

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND

FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE FUTURE
ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR
LEWISHAM

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

September 1999

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Lewisham is inserted inside the back cover of the report



Local Government Commission for England

7 September 1999

Dear Secretary of State

On 22 September 1998 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Lewisham under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in March 1999 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 136-137) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Lewisham.

We recommend that Lewisham Borough Council should be served by 54 councillors representing 18 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

We note that you have now set out in the White Paper *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People* (Cm 4014, HMSO), legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Lewisham on 22 September 1998. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 23 March 1999, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in seven of the 26 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough;**
- **by 2003 electoral equality 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 five wards, and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 136-137) are that:

- **Lewisham Borough Council should be served by 54 councillors, instead of 67 as at present;**
- **there should be 18 wards, eight fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all of the existing wards.**

These 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 all of the proposed 18 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by less than 10 per cent from the borough average.**

- **This improved electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 4 per cent from the average for the borough in 2003.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 18 October 1999:

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

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas (existing wards)
1 Bellingham	3	Bellingham ward; Perry Hill ward (part); Sydenham East ward (part)
2 Blackheath	3	Blackheath ward; St Margaret ward (part)
3 Burnt Ash	3	Hither Green ward (part); Manor Lee ward; St Mildred ward (part)
4 Catford Central	3	Blythe Hill ward (part); Catford ward (part); Perry Hill ward (part); Rushey Green ward
5 Catford South	3	Catford ward (part); St Andrew ward (part); Whitefoot ward (part)
6 Crofton Park	3	Blythe Hill ward (part); Crofton Park ward (part); Forest Hill ward (part)
7 Downham	3	Churchdown ward (part); Downham ward
8 Drake	3	Drake ward (part); Grinling Gibbons ward (part)
9 Evelyn	3	Evelyn ward; Grinling Gibbons ward (part); Marlowe ward (part)
10 Forest Hill	3	Horniman ward; Sydenham West ward (part)
11 Forster	3	Churchdown ward (part); St Andrew ward (part); Whitefoot ward (part)
12 Grove Park	3	Grove Park ward; St Mildred ward (part)
13 Hither Green	3	Hither Green ward (part); Ladywell ward (part); St Margaret ward (part)
14 Ladywell	3	Crofton Park ward (part); Drake ward (part); Ladywell ward (part)
15 Marlowe	3	Grinling Gibbons ward (part); Marlowe ward (part)
16 Pepys	3	Drake ward (part); Marlowe ward (part); Pepys ward
17 Perry Vale	3	Forest Hill ward (part); Perry Hill ward (part); Sydenham East ward (part)
18 Sydenham	3	Sydenham East ward (part); Sydenham West ward (part)

Note: Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Lewisham

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bellingham	3	9,654	3,218	-2	9,860	3,287	-1
2 Blackheath	3	10,159	3,386	4	10,370	3,457	4
3 Burnt Ash	3	10,181	3,394	4	10,147	3,382	1
4 Catford Central	3	9,432	3,144	-4	9,767	3,256	-2
5 Catford South	3	9,736	3,245	-1	9,855	3,286	-2
6 Crofton Park	3	9,294	3,098	-5	9,604	3,201	-4
7 Downham	3	9,769	3,256	0	9,629	3,210	-4
8 Drake	3	10,072	3,357	3	10,337	3,446	3
9 Evelyn	3	9,242	3,081	-6	10,004	3,335	0
10 Forest Hill	3	9,841	3,280	0	9,920	3,307	-1
11 Forster	3	9,851	3,284	0	9,763	3,254	-2
12 Grove Park	3	10,102	3,367	3	10,169	3,390	2
13 Hither Green	3	9,654	3,218	-2	9,905	3,302	-1
14 Ladywell	3	9,543	3,181	-3	9,761	3,254	-2
15 Marlowe	3	9,527	3,176	-3	10,407	3,469	4
16 Pepys	3	10,107	3,369	3	10,220	3,407	2
17 Perry Vale	3	10,260	3,420	5	10,424	3,475	4
18 Sydenham	3	10,081	3,360	-3	10,033	3,344	0
Totals	54	176,505	—	—	180,175	—	—
Averages	—	—	3,269	—	—	3,337	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on material from Lewisham Borough Council.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the London borough of Lewisham.

2 In broad terms, the objective of this periodic electoral review of Lewisham is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor on the Borough Council is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. 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.

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

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

4 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (second edition published in March 1998), which sets out our approach to the reviews. We are not required to have regard to parliamentary constituency boundaries in developing our recommendations. Any new ward boundaries will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its reviews of parliamentary constituencies.

5 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Wherever possible we try 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.

6 We are not prescriptive on council size but, as indicated in our *Guidance*, would expect the overall number of members on a London borough council

usually to be between 40 and 80. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against an upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a borough's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

The London Boroughs

7 Our programme of periodic electoral reviews of all 386 local authorities in England started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004. The 1992 Act requires us to review most local authorities every 10 to 15 years. However, the Act is silent on the timing of reviews by the Commission of the London boroughs. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

8 Most London boroughs have not been reviewed since 1977. Following discussions with local authority interests on the appropriate timing of London borough reviews, we decided to start as soon as possible after the May 1998 London local government elections so that all reviews could be completed, and the necessary orders implementing our recommendations made by the Secretary of State, in time for the next London elections scheduled for May 2002. Our reviews of the 32 London boroughs started on a phased basis between June 1998 and February 1999.

9 We have sought to ensure that all concerned were aware of our approach to the reviews. Copies of our *Guidance* were sent to all London boroughs, along with other major interests. In March 1998 we briefed chief executives at a meeting of the London branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, and we also met with the Association of London Government. Since then we welcomed the opportunities to meet with chief

officers and, on an all-party basis, members in the majority of individual authorities. This has enabled us to brief authorities about our policies and procedures, our objective of electoral equality having regard to local circumstances, and the approach taken by the Commission in previous reviews.

10 Before we started our work in London, the Government published for consultation a Green Paper, *Modernising Local Government – Local Democracy and Community Leadership* (February 1998) which, inter alia, promoted the possibility of London boroughs having annual elections with three-member wards so that one councillor in each ward would stand for election each year. In view of this, we decided that the order in which the London reviews are undertaken should be determined by the proportion of three-member wards in each borough under the current arrangements. On this basis, Lewisham was in the third phase of reviews.

11 The Government's subsequent White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, published in July 1998, set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. For all unitary councils, including London boroughs, it proposed elections by thirds. It also refers to local accountability being maximised where the whole electorate in a council's area is involved in elections each time they take place, thereby pointing to a pattern of three-member wards in London boroughs to reflect a system of elections by thirds.

12 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1998/99 PER programme, including the London boroughs, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain the approach to PERs as set out in the March 1998 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we added that local authorities and other interested parties would no doubt 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. Our general experience has been that proposals for three-member ward patterns emerged from most areas in London.

13 Finally, it should be noted that there are no parishes in London, and in fact there is no legislative provision for the establishment of parishes in London. This differentiates the reviews

of London boroughs from the majority of the other electoral reviews we are carrying out elsewhere in the country, where parishes feature highly and provide the building blocks for district or borough wards.

The Review of Lewisham

14 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements for Lewisham. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1977 (Report No. 203).

15 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 22 September 1998, when we wrote to Lewisham Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified the local authority associations, the Metropolitan Police, Members of Parliament and the Member of the European Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, and the headquarters of the main political parties. At the start of the review and following publication of our draft recommendations, we placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and other publicity, and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations was 14 December 1998. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 Stage Three began on 23 March 1999 with the publication of our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Lewisham*, and ended on 17 May 1999. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2. CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

17 The borough of Lewisham covers an area of 3,500 hectares in south-east London. It comprises a socially and culturally diverse population of over 240,000 (mid-1996). The character of the borough is predominantly residential, and includes the diverse communities of Bellingham, Blackheath, Deptford, Downham, Hither Green, Lee and New Cross. A significant amount of regeneration work is currently taking place in the borough, including in the Catford town centre area and the Ladywell athletics track complex. New development has also been earmarked for the northern and central areas of the borough. The borough also contains 288 hectares of parks and open spaces.

