

# Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North Kesteven in Lincolnshire

Further electoral review

*May 2005*

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# Contents

	Page
What is The Boundary Committee for England?	5
Executive summary	7
1 Introduction	17
2 Current electoral arrangements	21
3 Submissions received	27
4 Analysis and draft recommendations	31
• Electorate figures	32
• Council size	32
• Electoral equality	36
• General analysis	37
Warding arrangements	
a Bassingham, Brant Broughton, Cliff Villages, Eagle & North Scarle and Skellingthorpe wards	38
b The five wards of North Hykeham	41
c Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East, Branston & Mere, Heighington & Washingborough and Waddington West wards	44
d Ashby de la Launde, Billingham, Martin and Metheringham wards	46
e The six wards of Sleaford	49
f Cranwell & Byard's Leap, Heckington Rural, Kyme, Leasingham & Roxholm, Osbournby and Ruskington wards	52
5 What happens next?	59
6 Mapping	61
Appendix	
A Code of practice on written consultation	63



# What is The Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting electoral reviews as directed by The Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)

Robin Gray

Joan Jones CBE

Ann M. Kelly

Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.



## Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities, as directed by The Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State. As a result of the poor levels of electoral equality in the district of North Kesteven under the existing arrangements, The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to review the electoral arrangements of the district on 2 June 2004. The broad objective of this electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole.

## Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, eight wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. The development that the District Council forecast for the five-year period that occurred between 1996 and 2001 during the last review was not realised, particularly in Sleaford Navigation and Skellingthorpe wards. However, in Sleaford Quarrington ward, more development was undertaken than expected, which has resulted in it having a particularly poor variance, with currently 37% more electors than the district average.

The table below outlines the four stages of this review.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 May 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	9 August 2005	Final deliberation prior to our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission

## Submissions received

During Stage One, we received 16 submissions, including three district-wide schemes, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. The District Council, Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party (the Labour Party) and Councillor Hudson all submitted district-wide schemes. We also received six submissions from parish and town councils, two from district councillors, two from Sleaford town councillors and two from local residents.

## Analysis and draft recommendations

### Electorate figures

During the last review, a 9% increase in electorate was projected between 1996 and 2001. However, since 1996, there has been a 13% increase in the electorate of North Kesteven district. The Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2008, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 11% over the five year

period from 2003 to 2008. The District Council stated that at Stage Three it may put forward amendments to its projected electorate in light of further information available by that time. Concerns were expressed by two respondents as to the accuracy of the District Council's projected electorate figures and the possibility that it had underestimated future electorate growth. We noted these concerns but are content that the District Council's figures provide the best estimates currently available.

## Council size

We received proposals for three different council sizes of 40, 42 and 43. A local resident stated that the current council size of 40 should not increase. The District Council argued that a council of 42 members would provide convenient and effective local government. Councillor Hudson and the Labour Party argued that a council size of 43 would be acceptable to the electorate, would provide an additional councillor to each of the two towns and would not increase costs. We requested further evidence and having carefully considered this and investigated the distribution of councillors across the district, we are recommending a council size of 43.

## General analysis

Our draft recommendations are a mixture of the District Council, the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals as well as our own proposals. For much of the district, we did not receive any evidence to justify the proposals submitted, therefore in these cases we have investigated various different options and proposed wards which would provide good electoral equality. We are proposing to create 11 single-member, seven two-member and six three-member wards.

## What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for North Kesteven contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 8 August 2005. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for North Kesteven and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Sleaford to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations

Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Review Manager  
North Kesteven Review  
The Boundary Committee for England  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of Councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1 Ashby de la Launde	1	Ashby de la Launde ward and part of Cranwell & Byard's Leap ward (the parish of Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange)
2 Bassingham & Brant Broughton	3	Bassingham ward; part of Brant Broughton ward (parishes of Beckingham, Brant Broughton & Stragglethorpe, Carlton le Moorland, Norton Disney and Stapleford) and Witham St Hughs parish (part of Bassingham ward and part of Brant Broughton ward south of A46)
3 Billingham & Martin	2	Billingham ward; part of Kyme ward (parish of North Kyme); part of Martin ward (parishes of Martin, Timberland and Walcott)
4 Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	3	(unchanged) Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East ward
5 Branston	2	(unchanged) Branston & Mere ward
6 Cliff Villages	2	(unchanged) Cliff Villages ward
7 Cranwell & Osbournby	2	Osbournby ward; part of Cranwell & Byard's Leap ward (parishes of Braucewell and Cranwell & Byard's Leap); part of Heckington Rural ward (parish of Burton Pedwardine); part of Leasingham & Roxholm ward (parishes of North Rauceby and South Rauceby)
8 Eagle & Skellingthorpe	3	Eagle & North Scarle ward; Skellingthorpe ward; part of Brant Broughton ward (parish of Swinderby)
9 Heckington Rural	2	part of Heckington Rural ward (parishes of Great Hale, Heckington, Helpringham and Little Hale)
10 Heighington & Washingborough	3	(unchanged) Heighington & Washingborough ward
11 Kirkby la Thorpe & South Kyme	1	part of Kyme ward (parishes of Anwick, Asgarby & Howell, Ewerby & Evedon, Kirkby la Thorpe and South Kyme)
12 Leasingham & Ruskington	3	Ruskington ward; part of Leasingham & Roxholm ward (parishes of Leasingham and Roxholm)

**Table 1 (continued): Draft recommendations: Summary**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of Councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
13 Metheringham	2	Metheringham ward; part of Martin ward (parish of Blankney)
14 North Hykeham Forum	1	part of North Hykeham Forum ward; part of North Hykeham Memorial ward
15 North Hykeham Memorial	2	part of North Hykeham Memorial ward; part of North Hykeham Mill ward and part of North Hykeham Moor ward
16 North Hykeham Mill	1	part of North Hykeham Mill ward
17 North Hykeham Moor	1	part of North Hykeham Forum ward; part of North Hykeham Moor ward
18 North Hykeham Witham	1	North Hykeham Witham ward; part of North Hykeham Mill ward
19 Sleaford Central	1	Part of Sleaford Castle ward; part of Sleaford Mareham ward
20 Sleaford Holdingham	1	(unchanged) Sleaford Holdingham ward
21 Sleaford Navigation	1	Sleaford Navigation ward; part of Sleaford Castle ward; part of Sleaford Westholme ward
22 Sleaford Quarrington	3	Sleaford Quarrington ward; part of Sleaford Castle ward; part of Sleaford Mareham ward
23 Sleaford Westholme	1	part of Sleaford Westholme ward
24 Waddington West	1	(unchanged) Waddington West ward

**Notes:**

1. The whole district is parished.
2. The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
3. We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.



**Table 2: Draft recommendations for North Kesteven – 2003**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashby de la Launde	1	1,844	1,844	5
2 Bassingham & Brant Broughton	3	3,632	1,211	-31
3 Billingham & Martin	2	3,584	1,792	2
4 Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	3	6,184	2,061	18
5 Branston	2	3,768	1,884	7
6 Cliff Villages	2	3,808	1,904	9
7 Cranwell & Osbournby	2	3,885	1,943	11
8 Eagle & Skellingthorpe	3	4,897	1,632	-7
9 Heckington Rural	2	3,949	1,975	13
10 Heighington & Washingborough	3	5,385	1,795	2
11 Kirkby La Thorpe & South Kyme	1	1,687	1,687	-4
12 Leasingham & Ruskington	3	5,586	1,862	6
13 Metheringham	2	3,969	1,985	13
14 North Hykeham Forum	1	1,916	1,916	9
15 North Hykeham Memorial	2	1,854	927	-47
16 North Hykeham Mill	1	1,894	1,894	8
17 North Hykeham Moor	1	1,929	1,929	10
18 North Hykeham Witham	1	1,781	1,781	2
19 Sleaford Central	1	1,911	1,911	9
20 Sleaford Holdingham	1	1,966	1,966	12
21 Sleaford Navigation	1	1,779	1,779	1

**Table 2 (continued): Draft recommendations for North Kesteven – 2008**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2008)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1 Ashby de la Launde	1	1,920	1,920	-2
2 Bassingham & Brant Broughton	3	5,662	1,887	-3
3 Billingham & Martin	2	3,964	1,982	1
4 Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	3	6,589	2,196	12
5 Branston	2	3,846	1,923	-2
6 Cliff Villages	2	4,183	2,092	7
7 Cranwell & Osbournby	2	3,974	1,987	2
8 Eagle & Skellingthorpe	3	5,573	1,858	-5
9 Heckington Rural	2	4,148	2,074	6
10 Heighington & Washingborough	3	5,495	1,832	-6
11 Kirkby La Thorpe & South Kyme	1	1,962	1,962	0
12 Leasingham & Ruskington	3	5,792	1,931	-1
13 Metheringham	2	4,263	2,132	9
14 North Hykeham Forum	1	1,866	1,866	-5
15 North Hykeham Memorial	2	3,746	1,873	-4
16 North Hykeham Mill	1	1,894	1,894	-3
17 North Hykeham Moor	1	1,926	1,926	-1
18 North Hykeham Witham	1	1,913	1,913	-2
19 Sleaford Central	1	1,928	1,928	-1
20 Sleaford Holdingham	1	2,011	2,011	3
21 Sleaford Navigation	1	1,841	1,841	-6

**Table 2 (continued): Draft recommendations for North Kesteven – 2003**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2003)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
22 Sleaford Quarrington	3	4,446	1,482	-16
23 Sleaford Westholme	1	1,736	1,736	-1
24 Waddington West	1	2,032	2,032	16
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>75,422</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>–</b>

**Table 2 (continued): Draft recommendations for North Kesteven – 2008**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2008)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
22 Sleaford Quarrington	3	5,694	1,898	-3
23 Sleaford Westholme	1	1,789	1,789	-8
24 Waddington West	1	2,056	2,056	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>84,035</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>–</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Kesteven District 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 district. 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 proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of North Kesteven, on which we are now consulting.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 The Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make on-going assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a PER has elapsed. It was agreed that the criteria for deciding which authorities should be investigated was:

- either 30% of wards in an authority with electoral variances of more than 10% from the average or;
- any single ward with a variance of more than 30% from the average.

