1,928	1,928	8	1,989	1,989	-1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>76,994</b>	–	–	<b>86,385</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,791</b>	–	–	<b>2,009</b>	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Ashford Borough Council's submission.*

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



# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Ashford in Kent on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 two-tier districts in Kent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2005.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Ashford. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1975 (Report No. 61). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We completed a directed electoral review of Medway in 1996. We expect to commence a periodic electoral review of Medway later this year, and of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any

imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

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

*Figure 3: Stages of the Review*

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 2000/01 PER programme, including the Kent districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Ashford Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 17 October 2000 and will end on 11 December 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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





## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of Ashford is situated in East Kent and bounded by the North Downs, Weald of Kent and Romney Marsh. The main centre of population is Ashford town; the borough also includes Tenterden, together with a large rural area. The Regional Planning Guidance has identified Ashford as one of the major future growth areas in the South East and significant development, particularly on the periphery of the town, is taking place, with more expected. The borough is served by good communication links, including the M20 and Ashford International railway station, serving the Channel Tunnel rail link, the continued development of which is having a major impact on the area. The borough contains 39 parishes. Ashford town being unparished, with the exception of Stanhope parish.

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

18 The electorate of the borough is 76,994 (February 2000). The Council presently has 34 members who are elected from 45 wards, 21 of which are relatively urban covering Ashford town and the remainder predominantly rural. Four of the wards are each represented by two councillors and 41 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Ashford borough, with around 27 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been the Ashford town area.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,571 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,763 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 34 of the 45 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, in 23 wards by more than 20 per cent and in nine wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Kingsnorth ward where the councillor represents 205 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Ashford*

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Aldington	1	1,125	1,125	-28	1,158	1,158	-34
2 Appledore	1	776	776	-51	785	785	-55
3 Ashford Bockhanger	1	2,361	2,361	50	2,361	2,361	34
4 Ashford Brookfield	1	1,347	1,347	-14	1,347	1,347	-24
5 Ashford Bybrook	1	1,379	1,379	-12	1,383	1,383	-22
6 Ashford Central	2	3,065	1,533	-2	4,779	2,390	36
7 Ashford Eastmead	1	1,609	1,609	2	1,856	1,856	5
8 Ashford Hampden	1	1,113	1,113	-29	1,120	1,120	-36
9 Ashford Henwood	1	1,375	1,375	-12	1,780	1,780	1
10 Ashford Kennington Lees	1	1,652	1,652	5	1,679	1,679	-5
11 Ashford Musgrove	1	1,275	1,275	-19	1,275	1,275	-28
12 Ashford Queens	1	1,485	1,485	-5	1,552	1,552	-12
13 Ashford Singleton	2	2,152	1,076	-32	2,179	1,090	-38
14 Ashford South Willesborough	1	2,140	2,140	36	2,496	2,496	42
15 Ashford Spearpoint	1	1,867	1,867	19	2,497	2,497	42
16 Ashford Stanhope	2	2,442	1,221	-22	2,444	1,222	-31
17 Ashford Twelve Acres	1	1,314	1,314	-16	1,314	1,314	-25
18 Ashford Victoria Park	1	1,231	1,231	-22	1,267	1,267	-28
19 Ashford Warren	1	1,595	1,595	2	1,566	1,566	-11
20 Ashford Waterside	1	1,193	1,193	-24	1,197	1,197	-32
21 Ashford Willesborough Lees	1	3,170	3,170	102	3,240	3,240	84
22 Ashford Windmill	1	1,382	1,382	-12	1,382	1,382	-22
23 Ashford Woolreeds	1	1,267	1,267	-19	1,267	1,267	-28
24 Bethersden	1	1,185	1,185	-25	1,194	1,194	-32

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
25 Biddenden	1	1,949	1,949	24	1,978	1,978	12
26 Boughton Aluph	1	1,558	1,558	-1	2,384	2,384	35
27 Brabourne	1	1,523	1,523	-3	1,545	1,545	-12
28 Charing	2	2,241	1,211	-29	2,293	1,147	-35
29 Chilham	1	1,731	1,731	10	1,755	1,755	0
30 Great Chart	1	2,477	2,477	58	3,521	3,521	100
31 Hamstreet	1	1,962	1,962	25	2,079	2,079	18
32 High Halden	1	1,182	1,182	-25	1,223	1,223	-31
33 Hothfield	1	1,237	1,237	-21	1,272	1,272	-28
34 Kingsnorth	1	4,798	4,798	205	7,301	7,301	314
35 Mersham	1	1,783	1,783	13	2,417	2,417	37
36 Pluckley	1	1,019	1,019	-35	1,043	1,043	-41
37 Rolvenden	1	1,362	1,362	-13	1,377	1,377	-22
38 Smarden	1	1,877	1,877	19	1,915	1,915	9
39 Tenterden East	1	1,574	1,574	0	1,749	1,749	-1
40 Tenterden St Michaels	1	1,932	1,932	23	1,937	1,937	10
41 Tenterden South East	1	1,484	1,484	-6	1,554	1,554	-12
42 Tenterden West	1	1,096	1,096	-30	1,098	1,098	-38
43 Wittersham	1	1,248	1,248	-21	1,288	1,288	-27
44 Woodchurch	1	1,533	1,533	-2	1,549	1,549	-12
45 Wye	1	1,928	1,928	23	1,989	1,989	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>76,994</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>86,385</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,571</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,763</b>	<b>-</b>

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Appledore ward were relatively over-represented by 51 per cent, while electors in Kingsnorth ward were relatively under-represented by 205 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Ashford Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 12 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, the Independent Group and the local Labour Party, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

#### **Ashford Borough Council**

23 The Borough Council proposed 43 councillors serving 34 single and two-member wards, a reduction of six councillors and 11 wards. Under the Council's scheme the boundaries of four wards, Biddenden, Smarden, Tenterden St Michaels and Wye, would be unchanged, while the boundaries of the remaining wards would be modified. It proposed a number of boundary amendments in the Tenterden area and a reconfiguration of a number of the rural wards. The Council's rural ward proposals would involve new parish warding for Charing parish. In Ashford town, and the immediate surrounding area, the Council proposed 19 wards which would encompass the development sites on the edge of the urban area, together with a number of adjustments to the current town ward boundaries. The Borough Council's scheme would achieve significant improvements in electoral equality. Although 14 wards would vary by more than 10 per cent initially, no ward is projected to vary by more than 8 per cent from the borough average by 2005, due to significant forecast growth.

