

New electoral arrangements for Castle Point Borough Council Final Recommendations

March 2023

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission² are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

² Peter Maddison QPM was present during Board meetings where draft recommendations were discussed and agreed. He ceased his role as a Commissioner on 31 December 2022.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Castle Point?

7 We are conducting a review of Castle Point Borough Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2000, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'. Additionally, some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Castle Point are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

Our proposals for Castle Point

9 Castle Point should be represented by 39 councillors, two fewer than there are now.

10 Castle Point should have 13 wards, one fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Castle Point.

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Castle Point. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
26 April 2022	Number of councillors decided
10 May 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
18 July 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
4 October 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
12 December 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
7 March 2023	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

19 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2021	2028
Electorate of Castle Point	69,666	72,820
Number of councillors	39	39
Average number of electors per councillor	1,786	1,867

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Castle Point will have good electoral equality by 2028.

Submissions received

21 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2028, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2023. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 5% by 2028.

23 We received a number of submissions during consultation that challenged the electoral forecasts put forward by the Council. These submissions argued that the current local plan had been rejected, that a new local plan might be forthcoming, and the review should be paused until this was confirmed. While we note these concerns,

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

we are content with the forecasts provided by the Council at the start of consultation. There will always be fluctuations in electorate estimates caused either by changes in long-term plans or new development being agreed during the course of an electoral review, or both. However, as stated in our guidance, forecasting electorates can be an inexact science and we need to use an agreed set of forecast figures throughout the process. We remain satisfied with the forecast information provided by the Council and have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

Number of councillors

24 Castle Point Borough Council currently has 41 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that decreasing this number by two would ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 39 councillors.

26 As the Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation that it have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

27 We received several submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. These submissions included a mixture of comments. Some argued against a general reduction, some against the specific reduction on Canvey Island, and some that the mainland should have its councillors reduced to bring the total for each area closer together. Given that Castle Point elects by thirds, the split set out in the draft recommendations (24 councillors on the mainland and 15 on Canvey Island) remains the best balance of electors to minimise electoral variances and avoid creating wards that straddle both areas. As covered in paragraphs 52–57, we did consider moving away from a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards on Canvey Island but have not been persuaded that sufficient evidence has been received to justify such a change.

Ward boundaries consultation

28 We received 23 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These did not include any borough-wide proposals, but instead provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

29 We carefully considered the comments received and used these where possible to put together a new pattern of wards.

30 Our draft recommendations took into account local evidence that we received, which provided evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

31 We visited the area in order to look at the various different proposals on the ground. This tour of Castle Point helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

32 Our draft recommendations were for 13 three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

33 We received 43 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included a borough-wide proposal from the Castle Point Conservative Association ('the Conservatives'). Multiple respondents also expressed their support for the Conservatives' proposal. The majority of the other submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our proposals in the western part of Canvey Island.