3 The intention of the research was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances and assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of North Kesteven. North Kesteven's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1997. An Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 21 September 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

5 In carrying out these reviews we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962), i.e. the need to:
  - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
  - secure effective and convenient local government; and
  - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of North Kesteven is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the EC in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of more than 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. When electoral imbalances arise across an area, or between individual wards, that principle can become eroded if the imbalances are left uncorrected. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, providing that each councillor represents exactly the same number of electors is unachievable given geographic and other constraints, including the make up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. The Electoral Commission's *Guidance* to the Committee on this subject is quite clear. It is of paramount importance that any council size proposed to us has been developed and can be argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure. As intimated in its *Guidance*, The Electoral Commission does not allow for the decision on council size to be based purely on addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider the factor of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be ensuring that the authority's political management arrangements are best employed under the recommended council size, and that this can be shown to be so.

11 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size best allows the political management structures to be employed most effectively, achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

12 Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

13 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Stages of the review**

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 May 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	9 August 2005	Final deliberation prior to our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission

14 Stage One began on 3 August 2004, when we wrote to North Kesteven District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lincolnshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Lincolnshire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, Members of the European Parliament for the East Midlands Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited North Kesteven District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 2004.

15 During Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

16 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 17 May 2005 and will end on 8 August 2005, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

17 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

## Equal Opportunities

18 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to:

- The general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
  - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
  - promote equality of opportunity; and
  - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

## National parks, AONB and the Broads

19 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park;
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB;
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

20 The district of North Kesteven lies to the south of the City of Lincoln. It is largely rural in nature and includes two small towns of Sleaford and North Hykeham as well as numerous villages and hamlets. It is fully parished, with 72 parishes and has a population of 96,852 (2004).

21 Since the publication of the LGCE's final recommendations in 1997, some of the expected development did not go ahead, most notably in Skellingthorpe ward, whilst significant unforeseen development has occurred in Sleaford and North Hykeham parishes. During the previous review, the District Council projected that Skellingthorpe ward would experience an increase in electorate sufficient to improve its electoral variance from -21% to -8% by 2001. However, the ward's variance is now -28%. Contrary to this, large housing developments have taken place on former military bases, a former hospital in Bassingham and North Hykeham Mill and Sleaford Quarrington wards, resulting in projected variances of 94%, 75% and 66% more than the district average by 2008 respectively. Therefore, this has resulted in poor levels of electoral equality, particularly in these areas.

22 The Electoral Commission agreed at its meeting of 12 February 2004 that the Boundary Committee undertake initial research into 14 authorities, including North Kesteven, where electoral imbalances remain in place following PERs in the mid to late 1990s. The intention of the research was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances and assess what action, if any, is appropriate to rectify the situation. As a result of the further research undertaken into the continuing levels of electoral inequality, The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of North Kesteven District Council at its meeting on 7 April 2004.

23 The electorate of the district is 75,422 (December 2003). North Hykeham parish comprises 12% and Sleaford parish 16%, of the district's total electorate. The majority of wards are single-member wards, while six are represented by two members, and two by three members.

24 The Council presently has 40 members who are elected from 30 wards, eleven of which are relatively urban in North Hykeham and Sleaford and the remainder being predominantly rural. At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,886 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,101 by the year 2008 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to overestimations and underestimations in electorate growth since the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in eight of the 30 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, in two wards by more than 20% and in one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Sleaford Quarrington ward, where the councillor represents 37% more electors than the district average.

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

**Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in North Kesteven – 2003**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashby de la Launde	1	1,794	1,794	-5
2 Bassingham	1	2,145	2,145	14
3 Billingham	1	1,719	1,719	-9
4 Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	3	6,184	2,061	9
5 Branston & Mere	2	3,768	1,884	0
6 Brant Broughton	1	1,999	1,999	6
7 Cliff Villages	2	3,808	1,904	1
8 Cranwell & Byard's Leap	1	1,675	1,675	-11
9 Eagle & North Scarle	1	1,665	1,665	-12
10 Heckington Rural	2	4,026	2,013	7
11 Heighington & Washingborough	3	5,385	1,795	-5
12 Kyme	1	2,051	2,051	9
13 Leasingham & Roxholm	1	1,771	1,771	-6
14 Martin	1	1,685	1,685	-11
15 Metheringham	2	3,785	1,893	0
16 North Hykeham Forum	1	1,931	1,931	2
17 North Hykeham Memorial	1	1,827	1,827	-3
18 North Hykeham Mill	1	1,975	1,975	5
19 North Hykeham Moor	1	1,890	1,890	0
20 North Hykeham Witham	1	1,751	1,751	-7
21 Osbournby	1	1,783	1,783	-5
22 Ruskington	2	4,215	2,108	12
23 Skellingthorpe	2	2,720	1,360	-28

**Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in North Kesteven – 2008**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashby de la Launde	1	1,884	1,884	-10
2 Bassingham	1	4,082	4,082	94
3 Billingham	1	2,010	2,010	-5
4 Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	3	6,589	2,196	5
5 Branston & Mere	2	3,846	1,923	-8
6 Brant Broughton	1	2,234	2,234	6
7 Cliff Villages	2	4,183	2,092	0
8 Cranwell & Byard's Leap	1	1,715	1,715	-18
9 Eagle & North Scarle	1	1,757	1,757	-16
10 Heckington Rural	2	4,244	2,122	1
11 Heighington & Washingborough	3	5,495	1,832	-13
12 Kyme	1	2,343	2,343	12
13 Leasingham & Roxholm	1	1,804	1,804	-14
14 Martin	1	1,790	1,790	-15
15 Metheringham	2	4,074	2,037	-3
16 North Hykeham Forum	1	1,907	1,907	-9
17 North Hykeham Memorial	1	1,910	1,910	-9
18 North Hykeham Mill	1	3,675	3,675	75
19 North Hykeham Moor	1	1,887	1,887	-10
20 North Hykeham Witham	1	1,845	1,845	-12
21 Osbournby	1	1,831	1,831	-13
22 Ruskington	2	4,412	2,206	5
23 Skellingthorpe	2	3,199	1,600	-24

**Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in North Kesteven – 2003**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2003)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
24 Sleaford Castle	1	1,958	1,958	4
25 Sleaford Holdingham	1	1,966	1,966	4
26 Sleaford Mareham	1	1,913	1,913	1
27 Sleaford Navigation	1	1,518	1,518	-19
28 Sleaford Quarrington	1	2,588	2,588	37
29 Sleaford Westholme	1	1,895	1,895	1
30 Waddington West	1	2,032	2,032	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>75,422</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>–</b>

**Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in North Kesteven – 2008**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Sleaford Castle	1	2,297	2,297	9
25 Sleaford Holdingham	1	2,011	2,011	-4
26 Sleaford Mareham	1	1,930	1,930	-8
27 Sleaford Navigation	1	1,580	1,580	-25
28 Sleaford Quarrington	1	3,497	3,497	66
29 Sleaford Westholme	1	1,948	1,948	-7
30 Waddington West	1	2,056	2,056	-2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>84,035</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Kesteven District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2003, electors in Skellingthorpe ward were relatively over-represented by 28%, while electors in Sleaford Quarrington ward were significantly under-represented by 37%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 Submissions received

26 At the start of the review, members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for North Kesteven District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

27 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Boundary Committee visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 16 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party and Councillor Hudson, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

#### North Kesteven District Council

28 The District Council proposed a council of 42 members, an increase of two. The Council proposed to retain 15 of the 30 existing wards. It consulted on its proposals with parish councils and district councillors, as well as publicising its proposals in the district newsletter and setting up a working group to investigate possible options. Under the Council's proposals, three wards would have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average by 2008. It provided detailed evidence to justify the variances of these two wards and its proposal to transfer part of Sleaford parish into a neighbouring ward, as well as brief evidence for its remaining proposals.

#### Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party

29 Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party (the Labour Party) submitted a district-wide scheme based on a council size of 43, including an additional district councillor for Sleaford. It proposed multi-member wards in the rural area and single-member wards in the two towns. The Labour Party proposed 24 wards, two of which would have electoral variances more than 10% from the district average by 2008. It argued that 'due to the pattern of communities within the district, it is not possible to reflect optimum community identity' but did not provide detailed arguments in support of its proposals.

#### Parish and town councils

30 We received six submissions from parish and town councils. North Hykeham Town Council put forward a proposal for a new ward in North Hykeham, in view of the town's increasing electorate. However, it did not provide details of the boundary of the new ward. It also proposed subsequent new electoral arrangements for the Town Council.

31 Skellingthorpe Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed council size of 42 and its proposals for a two-member ward comprising Skellingthorpe parish. It stated Skellingthorpe parish should not be placed in a ward with neighbouring parishes with which it shares no links. The Parish Council argued that, despite the high electoral variance of this proposed ward, it be adopted in order to reflect community identity. It provided details of the amenities and services provided in Skellingthorpe village.

32 Dogdyke Parish Council expressed concern regarding the District Council's proposal to transfer Dogdyke parish from Billingham ward and place it in a ward with Martin parish. It argued that electors in Dogdyke parish share links with the community of Billingham and use the facilities there, and do not have links with Martin ward. Carlton le Moorland Parish Council considered that the District Council's draft recommendations held no significant implications for its parish. Nocton and Washingborough parish councils supported the District Council's proposals to retain the existing wards covering their parishes.

## District councillors

33 We received three representations from district councillors. Councillor Hudson (representing Waddington West ward) submitted a district-wide scheme based on a council size of 43 members, representing 25 wards. Under his proposals, the wards would comprise a mixture of single-member and multi-member wards, of which three would have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average by 2008. He argued that his proposals would provide good electoral equality and reflect community identity as far as possible; however, he noted that 'there are no significant natural boundaries' in North Kesteven.

34 Councillor Marriott (representing North Hykeham Memorial ward) opposed multi-member wards and argued that each ward should be represented by one councillor. He suggested that multi-member wards discourage potential candidates (particularly politically independent candidates) from standing for election, as multi-member wards would cover a larger area to canvass than single-member wards.

35 Councillor Watson (representing Sleaford Westholme ward) stated that Sleaford town will continue to develop and should be allocated seven district councillors. He also argued that the Rauceby Hospital site has always been part of Sleaford Town Council and should remain so. He expressed concern regarding the small number of electors per each Councillor representing the District Council's proposed two-member Skellingthorpe ward.

## Other representations

36 A further five representations were received, from two town councillors and three local residents.

37 Sleaford Town Councillors Edwards and Hayes, argued that Sleaford parish boundary be retained therefore retaining the Rauceby Hospital site. In view of the recent and forecast electorate growth, the town councillors proposed Sleaford town be represented by seven district councillors, an increase of one. Concern was expressed by Sleaford Town Councillor Edwards at the District Council's proposed Skellingthorpe ward, which would contain significantly fewer electors than the district average.