#### **Ashford Borough Council Conservative Group**

24 Ashford Borough Council Conservative Group supported the principle of single-member wards. Specifically the Group commented on proposals for Saxon Shore and Downs South wards, together with supporting Smeeth Parish Council's proposal for a single-member Smeeth ward.

#### **Ashford Borough Council Liberal Democrats**

25 The Liberal Democrats (representing the local party and the Group) also proposed a council size of 43 but serving 32 one- and two- member wards. Overall, there was agreement between the Liberal Democrats' and the Borough Council's proposals for 11 of the wards, particularly in the Tenterden area and some of the rural wards. However, the Liberal Democrats provided a different configuration for seven of the rural wards. They also proposed alternatives for wards in parts of the urban area. Their proposals achieved marginally better electoral equality, with no ward varying by more than 6 per cent by 2005.

## **Ashford & Tenterden Constituency Labour Party**

26 The Ashford & Tenterden Labour Party (stating that it also represented the Borough Council Labour Group) also made borough-wide proposals based on a council size of 43. It based its proposals on a pattern of 21 two-member wards, with one ward, Biddenden, remaining single-member. This pattern would, however, lead to a number of geographically large rural wards. The scheme also proposed a different ward configuration on the periphery of the town. The Labour Party's proposals would also provide a significant improvement to electoral equality, but the submission provided only approximate electorates for a number of the wards. Under its proposals no ward would vary by more than 5 per cent by 2005.

## **Ashford Borough Council Independent Group**

27 The Independent Group put forward a borough-wide scheme for 47 councillors, a reduction of two, with a preference for single-member wards. They supported only a slight reduction in council size due to the significant growth in the area. As an alternative they also proposed the current council size of 49. Their proposals were supported by only approximate electorate figures for wards in some areas, but one ward, in the rural south-east of the borough, would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent based on the Group's 2005 figures.

## **Parish Councils**

28 We received representations from five parish councils. Appledore and Kenardington parish councils supported the Borough Council's proposals for Isle of Oxney ward, which would include the parishes of Appledore, Kenardington, Wittersham and Stone-cum-Ebony. Ruckinge and Warehorne parish councils objected to the Borough Council's proposal to abolish Hamstreet ward. Ruckinge Parish Council stated that the proposed Saxon Shore ward would be geographically too large and bisected by a railway line. Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council objected to the Borough Council's proposal to include the parish with part of the urban area. It considered that the parish could form a ward on its own, or a two-member ward with neighbouring parishes.

## **Other Representations**

29 We received two further representations. Kent County Council stated that any reduction in the number of borough wards would reduce flexibility for proposals for county divisions when conducting a subsequent review of the County Council electoral arrangements. A resident of Smeeth supported the proposal by Smeeth Parish Council in its response to the Council's consultation for a single-member ward for Smeeth.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

30 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Ashford is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

31 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

32 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

33 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

34 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 12 per cent from 76,994 to 86,385 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. Ashford has been identified in local planning guidance as one of the three major growth areas in the South East and a large amount of development is expected, particularly in the wards on the edge of the town. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

35 During the early stages of the review we sought detailed evidence to underpin the Council’s projections. We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, we are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

## **Council Size**

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

37 Ashford Borough Council presently has 49 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 43 members, a reduction of six, which would provide for good representation across the borough, taking account of the areas under development. Both the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party agreed with a council size of 43. The Independent Group proposed a council size of 47 (with a second preference for 49), which it stated would retain an appropriate level of representation to take account of the imminent increase in electorate.

38 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the general agreement among the majority of the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 43 members. Accordingly, we are unable to adopt the ward pattern proposed by the Independent Group as part of our draft recommendations.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

39 In looking at the borough-wide proposals received for Ashford, several issues have emerged which have informed us in determining our draft recommendations. Firstly, while initially each of the 43-member proposals retained high levels of electoral inequality in some wards, each achieved excellent electoral equality by 2005, by taking into account the projected growth in the areas concerned.

40 The Labour Group, however, put forward an almost entirely two-member ward pattern. While we note that this pattern would provide improvements to electoral equality, we do not consider that it would provide the best balance between this and the statutory criteria. In particular, it would result in a number of geographically large and diverse wards in the rural area. Moreover, we do not consider that its proposals have any particular advantage in terms of the warding arrangements for the areas under development on the edge of the town. Therefore, we do not propose to take forward any of the detailed warding proposals from the Labour Party as part of our draft recommendations, but consider that a mix of one and two-member wards would reflect the statutory criteria in the borough, but consider that a mix of one and two-member wards would best reflect the statutory criteria in the borough.

41 In comparing the Liberal Democrats' and Borough Council's proposals in the urban area, several issues emerged. First, the Borough Council's proposals generally utilise clearer, more recognisable boundaries. These include the M20 and the Channel Tunnel rail link in parts of the town. Second, the Borough Council retained a ward covering most of Stanhope, an estate which we considered has a strong community identity. We also noted that the Council's proposals were subject to extensive consultation.



42 In the rural area, there was an element of agreement between the proposals, including the four wards for Tenterden and the surrounding area, but there were some differences, particularly in the northern part of the borough. We found that, where there were differences, the issues were finely balanced, particularly with regard to community identity. We are, however, persuaded by the Borough Council's guiding principles in favour of a majority of single-member wards and to retaining whole parishes in the wards in the rural area as far as possible. Having visited the areas concerned, we consider that the Council's proposal to include Charing parish in two different wards does not adversely affect the statutory criteria and would also help to provide a coherent ward pattern across the neighbouring area. Moreover, we consider that the Council's proposal to retain the existing Wye ward is a better reflection of community identity than the Liberal Democrats' proposal in this area, which involves linking Wye with neighbouring parishes.