Final recommendations

34 Our final recommendations are for 13 three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

35 Our final recommendations are the same as the draft recommendations with some changes to ward names on the mainland.

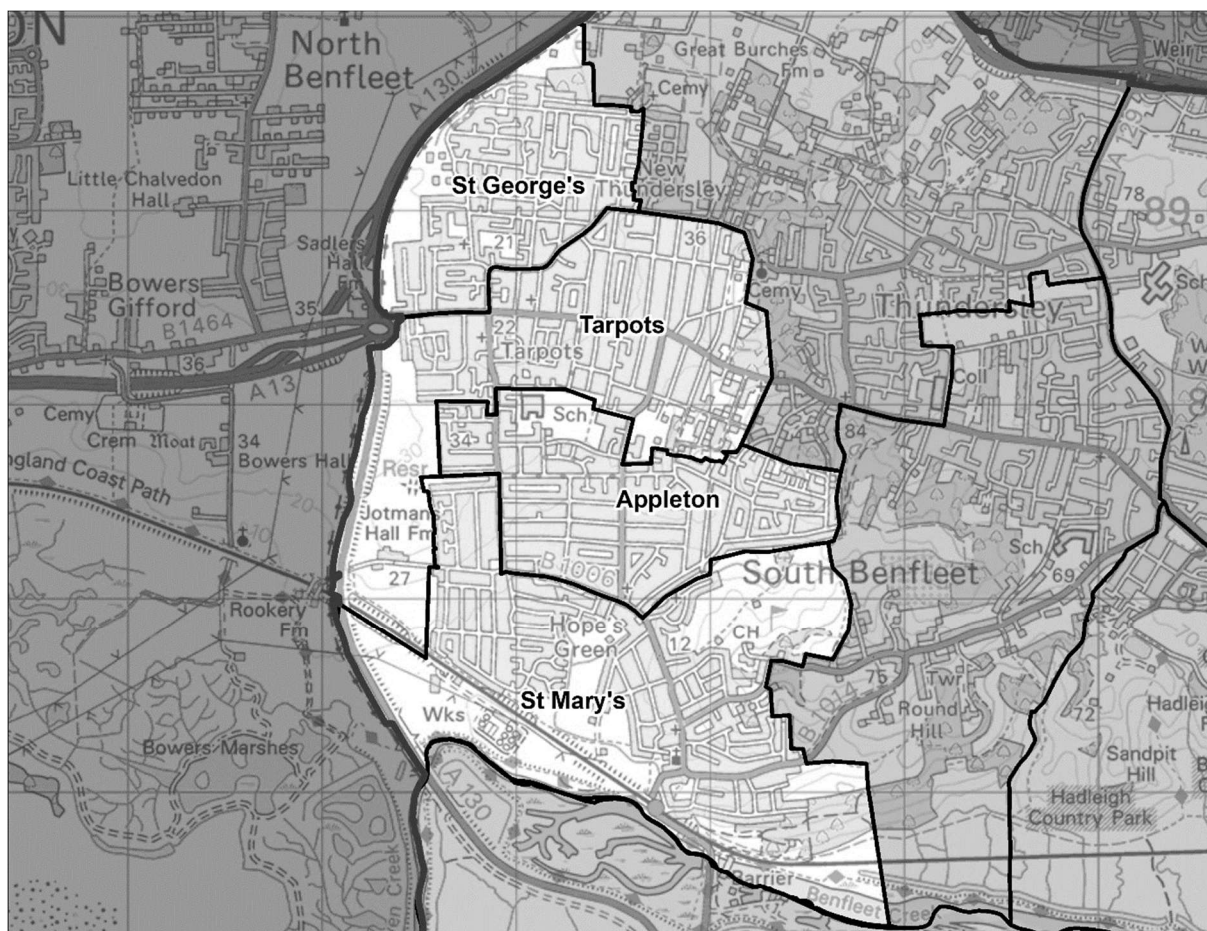
36 The tables and maps on pages 9–14 detail our final recommendations for each area of Castle Point. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 21 and on the large map accompanying this report.

South Benfleet



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Appleton	3	-9%
St George's	3	-7%
St Mary's	3	-1%
Tarpots	3	9%

Appleton, St George's, St Mary's and Tarpots

38 The Conservatives' proposal retained some elements of our draft proposals, but also proposed significant changes. These included recreating a ward similar to the existing Boyce ward, and moving the south-west corner of the proposed St George's ward into Tarpots.

39 While these proposals used strong boundaries for the most part, they all featured electoral variances significantly higher than those we recommended in our draft recommendations. This included a Rushbottom ward with more than 20% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the borough.

40 We were therefore not persuaded that such a warding pattern represented the best balance of our statutory criteria, and considered that any amendments we could make to improve these would undermine the community evidence underpinning the proposals.

41 In another submission, Councillor Walter supported our proposals for St George's ward, as well as opposing the Conservatives' proposal including changing the ward name to Rushbottom. He commented that the A13 should be retained as a ward boundary as proposed, rather than moving the boundary to its north.