38 Two Sleaford residents (in a joint submission) supported the Labour Party's proposal for seven single-member Sleaford wards. Another Sleaford resident also proposed that Sleaford should comprise seven district wards, incorporating the development on the former Rauceby Hospital site. He noted that the current Skellingthorpe ward contains too few electors compared to the district average and could see no justification for the

continuation of this. He hoped that the under-representation throughout the district, could be addressed without increasing the overall council size increasing significantly.

39 A resident of Metheringham proposed that the hamlet of Blankney in a parish of the same name should be included in a ward with Metheringham, Nocton and Dunston parishes. He argued that these four parishes 'form a geographical and historical whole' and that no ward should be represented by more than two district councillors. He also suggested that the towns of Sleaford and North Hykeham each be allocated an additional district councillor, but that the overall council size should not be increased.



## 4 Analysis and draft recommendations

**40 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for North Kesteven and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. In particular, we found our decisions regarding Sleaford as well as much of the remainder of the district to be a difficult judgement between our statutory criteria. In the case of Sleaford, this was as a result of no viable proposals based on a council size of 43. Throughout much of the district it was often difficult to make well-informed recommendations for ward boundaries due to the lack of evidence received from local interested parties during Stage One. In these cases, we have sought to achieve the best levels of electoral equality in the absence of any evidence reflecting the other two criteria, and would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.**

41 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North Kesteven is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended):

- the need to secure effective and convenient local government;
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation).

42 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

43 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in 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.

44 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim 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 make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

45 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these

recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not therefore able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

## Electorate figures

46 As part of the previous review of North Kesteven district, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 9% between 1996 and 2001. However, between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by 13%. There has only been significant growth in Bassingham, Ruskington and Sleaford Quarrington wards and been no substantial growth overall in Skellingthorpe ward. This has resulted in poor electoral equality across much of the district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2008, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 11% from 75,422 to 84,035 over the five-year period from 2003 to 2008. It expects most of the growth to be in Bassingham ward and North Hykeham and Sleaford towns. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to planning applications, development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. The Council also examined the planning permissions granted up to March 2004 and took account of the 2003 Housing Land Availability study. It took into account developments expected to be completed by 2008, but did not include major developments or affordable housing schemes which would not be completed by 2008.

47 The District Council noted that, during its consultation period, concerns were raised regarding the projected electorate figures, particularly for Sleaford. It stated that at Stage Three it may put forward amendments to its projected electorate, in light of further information available by that time. However, it concluded that the figures available were its best estimates at this time.

48 A number of submissions received during Stage One mentioned the projected electorate figures. The Labour Party stated that it did not consider it necessary to query the District Council's projections. North Hykeham Town Council considered that the District Council's estimated figures for its town could be 'slightly on the low side' in view of continual development. Skellingthorpe Parish Council indicated that the District Council's projected figures for Skellingthorpe 'are perhaps on the cautionary side'. Councillor Hudson noted that the projected figures are disputed and may be revised at a later stage.

49 We note the concerns expressed regarding the District Council's figures for the district's projected electorate. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the District Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and will carefully consider any revisions received.

## Council size

50 North Kesteven District Council presently has 40 members. The District Council proposed a council of 42 members as this offered the 'most effective solution' to achieving good electoral equality. The Council stated that it also recognised 'the

importance of developing and maintaining close community links'. It argued that any reduction in council size, particularly in large rural wards, 'could strain the relationship between individual councillors and their local communities'. The District Council contended that a slight increase would allow it 'to adequately maintain' representational links, while avoiding the need for any major changes to its political management structure which could adversely affect the Council's overall effectiveness.

51 The District Council stated that it introduced a new Executive and Scrutiny political management system in May 2001 and established a cabinet of six members and three scrutiny panels, each comprising 13 members. It detailed how each panel is responsible for scrutinising policies and services and how sub panels undertake specific research tasks and ad-hoc reviews. It stated there are also two planning committees, in which members are actively involved. In addition, the Council has a new Standards Committee and new licensing responsibilities, both of which members will spend time working on. The Council contended that a reduced council size would make it difficult for members to have sufficient time to represent their constituents and argued that a council comprising 42 members would 'enable the Council to achieve an effective and convenient local government process'. It stated it would mean that the Council could 'continue to function effectively and efficiently under its new political management structures' and 'enable members to be able to ... represent their electorate in what is, a large geographical area and one that is diverse'.

52 District Councillor Hudson proposed a council size of 43 members. He noted that 'a radical alternative of about 15 was considered and rejected' by the report to the working party for the review. He considered that such a council size would have the advantage of fully engaging non-executive members in the scrutiny process and would reduce the cost of member services. Councillor Hudson noted that disadvantages of such a reduced council size would include increased workloads and a likely lack of public support. He stated that a council size of 43 would reflect the current ward size, distribute wards 'sufficiently fine to reflect the relative sizes of Sleaford and North Hykeham' and create wards of a size acceptable to the electorate. It was also noted by Councillor Hudson that disadvantages of a council size of 43 would be the high cost of member services and committees 'too large for effective decision making'.

53 Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party also proposed a council size of 43, stating 'this will neither greatly inconvenience the existing composition of the District Council nor place an unmanageable financial burden on the taxpayer'.

54 Skellingthorpe Parish Council stated that it supported the District Council's proposal 'that the number of elected members be increased from the present 40 to 42 members'. A local resident stated that he would 'certainly not wish to see more councillors over the current number of the current 40 councillors'.

55 We considered that we had received insufficient evidence on which to base a decision in relation to council size and therefore we wrote to the respondents above who had referred to council size in their submissions, requesting additional evidence to back up their proposals. We requested that they provide evidence as to why their proposed council size would provide the most convenient and effective local government. In particular, we asked the District Council to explain in more detail how its proposed increase in council size of two would work within the Council's political structure. This would include the membership of committee meetings as well as the

proposed council size's impact on the duties of councillors and how effectively they would be able to represent their electorate.

56 We received responses from the District Council, the Labour Party, Councillor Hudson, Skellingthorpe District Council and a local resident.

57 The District Council provided a response in support of its proposal for a council of 42 members. It noted the 'rapid growth' in the district's population since the last review and the rural nature of the district with 'many scattered small communities'. The District Council argued that close community links are maintained through effective local representation, which the current council size of 40 'broadly fulfils'. However, it noted that some members have to represent numerous different communities and therefore any reduction in council size would 'place an intolerable burden' on some members to continue to effectively represent communities. The District Council argued that a minor increase of two councillors would maintain 'a fine balance', not encroaching on the internal management structure, yet ensuring that the electorate is adequately and equally represented. It claimed that its approach to council size was in line with the work of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister regarding reform within local government to create sustainable communities through good leadership.

58 The District Council provided details of the workload of two members including the number of parish council meetings attended (68), local surgeries (20) and other external roles, such as involvement with charities and Primary Care Trusts. The Council is planning to undertake a restructure of its scrutiny function, establishing a number of working groups and sub-groups to deal with policy development and scrutiny. It suggested that the two potential new members would not adversely affect these changes but would 'be helpful for the sub-structure' as scrutiny work will increase over time. The District Council also submitted details of time spent by the Chairman (15 hours approximately) and committee members (six hours approximately) per Planning Committee meeting. In addition to this, the District Council supplied information as to time spent by councillors on work with a range of 76 external organisations. It estimated that on average members spend nine hours in total attending and preparing for meetings with outside bodies. It stated that in future, members will spend more time on dealing with Standards Committees and the Council's new regulatory licensing function, thus two additional members would help to ease the additional workload generated.

59 The District Council concluded that the current council size of 40 'is working well and a marginal increase to 42 [would] enable the same effective performance to continue' and provide electoral equality.

60 Councillor Hudson put forward an argument for a council size of 43, and compared the advantages and disadvantages of a council of 15, 43 or 60 members in relation to aspects of councillors' roles. He argued that a council size of 15 would ensure more consistency, prevent members from becoming too parochial, create small focused committees and reduce the expenses budget. However, he also acknowledged that a council size of 15 would result in large workloads, a small pool of members and expertise and would require councillors to be employed on a full-time basis and paid accordingly. He noted that a council comprising 60 members would create a light workload, smaller wards to represent and a large pool of experience to draw on. Disadvantages of such a council would be that members would be parochial, sharing information and policy creation work among so many members would be difficult,

committees would be large and costs would increase, as would the workload involved in providing member support services.

61 He argued that a 'medium size' council of 43 members would result in the 'right level of workload for councillors', good size committees and reasonable costs. He noted a 43-member council, compared to the even numbers of 42 or 44, would have the advantage of reducing the chances of a hung council or the use of a casting vote. Councillor Hudson concluded that a council size of 43 would provide the best balance between members' workload, the size of rural and urban wards, membership of committees and costs and would yield fewer disadvantages than alternative council sizes. He argued that the new political management system has created a larger workload for councillors than the previous committee system. 'Scrutiny panels directly replaced committees. Scrutiny demands more of councillors' as non-executive members 'must now research and question council policy and services'. He noted that the 'disparate settlements in North Kesteven make setting a council size for the role of councillor as a representative difficult' as a balance has to be found to adequately represent both the urban areas and rural parishes. Councillor Hudson alleged that 'the role of executive members does not greatly influence council size' and the majority of members' workload is dictated by the council's management demands. Instead, he argued, the 'roles of non-executive councillors determine council size' and their role could be developed through the creation of a shadow executive.

62 The Labour Party stated that, in formulating its proposals, it compared the council size of North Kesteven to those of other local authorities providing for a similar area and electorate. It claimed that the overview and scrutiny system 'was not working in the best interests of the people and often the caseload fell on a few councillors prepared to undertake the additional work involved'.

63 Skellingthorpe Parish Council stated it had 'no further evidence' to support the proposed increase in council size to 42. The local resident who had previously proposed to retain the existing council size of 40, put forward proposals for 37 single-member wards. However, we were unable to consider these proposals since the deadline for submissions had passed and we had only requested additional information specifically relating to council size. He argued that single-member wards would provide good representation and reflect community identities. It was also noted by the local resident that reducing or retaining the current number of councillors would reduce the allowances paid to councillors and so reduce costs.

64 Having carefully considered these representations, we considered that the evidence received was not precise enough to enable us to make a thorough analysis of the impact of council sizes of 40, 42 or 43 on the political management structure. However, we noted that with the exception of the local resident, all the respondents supported a small increase in council size. We further noted that respondents put forward various brief arguments that an increase in council size would reflect the increase in the electorate and the workload of councillors, provide good representation and allow the political management structure to continue to work effectively.