43 Accordingly, and in view of the agreement between the two proposals for some elements of the Council's proposals, together with the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should adopt the Borough Council's scheme as the basis for our draft recommendations, with only minor amendments in some areas to ensure that boundaries follow recognisable ground features. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

#### **Ashford Town**

- (a) Ashford Bockhanger, Ashford Bybrook, Ashford Kennington Lees, Ashford Spearpoint and Ashford Warren wards;
- (b) Ashford Central, Ashford Henwood, Ashford Queens and Ashford Victoria Park wards;
- (c) Ashford South Willesborough, Ashford Twelve Acres, Ashford Waterside, Ashford Willesborough Lees and Ashford Windmill wards;
- (d) Ashford Brookfield, Ashford Eastmead, Ashford Hampden, Ashford Musgrove, Ashford Singleton, Ashford Stanhope and Ashford Woolreeds wards.

#### **Outside Ashford Town**

- (e) Rolvenden, Tenterden East, Tenterden St Michaels, Tenterden South East, and Tenterden West wards;
- (f) Boughton Aluph, Chilham, Great Chart and Hothfield wards;
- (g) Aldington, Brabourne, Hamstreet, Kingsnorth, Mersham and Wye wards;
- (h) Appledore, Wittersham and Woodchurch wards;
- (i) Bethersden, Biddenden, Charing, High Halden, Pluckley and Smarden wards.

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

## **Ashford Bockhanger, Ashford Bybrook, Ashford Kennington Lees, Ashford Spearpoint and Ashford Warren wards**

45 These single-member wards are situated in the north of Ashford town. The number of electors represented by the councillor for Bockhanger, Bybrook, Kennington Lees, Spearpoint and Warren wards is 50 per cent above, 12 per cent below, 5 per cent above, 19 per cent above and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively (34 per cent above, 22 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 42 per cent above and 11 per cent below in 2005).

46 The Borough Council proposed that there should be four new wards covering this area. It proposed a single-member Kennington ward, which would include much of the existing Kennington Lees ward, together the parts of Bockhanger and Bybrook wards, situated to the south of Lower Vicarage Road and west of Faversham Road, (although the area adjacent to the new Goat Lees development, bounded by Faversham Road and Grosvenor Road, would be included in a new single-member Boughton Aluph & Eastwell ward, discussed later). The Council also proposed a new single-member Little Burton Farm ward comprising part of the existing Spearpoint ward, (including the Little Burton Farm development site), bounded by its current western and southern boundaries, and by The Ridge and Willesborough Road to the east. The Council further proposed a single-member Bybrook ward which would include most of the existing Bybrook ward together with the parts of Henwood and Queens wards, that lie north of the M20. It would also include properties on the western side of Bybrook Road, together with Bybrook Court and Nine Acres from Bockhanger ward. Finally, the Council proposed a single-member Bockhanger ward comprising most of the existing Bockhanger ward, together with the north-western part of the existing Warren ward (except a small part of Westwall Lane to be included in Downs West ward).

47 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bockhanger, Bybrook, Kennington and Little Burton Farm wards would be 8 per cent above the average, 9 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 24 per cent below respectively (3 per cent below, 2 per cent below, 5 per cent below and 1 per cent below respectively by 2005).

48 The Liberal Democrats also proposed four wards broadly covering this area they each represented by a single member. They proposed a new Spearpoint ward which would comprise parts of the current Kennington Lees and Spearpoint wards with the boundary following Canterbury Road, Faversham Road and Canterbury Road. To the south, they also proposed a Little Burton ward with the western boundary following the back of Bybrook Road and the southern boundary following the River Stour. They also proposed a Bockhanger ward comprising the majority of the current ward, but also including the whole of Bybrook Road from Bybrook ward. Additionally, they proposed a Gore Hill ward covering a large part of the existing Warren ward. In each of these wards the number of electors represented by the councillor would vary by no more than 5 per cent by 2005.

49 We have carefully considered both these proposals and note that they would both provide excellent levels of electoral equality. However, we consider that the Borough Council's proposals give better boundaries in this area, particularly as they utilise the M20 for the southern boundaries of the wards as far as possible. Additionally, having visited the area we consider that the ward

pattern provides a good reflection of the statutory criteria and has the advantage of having been consulted on locally.

50 On balance, therefore, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Bockhanger, Bybrook, Kennington and Little Burton Farm wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bockhanger, Bybrook, Kennington and Little Burton Farm wards would be 8 per cent above the average, 9 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 24 per cent below respectively (3 per cent below, 2 per cent below, 5 per cent below and 1 per cent below respectively by 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Ashford Central, Ashford Henwood, Ashford Queens and Ashford Victoria Park wards**

51 The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Central ward is 2 per cent below the average. In the single-member Henwood, Queens and Victoria Park wards the number of electors represented by the councillor is 12 per cent below, 5 per cent below and 22 per cent below the average respectively (1 per cent above, 2 per cent below and 28 per cent below in 2005).

52 The Borough Council proposed three wards broadly covering this area. It proposed a two-member Queens ward covering part of the current Queens ward to the north of Albert Road and Somerset Road, part of Henwood ward (south of the M20), and the part of Warren ward to the south-east of Warren Lane. The Council also proposed a two-member Godinton ward, covering most of the current Central ward, with the exception of the area to the east of Forge Lane, West Street and Gasworks Lane but including the four significant development sites in the area. It further proposed a two-member Central ward, including the existing Victoria Park ward, part of Queens ward, south of Albert Road, the part of the existing Central ward between Park Street and the Channel Tunnel railway line, part of Eastmead ward north of Lower Denmark Road and west of Beaver Road, and part of Musgrove ward east of Jemmett Road and north of Beaver Drive. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Central, Godinton and Queens wards would be 10 per cent above, 26 per cent below, equal to the borough average respectively (6 per cent above, 8 per cent above and equal to the average by 2005).