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

19 The electorate of the borough (February 1998) is 176,505. The Council currently has 67 councillors who are elected from 26 wards (Map 1 and Figure 3). Fifteen wards are each represented by three councillors and 11 wards elect two councillors each. As in all London boroughs, the whole council is elected together every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review, there has been a decrease in the number of registered electors in the borough, with around 6 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago largely, it is understood, as a result of an exercise undertaken by the Borough Council to update the electoral register.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,634 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,689 by the year 2003, 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 seven of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Downham ward where each of the three councillors represents on average 19 per cent fewer electors than the borough average.

Map 1:
Existing Wards in Lewisham

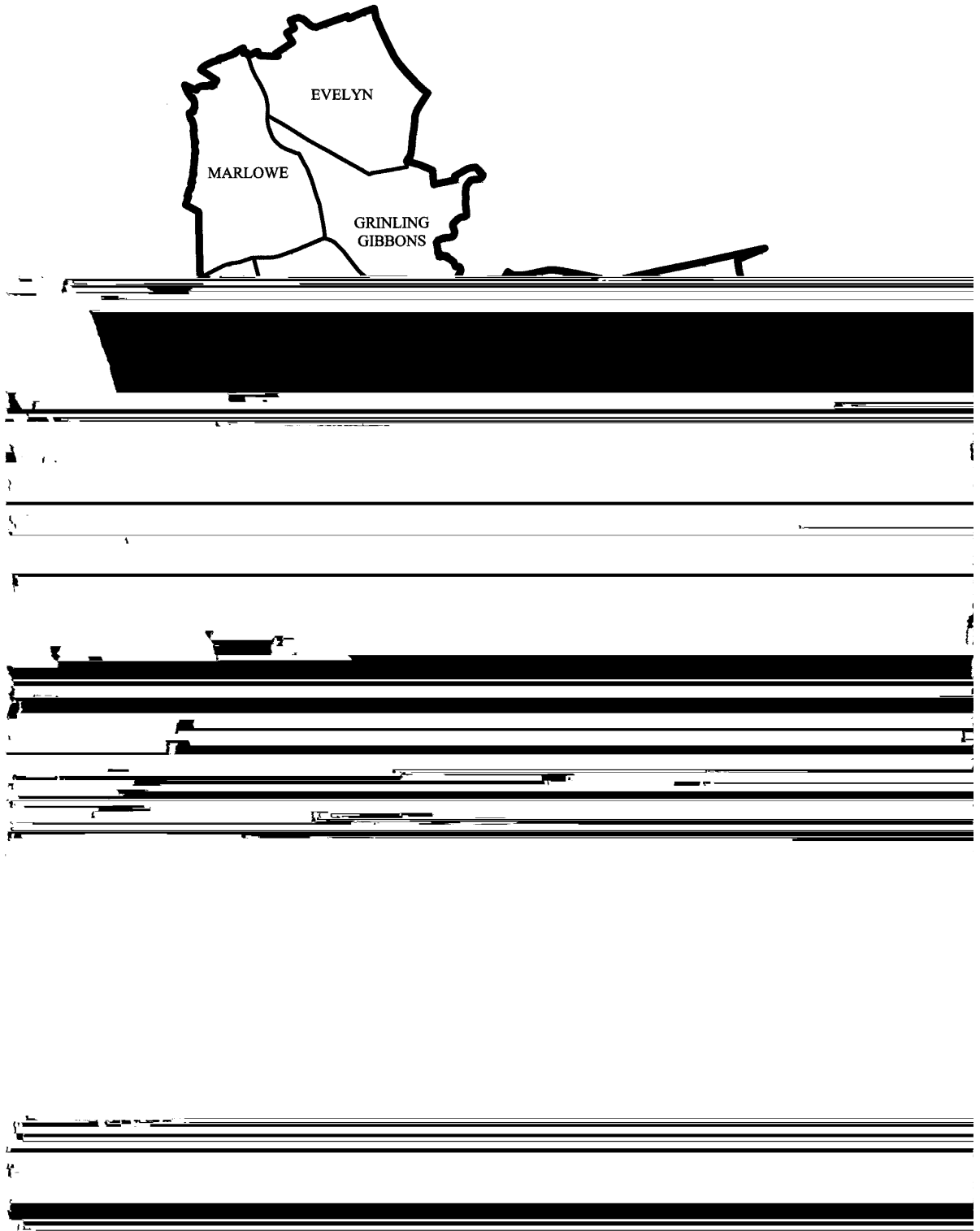


Figure 3:
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Bellingham	2	5,896	2,948	12	6,025	3,013	12
2 Blackheath	2	5,386	2,693	2	5,551	2,776	3
3 Blythe Hill	2	5,254	2,627	0	5,435	2,718	1
4 Catford	2	5,881	2,941	12	5,850	2,925	9
5 Churchdown	3	7,062	2,354	-11	6,993	2,331	-13
6 Crofton Park	3	7,864	2,621	0	7,963	2,654	-1
7 Downham	3	6,404	2,135	-19	6,274	2,091	-22
8 Drake	3	8,099	2,700	2	7,892	2,631	-2
9 Evelyn	3	7,658	2,553	-3	8,242	2,747	2
10 Forest Hill	2	5,007	2,504	-5	5,077	2,539	-6
11 Grinling Gibbons	3	7,436	2,479	-6	8,166	2,722	1
12 Grove Park	2	5,275	2,638	0	5,333	2,667	-1
13 Hither Green	3	8,320	2,773	5	8,371	2,790	4
14 Horniman	3	7,693	2,564	-3	7,822	2,607	-3
15 Ladywell	3	7,801	2,600	-1	8,241	2,747	2
16 Manor Lee	2	5,723	2,862	9	5,736	2,868	7
17 Marlowe	3	8,047	2,682	2	8,755	2,918	9
18 Pepys	3	7,805	2,602	-1	8,015	2,672	-1
19 Perry Hill	3	8,263	2,754	5	8,408	2,803	4
20 Rushey Green	2	5,876	2,938	12	6,188	3,094	15
21 St Andrew	2	5,904	2,952	12	6,047	3,024	12
22 St Margaret	2	5,262	2,631	0	5,318	2,659	-1

continued overleaf

Figure 3 (continued):
Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 St Mildred	3	8,884	2,961	12	8,874	2,958	10
24 Sydenham East	3	7,270	2,423	-8	7,422	2,474	-8
25 Sydenham West	3	7,514	2,505	-5	7,316	2,439	-9
26 Whitefoot	2	4,921	2,461	-7	4,861	2,431	-10
Totals	67	176,505	—	—	180,175	—	—
Averages	—	—	2,634	—	—	2,689	—

Source: Electorate figures are based on Lewisham Borough Council's Stage One submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1998, electors in Downham ward were relatively over-represented by 19 per cent, while electors in Bellingham were relatively under-represented by 12 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

²² During Stage One we received three direct representations, including a detailed borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, together with representations from Sydenham East Labour Party and a local resident. The Borough Council appended copies of submissions which it had received as part of its own Stage One consultation. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft Recommendations on the Future Electoral Arrangements for Lewisham*.

²³ Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposal for a significant reduction in council size from 67 to 54 and a pattern of entirely three-member wards. However, we made modifications to many of the Council's proposed ward boundaries in order to achieve more balanced representation across the borough, improving electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria. Overall, we proposed that:

- (a) Lewisham Borough Council should be served by 54 councillors;
- (b) there should be 18 wards, involving changes to the boundaries of all existing wards, with each ward returning three councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Lewisham Borough Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 18 wards.

²⁴ Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all 18 wards varying by no more than 4 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with all wards expected to vary by no more than 3 per cent from the borough average in 2003.

4. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

²⁵ During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 16 representations were received. A list of respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Lewisham Borough Council and the Commission.

Lewisham Borough Council Labour Group

²⁶ The Labour Group of Councillors on Lewisham Borough Council submitted a borough-wide scheme at Stage Three, which we were informed was subsequently endorsed by the Borough Council, after the close of the consultation stage. They stated that “we agree with the pattern of 18 three-member wards proposed, making 54 councillors in all. We agree the 18 core areas proposed for each ward. Many of the specific boundaries are well chosen and define clear communities in the minds of local people as well as on the map”.