65 We consider that the District Council and Labour Party's submissions did not supply specific arguments for increasing the council by two or three. Instead, they simply noted the enlarged electorate and the often extensive rural wards that members represent and stated that an increase in members would help to prevent an increase in their workload

and provide effective local government. However, we accept that an increased council size of either 42 or 43 can be justified in terms of political management structure and councillors' workload.

66 We are unable to take account of Councillor Hudson's and others comments regarding the financial implications of particular council sizes and the potential of a hung council or use of casting votes, as these are considerations which do not fall within the statutory criteria of our decisions.

67 Having accepted the evidence provided to increase the council size by two or three, we examined the impact different council sizes would have on the allocation of councillors for different parts of the district, including the towns and the rural area. We noted that, if the external Sleaford Town Council boundary were retained, council sizes of 40 and 42 would not allow for the correct allocation of councillors between the towns and the rural area. Under a council size of 42 or 43, Sleaford as a whole would be entitled to seven district councillors. The town would be entitled to six district councillors under all three council sizes if part of Sleaford town were placed in a neighbouring ward, as proposed by the District Council. However, we noted that the new Sleaford parish ward this proposal would create would only contain 35 electors (under 2003 figures). We were concerned that this was an insufficient number of electors for one town councillor to represent in a parish of 13,263, as this would not provide effective and convenient local government. While we recognise that the area's electorate is due to increase in the near future, it would currently comprise inadequate numbers of electors for a district or parish ward. We have therefore not pursued this proposal.

68 Consequently, we decided to create wards within Sleaford town boundaries and not place part of the parish in an outlying ward, meaning that Sleaford is entitled to an additional councillor. Thus, we again note that if the Sleaford parish boundary were retained, council sizes of 40 and 42 would not provide the correct distribution of councillors throughout the district in terms of electoral equality. We note the consensus between the District Council, Labour Party and Councillor Hudson, that the council size should be increased in view of the nature of the district and councillors' increased workload. However, although we accept the argument for a small increase in council size, they did not convincingly specify why their proposal for a particular number of district councillors would meet the needs of the district. We also note the lack of evidence provided in support of the local resident's proposal for a council size of 40. Therefore, in view of the lack of evidence provided and the issues relating to the appropriate distribution of councillors within urban areas, we are not adopting a council size of 40 or 42. We are consequently recommending a council size of 43, which would provide the correct allocation for the district.

69 Having examined the best allocation of councillors for the district, together with the responses received, we conclude that a council of 43 members would best meet the statutory criteria.

## Electoral equality

70 As stated in paragraph 9, electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally

well below 10%. Therefore, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality seeking a number of electors per councillor as close to the district average as possible. It is the Committee's aim to reduce all levels of under or over-representation providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

## General analysis

71 Our draft recommendations are a mixture of the District Council, the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals as well as our own proposals. For much of the district we did not receive any evidence to justify the proposals, therefore in these cases we have investigated various different options and proposed wards which would provide an improved level of electoral equality. We have tried to take account of submissions regarding community identity where possible. However, in a number of areas, due to a lack of strong evidence received we are recommending wards based on electoral equality, and would welcome new evidence of community identity during Stage Three. We have attempted to avoid combining rural and urban areas in the same wards and are not recommending any new parish warding in rural areas. We note concerns expressed regarding multi-member wards. However, we are prepared to recommend such wards where we consider they would provide the best balance available between the statutory criteria. We are proposing to reduce the number of single-member wards from 22 to 11, to increase the number of two-member wards from six to seven and three-member wards from two to six. In total, we propose to create 24 wards, with the majority of single-member wards being of an urban nature.

## Warding arrangements

72 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a. Bassingham, Brant Broughton, Cliff Villages, Eagle & North Scarle and Skellingthorpe wards (page 38)
- b. The five wards of North Hykeham (page 41)
- c. Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East, Branston & Mere, Heighington & Washingborough and Waddington West wards (page 44)
- d. Ashby de la Launde, Billingham, Martin and Metheringham wards (page 46)
- e. The six wards of Sleaford (page 49)
- f. Cranwell & Byard's Leap, Heckington Rural, Kyme, Leasingham & Roxholm, Osbournby and Ruskington wards (page 52)

73 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 and on the maps accompanying this report.

## Bassingham, Brant Broughton, Cliff Villages, Eagle & North Scarle, and Skellingthorpe wards

74 The above five wards are located in the north-west of the district. Table 5 (below) outlines the constituent areas of each ward. Table 4 (on page 22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

**Table 5: Existing arrangements**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Bassingham	Aubourn & Haddington, Bassingham, Thurlby parishes and part of Witham St Hughs parish	1
Brant Broughton	Beckingham, Brant Broughton & Stragglethorpe, Carlton-le-Moorland, Norton Disney, Stapleford and Swinderby parishes and part of Witham St Hughs parish	1
Cliff Villages	Boothby Graffoe, Coleby, Harmston, Leadenham, Navenby, Welbourne and Wellingore parishes	2
Eagle & North Scarle	Doddington & Whisby, Eagle & Swinethorpe, North Scarle and Thorpe on the Hill parishes	1
Skellingthorpe	Skellingthorpe parish	2

75 During Stage One we received eight representations regarding this area. The District Council proposed that the existing five wards be broadly retained (taking the creation of a new parish of Witham St Hughs from part of Swinderby and Thurlby parishes into account). However, under its proposals it renamed Bassingham ward as Bassingham & Witham ward and recommended, in light of the ward's increased electorate, that an additional member represent it. It argued that 'a completely new village [in Witham St Hughs parish] combined with a growing electorate in the ward will require 2 members to provide effective and convenient representation of local links'. The District Council argued that 'strong community links exist between the parishes/communities lying along the cliff edge' in Cliff Villages ward. It claimed that the links between district and parish councillors in Cliff Villages and Brant Broughton wards should be maintained. The District Council supplied a summary of submissions received during its initial consultation, which included opposition to the prospect of transferring Leadenham parish of Cliff Villages ward into a new ward.

76 The District Council provided evidence in support of its proposal to retain the existing single-member Eagle & North Scarle ward, which would have an electoral variance 11% below the district average by 2008 (under a council size of 43). It argued that 'three of the four villages that make up the ward are on the edge of the district' and 'these four villages are closely linked and are all on the north east side of the new A46 dual

carriageway and Lincoln bypass'. The District Council stated that 'the four parishes work jointly on a regular basis on a whole range of initiatives, including planning issues' and are in the same PCC [Parochial Church Council] grouping. It also noted that the parishes are 'covered by the same bus route from Lincoln' and 'there is also a very close association in the parishes for the primary school catchment areas'.

77 The District Council and Skellingthorpe Parish Council submitted very similar evidence in support of retaining the existing two-member Skellingthorpe ward, which would have an electoral variance 18% below the district average by 2008 (under a council size of 43). They described some of the history and geography of Skellingthorpe, as well as its population trends, employment, housing, transport, education, leisure facilities, and the village magazine. They stated that Skellingthorpe is a dormitory village of Lincoln, which it looks to for employment, shopping, recreation and other services. Skellingthorpe Parish Council added that, due to Skellingthorpe's location on the edge of the district and 'its very strong community identity [it] should be treated as an "exception"'. It noted that it could easily be argued that Skellingthorpe village become part of Lincoln City Council. However, it realised that such an amendment does not fall under the remit of this review. The Parish Council contended that 'community identity is far more important than artificially moving areas together to make the number crunching exercise conform to a given criteria'. It argued that there is 'no logic' in placing areas, which do not share community identity, in the same ward, as there is nothing that links Skellingthorpe with neighbouring parishes in the district. Skellingthorpe Parish Council therefore concluded that Skellingthorpe ward should be retained in order to reflect 'its very strong identity as a major stand-alone village' bordering two other districts, with 'many services and amenities' of its own.

78 District Councillor Watson, Sleaford Town Councillor Edwards and a local resident all expressed concerns regarding the District Council's proposal to retain the existing Skellingthorpe ward with its consequent small number of electors per councillor compared with the district average.

79 The Labour Party and Councillor Hudson both proposed a three-member Eagle ward comprising Eagle & North Scarle ward, Skellingthorpe ward and Swinderby parish of Brant Broughton ward, which would have an electoral variance 5% below the district average by 2008. Both the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson proposed a three-member Moorland ward. This would comprise Bassingham ward and Brant Broughton ward (less Swinderby parish) and would have an electoral variance of 3% below the district average by 2008. They also both proposed to retain Cliff Villages ward, but renamed it Cliff ward. Councillor Hudson stated that his proposals would satisfy 'many points raised in the public consultation' including retaining Thurlby parish's links with Bassingham parish, accommodating 'the potential growth of Witham St Hughs [parish]' and retaining 'Cliff ward'. Neither provided further evidence in support of their proposals.

80 Carlton le Moorland Parish Council (currently within Brant Broughton ward) noted the District Council's proposals and considered that 'there were no significant implications' for its parish.

81 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One. We note the consensus between the District Council, the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson to retain the existing Cliff Villages ward. We investigated the possibility of improving the ward's 7% electoral variance (by 2008) by transferring a parish into another ward. It was

noted that removing Harmston parish from Cliff Villages ward would result in no improvement to electoral equality, but transferring Leadenham parish would provide an electoral variance of 1% fewer than the district average (by 2008). However, we are reluctant to do so, having noted the evidence received in opposition to the District Council's proposal to transfer Leadenham parish into another ward. Having visited the area and noted the excellent road links between all the constituent parishes, we concur with the District Council that the existing Cliff Villages ward reflects community identity and therefore should be retained. In light of the support for this ward, the clear links between the settlements and the good levels of electoral equality achieved, we propose to retain the existing Cliff Villages ward as part of our draft recommendations. We do not propose to adopt the Labour Party's proposal to change the ward name to Cliff, as we consider the name Cliff Villages to be more reflective of the constituent villages running along the Lincoln Edge.

82 To the west of Cliff Villages ward, the District Council proposed to broadly retain the existing Bassingham and Brant Broughton wards (taking the creation of a new parish of Witham St Hughs from part of Swinderby and Thurlby parishes into account). It also proposed to retain Eagle & North Scarle and Skellingthorpe wards and the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson proposed to broadly combine these wards into new three-member Moorland and Eagle wards. We note that the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals would provide better electoral equality than the District Council's proposals for this area. We acknowledge and concur with comments received stating that the development in Witham St Hughs parish means that this area is entitled to an additional councillor. In the absence of any community identity evidence, we have had to consider other evidence and factors to produce our recommendations.