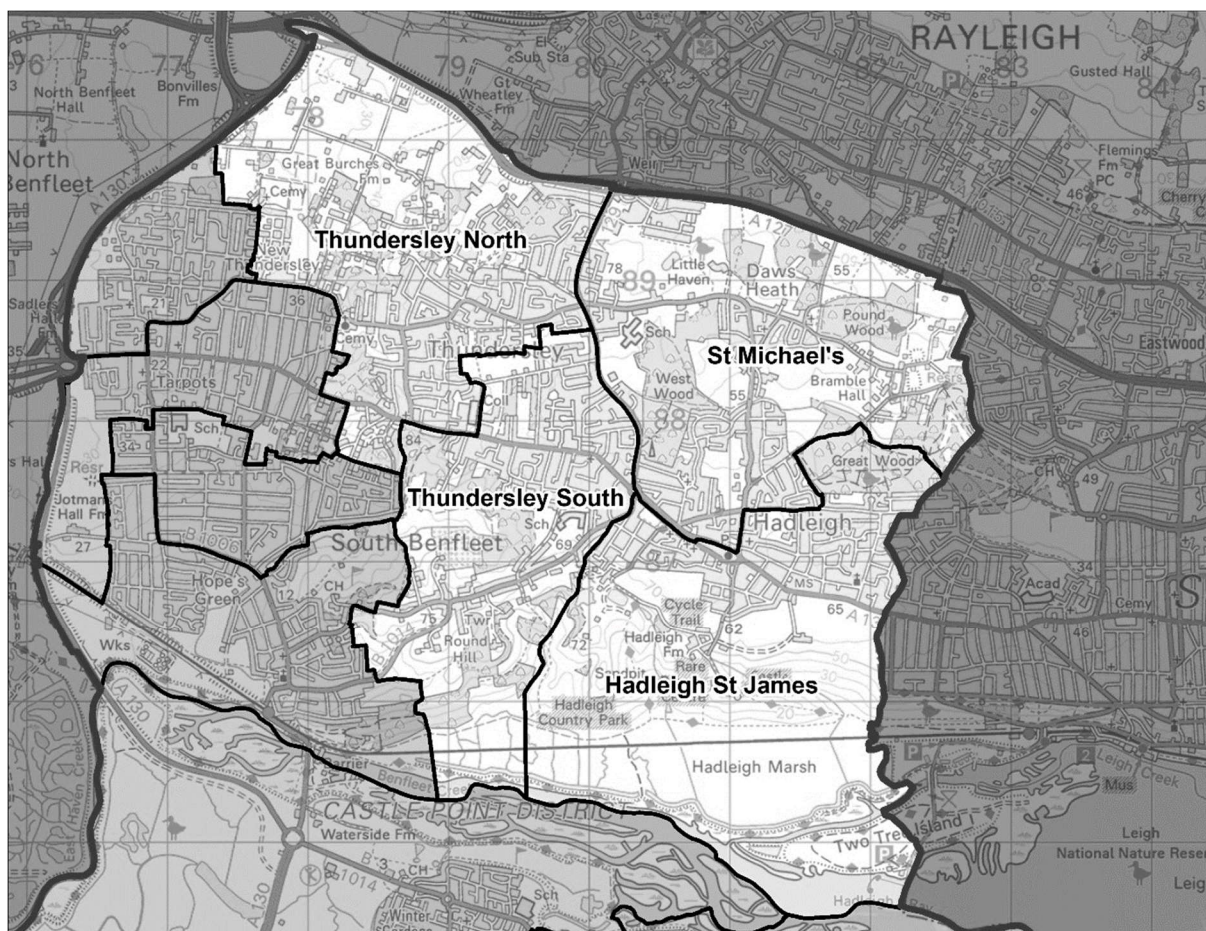
42 Councillor Ainsley proposed amendments to the Appleton and St Mary's wards. She proposed to use the A13 as a northern boundary and High Road as the boundary between them. However, this proposed Appleton ward would be significantly undersized compared to the average, and we did not assess that there was sufficient evidence within the submission to justify the high electoral variance that would result.

43 Councillor Sheldon expressed his support for the Conservatives' proposal and commented that the Jotman's Farm area and future development looked more to Benfleet High Road than Tarpots and should be warded as such. We considered this, but were concerned that the access was likely to be onto the Sadlers Farm roundabout, and so would involve a circuitous route to access the rest of St Mary's ward. We therefore do not propose amending our draft recommendations in this area.

44 Councillor Edwards was critical of wards which crossed the A13. While we acknowledge it would create a strong boundary, we were not able to produce a pattern of wards which would provide for greater use of the A13 as a boundary. In particular, we assessed on our visit to the area that there were some places where the A13 provided amenities to both sides and was therefore a focus rather than a dividing feature between communities.

45 One resident commented that, given the ward names on Canvey Island all referenced the location they were part of, the same should be the case for the mainland. These included referencing Benfleet or Thundersley in the proposed names. However, we consider that this would unnecessarily lengthen names and is not necessary to identify the location of wards, so do not propose to adopt this.

Hadleigh and Thundersley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Hadleigh St James	3	-10%
St Michael's	3	-10%
Thundersley North	3	-2%
Thundersley South	3	-9%

Hadleigh St James, St Michael's, Thundersley North and Thundersley South

46 The Conservatives' proposal involved some significant changes from our draft recommendations. For example, they argued in favour of extending Victoria ward west into the Cedar Hall area of Thundersley, as well as amending our proposed Hadleigh West ward to take in much of the former Boyce ward. Again, these proposals all had higher electoral variances than we considered were justified by the evidence received. In particular, their proposed Victoria ward would contain 41% more electors per councillor than the borough average.