²⁷ However, the Group proposed substantial modifications to the boundaries of wards in the south of the borough as detailed in the draft recommendations and smaller modifications to boundaries in the north, arguing that it is possible to devise a borough-wide scheme which would better reflect community identities while achieving electoral equality. The modifications would affect 14 of the 18 proposed wards with only Burnt Ash, Drake, Forest Hill and Pepys wards unaffected. Alternative ward names were submitted for 11 of those included in the draft recommendations. Under these proposals, no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 6 per cent from the borough average initially, and no more than 4 per cent from the average in 2003.

Lewisham Conservatives

²⁸ The Lewisham Conservatives (comprising the West Lewisham, East Lewisham and Lewisham Deptford Conservative Associations) expressed concern “that the new boundaries in the south of

the borough cut across a number of natural communities and feel that this situation should be improved”. They therefore put forward alternative proposals for wards in the south of the borough, which they argued would better reflect community identity “whilst, at the same time, preserving the electoral equality achieved by the Commission’s proposal.” Their proposals were based on 1998 electorate figures only.

²⁹ Specifically, the Conservatives submitted modifications to the boundaries of the proposed Bellingham, Catford Central, Catford South, Downham, Forster, Perry Vale and Sydenham wards. In particular, they stated that their proposals would provide for a less geographically large Downham ward, recognise physical boundaries in the area while substantially reducing the disruption to the current arrangements. Furthermore, they stated that their proposals would provide “electoral equality similar to, or better than, that outlined in the Commission’s draft proposal”. The number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 4 per cent from the borough average initially.

Lewisham Liberal Democrats

³⁰ The Lewisham Liberal Democrats also submitted boundary modifications to the proposed wards in the south of the borough. They stated that “we have worked from the Commission’s proposals and redrawn boundaries only where we can see a genuine improvement”. The changes would affect the five proposed wards of Bellingham, Catford Central, Catford South, Downham and Forster. The Liberal Democrats provided 1998 electorate figures only, with its proposals resulting in the number of electors per councillor in all wards varying by no more than 4 per cent.

Ward Labour Parties

³¹ In response to our draft recommendations, we received five representations from local Labour Groups. The Crofton Park Labour Party restated its opposition to the Borough Council’s Stage One

proposed Park Hill ward and opposed the Park Hill ward included in the draft recommendations, arguing that the ward would have no community focus. It also opposed the ward name of Park Hill on the basis that the area covered by the proposed ward would be more appropriately known as Honor Oak Park or Blythe Hill. Furthermore, it questioned the importance of providing electoral equality over the variation in socio-economic conditions between existing wards.

32 Ladywell Branch Labour Party broadly accepted the draft recommendations. However, it expressed concern about elements of the proposed Hither Green, Ladywell and Park Hill wards as it felt these would straddle natural boundaries.

33 Lewisham Deptford Labour Party (Blythe Hill Branch) opposed the draft recommendations, stating that they would be at the expense of the “geographical cohesion of the area”. It argued that the proposals would damage the communities of Ladywell and Blythe Hill and that the railway lines and the river in the area would provide more suitable ward boundaries. It also preferred retaining the ward name of Blythe Hill, as at present and proposed boundary changes that would enlarge the proposed Ladywell ward.

34 Sydenham East Branch Labour Party put forward alternative boundaries for the proposed Sydenham ward, together with boundary changes to the proposed Bellingham, Forest Hill, Perry Vale and Sydenham wards. It stated that these changes would “be in the interest of the neighbouring wards as much as Sydenham, and throughout we have sought to apply the principle of making electoral districts accord with natural organic communities”. The Grinling Gibbons Branch of Lewisham Deptford Labour Party opposed our draft recommendation to abolish Grinling Gibbons ward.

Other Representations

35 A further eight representations were received in response to our draft recommendations, from two local groups, one borough councillor and five local residents.

36 Grove Park Community Group generally supported our draft recommendations for Grove Park ward with a minor change to the proposed south-western boundary, to include Grove Park

Station in the modified ward, reverting to the existing boundary in the area. The Sydenham Society objected to our draft recommendations for Bellingham, Sydenham and Forest Hill wards.

37 Councillor Mrs Best, member for Sydenham East ward, proposed retaining the community of Sydenham in one borough ward, arguing that this would result in a more community-focused ward. Mr Warbey, a resident of Downham, made a detailed submission opposing the draft recommendations on the basis of council size, local historical ties and poor public consultation by Lewisham Borough Council. He proposed a detailed scheme based on a 63-member council, supplying figures for 1998 only.

38 Two residents of Bellingham opposed the proposed Bellingham and Downham wards, arguing that the Bellingham Estate should remain in one borough ward, rather than split between two wards as it would be under the draft recommendations. A resident of Catford opposed our proposed Park Hill ward for reasons of community identity, arguing that it did not use natural boundaries. A resident of Blythe Hill objected to our proposals for the area covering the existing Hither Green and Blythe Hill wards, arguing that they would be detrimental to communities and proposed alternative boundaries in the area.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

39 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Lewisham is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the interests and identities of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

40 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 ensuing five years. We must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

41 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.

42 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, 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. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates. We will require particular justification for schemes which result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance over 10 per cent in any ward. In reviews of predominantly

urban areas such as the London boroughs, our experience suggests that we would expect to achieve a high degree of electoral equality in all wards.

Electorate Forecasts

43 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2003, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2 per cent from 176,505 to 180,175 over the five-year period from 1998 to 2003. It expects most of the growth to be in the north of the borough, although some was expected in the central wards of Ladywell and Rushey Green. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to the unitary development plan for the borough, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

44 In our draft recommendations report we accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Council’s forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

45 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

46 We indicated in our *Guidance* that we would normally expect the number of councillors serving a London borough to be in the range of 40 to 80.

47 Lewisham Borough Council currently has 67 members. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a council size of 54 members to support the recommendations of its select committee report (1999) on political management. These recommendations include a directly elected

mayor, a cabinet of eight members and assembly of 54 councillors. It stated that “this will allow councillors to focus on their representative role and a reduced council size will free up resources to support councillors in this role”.

48 The Council stated that it had “paid particular attention to linking the ward review with the proposals for modernising councils outlined in the White Paper”. It considered that the proposals for streamlining councils, and separating the political executive, representative and scrutiny roles lead it to “move towards a smaller sized council”. The Council indicated that discussions about the electoral review formed part of the deliberations of the Council’s select committee process on new political management structures. It concluded that the Council is likely to “adopt a new model of political governance” and that the 54-member option would best fit with such a new structure.

49 In our draft recommendations report we noted there was general agreement to reduce the current council size from 67, although by varying degrees. All Stage One representations which made a specific proposal preferred a council size based on one of the Council’s options – for 54 or 63 councillors.

50 We stated in our draft recommendations report, that while the Commission welcomes proposals for different democratic styles and structures, particularly having regard to the Government’s White Paper, we expect such propositions to be supported by evidence that they have been thought through and consulted upon locally. We noted that Lewisham Borough Council had locally consulted on changes to the Council’s future political management and structure and that the majority of Council members supported a council size of 54.

51 In our draft recommendations report we considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a council of 54 members.

52 At Stage Three, the only alternative to our proposed council size of 54 came from Mr Warbey, a resident of Downham, who proposed a 63-member council, submitting a detailed scheme based on 1998 electorate only. However, in view of the continued general support from members of the council for a council of 54 members, together

with the absence of persuasive evidence in support of the alternative proposed, we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 54, as final. We have therefore have been unable to consider boundaries proposed under a significantly different council size as ward sizes and configurations vary substantially, and accordingly Mr Warbey’s proposal has not been discussed in the text which follows.

Ward Names

53 In our draft recommendations report we consulted on many of the “working” ward names provided by the Borough Council as they generally reflected the areas covered, together with a proposal of our own for one ward. We invited further views on ward names during Stage Three as well as on the rest of our draft recommendations.

54 In response to our consultation exercise we received several suggestions for alternative ward names. We have considered these proposals and note that only the proposal to rename Park Hill ward as Crofton Park ward commands broad support. Consequently, we only propose changing this ward name and confirm the remaining 17 ward names proposed in our draft recommendations as final (see Figures 1 and 2).