83 We investigated options to improve electoral equality and create single-member wards in this area including a ward comprising Eagle & Swinethorpe, North Scarle, Swinderby and Thorpe on the Hill parishes (resulting in a variance 9% more than the district average by 2008). Due to the location of these parishes on the edge of the district, in order to attempt to improve electoral equality, it would only be possible to remove Thorpe on the Hill parish but this would not improve electoral equality (13% fewer electors than the district average by 2008). We note that the western boundary of the proposed Moorland ward would broadly follow the A46, creating a strong boundary. In light of this and our decision to retain Cliff Villages ward, we are adopting Moorland ward as part of our draft recommendations in view of the good electoral equality it would provide. However, we are proposing to name the ward Bassingham & Brant Broughton in order to reflect the two largest settlements in the ward, which corresponds with our approach to naming our proposed new wards elsewhere in the district.

84 We note the poor electoral equality of the existing two-member Skellingthorpe ward and the considerably improved electoral equality of the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposed alternative Eagle ward. The District Council and Skellingthorpe Parish Council provided some evidence in support of the existing Skellingthorpe ward, detailing the services and amenities available in the village. However, we note comments were also received voicing concern regarding the potential poor electoral equality of the District Council's proposed Skellingthorpe ward.

85 We consider that insufficient evidence was received to justify such a high electoral variance in Skellingthorpe ward. Although we received some description of the village, we received no evidence of why it was not linked to other villages around it and could

not be equally well served in a multi-member ward with the other villages in the vicinity. The majority of the evidence listed amenities and services available in the village, which are likely to contribute towards a community identity. However, we consider that insufficient evidence was received to justify retaining a ward containing 18% fewer electors than the district average by 2008. We would require more evidence as to why Skellingthorpe parish should form a ward on its own and not be linked with other areas. We visited the area and noted the road link between Skellingthorpe and other parishes in the district.

86 We investigated a number of different options to try to take account of the District Council and Skellingthorpe Parish Council's comments and improve electoral equality. We note it would be possible to create a ward with good electoral equality (1% under the district average by 2008) comprising Doddington, Skellingthorpe and Thorpe on the Hill parishes. A ward comprising Eagle & Swinethorpe, North Scarle, Norton Disney and Swinderby parishes would also have excellent electoral equality. However, this would have a knock-on effect on our proposed Bassingham & Brant Broughton ward, because without Norton Disney and Swinderby parishes it would have 14% fewer electors than the district average by 2008 and would also breach the A46. We conclude that while we may be able to slightly improve electoral equality by putting forward our own warding arrangements, compared to the District Council's proposals, the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals offered the best overall electoral equality. We acknowledge the location of Skellingthorpe parish on the edge of the district, close to Lincoln, with which it shares many links, and the District Council and Parish Council's catalogue of amenities within the parish. However, in view of the poor electoral equality of Skellingthorpe ward, we do not consider this to provide persuasive enough evidence or arguments to justify its retention. We are therefore proposing to adopt Labour Party's Eagle ward as part of our draft recommendations and would welcome any additional evidence during Stage Three. We propose to name this ward Eagle & Skellingthorpe in order to recognise the two settlements at either end of the ward.

87 Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12), provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Bassingham & Brant Broughton, Cliff Villages and Eagle & Skellingthorpe wards.

## North Hykeham

88 North Hykeham is a parish situated in the north of the district and divided into five town council wards based on district wards of the same names. The parish comprises the district wards of North Hykeham Forum, North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Mill, North Hykeham Moor and North Hykeham Witham. Table 4 (page 22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that the wards are forecast to have by 2008, if the existing arrangements remained in place.

89 We received five representations during Stage One in relation to North Hykeham town. The District Council proposed six single-member wards, including an additional ward for North Hykeham, and proposed to broadly retain four of the existing wards, namely North Hykeham Forum, North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Moor and North Hykeham Witham. It recommended a minor amendment to the boundary between North Hykeham Forum and North Hykeham Witham wards to transfer a small area of Lincoln Road located between the access to Broadway and Dore Avenue, from North Hykeham Forum into North Hykeham Witham ward. It proposed another minor

amendment to transfer the area along Meadow Lane between Russell Avenue and Chapel Lane, from North Hykeham Mill ward into North Hykeham Witham ward. The District Council also proposed to transfer Haze Lane from North Hykeham Moor ward into North Hykeham Memorial ward.

90 It put forward a new North Hykeham Mill ward, less Chapel Farm and Grange Farm and utilising the backs of the houses of Dorchester Way and Hebden Moor Way as well as the southern section of Mill Lane as boundaries. Under the District Council's recommendations, the remainder of North Hykeham Mill ward would comprise part of a new North Hykeham Chapel Farm ward. This ward would also contain part of North Hykeham Memorial ward, north of Newark Road, south of the track by the sand and gravel pit and west of Heron Walk. The remainder of the existing North Hykeham Memorial ward, plus Haze Lane, transferred from the current North Hykeham Moor ward, would comprise the District Council's North Hykeham Memorial ward. It stated that its proposals for North Hykeham would 'ensure equality of representation'. The ward would initially take into account the 'significant new development over the next few years'.

91 The Labour Party also proposed six single-member wards for North Hykeham town. Its North Hykeham Forum, North Hykeham Moor and North Hykeham Witham wards were identical to the District Council's. The Labour Party's North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Mill and North Hykeham Grange wards differed slightly from the District Council's equivalent North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Mill and North Hykeham Chapel Farm wards. The Labour Party proposed simply to divide the existing North Hykeham Mill ward along the same boundary described earlier, creating a new North Hykeham Grange ward, retaining the boundary with North Hykeham Memorial ward along Newark Road. It noted the 'unprecedented population growth since the last review' and the 'large housing development' planned for North Hykeham Mill ward. It acknowledged that it had 'not been practical' in the case of its proposed North Hykeham Grange ward, to 'minimise variation from the district average' and the ward would have an electoral variance of 88% below the district average.

92 Having considered the future increase in the electorate of North Hykeham Mill ward, its Town Council 'resolved that a further district councillor be requested to represent North Hykeham' and a new North Hykeham Chapel Farm ward be created around the new development. It argued that this would provide good electoral equality and reflect community identity, however it did not put forward exact ward boundaries. The Town Council stated that the new North Hykeham Chapel Farm ward should be based on part of the existing North Hykeham Mill ward and 'not parts selected from other wards'. Councillor Hudson did not submit specific proposals for warding arrangements in North Hykeham, but merely proposed that the town should be allocated six district councillors. He noted that his district proposals meet 'North Hykeham Town Council's aspirations on ward numbers'. A local resident considered that, in light of the increased electorate in North Hykeham, it should be allocated an additional ward and district councillor.

93 We have carefully considered all representations received during Stage One. We note the broad consensus between the majority of the proposals received for North Hykeham and the reasonable electoral equality of the District Council's proposals. However, the Labour Party's proposed North Hykeham Grange ward would initially contain 88% fewer electors than the district average, before new development is completed. This ward would comprise just 207 electors, which we consider too few to

be represented by one district councillor, therefore it is necessary to combine it with another area in order to provide a ward of a suitable size to justify representation on the District Council prior to the development being completed. We propose to create a two-member North Hykeham Memorial ward broadly comprising the District Council's proposed North Hykeham Memorial and North Hykeham Chapel Farm wards. We propose to create wards based around the external North Hykeham parish boundary. However, we are proposing a number of boundary amendments in order to improve electoral equality, improve the reflection of community identities and provide clearer boundaries.

94 We consider that part of the existing boundary between North Hykeham Memorial and North Hykeham Forum, following Leyburn Road could be improved in order to provide a more logical boundary, reflecting access points. We therefore propose an amendment so that the boundary between North Hykeham Forum and North Hykeham Memorial wards continues south behind the back of the houses of Constance Avenue and Colne Close and includes Glenbank Close. The boundary would then rejoin the existing boundary along Newark Road. This proposal would thus transfer Glenbank Close, Bure Close, Colne Close, Leyburn Road, Constance Avenue and Thirsk Drive from North Hykeham Memorial ward into North Hykeham Forum ward. We propose another amendment to the existing boundary between North Hykeham Memorial and North Hykeham Moor ward to follow the western side of the school (off Moor Lane) playing field instead of Haze Lane. This would result in the transfer of Haze Lane, Jaguar Drive, Cresta Close, Sunbeam Avenue and Lotus Court from North Hykeham Moor ward into North Hykeham Memorial ward. We consider that this amendment would create a stronger boundary and should better reflect community identity.

95 We propose to broadly adopt the remainder of the District Council and Labour Party's proposals for North Hykeham, with two amendments to improve electoral equality and the reflection of community identity, as well as providing more easily identifiable boundaries. We propose an amendment to the existing boundary between North Hykeham Forum and North Hykeham Moor wards in order to improve electoral equality in the latter ward. Under our proposal, the boundary currently running along Dore Avenue, north of Mulberry Lane would instead follow the track running from Mulberry Lane, along the south-west boundary of the school off Ash Grove and run northwards along the backs of the houses to Newark Road. This would improve electoral equality from 5% fewer electors than the district average to 2% more than the district average by 2008.

96 In addition, we do not propose to transfer the area of Lincoln Road between Broadway and Dore Avenue from North Hykeham Forum ward into North Hykeham Witham ward. We consider this joint proposal to be inconsistent with the remainder of the boundary in this area, which follows Lincoln Road. We consider that it would better reflect community identity to adhere to the existing boundary between North Hykeham Witham and North Hykeham Forum wards. Our proposed North Hykeham Witham ward would also improve the electoral equality of the jointly proposed North Hykeham Witham ward from 6% fewer electors than the district average to 2% fewer than the district average by 2008.

97 As part of our proposals, five new North Hykeham parish wards will be created, based on our proposed new wards, as detailed in the parish and town council electoral arrangements section (page 57).

98 In conclusion, we consider that our proposals for five district wards covering North Hykeham parish will ensure good electoral equality, use strong boundaries and provide a good reflection of community identity, and would retain the existing ward names. Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for North Hykeham Forum, North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Mill, North Hykeham Moor and North Hykeham Witham wards.

## Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East, Branston & Mere, Heighington & Washingborough and Waddington West wards

99 The above four wards are situated in the north of the district. Table 4 (page 22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

**Table 6: Existing arrangements**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Branston & Mere	Branston & Mere and Potter Hanworth parishes	2
Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East	Bracebridge Heath parish and the Waddington East parish ward of the parish of Waddington	3
Heighington & Washingborough	Canwick, Heighington and Washingborough parishes	3
Waddington West	Waddington West parish ward of the parish of Waddington	1

100 We received four representations regarding this area. The District Council proposed to retain the existing wards. However, it renamed Branston & Mere ward as Branston ward. It argued that the 'representative links between district councillors and parish councils' should be retained and noted that 'no significant electoral growth' is projected for Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East ward. It also noted that Heighington & Washingborough ward contains 'three very active parish councils' and 'the lower section of Waddington parish is very much a separate community [from the upper section] and so it is appropriate that it has a separate member representing the interest of the area'.

101 Councillor Hudson and the Labour Party put forward identical ward boundaries to that of the District Council based on the existing wards. However, they proposed alternative names for these four wards. Councillor Hudson proposed to name Branston & Mere as Fens North ward, Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East as Heath ward, Heighington & Washingborough as Washingborough ward and Waddington West ward, as Lowfields ward. Councillor Hudson noted that the total electorate of his proposed Heath ward would vary by more than 10% from the district average by 2008, but argued that 'the size of parishes and parish wards within and adjacent to [Heath] ward preclude

a better distribution'. He noted that an alternative ward linking Bracebridge Heath parish and Waddington West parish would allow better electoral equality but 'is open to interpretation as a detached ward'.

102 The Labour Party proposed the same Fens North and Washingborough wards as Councillor Hudson. It put forward alternative Heath and Fens Central wards, the former comprising Waddington West ward and Bracebridge Heath parish. Its Fens Central ward would contain Dunston, Metheringham and Nocton parishes and Waddington East parish ward of Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East ward. The Labour Party did not produce any evidence in support of its proposals for these wards. Washingborough Parish Council stated that it was 'satisfied' with the District Council's proposals for its parish and would favour the retention of the existing arrangements for the three-member Heighington & Washingborough ward.

103 We carefully considered all representations received during Stage One. We note the consensus between the District Council, Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals to retain the boundaries of the existing Branston & Mere and Heighington & Washingborough wards. We consider that these two wards would provide good electoral equality and therefore, in light of this and the local support received for them, propose to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our proposals Branston & Mere ward would be renamed Branston ward, as proposed by the District Council, to reflect the name of the largest settlement in this ward.

104 We noted the Labour Party's proposals for new Heath and Fens Central wards. However, in view of our proposal for a Metheringham ward detailed below, we are unable to adopt its Fens Central ward, which would include Waddington East parish ward of Waddington parish. If this parish ward were included in a ward with our proposed Metheringham ward, it would have an electoral variance of 11% more than the district average by 2008. It would also, in our opinion, not reflect community identity, as electors in Waddington East parish ward are unlikely to look east to Nocton, Dunston, Metheringham and Blankney parishes, which is indicated by the main roads between these parishes running north - south rather than east - west. We therefore do not intend to adopt this ward as part of our draft recommendations.

105 The Labour Party's proposed Heath ward would be detached, denoting that the component parts would not be linked together but would be separated by part of another ward. We are reluctant to adopt such a ward, as we consider it would not provide convenient and effective local government. Therefore we do not propose to adopt this ward.

106 We then examined the District Council and Councillor Hudson's proposals for the Bracebridge Heath and Waddington area. We investigated alternative warding arrangements to improve the electoral equality of the existing Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East ward, which would contain 5% (under the current arrangements) and 12% (under our draft recommendations) more electors than the district average by 2008. We noted that, if the A607 road were used as a boundary to divide Waddington parish, the area to the east would have an electoral variance of 39% more electors than the district average by 2008 and the area to the west would contain 18% fewer. We were unable to identify suitable alternative ward boundaries that would not arbitrarily divide the villages of Waddington East and Waddington West. We noted the agreement between the District Council and Councillor Hudson regarding the boundaries of the

existing wards. We also noted the District Council's comment that Waddington West parish ward contains a separate community from the remainder of Waddington and so should have its own member to represent it. We concluded that it would not be appropriate to place Waddington West parish ward in a district ward with neighbouring areas such as Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East ward, which has three district councillors. We consider that each ward should not be represented by more than three district councillors, other than in very exceptional circumstances. In view of this restraint and our reluctance to arbitrarily divide the Waddington villages, we are not proposing any amendments to the existing arrangements in the Waddington area. In addition, Councillor Hudson commented on the difficulty in achieving reasonable electoral equality in this part of the district. We therefore decided to adopt the District Council and Councillor Hudson's proposals, using the existing ward names of Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East and Waddington West, which reflect the constituent parts of the two wards. We consider that these wards would reflect community identity and provide convenient and effective local government.

107 Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Branston, Bracebridge Heath & Waddington East, Waddington West and Heighington & Washingborough wards.

## Ashby de la Launde, Billingham, Martin and Metheringham wards

108 The above four wards are located in the north-east of the district. Table 4 (page 22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

**Table 7: Existing arrangements**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Ashby de La Launde	Ashby de la Launde & Bloxholm, Digby, Dorrington, Rowston and Scopwick parishes	1
Billingham	Billingham and Dogdyke parishes	1
Martin	Blankney, Martin, Timberland and Walcott parishes	1
Metheringham	Dunston, Metheringham and Nocton parishes	2

109 We received six representations regarding this area. The District Council proposed to retain the existing Ashby de la Launde and Metheringham wards, stating that there is a need to 'maintain local representative links between the District Council and the parish council[s]' in the two wards. The District Council proposed to transfer Dogdyke parish from Billingham ward into Martin ward, noting that 'any concerns and issues in Dogdyke [parish] are likely to be of a similar nature to parishes in Martin'. It then proposed to transfer North Kyme parish into a single-member ward with Billingham parish, for which it did not submit a new name. The District Council argued that 'the boundary of North Kyme [parish] is closely linked and inter-twined with Billingham [parish], so many of the issues and concerns are common to both these communities'. It also noted that this

change ‘facilitates equal representation of the electorate ... and ensures strong community links are maintained’. All of the District Council’s wards for this part of the district would have electoral variances within 10% of the district average by 2008.

110 The Labour Party proposed a three-member Fens Central ward as described earlier and, supported by Councillor Hudson, recommended a three-member Fens South ward comprising the existing Ashby de la Launde, Billingham and Martin wards and Brauncewell and Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange parishes of Cranwell & Byard’s Leap ward.

**Table 8: Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party proposals**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Fens Central	Dunston, Metheringham and Nocton parishes, Waddington East parish ward of Waddington parish	3
Fens South	Ashby de la Launde, Billingham, Blankney, Brauncewell, Digby, Dogdyke, Dorrington, Martin, Rowston, Scopwick, Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange, Timberland, Walcott parishes	3

111 Councillor Hudson submitted almost identical proposals to the Labour Party. However, under his proposals Fens Central ward would not include Waddington East parish ward of Waddington parish and thus would be based on the same boundaries as the existing Metheringham ward, which the District Council also proposed to retain. Councillor Hudson argued that his and the Labour Party’s proposed Fens South ward would retain Dogdyke parish’s ‘link to Billingham [parish]’. Dogdyke Parish Council expressed concern that the District Council’s proposal to transfer its parish into Martin ward would isolate it and ‘not be of any benefit to the community of Dogdyke’. It stated that ‘Dogdyke parish has long historic ties with Billingham, and the people of these villages have always been part of the same community’ and have ‘no connection or link to Martin ward’. Dogdyke Parish Council contended that Billingham provides its electorate with various services and amenities and sharing a district councillor ‘has worked for the benefit of all’.

112 Nocton Parish Council stated that it would like to retain the existing Metheringham ward which it considers provides it with good representation. A Metheringham resident proposed that the hamlet of Blankney transfer into Metheringham ward since the constituent parishes ‘form a geographical and historical whole’ and share historical links.

113 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One. As stated earlier (in paragraph 100), we do not propose to adopt the Labour Party’s proposed Fens Central ward, as we do not consider that it would reflect community identity. The Labour Party did not provide any evidence of shared community identity between Waddington East parish ward of Waddington parish and the existing Metheringham ward. Having visited the area and taken the road links into consideration, we do not

believe that the proposed Fens Central ward would provide convenient and effective local government or mirror community links.

114 We note the consensus between the District Council, Councillor Hudson and Nocton Parish Council to retain the existing Metheringham ward as well as its name. We do not propose to rename it Fens Central in view of our decision not to adopt the series of proposed Fens ward names and retain the ward names which reflect communities within the wards. We also note the view of a Metheringham resident that Blankney hamlet should be part of Metheringham ward in order to reflect community identity. Having visited the area and noted the proximity and good road links between Blankney and Metheringham parishes, we propose to transfer Blankney parish into Metheringham ward. We acknowledge that this would worsen electoral equality from 4% (under a council size of 43) to 9% more than the district average by 2008. However, we consider that in view of the improvement in the reflection of community identity, this electoral variance is acceptable.

115 The Labour Party and Councillor Hudson both proposed a three-member Fens South ward, which would have an electoral variance of 8% more than the district average by 2008. We note that this proposal took into consideration concerns regarding the District Council's proposal to transfer Dogdyke parish; however, this would not provide as good electoral equality as the District Council's proposals for this area.

116 During a visit to the area, we noted the clear links between Dogdyke and Billingham parishes, as well as a less easily identifiable link between Martin and Dogdyke parishes. We therefore investigated alternative options to see if it would be possible to create wards with both good electoral equality and a good reflection of community identity. We found that combining Billingham, Dogdyke, North Kyme, Martin, Timberland and Walcott parishes in a two-member ward would result in an electoral variance of 1% more than the district average by 2008. In view of the excellent electoral equality such a ward would provide, as well as the reflection of community links between Dogdyke and Billingham parishes, we propose to adopt a new Billingham & Martin ward as part of our draft recommendations. We recognise that this proposal would place North Kyme and South Kyme parishes in separate wards. However, having visited the area and noted the short distance between the villages of North Kyme and Billingham, as well as the District Council's comments on the communities' shared concerns, we are content that this new ward would adequately reflect community identity.

117 We note the District Council's proposal to retain the existing Ashby de la Launde ward. Since we did not receive any comments regarding community identity in this area, we looked to try to improve electoral equality. One option to transfer Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange parish into Ashby de la Launde ward would improve the electoral variance from 4% fewer electors than the district average, to 2% fewer by 2008. We note that the Labour Party also proposed to place Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange parish in its Fens South ward, which would include the existing Ashby de la Launde ward. In light of this, we propose to transfer Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange parish into Ashby de la Launde ward.