53 The Liberal Democrats proposed three wards broadly covering this area, together with an alternative which would include separate Warren and Godinton wards. Specifically, they proposed a single-member Henwood ward covering most of the existing Henwood ward, together with part of the existing Queens and Central wards. They also proposed a Central ward comprising part of the current Central ward, situated entirely north of the Channel Tunnel railway line. In the north-west of the town they proposed two-member Godinton ward covering much of the existing Warren and Central wards. Under their proposals electoral equality would be significantly improved, with the number of electors per councillor in each ward varying by no more than 1 per cent from the average in 2005.

54 Having carefully considered the representations received, we note that both proposals would significantly improve electoral equality. Of particular note was the Liberal Democrats' proposal to utilise the Channel Tunnel railway as a boundary. However, having visited this part of the town we have noted that both sides of the railway have a similar community identity, with Ashford

International station acting as a focal point. Accordingly, we consider that the Borough Council's proposals, which include a Central ward crossing the railway line, provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria while improving electoral equality, and also have the advantage of having been consulted upon locally. Moreover, given that we are adopting the Borough Council's ward pattern to the north of this area, its proposals for these wards are compatible. Accordingly, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Central, Godinton and Queens wards as part of our draft recommendations.

55 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Central, Godinton and Queens wards would be 10 per cent above, 26 per cent below and equal to the borough average respectively (6 per cent above, 8 per cent above and equal to the average by 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

### **Ashford South Willesborough, Ashford Twelve Acres, Ashford Waterside, Ashford Willesborough Lees and Ashford Windmill wards**

56 The number of electors represented by the councillor in the single-member wards of South Willesborough, Twelve Acres, Waterside, Willesborough Lees and Windmill is 36 per cent above, 16 per cent below, 24 per cent below, 102 per cent above and 12 per cent below the average for the borough respectively (42 per cent above, 25 per cent below, 32 per cent below, 84 per cent above and 22 per cent below in 2005).

57 The Borough Council proposed four new wards broadly covering this area. It proposed a new two-member North Willesborough ward to include the whole of the existing Waterside and Windmill wards and most of the existing Willesborough Lees ward, except the part that lies south of Hythe Road, which it included in part of Sevington ward so that all the area north of Bad Munstereifel Road forms part of a new single-member Highfield ward. The Council also proposed a revised single-member South Willesborough ward which would include most of the current ward south of the stream running east/west adjacent to Maunsell Place, Baxendale Court and Bentley Road together with transferring Boys Hall Road and Ash Meadows from Willesborough Lees ward to South Willesborough ward. The remainder of South Willesborough ward would be included with the existing Twelve Acres ward to form a new single-member Newtown ward.

58 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Highfield, Newtown, North Willesborough and South Willesborough wards would be 8 per cent above the borough average, 9 per cent above, 11 per cent above and 13 per cent below respectively (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 4 per cent below in 2005).

59 The Liberal Democrats proposed a two-member North Willesborough ward covering much of the current Willesborough Lees ward and part of Windmill ward, but also put forward an alternative of two single-member wards: a Windmill ward, covering most of Willesborough Lees and Windmill wards, and a North Willesborough ward covering the existing Waterside ward. They also proposed a new single-member Highfield ward similar to that proposed by the Borough Council, but also including Boys Hall Lane. They further proposed a two-member South Willesborough ward covering the existing South Willesborough and Twelve Acres wards, together with an alternative for two single-member wards covering these areas. Under the Liberal

Democrats' proposals for Highfield, North Willesborough and South Willesborough wards the electoral variances would be no more than 5 per cent by 2005.

60 We have carefully considered the representations received for this area and note that both proposals would provide significant improvements to electoral equality and that there are significant similarities between them. We consider that, while under both proposals the wards cross either the M20 or the Channel Tunnel railway in this area, those put forward by Borough Council would include whole community areas and therefore provide a coherent ward pattern, which would meet the statutory criteria. Moreover, we have noted that the Borough Council's proposals were consulted on locally. We therefore propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for four wards covering the area as part of our draft recommendations.

61 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Highfield, Newtown, North Willesborough and South Willesborough wards would be 8 per cent above the borough average, 9 per cent above, 11 per cent above and 13 per cent below respectively (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 4 per cent below in 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

#### **Ashford Brookfield, Ashford Eastmead, Ashford Hampden, Ashford Musgrove, Ashford Singleton, Ashford Stanhope and Ashford Woolreeds wards**

62 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Brookfield, Eastmead, Hampden, Musgrove and Woolreeds is 14 per cent below, 2 per cent above, 29 per cent below, 19 per cent below and 19 per cent below the borough average respectively (24 per cent below, 5 per cent above, 36 per cent below, 28 per cent below and 28 per cent below in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Singleton ward and the two-member Stanhope ward (covering the parish of the same of name) is 32 per cent below and 22 per cent below the average respectively (38 per cent below and 31 per cent below in 2005).

63 The Borough Council proposed three wards broadly covering this area. It proposed a single-member Eastmead ward which would comprise part of the current Eastmead ward bounded by Beaver Road, Denmark Road and Norman Road, together with the existing Hampden ward, less a small area around Beaver Court which would be transferred to its proposed two-member Beaver ward. Beaver ward would also include the existing Brookfield and Singleton wards, together with part of Musgrove ward bounded by Jemmet Road to the east. Finally the Council proposed a revised single-member Stanhope ward, with the boundary following Stanhope Road, thereby including the Speldhurst Close area in the proposed Washford ward (discussed below).

64 Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Beaver, Eastmead and Stanhope wards would be 17 per cent above the average, 12 per cent above and 18 per cent above respectively (5 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 5 per cent above by 2005).