Electoral Arrangements

55 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered the representations received during Stage One. The Borough Council’s proposals were for a reduction in council size from 67 to 54, serving 18 three-member wards. The Council stated that its overall objectives were to achieve electoral equality and reduce the number of wards in anticipation of new political management structures. It also stated that it had had regard to defined boundaries, such as major roads and railway lines; parliamentary constituency boundaries, as they follow well established and clear boundaries; the largely residential character of the borough; and historical characteristics and locally recognised neighbourhoods and commercial centres.

56 During its initial deliberations, the Council had consulted on three options for re-warding the borough: 21 wards served by 63 councillors; 18 wards served by 54 councillors; and 15 wards served by 45 councillors, all based on three-member ward patterns. It stated that no clear consensus had emerged, with the local branches of

both the Liberal Democrat and Labour parties supporting an 18-ward option, while the local branch of the Conservative party supported a 21-ward option. The Council appended a number of representations to its Stage One submission from local political groups. From all the evidence received, some considerations emerged

formulating our final recommendations for some areas we have attempted to use polling districts as a basis for our proposals reflecting the approach of the respondents.

63 The most significant departure from our draft recommendations would be to ward boundaries in the south of the borough, where each of the political groups on the Council and others proposed changes to the draft recommendations. A number of smaller changes have been proposed to our draft recommendations for the wards in the north of the borough. While we recognise these changes are relatively significant, we do not consider that they are so radical as to represent a fundamental change to the overall scheme for Lewisham.

64 The following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

Lewisham Deptford

- (a) Evelyn, Grinling Gibbons and Marlowe wards;
- (b) Pepys and Drake wards;
- (c) Ladywell, Crofton Park and Blythe Hill wards;

Lewisham East

- (d) Blackheath, St Margaret, Manor Lee and Hither Green wards;
- (e) St Mildred and Grove Park wards;
- (f) Whitefoot, Churchdown and Downham wards;

Lewisham West

- (g) Rushey Green, St Andrew, Catford and Bellingham wards;
- (h) Horniman, Perry Hill and Forest Hill wards;
- (i) Sydenham East and Sydenham West wards.

65 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Lewisham Deptford

Evelyn, Grinling Gibbons and Marlowe wards

66 The three wards of Evelyn, Grinling Gibbons and Marlowe are each served by three councillors, and are situated in the north of the borough, with boundaries defined by the River Thames and the borough boundary. The average number of electors

represented by each councillor is 3 per cent below the borough average in Evelyn ward (2 per cent above in 2003), 6 per cent below in Grinling Gibbons ward (1 per cent above in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Marlowe ward (9 per cent above in 2003).

67 In its Stage One submission, the Borough Council proposed reconfiguring the three existing wards into two new wards, Evelyn and Marlowe, with the main A2 trunk road and Queen's Road forming their southern boundary. This proposal would transfer polling districts DKE and DKF of Grinling Gibbons ward to a revised Drake ward, and Grinling Gibbons ward would cease to exist. The boundary between Evelyn and Marlowe wards would follow the railway line, Edward Street and Deptford High Street. Under the Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Evelyn ward (9 per cent above in 2003) and 1 per cent below the average in Marlowe ward (6 per cent above in 2003).

68 We judged, however, that better electoral equality could be achieved in this area, particularly in five years' time, and proposed minor modifications to the Council's proposals as our draft recommendations. We proposed that the boundary between the two wards should follow parts of the railway line and Edward Street to the borough boundary, and that the southern boundary of Marlowe ward should follow the length of New Cross Road (the A2), instead of running along Queen's Road in the south-east. This proposal would transfer polling district DKD from the Council's proposed Evelyn ward to Marlowe ward and polling district DQE from the Council's proposed Marlowe ward to Pepys ward (detailed later). Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in both Evelyn and Marlowe wards (improving to 1 per cent above and 3 per cent above the average respectively in 2003).

69 At Stage Three the Labour Group on the Borough Council expressed concern that our draft recommendations would split the Crossfields Estate between the proposed Evelyn and Marlowe wards and suggested that Finch, Congers and Farrer Houses (134 electors) be transferred from Evelyn ward to Marlowe ward. The Labour Group also proposed that Marlowe ward be renamed New Cross ward.

70 Grinling Gibbons Labour Party supported the Labour Group's proposal to include the Crossfield Estate in Marlowe ward. They also expressed

concern that the existing Grinling Gibbons ward had been used to form parts of the proposed Evelyn and Marlowe wards, arguing that Grinling Gibbons was the “historical heart” of Deptford. They objected to the use of Deptford High Street and New Cross Road as ward boundaries.

71 In considering the warding arrangements for this area, we note that the Labour Group’s proposals to modify Evelyn and Marlowe wards would have a negligible effect on electoral equality, would retain the Crossfield Estate in one ward and command a degree of local support. We continue to judge that our draft recommendations, utilising Deptford High Street and New Cross Road as boundaries, provide identifiable ward boundaries in this area. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for Evelyn and Marlowe wards as final, subject to the boundary modification put forward by the Labour Group (but not the change in ward name), outlined above and illustrated on the large map at the back of the report. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Evelyn ward would be 6 per cent below the borough average (equal to the average in 2003) and 3 per cent below in Marlowe ward (4 per cent above in 2003).

Pepys and Drake wards

72 These two three-member wards are also situated in the north of the borough. The number of electors per councillor is currently 1 per cent below the borough average in Pepys ward (unchanged in 2003) and 2 per cent above in Drake ward (2 per cent below in 2003).

73 Although there is currently good electoral equality in both wards, the Council proposed change at Stage One, to facilitate a good borough-wide scheme based on a smaller council size. It proposed that Pepys ward should be extended in the north-east to run along Shardeloes Road and Lewisham Way to the A2, to include part of Drake ward. Drake ward would then be further modified to include part of Crofton Park ward in the south, and as already stated, would also include two polling districts from the existing Grinling Gibbons ward.

74 Under the Council’s Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Pepys ward (4 per cent in 2003) and equal to the average in Drake ward (unchanged in 2003). No other

representations were received regarding these two wards during the initial stage of the review.

75 In our draft recommendations report we decided that, although the Council’s proposals for both wards would achieve good electoral equality, further boundary changes should be made to both wards in order to accommodate the consequential effects of our draft recommendations in the rest of the borough. We proposed that the north-eastern boundary of Pepys ward should follow the railway line, instead of Shardeloes Road, thereby retaining part of polling district DHB in Drake ward, and part of Pepys ward’s northern boundary should be extended to New Cross Road (the A2) to include polling district DQE from Marlowe ward. We also proposed that the southern boundary of Drake ward should continue to follow the existing boundary along Breakspears Road, then along Harefield Road and Crescent Way, thereby including part of polling districts DFA and DHD (currently in Crofton Park ward) in a revised Ladywell ward, detailed later. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in both Pepys and Drake wards (2 per cent above and 3 per cent above respectively in 2003).

76 At Stage Three we received no representations commenting on our proposals for the boundaries of Pepys ward and therefore confirm our draft recommendation for Pepys ward as final.

77 A resident of Blythe Hill proposed that the area broadly around Elverson Road and Leathwell Road (polling district DOA, in the north of the proposed Hither Green ward) should form part of the proposed Drake ward, arguing that as an area it is isolated from the communities to its south by railway lines. However, Ladywell Labour Party supported our proposal to include polling district DOA in Hither Green ward.

78 After considering the representations received at Stage Three, we note that polling district DOA has community ties with the Elmira Street housing estate (in the proposed Hither Green ward). We remain of the opinion that our draft recommendations for the proposed Drake ward provide a good level of electoral equality while reflecting the statutory criteria, and therefore confirm them as final. Additionally, the Labour Group proposed that Pepys ward be renamed Telegraph Hill and that Drake ward be renamed Brockley. Having considered the nature of the areas

concerned, we are not persuaded that the proposed names will better reflect the communities covered than those names included in our draft recommendations, and we are therefore confirming them as final. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances remain unchanged from those included in our draft recommendations.