47 There were minimal other comments on this area. A resident supported our draft Thundersley ward as it united a clear community in a single ward.

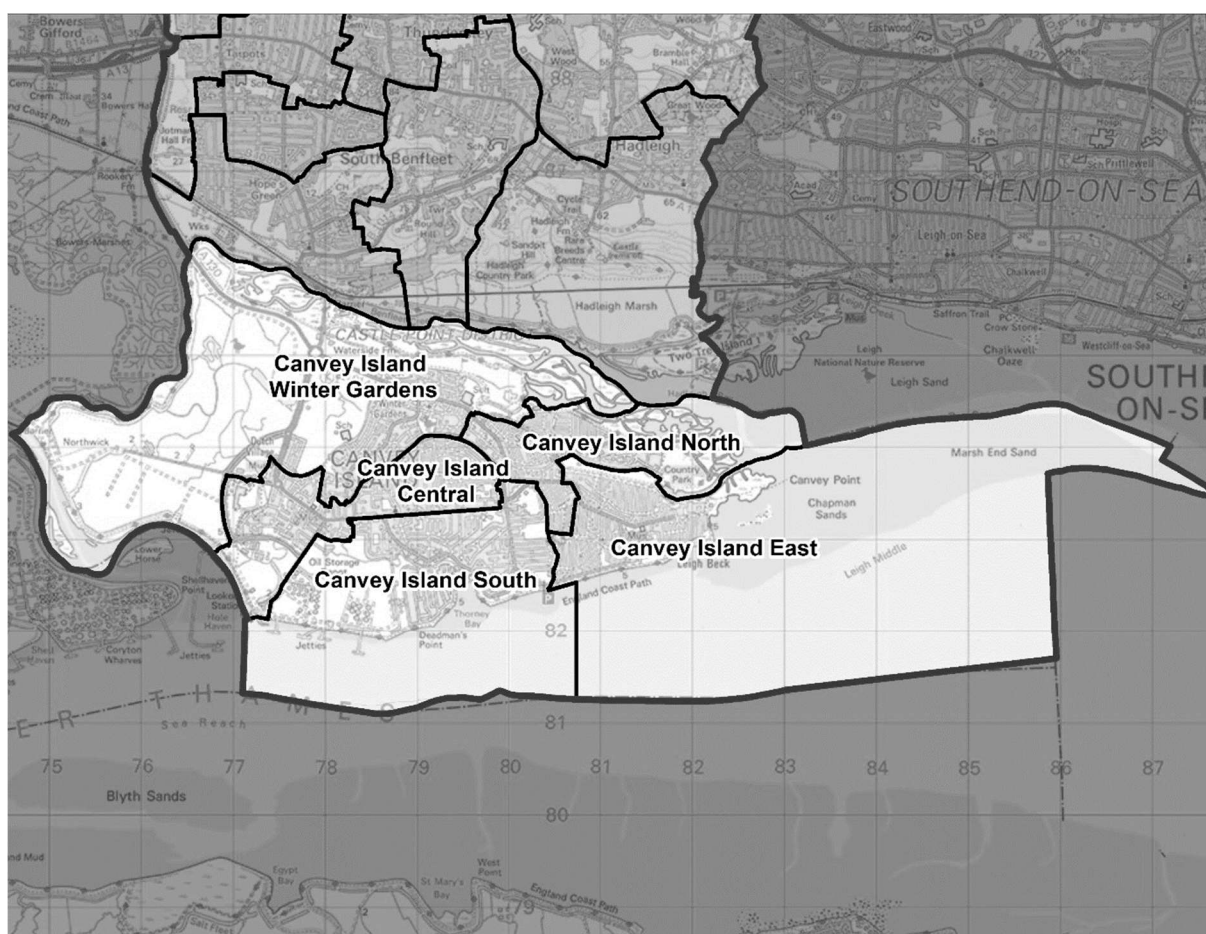
48 Councillor Edwards commented that Hadleigh West ward as proposed was more likely to be viewed as Benfleet or Thundersley. He also criticised our proposal to cross the A13 and bring Glen Road and Mount Road into Thundersley ward. We considered that these areas had clearer access to areas immediately facing them on the A13 and so maintain this ward boundary in our final recommendations.

49 We received comments from three different residents on ward names in this area. Among these comments there was reference to our Hadleigh East and Hadleigh West wards not containing areas which would be commonly accepted as Hadleigh. All three residents proposed that Hadleigh East should be renamed Hadleigh St James ward, and we consider this to be a change which merits adoption.