65 The Liberal Democrats proposed four wards broadly covering this area. They proposed a single-member Eastmead ward comprising parts of the current Eastmead and Hampden wards. They also proposed a single-member Victoria Park ward covering Musgrove ward and parts of Eastmead and Victoria Park wards. Additionally, they proposed a two-member Stanhope ward,

covering Stanhope ward and parts of Hampden and Woolreeds wards, and a two-member Brookfield ward comprising the existing Brookfield ward and parts of Woolreeds and Victoria Park wards. They also proposed an alternative for two single-member wards for the Brookfield area, with a Brookfield ward covering the northern area and Beaver Green ward covering the southern area. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals for Brookfield, Eastmead, Stanhope and Victoria Park wards, there would be no electoral variance greater than 4 per cent by 2005.

66 We have carefully considered the proposals we received for this part of the town and have noted that they each provide considerable improvements to electoral equality. However, we have noted that the Borough Council's proposals are more generally based on existing whole wards. In particular, we consider that its proposal to retain most of Stanhope area in a single ward is a good reflection of community identity and this, in turn, has a bearing on the ward pattern for the neighbouring areas. Moreover, the Borough Council's proposals were subject to local consultation. We therefore propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

67 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Beaver, Eastmead and Stanhope wards would be 17 per cent above the average, 13 per cent above and 18 per cent above respectively (5 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 5 per cent above by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

## **Outside Ashford Town**

### **Rolvenden, Tenterden East, Tenterden St Michaels, Tenterden South East, Tenterden West wards**

68 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the existing single-member wards of Rolvenden (comprising the parishes of Newenden and Rolvenden), Tenterden East, Tenterden South East, Tenterden St Michaels and Tenterden West is 13 per cent below, equal to, 6 per cent below, 23 per cent above, 10 per cent below and 30 per cent below the borough average respectively (22 per cent below, 1 per cent below, 12 per cent below, 10 per cent above and 38 per cent below the average in 2005).

69 Both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats proposed the same pattern of four single-member wards for this area. First, both proposed no change to Tenterden St Michaels ward. They proposed that part of the current Tenterden West ward be included with Rolvenden and Newenden parishes to form a new Rolvenden & Tenterden West ward. They also proposed new Tenterden North and Tenterden South wards which would include parts of the current Tenterden South East and Tenterden East wards. Under these proposals good levels of electoral equality would be achieved, with the number of electors per councillor varying by 6 per cent or less in each ward by 2005.

70 In considering the proposals from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats we have noted the good electoral equality achieved under the new warding arrangements for the Tenterden area and, in the light of the consensus between these two proposals together with the fact that they have been the subject of local consultation, we are adopting them as part of our draft

recommendations, with some minor amendments to the boundary between Tenterden North and Tenterden South wards to ensure that it follows recognisable ground features, which do not affect any electors.

71 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Rolvenden & Tenterden West, St Michaels, Tenterden North and Tenterden South wards would be 10 per cent above the average, 8 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 2 per cent above respectively (1 per cent below, 4 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 5 per cent below respectively in 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on map A2 in Appendix A.

### **Boughton Aluph, Chilham, Great Chart and Hothfield wards**

72 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Boughton Aluph (comprising the parishes of Boughton Aluph and Eastwell), Chilham (comprising the parishes of Chilham, Crundale and Godmersham), Great Chart (covering the parish of Great Chart with Singleton) and Hothfield (comprising the parishes of Challock, Hothfield and Westwell) is 1 per cent below, 10 per cent above, 58 per cent above and 21 per cent below the average for the borough respectively (35 per cent above, equal to, 100 per cent above, and 28 per cent below the average in 2005).

73 The Borough Council proposed that part of Kennington Lees ward be included with the current Boughton Aluph ward in a new single-member Boughton Aluph & Eastwell ward, which would include the Goat Lees development site. It also proposed a new single-member Downs South ward comprising the parishes of Chilham, Crundale and Godmersham and a single-member Downs West ward comprising the parishes of Challock, Hothfield and Westwell, together with a small part of Westwall Lane from Ashford Warren ward. The Council also proposed a two-member Great Chart & Singleton ward which would include most of the current Great Chart and Singleton wards, although a small area in the south, covering part of the future Brisley Farm development site, would be included in a new Washford ward, described in paragraph 80 below. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Boughton Aluph & Eastwell, Downs South, Downs West and Great Chart & Singleton wards would be 38 per cent below the average, 7 per cent above, 8 per cent above and 9 per cent below respectively (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 7 per cent above respectively in 2005).

74 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the parishes of Challock, Eastwell, Molash, Westwell and part of Boughton Aluph should form a new single-member North Downs ward, with the remainder of the parish being included with part of Ashford town. They also proposed that the parishes of Charing, Little Chart, Hothfield and Pluckley should form a new two-member Calehill ward. They also proposed that the parishes of Brook, Chilham, Crundale, Godmersham and Wye with Hinxhill should form a new two-member Stour Valley ward. However, they stated that they supported the Council's two-member Great Chart & Singleton ward. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals good levels of electoral equality would be achieved by 2005, with none of their proposed wards varying by more than 7 per cent from the average. The Liberal Democrats stated that their proposed Calehill ward "recreates the ancient hundred of Calehill, centred on Calehill Park [and] brings together a number of communities sharing problems along the M20/CTRL".

75 Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council objected to the Borough Council's proposal to include the parish with part of the urban area. It considered that the parish could form a ward on its own, or a two-member ward with neighbouring parishes.

76 In considering the proposals from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats, we note that both would provide good levels of electoral equality. However, in this mainly rural area we are persuaded that a pattern of predominantly single-member wards provides the best reflection of the statutory criteria. Moreover, we consider that they are, in part, determined by proposals which incorporate the areas under development. In looking at the specific configurations of these wards, we consider that the proposal for a new Washford and Boughton Aluph & Eastwell wards, which will both cover large areas under development, and the retention of Wye ward are good reflections of community identities in the areas concerned.

77 Therefore, having carefully considered the representations received, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Boughton Aluph & Eastwell, Downs West, Downs South, Great Chart & Singleton ward, as part of our draft recommendations, with a minor amendment to the boundary of Washford ward, in the southern area of Great Chart with Singleton parish, to ensure that the ward boundary follows recognisable ground features and that there are sufficient electors to form a parish ward in the area.