Ladywell, Crofton Park and Blythe Hill wards

79 These three wards are situated in the heart of the borough. Ladywell and Crofton Park wards are represented by three councillors each, while Blythe Hill ward currently elects two councillors. The number of electors represented by each councillor is 1 per cent below the borough average in Ladywell ward (2 per cent above in 2003) and equal to the average in both Crofton Park and Blythe Hill wards (1 per cent below and 1 per cent above respectively in 2003).

80 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed reconfiguring the three wards into two modified wards. The eastern boundary of Ladywell ward would continue to follow the constituency boundary (the A21) but its south-western boundary with Crofton Park ward would be modified to include polling district DFB and part of polling district DFA from Crofton Park ward. The remainder of Crofton Park ward, less another part of polling district DFA transferred to the modified Drake ward (detailed earlier), together with Blythe Hill ward, would form a new Park Hill ward. The boundaries of the new Park Hill ward would be well-defined by railway lines and the A205 South Circular Road. The north-western boundary of the ward would follow Brockley Grove, Brockley Road and Foxberry Road to the existing boundary. However, in response to the Borough Council's initial consultation exercise, the Lewisham Liberal Democrats had informed the Borough Council that they had reservations regarding the northern end of the proposed Park Hill ward, as they considered that the natural communities around the Brockley Road and Crofton Park station areas would be divided. Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in Ladywell ward (3 per cent above in 2003) and 4 per cent above the average in Park Hill ward (5 per cent in 2003).

81 After due consideration of the Stage One representations, and considering our proposals for neighbouring wards, we concluded that some modifications should be made to the Council's proposed wards. Under our proposals, Ladywell

ward would lose polling district DOA and part of polling district DOC to Hither Green ward (detailed later) in the east; it would lose polling district DOF and part of polling district DFB in the south to Park Hill ward; it would gain part of polling district DFE from Park Hill ward in the west; and its north-western boundary would be extended to follow Crescent Way, Breakspears Road and Foxberry Road, thereby including the whole of polling district DFA (which was split between three wards under the Council's proposals). Park Hill ward should be further modified by transferring polling district DCD and part of polling district DCB (Iona Close and Ravensbourne Park nos. 60-84) to the new Catford Central ward (detailed later). Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Ladywell and Park Hill wards would be 2 per cent below and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively (2 per cent below in both wards in 2003).

82 At Stage Three the Labour Group proposed that Ladywell ward be extended south to incorporate polling district DOF (the Ladywell Lodge site – including Foxborough Gardens, Dressington Avenue and Slagrove Place) reflecting the views of the Ladywell Society and Ward Labour Party which stated that “this polling district is part of the heartland of Ladywell”. The Labour Group also proposed that the south-western boundary of Ladywell ward be modified to follow Comerford Road, part of Brockley Road, the southern edge of Brockley Cemetery and Brockley Grove (to the existing ward boundary of Marnock Road), on the basis that this proposal would reunite the community of Crofton Park in one borough ward (the proposed Park Hill ward). The Labour Group further proposed that polling district DOE be transferred from Ladywell ward to Hither Green ward, on the basis that it would facilitate good electoral equality in the two wards.

83 The Labour Group also proposed that the community of Crofton Park be reunited in one borough ward. As detailed above, they proposed that polling district DOF be transferred from Park Hill ward to Ladywell ward and the area south of Comerford Road and Brockley Grove and north of the railway line be transferred from Ladywell ward to Park Hill ward. In order to secure a satisfactory level of electoral equality in Park Hill ward the Labour Group proposed that the eastern boundary should be modified to follow the centre of Bankhurst Road and Montacute Road. The Labour Group also proposed that this ward should be renamed Crofton Park.

84 Under the Labour Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Ladywell ward (2 per cent in 2003) and 5 per cent below the average in Crofton Park ward (4 per cent in 2003).

85 Ladywell Branch Labour Party supported our draft recommendation to transfer polling district DOA from Ladywell to Hither Green ward and polling districts DFE, DFA and DHD from Crofton Park ward to Ladywell ward. However, they opposed the proposal to include polling district DOC (Elmira Street housing estate) in Hither Green ward and polling districts DOF and part of DFB in the new Park Hill ward, as they contended that this would not provide identifiable ward boundaries.

86 The Lewisham Deptford Labour Party (Blythe Hill Branch) argued that the boundaries included in the draft recommendations would not best reflect the communities of Ladywell, Blythe Hill and Crofton Park. They specifically opposed the recommendation to include polling districts DCD and DCB in Catford Central ward and polling district DOF in Park Hill ward, proposing instead that a large section of Park Hill ward (to the west of Brockley Road) be included in Ladywell ward. A resident of Blythe Hill asserted that the Loampit Vale area should remain part of Ladywell ward and that the proposed Park Hill ward boundaries were not as identifiable as those of the existing Crofton Park ward.

87 Crofton Park Labour Party opposed the draft recommendations for Park Hill ward stating that the ward "would have no central community focus" and expressed concern that the Commission had disregarded the "variation in socio-economic conditions between existing wards". They proposed that the ward be renamed Honor Oak Park or Blythe Hill to better reflect the area covered. A resident of Catford objected to the proposed boundaries of Park Hill ward and suggested that polling district DOF should not form part of the proposed ward and instead polling districts DCD and DCB should form part of the proposed ward.

88 In assessing the Stage Three representations we note that there is a necessity for change to both the proposed Ladywell and Park Hill wards, for reasons of community identity. In revising the draft recommendations we have considered the area as a whole and propose that the draft recommendations should be modified to reflect the Labour Group's proposals for Ladywell and Park Hill wards which,

we consider, best reflect local community identities, while retaining a good level of electoral equality, together with providing clearly defined boundaries. The proposals are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

89 We also propose that Park Hill ward be renamed Crofton Park, judging that it more accurately represents the area covered by the ward. Under our final recommendations for Ladywell and Crofton Park wards, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent and 5 per cent below the average respectively (2 per cent and 4 per cent below the average in 2003).

Lewisham East

Blackheath, St Margaret, Manor Lee and Hither Green wards

90 The wards of Blackheath, St Margaret and Manor Lee each return two members, while Hither Green is a three-member ward. All are situated in the north-east of the borough which, as an area, is relatively under-represented. The number of electors per councillor in the existing wards is 2 per cent above the borough average in Blackheath, equal to the average in St Margaret, 9 per cent above in Manor Lee and 5 per cent above in Hither Green, with little overall improvement projected by 2003.

91 At Stage One the Council proposed a modified Blackheath ward comprising the existing Blackheath and St Margaret wards, except for part of polling district EVB of St Margaret ward, which would be included in a modified Hither Green ward. The proposed boundary of Blackheath ward would follow the major part of Lee High Road, then run along Belmont Road, Brandram Road and Belmont Hill to the existing boundary. Hither Green ward would be further modified to follow the River Quaggy in the east to include polling district EPA from the existing Manor Lee ward. The remainder of Manor Lee ward, together with a large part of the existing St Mildred ward would form a new Burnt Ash ward. The southern boundary of the new ward would follow the A205 South Circular Road and Baring Road, then run along the south side of Northbrook Park. Under the Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Blackheath ward (unchanged in 2003), 1 per cent below in Hither Green ward (2 per cent below in 2003) and 1 per cent above in Burnt Ash ward (1 per cent below in 2003).

92 In response to the Borough Council's initial consultation, Lewisham East Labour Party proposed an alternative configuration in this area, combining the two existing wards of Blackheath and St Margaret to form a new ward, with the southern boundary following Lee High Road. Manor Lee ward would be extended to include parts of Hither Green and St Mildred wards. The remainder of Hither Green ward, together with part of St Mildred ward should form another new ward. We also noted that Lewisham Liberal Democrats had concerns over the inclusion of the area in the south of the current St Margaret ward (part of polling district EVB) in a modified ward south of Lee High Road, but otherwise was supportive of the Council's proposals for this area.