50 Options proposed for Hadleigh West included Kiln Road, Mummerys, Thundersley South and Benfleet Central. We assessed that amending this to Thundersley South, and our proposed Thundersley ward to Thundersley North, would be a better reflection of the areas each ward contained, based on the evidence received.

51 Also, two of the submissions proposed renaming Victoria ward. It was argued that the name was no longer relevant to the community it contained and it was proposed that the ward be renamed St Michael's to rectify this. We have decided to adopt this name change as part of our final recommendations.

Canvey Island



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Canvey Island Central	3	10%
Canvey Island East	3	7%
Canvey Island North	3	7%
Canvey Island South	3	8%
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	7%

Canvey Island

52 The majority of submissions we received in response to our draft recommendations related to Canvey Island, and in particular our proposals for the west of the Island. The Conservatives supported the proposals to create a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards, though differed in how this should be done.

53 While they provided evidence and justification as to how each of their proposed wards would reflect community identity, their proposals did not provide for good electoral equality. Only one of the five wards (Canvey Leigh Beck, in the east of the island) was within 10% of the average for the borough, while another (Canvey Lake)

was almost 50% above the average. Our view was therefore that these proposals would not provide an effective balance of our statutory criteria.

54 Various other respondents commented that the general distribution of wards would leave Canvey Island with less councillor representation. They noted that, with the proposed reduction of two councillors for Canvey Island, the average number of electors per councillor would be significantly higher compared to the mainland. However, all wards are proposed to have variances within 10% of the average, which we consider to be good electoral equality. It is also not possible to improve on this without either moving away from a uniform pattern of three-member wards or creating a ward combining parts of the mainland with Canvey Island.

55 Councillor Palmer proposed increasing the council size to 42 and therefore allocating a sixth three-councillor ward for Canvey Island. However, this would result in an increased council size rather than the decrease agreed previously. While we are open to change our initial decision on the number of councillors for an authority, we would need to be persuaded on the merits of such a change, and that it would effectively balance our statutory criteria. As this proposal did not outline an appropriate warding scheme, we could not be sure that any proposal we put together would reflect local communities or ensure effective and convenient local government. In the absence of sufficient evidence, we have therefore decided not to adopt this approach in our final recommendations.

56 We considered an alternative proposal from a resident, which would retain a two-councillor Canvey Island West ward, but amend it to improve electoral equality. Upon further examination, it would still result in wards with electoral variances greater than 20%, when compared to the average for the borough. We therefore did not consider this would provide an improved warding pattern compared to that which we proposed in our draft recommendations.

57 Therefore, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final. We considered a variety of alternative proposals and warding configurations, but ultimately assessed that the pattern proposed in our draft recommendations provides the best balance of our statutory criteria.

Conclusions

58 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Castle Point, referencing the 2021 and 2028 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2021	2028
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,786	1,867
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendations

Castle Point Borough Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 13 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Castle Point.

You can also view our final recommendations for Castle Point on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

59 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

60 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Castle Point Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

61 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Canvey Island Town Council.

62 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Canvey Island parish.

Final recommendations

Canvey Island Town Council should comprise 11 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Canvey Island Central	2
Canvey Island East	2
Canvey Island North	2
Canvey Island South Central	2
Canvey Island South West	1
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	2

What happens next?

63 We have now completed our review of Castle Point. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2024.

Equalities

64 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Castle Point Borough Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Appleton	3	5,093	1,698	-5%	5,125	1,708	-9%
Canvey Island Central	3	5,941	1,980	11%	6,159	2,053	10%
Canvey Island East	3	5,872	1,957	10%	5,981	1,994	7%
Canvey Island North	3	5,937	1,979	11%	6,000	2,000	7%
Canvey Island South	3	5,783	1,928	8%	6,070	2,023	8%
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	3	5,738	1,913	7%	5,996	1,999	7%
Hadleigh St James	3	4,699	1,566	-12%	5,032	1,677	-10%
St George's	3	4,938	1,646	-8%	5,192	1,731	-7%
St Mary's	3	5,476	1,825	2%	5,539	1,846	-1%
St Michael's	3	4,396	1,465	-18%	5,042	1,681	-10%
Tarpots	3	5,554	1,851	4%	6,083	2,028	9%