78 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Boughton Aluph & Eastwell, Downs South, Downs West and Great Chart & Singleton wards would be per cent 38 per cent below the average, 7 per cent above, 8 per cent above, 9 per cent below and 18 per cent below respectively initially (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 7 per cent above respectively in 2005). The proposals are shown on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Aldington, Brabourne, Hamstreet, Kingsnorth, Mersham and Wye wards**

79 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Aldington (comprising the parishes of Aldington, Bilsington and Bonnington), Brabourne (comprising the parishes of Brabourne, Brook and Hastingleigh), Hamstreet (comprising the parishes of Orlestone, Ruckinge and Warehorne), Kingsnorth (comprising the parishes of Kingsnorth and Shadoxhurst), Mersham (comprising the parishes Mersham, Sevington and Smeeth, together with part of Wye with Hinxhill parish) and Wye (covering most of Wye with Hinxhill parish) is 28 per cent below, 3 per cent below, 25 per cent above, 205 per cent above, 13 per cent above and 23 per cent above the borough average respectively. By 2005, there would be no significant improvement in these wards, and in Kingsnorth ward electoral equality would worsen further, varying by 314 per cent due to the extensive development in the area.

80 The Borough Council proposed significant changes to the ward pattern in the area around Kingsnorth parish. In order to reflect the new development sites in the Park Farm area, the Council proposed two new single-member wards of Park Farm North and Park Farm South. It also proposed that the Washford Farm part of Kingsnorth parish, containing an area identified for new development, be included in a new single-member Washford ward with part of Great Chart with Singleton parish and part of Stanhope parish around Speldhurst Close. The Council further proposed that the Stubbs Cross part of Kingsnorth parish be included in a new two-member



Weald South ward with the parishes of Orlestone, Shadoxhurst, Warehorne and Woodchurch. In addition, it proposed that the Kingsnorth village part of Kingsnorth parish be included in a new single-member Weald East ward with Mersham parish, part of Wye with Hinxhill parish and the part of Sevington parish situated below the Ring Road.

81 In the rural eastern part of the borough, the Borough Council proposed a new two-member Saxon Shore ward, comprising the parishes of Aldington, Bilsington, Bonnington, Brabourne, Brook, Hastingleigh, Ruckinge and Smeeth. It also proposed no change to the single-member Wye ward.

82 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Park Farm North, Park Farm South, Saxon Shore, Washford, Weald East, Weald South and Wye wards would be 28 per cent below, 67 per cent below, 10 per cent above, 18 per cent below, 16 per cent below, 5 per cent above and 8 per cent above the borough average respectively (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, equal to, 5 per cent below, 7 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 1 per cent below the average in 2005).

83 The Liberal Democrats agreed with the Borough Council's proposals for Park Farm North and Park Farm South wards. They proposed a new two-member Hamstreet ward combining the parishes of Orlestone, Shadoxhurst and Warehorne together with the Stubbs Cross and Washford Farm parts of Kingsnorth parish. Additionally, they proposed a new two-member Saxon Shore ward comprising the parishes of Aldington, Bonnington, Bilsington, Ruckinge and Sevington together with the Kingsnorth village part of Kingsnorth parish, and a single-member Brabourne ward including the parishes of Brabourne, Hastingleigh and Smeeth. Finally in this area, the Liberal Democrats proposed a two-member Stour Valley ward comprising the parishes of Brook, Chilham, Crundale, Godmersham and Wye. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals good electoral equality would be achieved, with none of the wards varying by more than 6 per cent from the average by 2005.

84 Ruckinge and Warehorne parish councils objected to the Borough Council's proposals as they affect these respective parishes since they would include parts of the current Hamstreet ward in neighbouring wards. A resident of Smeeth supported a single-member ward covering Smeeth which, he stated, had been proposed by Smeeth Parish Council.

85 We have carefully considered these options in detail and have noted that there is a degree of consensus regarding the ward pattern on the periphery of the town in the areas covered by new development. Having visited the areas concerned, we consider that the Borough Council's and the Liberal Democrats' proposals provide a good balance between achieving improvements to electoral equality and reflecting the statutory criteria. In particular, we are reassured that, although there are significant imbalances in these wards initially, large-scale development is taking place on the sites concerned. For the wards outside the areas affected by the new development, we have noted that the configurations proposed are, in part, dictated by the proposals for the wards which will contain new housing. However, in evaluating the Borough Council's proposals, we consider that the groupings of parishes which it has proposed would secure improvements to electoral equality, reflect community identities and provide convenient and effective local government. In particular, in the cases where the Council has proposed single-member wards, we consider that these provide a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the larger two-member wards

proposed by the Liberal Democrats. Moreover, we consider that the Borough Council's proposal to retain Wye ward offers a better balance between the statutory criteria than the Liberal Democrats' proposal, which would link Wye with neighbouring parishes.

86 We therefore propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations, with minor amendments to ensure that boundaries follow recognisable ground features. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Park Farm North, Park Farm South, Saxon Shore, Washford, Weald East, Weald South and Wye wards would be 28 per cent below, 67 per cent below, 10 per cent above, 17 per cent below, 16 per cent below, 13 per cent above and 8 per cent above the average respectively (4 per cent below, 3 per cent below, equal to, 4 per cent below, 7 per cent above, 5 per cent above and 1 per cent below the average in 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 2 and the large map inserted in the back of the report.

### **Appledore, Wittersham and Woodchurch wards**

87 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Appledore (comprising the parishes of Appledore and Kenardington); Wittersham (comprising the parishes of Stone-cum-Ebony and Wittersham) and Woodchurch (covering Woodchurch parish) is 51 per cent below, 21 per cent below and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (55 per cent below, 27 per cent below and 12 per cent below in 2005).

88 The Borough Council proposed a new single-member Isle of Oxney ward comprising the parishes of Appledore, Kenardington, Stone-cum-Ebony and Wittersham. Woodchurch parish would be included in a two-member Weald South ward together with the parishes of Orlestone, Warehorne and Shadoxhurst, and the Stubbs Cross part of Kingsnorth parish, as described in paragraph 80 above. Under the Borough Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Isle of Oxney ward would be 13 per cent above the average (3 per cent above in 2005).