93 While we recognised the support for keeping the whole of the existing St Margaret ward together, we concluded that using Lee High Road as a boundary would be inconsistent with our aim of achieving good electoral equality. We therefore adopted as our draft recommendations the Council's proposal for a modified Blackheath ward, as it would also provide the best electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

94 However, as part of our draft recommendations we proposed modifications to the Council's proposed Hither Green and Burnt Ash wards to facilitate a better scheme in the neighbouring wards. As stated earlier, we proposed including polling district DOA and part of polling district DOC from the existing Ladywell ward in Hither Green ward, and that polling district EPA should be included in a new Burnt Ash ward, instead of the Council's proposed Hither Green ward. We further proposed that part of polling district EMA of Hither Green ward (the area bordered by Dermody Road, Eastdown Park, Wisteria Road and College Park Close) should also be included in a new Burnt Ash ward. Burnt Ash ward would be further modified by transferring the remaining part of polling district EWC to the revised Grove Park ward (the whole of polling district EWC would therefore be included in Grove Park ward, detailed later). Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Hither Green ward (unchanged in 2003) and 4 per cent above in Burnt Ash ward (1 per cent in 2003).

95 At Stage Three the Labour Group proposed that "both sides of Belmont Hill are kept in Blackheath ward" (affecting 212 electors), to provide a more identifiable ward boundary for

Blackheath, this proposal would have a negligible affect on electoral equality. We therefore propose that the draft recommendations be modified to reflect this proposed change to Blackheath ward, with the number of electors per councillor 4 per cent above the borough average (unchanged in 2003). The Labour Group further proposed that Burnt Ash ward be renamed Lee Green ward. We do not however, consider there is sufficient evidence or support for this change of name, and having received no further comments at Stage Three regarding this ward we confirm our draft recommendation for Burnt Ash ward as final.

96 The Labour Group also proposed iterations to the boundaries of Hither Green ward, including the transfer of part of Belmont Hill from Hither Green ward to Blackheath ward (as detailed earlier). It proposed that polling district DOE (containing 355 electors), be transferred from Ladywell ward to Hither Green ward, arguing that this would facilitate the proposed changes to Ladywell ward. The Labour Group also proposed that Hither Green ward be renamed Lewisham Central, stating that it "would then be seen not as Hither Green with a lot of miscellaneous bits to the north, but as Lewisham town centre with a Hither Green extension". Under the Labour Group's proposals the members for Lewisham Central ward would represent 2 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (1 per cent in 2003).

97 The Ladywell Branch Labour Party supported our draft recommendation to include polling district DOA in Hither Green ward, but expressed concern about the inclusion of polling district DOC (currently part of Ladywell ward). A resident of Blythe Hill argued that the northern end of Hither Green ward would be isolated from the rest of the ward by the railway line, and instead proposed that the area around Leathwell Road form part of Drake ward and the area around Connington Road form part of Blackheath ward.

98 Having considered the Stage Three representations we note that there is no consensus as to what constitutes the community of "Hither Green". We have therefore based our final recommendations in this area on achieving electoral equality, while providing identifiable boundaries together with securing a coherent borough-wide scheme. We propose adopting the Labour Group's Stage Three scheme in this area as part of our final recommendations (excluding their proposed ward name change), retaining polling district DOA in Hither Green ward while transferring polling district

DOE from Ladywell ward to Hither Green ward, which we judge would facilitate the proposed modifications to Ladywell ward (described previously), produce a more coherently defined Hither Green ward and provide the identifiable boundary of the railway line in the west. Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hither Green ward would be 2 per cent below the borough average (1 per cent in 2003). Our final recommendations are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

St Mildred and Grove Park wards

⁹⁹ These two wards form the south-eastern border of the borough and share their boundaries with the London boroughs of Greenwich and Bromley. St Mildred ward is currently served by three councillors, each of whom represents 12 per cent more electors than the borough average (10 per cent in 2003). Grove Park ward is served by two councillors, and the number of electors served by each councillor is equal to the borough average (1 per cent below the average in 2003).

¹⁰⁰ As part of its Stage One scheme the Council proposed that part of St Mildred ward should be included in a new Burnt Ash ward (as stated earlier). It further proposed that the remainder of St Mildred ward, south of the A205 and Northbrook Park, together with the existing Grove Park ward, should form a modified Grove Park ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified ward would be 5 per cent below the borough average (7 per cent in 2003). The Lewisham East Labour Party wrote to the Council and proposed that parts of St Mildred and Grove Park wards should form a new ward. The boundaries of the new ward would be well defined by the railway line in the west, the A205 in the north and the borough boundaries in the east and south.

¹⁰¹ In our consultation report we concluded that a better balance of representation could be achieved by modifying the Borough Council's proposals, with boundaries which would reflect those proposed by the Lewisham East Labour Party. We proposed that the whole of polling district EWC of St Mildred ward should be included in the revised Grove Park ward, with the northern ward boundary following the A205 (St Mildreds Road). We also proposed that Grove Park ward should be modified in the west so that its boundary would follow the whole of the railway line, thereby including part of polling district ELA in a modified Downham ward. Under our draft recommendations

the number of electors per councillor in Grove Park ward would be equal to the borough average (1 per cent below in 2003).

¹⁰² At Stage Three the Labour Group, supported by the Grove Park Community Group, proposed that the western ward boundary should be modified to reflect the existing arrangements, arguing that it would facilitate the inclusion of Grove Park Railway Station and the Grove Park local shopping area in Grove Park ward. However, the Community Group did express support for the Commission's proposal to extend Grove Park ward northwards, to the A205 South Circular Road, on the basis that the new boundary unites the communities of Grove Park. Under the Labour Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Grove Park ward (2 per cent in 2003).

¹⁰³ We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area and consider that the Labour Group's proposals would better reflect local community identities while retaining good electoral equality and commanding local support. We are therefore adopting the Labour Group's Stage Three amendment to our Grove Park ward as our final recommendation. The electoral variances under our final recommendations would be the same as those under the Labour Group's scheme.

Whitefoot, Churchdown and Downham wards

¹⁰⁴ The three wards of Whitefoot, Churchdown and Downham comprise an area of the borough which is largely regarded locally as Downham, and is defined by the borough boundary in the south, Bellingham Road and Hazelbank Road (the parliamentary constituency boundary) in the north and railway lines in the east and west. Churchdown and Downham wards are each served by three councillors, while Whitefoot ward is served by two councillors. The wards are all over-represented: 7 per cent in Whitefoot ward, 11 per cent in Churchdown ward and 19 per cent in Downham ward (all worsening in 2003).

¹⁰⁵ In its Stage One submission the Council proposed reconfiguring the area covered by the three wards into two new wards, Forster and Downham. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in both wards (9 per cent in Forster ward and 10 per cent in Downham ward in 2003). The Lewisham East Labour Party wrote to the Council during Stage One proposing that the

boundary between Forster and Downham wards should run along Bromley Road to Bellingham Road, which would provide good levels of electoral equality (no more than 5 per cent).

106 We considered that the level of over-representation which would exist under the Council's proposed Forster and Downham wards could be improved. We proposed that the north-western boundary of Downham ward should run along Bromley Road, as proposed by Lewisham East Labour Party, thereby transferring polling district EEE to the new Forster ward, and along Southend Lane to include polling districts WAE and WAD from Bellingham ward. Forster ward would be modified further to transfer those properties south of Bellingham Road and Hazelbank Road to a new Catford South ward (detailed later). Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the borough average in Downham ward (equal to the average in 2003) and 1 per cent above the average in Forster ward (2 per cent below in 2003).

107 At Stage Three the Labour Group, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats all proposed modifications to our draft recommendation for Downham ward, on the grounds that a more geographically coherent ward could be provided. They all proposed that the northern boundary of Downham ward should be extended to include electors from the proposed Forster ward. Under the Labour Group's scheme the boundary would partly reflect the draft recommendations, but would be altered to run to the north of properties on Oakridge Road, west of properties on Downderry Road and follow the southern boundary of the school playing fields, parts of Moorside Road and Shroffold Road. The eastern boundary of Downham ward would be modified to reflect the existing arrangements (return part of the existing Grove Park ward to the proposed Grove Park ward) and that the western boundary of Downham ward be modified to follow the existing western boundaries of Downham and Whitefoot wards (the London Blackfriars to Sevenoaks railway line, from Southend Lane to the borough boundary).