118 Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Ashby de la Launde, Billingham & Martin and Metheringham wards.

## Sleaford

119 Sleaford is a parish situated in the south of the district and divided into six town council parish wards based on district wards of the same name. The parish comprises the single-member district wards of Sleaford Castle, Sleaford Holdingham, Sleaford Mareham, Sleaford Quarrington, Sleaford Navigation and Sleaford Westholme. Table 4 (page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

120 The District Council proposed six single-member wards for Sleaford, including the retention of Sleaford Holdingham and Sleaford Mareham wards. It put forward some new ward names and a number of amendments to the four remaining existing Sleaford wards in order to 'ensure equality of representation for the town area to reflect new development'. The District Council proposed a Sleaford Quarrington ward comprising part of Sleaford Quarrington ward. More specifically, the area south of Grantham Road, west of Stump Cross Hill and Victoria Avenue and east of the A15. Part of the existing Sleaford Quarrington ward north of Grantham Road and east of the A15, would be transferred into the District Council's proposed Sleaford St Botolph's ward. Its Sleaford St Botolph's ward would comprise the bulk of the existing Sleaford Castle ward, west of King Edward Street and south-west of the Ruskington railway line. The area of Sleaford Castle ward to the east of King Edward Street would be transferred into the District Council's proposed Sleaford Central ward, also comprising the entire current Sleaford Navigation ward. The District Council proposed a Sleaford Westholme ward, comprising the existing ward and part of the existing Sleaford Castle ward north of the railway line.

121 The District Council proposed to transfer part of the existing Sleaford Quarrington ward into its more rural Leasingham & Cranwell ward, which would have an electoral variance of 13% more than the district average by 2008. Taking account of the new development at the former Rauceby Hospital site in Sleaford Quarrington ward on the edge of Sleaford parish, Sleaford would be entitled to an additional councillor by 2008. The District Council therefore proposed to transfer the new development into its neighbouring Leasingham & Cranwell ward in order to provide good electoral equality and avoid substantial amendments to the town's ward boundaries. This proposal would create a new parish ward, which the District Council proposed to name Greylees, as detailed in the Parish and town council electoral arrangements section, at the end of the report.

122 The District Council argued that the Rauceby Hospital development will be relatively isolated from the remainder of Sleaford and therefore its community will not share the same concerns. It acknowledged that the electorate within this area 'will clearly look to Sleaford for most services, and still retain these links with Sleaford through the Town Council' but 'in the long term, the community links are expected to be self-generated and therefore be more self-contained'. The District Council contended that the new community is likely to practice joint-working with neighbouring parish councils and so it is sensible to place it within such a ward. It argued that, although it is difficult 'to assess exactly how the new community links will develop over time', it assumed that the new community will be regarded more of a rural village than an extension of Sleaford. However, it concluded that achieving electoral equality is the 'most important justification for this proposal'.

123 The Labour Party and two local residents (in a joint submission) submitted identical proposals for seven single-member district wards in Sleaford. The Labour Party contended that the District Council 'failed to address electoral imbalances' in Sleaford parish as a result of 'unprecedented population growth'. Thus, the Labour Party (and local residents) proposed seven single-member wards all within Sleaford parish boundary. Their proposals included five wards with identical boundaries to the District Council's proposals for Sleaford and an alternative Sleaford Quarrington West ward. This ward would incorporate the new development at the former Rauceby Hospital site and would be based on the same boundaries as the District Council's proposed Greylees parish ward. The Labour Party and local residents' proposals included different ward names compared with the District Council's proposals. They proposed to retain the ward name Sleaford Navigation and put forward Sleaford Quarrington East and Sleaford Tower as alternative names for the District Council's Sleaford Quarrington and Sleaford St Botolph's wards respectively.

124 The Labour Party stated that 'long-term, boundary divisions are sufficiently flexible to retain a "one member, one ward" approach for Sleaford'. However, it acknowledged that 'the short-term impact' of the new housing development on the former Rauceby Hospital site 'justifies ... introducing a transitional two-member ward in Quarrington until a reasonable level of electoral equality is achieved'.

125 District Councillor Watson, Sleaford Town Councillors Edwards and Hayes and a Sleaford resident all opposed the District Council's proposal to transfer part of Sleaford parish into its proposed Leasingham & Cranwell ward. They all noted the significant increase in the electorate of Sleaford town and therefore argued that it should be allocated seven district councillors. They also noted that the Rauceby Hospital site has historically been part of Sleaford parish. Sleaford Town Councillor Hayes contended that the residents of the Rauceby development 'will look to Sleaford for their service provision ... it makes little sense, therefore, to seek to separate it from Sleaford and to incorporate it into a rural ward with which it will share no commonality'. He therefore proposed that the Rauceby Hospital site be incorporated into a new seventh ward, which would necessitate amendments to the boundaries of the other Sleaford wards. The Sleaford resident supported the option of creating an additional Sleaford ward, and saw 'no merit' in separating the development site into a 'more rural' ward.

126 Councillor Hudson did not submit specific proposals for Sleaford but stated that the town should be allocated seven district councillors. A Metherringham resident also recommended that Sleaford be allocated an additional seventh district councillor.

127 We carefully considered all submissions received during Stage One. We note that the key issue in relation to Sleaford parish is whether to transfer part of the parish into a neighbouring rural ward, thus determining how many district councillors are allocated to the town. Under the District Council's proposals, six single-member Sleaford wards would be created and the new Rauceby Hospital development on the edge of the parish would be transferred into its Leasingham & Cranwell ward. Conversely, the Labour Party's proposals would retain the external parish boundary and allocate the parish seven district councillors.

128 We note that the District Council and Labour Party's proposals would create a new Greylees parish ward and a new Quarrington West district ward respectively, both initially containing just 35 electors. As stated in the council size section (page 34), we

are concerned that this is an insufficient number of electors for one town councillor to represent in a parish of 13,263, as this would not provide effective and convenient local government. The Labour Party's Quarrington West ward would initially contain 98% fewer electors than the district average and 53% fewer by 2008.

129 In light of this poor electoral equality and comments received from the Labour Party, District Councillor Watson, Sleaford Town Councillors Edwards and Hayes and a Sleaford resident, in opposition to the District Council's proposal to transfer part of Sleaford parish into a rural ward, we do not propose to breach the Sleaford parish boundary. We take the view that to do so would not reflect community identity or provide convenient and effective local government. Therefore, under our proposed council size of 43, we note that Sleaford parish as a whole is entitled to seven district councillors. In view of the lack of proposals received based on seven Sleaford district councillors while also providing good electoral equality, we have therefore not pursued these proposals and instead have generated our own proposals for Sleaford.

130 We explored various options and attempted to use ground features such as railways, roads and rivers as boundaries; however, this did not produce good electoral equality. We therefore adapted the Sleaford proposals we had received. The principal departure from these is in the south-west of the town, where we are proposing a three-member Sleaford Quarrington ward which would contain 3% fewer electors than the district average by 2008. This ward would comprise the existing Sleaford Quarrington ward, and parts of Sleaford Castle and Sleaford Mareham wards. The boundary of this ward would follow the external Sleaford parish boundary west of London Road, then the River Slea as far as the Ruskington railway line. The boundary would then follow the railway line south as far as King Edward Street, then run behind the back of the houses along Rhodes Avenue and George Street, before joining the existing boundary east of the junction of George Street and Grantham Road. It would then follow part of Grantham Road, then Victoria Avenue and London Road, Bullock Pasture Lane, returning to London Road. We acknowledge that our proposed three-member Sleaford Quarrington ward would cover a relatively large urban area and be slightly irregularly shaped. However, we have investigated numerous options and this provides the best electoral equality and ward boundaries that we could identify. We would welcome comments on our proposal during Stage Three.

131 The other proposed ward that significantly differs from the proposals submitted, is our proposed Sleaford Central ward which amalgamates areas from other wards in order to provide electoral equality. This ward includes parts of the existing Sleaford Castle and Sleaford Mareham wards. It would comprise the area to the east of our proposed Sleaford Quarrington ward south of Electric Station Road and West Gate, west of South Gate and south of the Boston/Spalding railway line. The remainder of the boundary of Sleaford Central ward would follow the external Sleaford parish boundary between London Road and the Boston/Spalding railway line. We acknowledge that this ward, comprising parts of two existing wards comprising much of the town centre as well as the edge of the town, may not provide the best arrangement. However, we consider that in view of the good electoral equality it will provide by 2008 (1% fewer electors than the district average), our proposed Sleaford Central ward provides the best option we could identify at this stage.

132 We are proposing some minor amendments to the District Council and Labour Party's proposed Sleaford Central/Navigation and Sleaford Westholme wards to

achieve better levels of electoral equality. The area to the east of South Gate in the existing Sleaford Castle ward will be transferred into the amended Sleaford Navigation ward. Similarly, the area to the east of North Gate and south of Tamar Court in Sleaford Westholme ward will be transferred into the amended Sleaford Navigation ward. Under our proposals, the existing ward names of Sleaford Navigation and Sleaford Westholme would be retained. We also propose retaining the existing Sleaford Holdingham ward in view of its good electoral equality. All our proposed Sleaford wards would have electoral variances within 10% of the district average by 2008. As part of our proposals, five new Sleaford parish wards will be created, based on our proposed new wards, as detailed in the parish and town electoral arrangements section (page 57).

133 Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Sleaford Central, Sleaford Holdingham, Sleaford Navigation, Sleaford Quarrington and Sleaford Westholme wards.

### Cranwell & Byard’s Leap, Heckington Rural, Kyme, Leasingham & Roxholm, Osbournby and Ruskington wards

134 The above six wards are located in the south of the district. Table 4 (page 22) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances that they would be forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

**Table 9: Existing arrangements**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Cranwell & Byard’s Leap	Brauncewell, Cranwell & Byard’s Leap and Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange parishes	1
Heckington Rural	Burton Pedwardine, Great Hale, Heckington, Helpringham, and Little Hale parishes	2
Kyme	Anwick, Asgarby & Howell, Ewerby & Evedon, Kirkby la Thorpe, North Kyme and South Kyme parishes	1
Leasingham & Roxholm	Leasingham, North Rauceby, Roxholm and South Rauceby parishes	1
Osbournby	Aswarby and Swarby, Aunsby and Dembleby, Culverthorpe and Kelby, Osbournby, Newton and Haceby, Silk Willoughby, Threekingham, Screddington, Swaton, Walcot near Folkingham and Wilsford parishes	1
Ruskington	Ruskington parish	2

135 We received three representations regarding this area. The District Council proposed to retain the existing Heckington Rural, Osbournby and Ruskington wards and stated that the local representative links between district and parish councillors should be retained in the former ward. It also argued that Osbournby ward contains 11 parish councils and 14 separate communities, therefore ‘any increase in ward size could make the task of representing the communities unrealistic’. The District Council stated that Ruskington is ‘a large village community, which requires two members to represent its interests and achieve effective representation’.