89 The Liberal Democrats agreed with the Borough Council's proposal for Isle of Oxney ward. They, however, proposed a two-member Weald Central ward comprising the parishes of Bethersden, High Halden and Woodchurch, with an electoral variance of 1 per cent by 2005, stating that it was not possible to create single-member wards in this area "unless a very artificial line was drawn, the effect of which would have been to split Bethersden". They also proposed an alternative configuration for Hamstreet ward, comprising Orlestone, Shadoxhurst and Wareham together with the Stubbs Cross part of Kingsnorth parish, as described in the above section. We also received representations from Appledore and Kenardington parish councils, who expressed support for the Borough Council's proposals.

90 Having considered the representations received we consider that, on balance, the Borough Council's proposal for Isle of Oxney ward provides the best balance between improving electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In particular, we note that this proposal is in part dictated by its proposed warding configurations affecting Kingsnorth parish, where substantial new development is taking place. We also noted that its proposed Isle of Oxney ward was supported by the Liberal Democrats and two of the parish councils affected. We therefore propose adopting the agreed proposal from the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats for Isle of Oxney as

part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendation the number of electors per councillor Isle of Oxney would be 13 per cent above the average (3 per cent above in 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Bethersden, Biddenden, Charing, High Halden, Pluckley and Smarden wards**

91 The number of electors represented by the councillor for the single-member wards of Bethersden, Biddenden, High Halden (each covering the parish of the same name), Pluckley (comprising the parishes of Little Chart and Pluckley) and Smarden (comprising the parishes of Egerton and Smarden) is 25 per cent below, 24 per cent above, 25 per cent below, 35 per cent below and 19 per cent above the borough average respectively (32 per cent below, 12 per cent above, 31 per cent below, 41 per cent below and 9 per cent above in 2005). The number of electors per councillor in the two-member Charing ward (covering Charing parish) is 29 per cent below the average (35 per cent below in 2005).

92 The Borough Council, supported by the Liberal Democrats, proposed retaining the current single-member Biddenden ward together with the current composition of the single-member Smarden ward, although both agreed that this latter ward should be renamed Weald North. The Borough Council also proposed a two-member Weald Central ward comprising the parishes of Bethersden, High Halden, Little Chart and Pluckley together with Charing Heath parish ward of Charing parish. The Council also proposed a single-member Charing ward, comprising Charing parish ward of Charing parish only.

93 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Biddenden, Charing, Weald Central and Weald North wards would be 9 per cent above the average, 6 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 5 per cent above respectively (2 per cent below, 2 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 5 per cent below respectively in 2005).

94 The Liberal Democrats supported the Council's proposal for Biddenden but generally proposed a different configuration for the area to the east of Ashford town, as described previously in paragraphs 74 and 89. Specifically, they proposed a new two-member Weald Central ward and a new two-member Calehill ward, which would include the whole of Charing parish in one ward.

95 In the light of the good levels of electoral equality achieved and the consensus between the Council and the Liberal Democrats, we are adopting the Council's proposals for Biddenden and Weald North wards as part of our draft recommendations. Having carefully considered the proposals received for the remainder of this area, we consider that the Borough Council's configuration, which would lead to the inclusion of the two Charing parish wards in different borough wards, would not adversely affect the statutory criteria. In fact, having visited the area, we have noted that the two communities of Charing and Charing Heath are separate, and accordingly have their own community identity. Moreover, we are unable to look at specific areas in isolation but are aiming to achieve the best balance between achieving electoral equality and reflecting the statutory criteria throughout the borough. The Liberal Democrats also stated that their proposed Weald Central ward "brings together 3 large Wealden villages with much in common. The resultant ward is rather large, but because the shape is fairly square the distances are rather less than in some other two-member wards," and therefore, in the light of our proposals

elsewhere, the Borough Council's proposals for Charing and Weald Central wards would help facilitate a coherent ward pattern in this and the surrounding area. We are therefore adopting them as part of our draft recommendations, with minor amendments to ensure boundaries follow recognisable ground features.

96 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Biddenden, Charing, Weald Central and Weald North wards would be 9 per cent above the average, 6 per cent above, 4 per cent above and 5 per cent above respectively (2 per cent below, 2 per cent below, 6 per cent below and 5 per cent below respectively in 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 2 and map A3 in Appendix A.

## **Electoral Cycle**

97 We did not receive any representations proposing a change to the borough's electoral cycle. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

## **Conclusions**

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 49 to 43;
- there should be 34 wards;
- the boundaries of 42 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of 11 wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

99 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose a number of very minor alterations throughout the borough to ensure that boundaries follow recognisable ground features.

100 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	49	43	49	43
Number of wards	45	34	45	34
Average number of electors per councillor	1,571	1,791	1,763	2,009
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	34	14	38	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	23	5	29	0

101 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Ashford Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 34 to 14. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Ashford Borough Council should comprise 43 councillors serving 34 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

### **Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

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

103 The parish of Great Chart with Singleton is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In its submission the Borough Council proposed that the parish be included in two borough wards: Great Chart & Singleton and Washford. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, we propose that Great Chart with Singleton parish be divided into two parish wards, Chilmington Green East parish ward and Singleton parish ward, represented by one and 10 parish councillors respectively.

**Draft Recommendation**

Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Chilmington Green East (returning one councillor) and Singleton (returning 10 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

104 The parish of Kingsnorth is currently served by 10 councillors and is divided into three wards. In its submission the Borough Council proposed that the parish should be divided between five borough wards: Park Farm North, Park Farm South, Washford, Weald East and Weald South. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, we propose that there should be five parish wards, Kingsnorth Village, Park Farm North, Park Farm South, Stubbs Cross and Washford, each represented by two parish councillors.