108 The Conservatives proposed that the northern boundary of Downham ward should follow Southend Lane while the Liberal Democrats proposed that it follow the centre of Southend Lane, then run to the west of properties on Downderry Road, to the north of properties on

Oakridge Road and along the centre of Shroffold Road. The Conservatives proposed that the western boundary follow Bromley Hill, Oakridge Road and Haddington Hill while the Liberal Democrats proposed that it follow Beckenham Hill and the railway line.

109 As a consequence of the proposed changes to Downham ward, Forster ward would be subject to significant modification under all three schemes. In addition to the boundary modification between Forster ward and Downham ward, detailed above, all three schemes extended Forster ward's northern boundary, but included different parts of the proposed Catford South ward. The Labour Group proposed that the "group of roads north of the Hither Green Cemetery and east of Verdant Lane, centred on Further Green Road and South Park Crescent" be added to Forster ward arguing that this area does not "naturally belong to any ward ... so it is just as reasonable to place them with Forster as it is with Catford South". The Labour Group proposed that Forster ward be renamed Whitefoot ward to better reflect the communities covered. Under the Labour Group's recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Downham and Whitefoot wards (4 per cent and 2 per cent below in 2003 respectively).

110 The Conservatives further proposed that the area south of Pasture Road and Dowanhill Road and east of Ardgowan Road form part of Forster ward and the Liberal Democrats proposed that the northern boundary of Forster ward follow Newquay Road (to include the whole road), part of Thornsbeach Road and Penderry Rise. Under all three schemes the eastern and western boundaries would be formed by the London Blackfriars to Sevenoaks and Charing Cross to Orpington railway lines respectively. Under the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' proposals the electoral variances would be 2 per cent and 4 per cent in Downham ward respectively, and 1 per cent under both schemes in Forster ward.

111 In considering the proposals for this area we have noted that each scheme provides similar warding arrangements while achieving a good level of electoral equality. We have concluded, however, that the Labour Group's proposals for Downham ward would provide a good level of electoral equality, together with identifiable ward boundaries, while best meeting the statutory criteria. These proposals also require the least departure from our draft recommendations and provide for a

coherent borough-wide scheme. We therefore propose adopting the Labour Group's proposed modifications to Downham ward as part of our final recommendations. The final recommendations for Downham ward are shown on the large map at the back of the report. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would be the same as those included under the Labour Group's scheme.

112 We further noted that the part of Catford South ward included in Forster ward under the Labour Group's scheme has no particular affinity with Catford South ward. We therefore consider that in order to achieve electoral equality, the area between Verdant Lane and the railway line should be transferred from Catford South ward to Forster ward. It should be noted that as an area it is more readily defined than those transfers proposed by the Conservatives or Liberal Democrats. We therefore propose that our final recommendations should reflect the Labour Group's proposed modifications for Forster ward, excluding the change in ward name, as shown on the large map at the back of the report. Under our final recommendations the electoral variances would be the same as those under the Labour Group's Stage Three recommendations.

Lewisham West

Rushey Green, Catford, St Andrew and Bellingham wards

113 These four wards are served by two members each and are situated in the "civic heart" and south of the borough. The area as a whole is relatively under-represented under the current arrangements. The number of electors per councillor is currently 12 per cent above the borough average in all four wards (15 per cent in Rushey Green, 9 per cent in Catford, and unchanged in St Andrew and Bellingham wards in 2003).

114 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed extending Rushey Green ward southwards to include part of Catford ward and south-westwards to include part of Perry Hill ward, to form a new ward called Catford Central. The remainder of Catford ward, together with the existing St Andrew ward, would form a new Catford South ward. The existing Bellingham ward would be subject to extensive changes to its western boundary, to include polling districts WXB and WXD from the existing Sydenham East ward, and polling district WSD and the former gas works

site, including the SavaCentre store, from the existing Perry Hill ward. The newly formed ward would be renamed Southend. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Catford Central ward (equal to the average in 2003), 2 per cent above in Catford South ward (1 per cent in 2003) and 1 per cent above in Southend ward (unchanged in 2003). The Lewisham Liberal Democrats wrote to the Council objecting to its proposals, especially in the Bellingham area, but no detailed alternative boundaries were proposed.

115 We concluded that although the Council's Stage One proposals would achieve good electoral equality in these wards, we had to have regard to the balance of representation for the borough as a whole. We therefore proposed that Catford South ward boundary should be modified to follow Bromley Road in the west, thereby including part of polling district WDB in the new Catford Central ward. As described earlier, Catford South ward's southern boundary would be modified to go along the back of properties in Bellingham Road and Hazelbank Road. Catford Central ward would be modified further by excluding polling district WSB (which would be included in our revised Bellingham ward), and including polling district DCD and part of polling district DCB (Ravensbourne Park nos. 60-84 and Iona Close from the existing Blythe Hill ward). We further proposed modifying the Council's new Southend ward to transfer polling districts WAE and WAD to Downham ward, including polling district WSB (currently in Perry Hill ward) and modifying the south-western boundary to run along Bell Green and to the east of Girton Road. We also proposed that the existing ward name of Bellingham should be retained, rather than the Council's proposed name of Southend, as we considered that Bellingham is a better reflection of the area covered by the ward. Under our draft recommendations the electoral variances in each of the three wards of Bellingham, Catford Central and Catford South would vary by 2 per cent (1 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent respectively in 2003) from the average.

116 At Stage Three the Labour Group proposed that Catford Central ward be extended south-westwards to include the area north of Catford Hill and Blythe Vale, together with transferring the area south of Culverley Road and east of Bromley Road and the railway line to Catford South ward (detailed below), to better reflect community identity in Catford Central, Catford South and

Bellingham wards. It also proposed that the western boundary of Catford Central ward follow the centre of Montacute Road. Under the Labour Group's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Catford Central ward would be 2 per cent below the average (1 per cent in 2003).

117 The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats proposed that Catford Central ward be modified in the south-east, by transferring the area around Bargery Road, Penerley Road, Culverley Road and Bromley Hill from Catford Central to Catford South (detailed below), and in the south-west to include part of our proposed Bellingham ward. Under the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrat's scheme the number of electors per councillor in Catford Central and Catford South wards would be 2 per cent and 1 per cent above the borough average respectively.

118 Having considered the Stage Three representations we note that each of the three schemes would achieve excellent electoral equality. We have therefore based our final recommendations on identifiable boundaries, community identity and a coherent borough-wide scheme. Consequently we have adopted the Labour Group's proposals for Catford Central ward as our final recommendations, except in the south-east where our proposed boundary would run to the north of properties on Culverley Road, as recommended by the Liberal Democrats, judging that these proposals would facilitate improved community identity in Bellingham and Catford South wards and provide clear boundaries. The ward boundary is shown on the large map at the back of the report.

119 At Stage Three each of the three parties proposed that Catford South ward be modified in the east to compensate Forster ward for its loss of electors to Downham ward, as detailed earlier. The Labour Group proposed that the boundary between Catford South ward and Catford Central ward be modified to follow Fordmill Road, Bromley Road and Culverley Road. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats also proposed that Catford South ward be extended north-westwards, with a slightly different boundary alignment. Under all three proposals for Catford South ward the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 3 per cent from the average.

120 Having carefully considered the Stage Three representations, we propose that Catford South ward be modified to reflect the Labour Group's proposals, with a small modification to the northern

boundary so that it is drawn to include the whole of Culverley Road in Catford South ward (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats). We judge that this would provide a good level of electoral equality, clear boundaries and better reflect communities. The electoral variances under our final recommendations for Catford South and Catford Central wards would be 1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively and 2 per cent for both wards by 2003.

121 At Stage Three each of the three schemes from the parties proposed that the Bellingham Estate should be included wholly in one borough ward, expressing concern that our draft recommendations had split it between two wards. Under the Labour Group's scheme, supported by Councillor Best, the northern boundary of Bellingham ward would be modified to follow Catford Hill, linking Stanstead Road to Perry Hill and the eastern boundary would follow the London Blackfriars to Sevenoaks railway line, from Catford Road to the borough boundary. The Labour Group's western boundary would be modified to include parts of the proposed Perry Vale and Sydenham wards and exclude part of the proposed Bellingham ward (polling districts WXB and WXD). The Conservatives proposed that Bellingham ward's eastern boundary remain unchanged, the northern boundary be modified to follow part of the Charing Cross to Kent railway line and Elm Lane, and the western boundary be modified to exclude polling district WXB to Sydenham ward. The Liberal Democrats proposed that the southern boundary follow Beckenham Hill and the north-western boundary follow Catford Hill. Under each of the proposals the number of electors per councillor in Bellingham ward would vary by no more than 2 per cent from the borough average.