136 The District Council proposed a provisionally named Kyme ward, comprising the existing Kyme ward, less North Kyme parish. It stated that this amendment would allow for good levels of electoral equality and would ensure community links between Billingham and North Kyme parishes are reflected. It suggested that the ward should be renamed as a result of transferring North Kyme parish into its proposed Billingham ward.

137 As detailed earlier, the District Council recommended combining Cranwell & Byard’s Leap and Leasingham & Roxholm wards and part of Sleaford Quarrington ward (west of the A15) into a new two-member Leasingham & Cranwell ward. It argued that these ‘communities are of a similar nature and many of the issues and concerns are common to both areas’. It submitted relatively detailed justification in support of its proposed Leasingham & Cranwell ward, which would have an electoral variance 10% more than the district average by 2008. The District Council proposed to transfer new development in Sleaford Quarrington ward into the proposed neighbouring Leasingham & Cranwell ward in order to try to improve electoral equality and avoid substantial amendments to the town’s ward boundaries. This proposal would create a new parish ward, as detailed in the parish and town electoral arrangements section.

138 The Labour Party and Councillor Hudson put forward three alternative multi-member wards in this area.

**Table 10: Sleaford and North Hykeham Constituency Labour Party and Councillor Hudson’s proposals**

<b>Name of ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Cranwell/Temple	Aswarby and Swarby, Aunsby and Dembleby, Burton Pedwardine, Cranwell & Byard’s Leap, Culverthorpe & Kelby, Newton & Haceby, North Rauceby, Osbournby, Screddington, Silk Willoughby, South Rauceby, Threekingham, Walcot near Folkingham and Wilsford parishes	2
Heckington	Asgarby & Howell, Ewerby & Evedon, Great Hale, Heckington, Helpringham, Kirkby la Thorpe, Little Hale, North Kyme, South Kyme and Swaton parishes	3
Ruskington	Anwick, Leasingham, Roxholm and Ruskington parishes	3

139 Neither the Labour Party nor Councillor Hudson provided any detailed evidence in support of their proposals for this area.

140 We carefully considered all representations received at Stage One. In view of our decision to retain the external Sleaford parish boundaries, as detailed in paragraph 124, we do not propose to adopt the District Council's proposed Leasingham & Cranwell ward. In addition we note the District Council's comments that Leasingham and Cranwell villages share similar concerns; however, this ward and the District Council's proposed neighbouring Ruskington ward would both have electoral variances of 10% more than the district average by 2008. Projected poor electoral equality and lack of substantial community identity evidence helped to form our decision not to adopt these two wards. We did not receive any other representations regarding this area, apart from the objections to including part of Sleaford town in the District Council's proposed two-member Leasingham & Cranwell ward, detailed in paragraph 124. We therefore explored alternative warding arrangements in order to provide improved electoral equality.

141 We note that the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposals for new Cranwell/Temple and Ruskington wards would provide significantly better electoral equality than the District Council's proposals: 1% fewer, and 5% more electors than the district average by 2008, respectively. We also noted that the District Council's proposal to retain the existing Osbournby ward would result in an electoral variance of 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2008. In view of the better electoral equality that the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson's proposal for this area would provide, our decision to retain Sleaford Town Council boundaries and the absence of any community identity evidence, we propose to broadly adopt their Cranwell ward. We propose to amend it slightly to include the parishes of Brauncewell and Swaton in light of its improvement to electoral equality. The inclusion of Swaton parish reflects the existing Osbournby ward. We are naming this ward Cranwell & Osbournby after two of the larger villages situated at either end of the ward. We do not propose to adopt Councillor Hudson's proposed ward name of Temple, as we consider it would not reflect community identity as well as our proposed ward name. Our two-member Cranwell & Osbournby ward would have an electoral variance of 2% more than the district average by 2008. We acknowledge that this ward would cover a relatively large area; however, in view of the very good electoral equality it would provide and the local support for this ward, we consider that it is the best option.

142 We are broadly adopting the Labour Party's alternative three-member Ruskington ward, less Anwick parish to Kirkby la Thorpe & South Kyme ward, which improves the ward's electoral equality. We propose to name this ward Leasingham & Ruskington in order to reflect the two closely linked villages within this ward. In view of its excellent electoral equality, we are adopting the District Council's provisionally named Kyme ward and renaming it Kirkby la Thorpe & South Kyme in order to reflect the inclusion of South Kyme parish. South of this ward, we are proposing to adopt the District Council's Heckington Rural ward, less the parish of Burton Pedwardine, in view of our proposals elsewhere and its reasonable electoral equality. Our Heckington Rural ward would have an electoral variance of 6% more than the district average by 2008.

143 Tables 1 and 2 (pages 9 and 12) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Cranwell & Osbournby, Heckington Rural, Kirkby la Thorpe & South Kyme and Leasingham & Ruskington wards.

## Conclusions

144 Table 11 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2003 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2008.

**Table 11: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements**

	Current arrangements		Draft recommendations	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
Number of councillors	40	40	43	43
Number of wards	30	30	24	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,886	2,101	1,754	1,954
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	8	13	8	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	5	2	0

145 As shown in Table 11, under our draft recommendations for North Kesteven District Council the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% would remain at eight. However, by 2008 only one ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. Our proposals, based on a variety of proposals, would improve electoral equality, reducing the number of wards with significant electoral variances from the district average. The electoral equality is forecast to improve further by 2008. We propose to increase the council size by three and reduce the total number of wards from 30 to 24.

### **Draft recommendation**

North Kesteven District Council should comprise 43 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2 and illustrated on the maps accompanying this report.

## Parish and town council electoral arrangements

146 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the district council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish and town councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the district council and the parish council concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

147 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Committee, lies with district councils. Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997. If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements order made by either the Secretary of State or The Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

148 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of North Hykeham and Sleaford to reflect the proposed district wards.

149 The parish of North Hykeham is currently served by 16 councillors representing five parish wards of Forum, Memorial, Mill, Moor and Witham. Each parish ward is represented by three town councillors, except Forum, which is represented by four town councillors. The District Council proposed that North Hykeham Town Council should 'increase the number of town councillors from the present 16 to 18 (6 wards based on 3 town councillors in each ward)'. North Hykeham Town Council stated that by 2008, each parish ward should be represented by three town councillors and therefore there should be 18 town councillors. It put forward interim arrangements based on the current 16 town councillors, until a new ward is created. These proposals would allocate Forum parish ward three town councillors instead of four and Mill parish ward four instead of three town councillors.

150 We propose to adopt the District Council and North Hykeham Town Council's proposals to increase the total of its members by two. We are not adopting North Hykeham Town Council's interim proposals for its electoral arrangements as part of our draft recommendations. Our recommendations have to take account of projected 2008 electorate figures and it is not within our remit to recommend interim electoral arrangements for parishes in the meantime. Therefore, we are recommending an increase in the size of North Hykeham Town Council from 16 to 18. We are amending the parish wards in North Hykeham in order to reflect our proposed district ward boundaries. We have broadly based the allocation of town councillors to each town ward on electoral equality and would welcome any comments on these recommendations during Stage Three.

**Draft recommendation**

North Hykeham Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, two more than at present, representing five wards: North Hykeham Forum (returning three councillors), North Hykeham Memorial (returning six councillors), North Hykeham Mill (returning three councillors), North Hykeham Moor (returning three councillors) and North Hykeham Witham (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 2.

151 The parish of Sleaford is currently served by 18 councillors representing the six parish wards of Castle, Holdingham, Mareham, Navigation, Quarrington and Westholme. Each parish ward is represented by three town councillors.

152 The District Council proposed seven parish wards and proposed to increase the number of town councillors to 19 in view of its proposals to amend Sleaford district ward boundaries. It put forward a proposal to create a new Greylees parish ward based on part of the existing Sleaford Quarrington ward containing the Rauceby Hospital development. The District Council proposed to transfer Greylees parish ward into its proposed Leasingham & Cranwell ward. The Labour Party, Councillor Hudson and two Sleaford residents (in a joint submission) did not include proposals for the Town Council's electoral arrangements in their proposals for seven district wards based on the same boundaries as the District Council's proposed parish wards. District Councillor Watson, Sleaford Town Councillors Edwards and Hayes and a Sleaford resident opposed the District Council's proposal to transfer part of Sleaford parish into a ward with other parishes. They argued that this would not reflect community identity. We did not receive any other comments regarding Sleaford Town Council's electoral arrangements.

153 As stated previously, we do not propose to adopt the District Council's proposals for Sleaford town council in light of our concern regarding the small number of electors (35) its proposed Greylees parish ward would contain and the provision of the correct distribution of town councillors under a council size of 43. We have subsequently produced our own proposals for 16 town councillors, representing five Sleaford parish wards, based on our proposed district wards in order to provide good electoral equality. We have endeavoured to allocate each parish ward the most suitable number of town councillors in terms of how many electors each ward contains. We would welcome comments on our recommendations for Sleaford Town Council during Stage Three.

**Draft recommendation**

Sleaford Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Central (returning three councillors), Holdingham (returning three councillors), Navigation (returning two councillors), Quarrington (returning eight councillors) and Westholme (returning two councillors). The boundaries between the parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map 3.



## 5 What happens next?

154 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for North Kesteven District Council contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 8 August 2005. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses (including names and addresses of respondents unless specified otherwise) may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

155 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Review Manager  
North Kesteven Review  
The Boundary Committee for England  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

156 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, the Boundary Committee now makes available for public inspection full copies of all representations it takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, a copy of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of North Kesteven District Council, at the Committee's offices in Trevelyan House and on its website at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk). The facility to put submissions on our website was not available during Stage One

157 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.



## 6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for North Kesteven:

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the district of North Kesteven.

**Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for North Kesteven District Council, including constituent parishes.

**Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in North Hykeham town.

**Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Sleaford town.



# Appendix A

## Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm>), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

**Table A1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria**

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We comply with this requirement.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.