**Draft Recommendation**

Kingsnorth Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Kingsnorth Village, Park Farm North, Park Farm South, Stubbs Cross and Washford, each returning two councillors. The boundary between the five parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

105 The parish of Sevington forms a joint parish council with Mersham parish. The parish is not warded and returns two out of a total of 11 councillors for the joint parish. In its submission the Borough Council proposed that Sevington parish should be divided between two borough wards: Highfield and Weald East. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations we propose that there should be two parish wards, Sevington North and Sevington South, served by one councillor each.

**Draft Recommendation**

Sevington & Mersham Parish Council should comprise 11 parish councillors, with Sevington parish comprising two wards: Sevington North and Sevington South, each returning one parish councillor. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

106 The parish of Stanhope is currently served by 11 councillors and is not warded. In its submission the Borough Council proposed that the parish should be divided between two borough wards: Stanhope and Washford. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, we

propose that there should be two parish wards, Stanhope Central and Stanhope Speldhurst, served by 10 and one parish councillors respectively.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Stanhope Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stanhope Central (returning 10 councillors) and Stanhope Speldhurst (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

107 The parish of Tenterden is currently served by 16 councillors and is divided into four parish wards. In its submission the Borough Council proposed that the parish should be divided between four borough wards: Rolvenden & Tenterden West, St Michaels (unchanged), Tenterden North and Tenterden South. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, we propose that there should be four parish wards, St Michaels, Tenterden North, Tenterden South and Tenterden West, each returning four parish councillors.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Tenterden Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: St Michaels, Tenterden North, Tenterden South and Tenterden West, each returning four parish councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

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

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

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Ashford*



## 5 NEXT STEPS

110 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 11 December 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

111 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142  
E-mail: [reviews@lgce.gov.uk](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)  
[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for Ashford: Detailed Mapping**

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

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

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed borough and parish warding of Tenterden.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed borough and parish warding of Charing.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Ashford town.

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Ashford: Key Map*

*Map A2: The proposed Borough and Parish warding of Tenterden.*

*Map A3: Proposed Borough and Parish Warding of Charing*

## APPENDIX B

### Ashford Liberal Democrats' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

*Figure B1: Ashford Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

In our analysis we give some weight to the proposals from the Liberal Democrats (first preference in areas where alternatives were also submitted). The wards where they do not agree with the Borough Council's proposals, and consequently our draft recommendations, are listed below for comparative purposes using 2005 electorate figures.

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bockhanger	1	2,081	2,081	4
Brabourne	1	1,984	1,984	-1
Brookfield	2	4,011	2,006	0
Calehill	2	4,035	2,018	0
Central	1	2,018	2,018	0
Eastmead	1	2,018	2,018	0
Godinton	2	3,991	1,996	-1
Gore Hill	1	2,077	2,077	3
Hamstreet	2	4,234	2,122	6
Henwood	1	2,027	2,027	1
Highfield	1	1,949	1,949	-3
Kennington Lees	1	2,100	2,100	5
Little Burton	1	2,116	2,116	5
North Willesborough	2	4,101	2,051	2
North Downs	1	2,052	2,052	2
Saxon Shore	2	3,894	1,947	-3
Spearpoint	1	2,092	2,092	4
Stanhope	2	4,010	2,005	0
Stour Valley	2	4,003	2,002	0

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
Victoria Park	1	1,934	1,934	-4
Weald Central	2	3,966	1,983	-1

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Ashford Liberal Democrats 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.*



Figure B2: Ashford Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Constituent areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Bockhanger	1	Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Bybrook ward (part)
Brabourne	1	Brabourne ward (parishes of Brabourne and Hastingleigh); Mersham ward (part - Smeeth parish)
Brookfield	2	Ashford Brookfield ward (part); Ashford Singleton ward (part); Ashford Woolreeds ward (part)
Calehill	2	Charing ward (Charing parish); Hothfield ward (part - Hothfield parish); Pluckley ward (parishes of Little Chart and Pluckley)
Central	1	Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Queens ward (part)
Eastmead	1	Ashford Eastmead ward (part); Ashford Hampden ward (part)
Godinton	2	Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)
Gore Hill	1	Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Warren ward (part)
Hamstreet	2	Kingsnorth ward (Stubbs Cross & Washford Farm parish wards of Kingsnorth parish); Hamstreet ward (part - the parishes Orlestone and Warehorne parishes)
Henwood	1	Ashford Central ward (part); Ashford Henwood ward (part); Ashford Queens ward (part)
Highfield	1	Ashford Willesborough Lees ward (part); Mersham ward (part)
Kennington Lees	1	Ashford Kennington Lees ward (part); Ashford Bockhanger ward (part); Ashford Boughton Aluph ward (part)
Little Burton	1	Ashford Bybrook ward (part); Ashford Spearpoint ward (part)
North Willesborough	2	Ashford Waterside ward; Ashford Willesborough Lees ward (part); Ashford Windmill ward
North Downs	1	Boughton Aluph ward (the parishes of Challock, Eastwell and Westwell); Hothfield ward (part - Westwell parish)
Saxon Shore	2	Aldington ward (the parishes of Aldington, Bonnington and Bilsington); Hamstreet ward (part - Ruckinge parish); Mersham ward (part - Mersham parish and southern part of Sevington parish); Kingsnorth ward (part - Kingsnorth Village part of Kingsnorth parish)
Spearpoint	1	Ashford Spearpoint ward (part); Ashford Kennington Lees ward (part)
Stanhope	2	Ashford Stanhope ward; Ashford Hampden ward (part); Ashford Woolreeds ward (part)

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
Stour Valley	2	Bethersden ward (the parishes of Chilham, Godmersham and Crundale); Brabourne ward (part - Brook parish); Mersham ward (part - part of Wye with Hinxhill parish); Wye ward (part of Wye with Hinxhill parish)
Victoria Park	1	Ashford Victoria Park ward (part); Ashford Eastmead ward (part); Ashford Musgrove ward
Weald Central	2	Bethersden ward (Bethersden parish); High Halden ward (High Halden parish); Woodchurch ward (Woodchurch parish)

## APPENDIX C

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish

---

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

or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

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

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

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

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

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