122 The Sydenham Society stated that "the proposed new ward of Bellingham is in our opinion meaningless and unrepresentative of the local communities", but proposed no alternative boundaries. Two residents of Bellingham Estate opposed our recommendations to split Bellingham Estate between the two borough wards of Bellingham and Downham. One of the residents stated that "the estate is very much a community ... attempting to unite it with an area which stretches all the way to Grove Park is clearly illogical."

123 In considering all the Stage Three representations we note that, although the three main political schemes proposed slightly different boundaries for Bellingham ward, they all addressed

the community identity issue and reunited Bellingham Estate in one ward. It has therefore been judged necessary to base our final recommendations on the provision of good boundaries, electoral equality and an arrangement

Group's scheme and 1 per cent fewer electors than the average under the Conservatives' scheme.

129 In considering the boundaries of Perry Vale ward we have noted that any changes in this area would have a consequential effect on the neighbouring wards. We have therefore been unable to adopt the Conservatives' proposals, notwithstanding the better electoral equality achieved under their proposals. Our final recommendations for Bellingham and Sydenham wards have an impact on the boundaries of Perry Vale ward, nevertheless, a good level of electoral equality is achieved in Perry Vale ward and it is based upon identifiable boundaries. We are therefore adopting the Labour Group's proposals for Perry Vale ward as part of our final recommendations, illustrated on the large map at the back of the report. The electoral variances under our final recommendations would be the same as those included under the Labour Group's scheme.

Sydenham East and Sydenham West wards

130 The three-member wards of Sydenham East and Sydenham West are located in the south-west corner of the borough. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 8 per cent below the borough average in Sydenham East ward (unchanged in 2003) and 5 per cent below in Sydenham West ward (9 per cent in 2003).

131 The Borough Council's Stage One scheme proposed that Sydenham East and Sydenham West wards should be combined to form a new three-member Sydenham ward, with the exception of polling districts WXB and WXD which would be included in its proposed Southend ward, and polling district WYA which would be included in its proposed Horniman ward. Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Sydenham ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent below in 2003). The Sydenham East Labour Party and the Lewisham Liberal Democrats objected to the Council's proposals, with the Labour Group proposing that the length of Sydenham Road, from Bell Green in the east to the Cobbs Corner roundabout in the west, and the tributary roads off Sydenham Road, should form the basis of any new Sydenham ward.

132 In our draft recommendations report we stated that we could not consider one area in isolation, but have to consider an appropriate warding pattern for the whole borough and concluded that

the Council's proposed ward pattern was the best solution available at that stage. We proposed, however, minor modifications to the Council's proposed Sydenham ward as our draft recommendation, extending the eastern boundary to include part of polling district WXD and part of polling district WXB with part of its northern boundary running along Dacres Road. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Sydenham ward would be 1 per cent below the borough average (3 per cent in 2003).

133 At Stage Three significant change was proposed by the Labour Group and Conservatives to the boundaries of Sydenham ward, to retain the community of Sydenham in one ward. The Labour Group proposed that the eastern boundary be modified to follow Champion Road, the western edge of Home Park and the eastern edge of properties on Fairlawn Park and that the northern boundary exclude Mayow Park and the northern end of Silverdale Road (to be included in Perry Vale ward); this proposal was supported by Councillor Best. The Conservatives proposed that the eastern boundary of Sydenham ward follow Kent House Road, Sydenham Road and Sunnysdene Street and that the northern boundary follow Burghill Road, rather than Adamsrill Road. The number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Sydenham ward (equal to the average in 2003) under the Labour Group's scheme while under the Conservatives' scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average.

134 The Sydenham East Branch Labour Party opposed the draft recommendations and stated that they were "undemocratic and detrimental to the future development of Sydenham". They proposed that polling districts WXB and part of WXD remain part of Sydenham ward but recognised that this would result in a degree of electoral inequality in neighbouring wards and therefore proposed modifications to the boundaries of Bellingham, Downham, Forest Hill and Perry Vale wards. The Sydenham Society opposed the proposals for Sydenham ward, on the basis that they exclude "the streets south of Sydenham Road from Trewsbury Road eastwards to Bell Green" but proposed no alternative boundaries.

135 It has become apparent from the Stage Three representations that our draft recommendations for Sydenham ward would not best reflect local communities. We conclude that the proposals

from the Sydenham East Labour Party were not a suitable alternative to the draft recommendations, on the basis that they would involve significant change to the wards adjacent to Sydenham, which had not been supported by sufficiently persuasive evidence. We concluded that the Conservatives' scheme did not sufficiently address local concerns about the community of Sydenham, since their proposed eastern boundary would continue to exclude that part of Sydenham east of Kent House Road and Sunnysdene Street. Consequently, we judge that the Labour Group's proposals for Sydenham ward build upon consensus for change and would strike the best balance between addressing local concerns, achieving electoral equality and meeting the statutory criteria. We therefore propose that our final recommendations for Sydenham ward reflect the Labour Group's Stage Three proposals, as shown on the large map at the back of the report. The electoral variances under our final recommendations would be the same as those included under the Labour Group's scheme.

Conclusions

¹³⁶ Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to substantially modify our draft recommendations in response to local views:

- (a) we propose that 14 of the 18 wards included in the draft recommendations be modified to reflect the Labour Group's proposals and local concerns;
- (b) Burnt Ash, Drake, Forest Hill and Pepys wards will remain unchanged from the draft recommendations.

¹³⁷ We conclude that, in Lewisham:

- (a) there should be a reduction in council size from 67 to 54;
- (b) there should be 18 wards, eight fewer than at present, which would involve changes to the boundaries of all of the existing wards, with each ward returning three councillors.

¹³⁸ Figure 4 shows (overleaf) the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1998 and 2003 electorate figures.

¹³⁹ As shown in Figure 4, our final recommendations for Lewisham Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards where the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from seven to none. This improved balance of representation is expected to improve further with all wards expected to vary by less than 4 per cent. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of this report.

Final Recommendation

Lewisham Borough Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 18 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map in the back of the report.

*Figure 4 :
Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	1998 electorate		2003 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	67	54	67	54
Number of wards	26	18	26	18
Average number of electors per councillor	2,634	3,269	2,689	3,337
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	0	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	1	0

Map 2:
The Commission's Final Recommendations for Lewisham



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6. NEXT STEPS

¹⁴⁰ Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Lewisham and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

¹⁴¹ It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made earlier than six weeks from the date that our recommendations are submitted to the Secretary of State.

¹⁴² All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Lewisham

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of 14 wards where our draft proposals are set out below. The only other change from draft to final recommendations, which is not included in Figure A1, is that we propose to rename Park Hill ward as Crofton Park.

Figure A1:

The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1998)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Bellingham	3	9,658	3,219	-2	9,864	3,288	-1
Blackheath	3	9,947	3,316	1	10,158	3,386	1
Catford Central	3	9,966	3,322	2	10,301	3,434	3
Catford South	3	10,030	3,343	2	10,152	3,384	1
Downham	3	10,192	3,397	4	10,052	3,351	0
Evelyn	3	9,376	3,125	-4	10,138	3,379	1
Forster	3	9,885	3,295	1	9,797	3,266	-2
Grove Park	3	9,807	3,269	0	9,874	3,291	-1
Hither Green	3	9,511	3,170	-3	9,762	3,254	-2
Ladywell	3	9,590	3,197	-2	9,808	3,269	-2
Marlowe	3	9,393	3,131	-4	10,273	3,424	3
Park Hill	3	9,511	3,170	-3	9,821	3,274	-2
Perry Vale	3	9,693	3,231	-1	9,857	3,286	-2
Sydenham	3	9,745	3,248	-1	9,697	3,232	-3

Source: Electorate figures are based on material provided by Lewisham Borough Council.

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