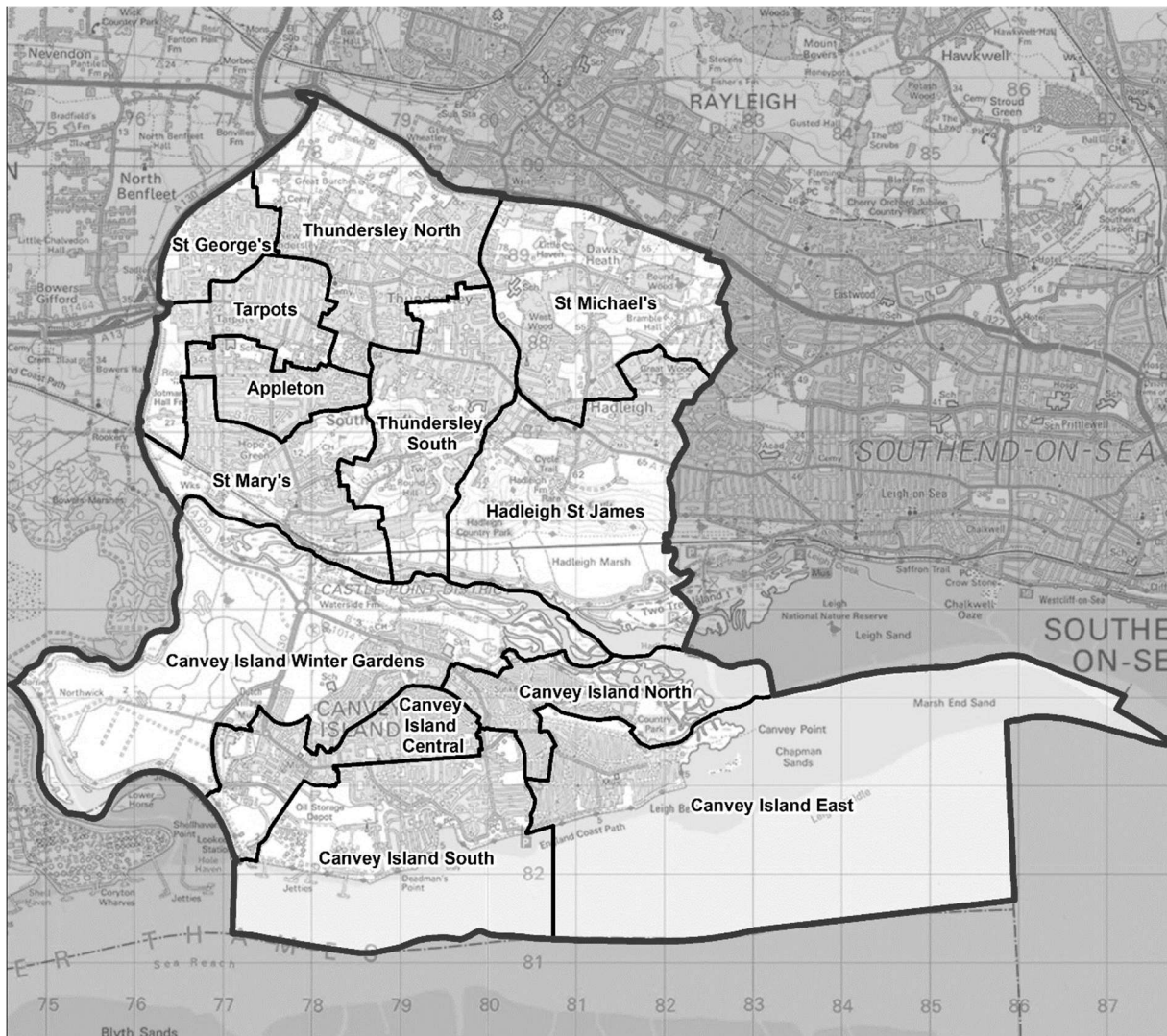
Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Thundersley North	3	5,437	1,812	1%	5,500	1,833	-2%
Thundersley South	3	4,802	1,601	-10%	5,101	1,700	-9%
Totals	39	69,666	–	–	72,820	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,786	–	–	1,867	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Castle Point.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward 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.

Appendix B

Outline map



A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/essex/castle-point

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/essex/castle-point

Political Groups

- Castle Point Conservative Association

Councillors

- Councillor S. Ainsley (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor D. Blackwell (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor B. Campagna (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor A. Edwards (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor P. Greig (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor G. Isaacs (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor B. Palmer (Castle Point Borough Council)
- Councillor A. Sheldon (Essex County Council)
- Councillor C. Walter (Castle Point Borough Council)

Local Residents

- 33 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority.
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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