

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Northamptonshire in Northamptonshire

Further electoral review

September 2006

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

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# 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 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

Director:

Archie Gall

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 the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of East Northamptonshire is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

## Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 10 of the 20 wards have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. This is not expected to improve by 2009.

This review was conducted in four stages:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

## Draft recommendations

We proposed adopting a mixture of one-, two- and three-member wards based on the District Council's proposals. We proposed a number of amendments in the Rushden and Higham Ferrers area to improve electoral equality and ensure that each area is represented by the correct number of councillors. We proposed creating a three-member Higham Ferrers Wharf ward taking in an area of Rushden parish. This was necessary to ensure that Rushden parish received its correct allocation of councillors. In the remainder of the district we proposed adopting the Council's proposals without amendment.

## Responses to consultation

We received 18 submissions at Stage Three, including comments from the District Council, six town and parish councils, local political parties, local associations and residents. The majority of submissions received objected to the proposed changes in Higham Ferrers and Rushden. The District Council put forward a detailed submission highlighting the separate identities and communities of Higham Ferrers and Rushden towns.

## Analysis and final recommendations

### Electorate figures

The Council is predicting electorate growth of 9% over the next five years. This will be spread across the district. We note that this figure is high but, on the evidence received, we consider it is the best estimate currently available. At Stage Three we received no further comments on electorate growth and are confirming these figures as final.

### Council size

At Stage Three East Northamptonshire Council reiterated its support for a council size of 40 and we received no other comments on council size. We are therefore confirming the council size of 40 as final.

### General analysis

Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we are broadly confirming our draft recommendations as final. However, we propose a significant amendment to our proposals in the towns of Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We received strong community identity evidence from East Northamptonshire Council in support of maintaining the existing boundary between Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We therefore propose reverting to the Council's original proposal of five wards in Rushden and two wards in Higham Ferrers, subject to some modification to improve access and boundaries. In light of the very limited comments received on the rest of the district and the good electoral equality, we propose confirming our draft recommendations outside Higham Ferrers and Rushden as final.

### What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 24 October 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

**Email: [implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)**

**The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.**

The full report is available to download at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

**Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Barnwell	1	Part of the existing Barnwell ward (the parishes of Barnwell, Clopton, Hemington, Lilford-cum-Wigsthorpe, Luddington, Thorpe Achurch, Thurning and Titchmarsh); part of the existing Dryden ward (the parish of Aldwinckle)
2	Fineshade	1	The existing Fineshade ward (the parishes of Collyweston, Duddington-with-Fineshade, Easton on the Hill and Wakerley); part of the existing King's Forest ward (the parish of Harringworth)
3	Higham Ferrers Chichele	2	Part of the existing Higham Ferrers ward (the proposed Higham Ferrers Chichele parish ward of Higham Ferrers parish)
4	Higham Ferrers Lancaster	2	Part of the existing Higham Ferrers ward (the parishes of Chelveston cum Caldecott and Newton Bromswold, and the proposed Higham Ferrers Lancaster parish ward of Higham Ferrers parish)
5	Irthlingborough John Pyel	2	Part of the existing Irthlingborough ward (the proposed Irthlingborough John Pyel parish ward of Irthlingborough parish)
6	Irthlingborough Waterloo	2	Part of the existing Irthlingborough ward (the proposed Irthlingborough Waterloo parish ward of Irthlingborough parish)
7	King's Forest	1	Part of the existing King's Forest ward (the parishes of Blatherwycke, Bulwick, Deene, Deenethorpe, King's Cliffe and Laxton); part of the existing Prebendal ward (the parish of Apethorpe)
8	Lower Nene	1	Part of the existing Lower Nene ward (the parishes of Ashton, Cotterstock, Lutton, Tansor and Warmington); part of the existing Barnwell ward (the parish of Polebrook)
9	Lyveden	1	Part of the existing Lyveden ward (the parishes of Brigstock and Sudborough); part of the existing Dryden ward (the parishes of Lowick and Twywell)

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

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
10 Oundle	3	The existing Oundle ward (the parish of Oundle); part of the existing Lyveden ward (the parish of Benefield); part of the existing Dryden ward (the parishes of Pilton, Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe)
11 Prebendal	1	Part of the existing Prebendal ward (the parishes of Nassington, Southwick, Woodnewton and Yarwell); part of the existing Lower Nene ward (the parishes of Fotheringhay and Glapthorn)
12 Raunds Saxon	2	Part of the existing Raunds Saxon ward, part of the existing Raunds Windmill ward (the proposed Raunds Saxon parish ward of Raunds parish)
13 Raunds Windmill	2	Part of the existing Raunds Windmill ward, part of the existing Raunds Saxon ward (the proposed Raunds Windmill parish ward of Raunds parish)
14 Rushden Bates	2	Part of the existing Rushden South ward, part of the existing Rushden East ward (the proposed Rushden Bates parish ward of Rushden parish)
15 Rushden Hayden	3	Part of the existing Rushden East ward, part of the existing Rushden South ward, part of the existing Rushden North ward (the proposed Rushden Bates parish ward of Rushden parish)
16 Rushden Pemberton	3	Part of the existing Rushden West ward, part of the existing Rushden South ward, part of the existing Rushden North ward (the proposed Rushden Pemberton parish ward of Rushden parish)
17 Rushden Sartoris	2	Part of the existing Rushden South ward, part of the existing Rushden West ward (the proposed Rushden Sartoris parish ward of Rushden parish)
18 Rushden Spencer	3	Part of the existing Rushden North ward, part of the existing Rushden West ward (the proposed Rushden Spencer parish ward of Rushden parish)
19 Stanwick	1	The existing Stanwick ward (the parishes of Hargrave and Stanwick)

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

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
20 Thrapston Lakes	2	Part of the existing Dryden ward (the parish of Islip); part of the existing Thrapston ward (the proposed Thrapston Lakes parish ward of Thrapston parish)
21 Thrapston Market	2	The existing Ringstead ward (the parishes of Denford and Ringstead); part of the existing Thrapston ward (the proposed Thrapston Market parish ward of Thrapston parish)
22 Woodford	1	The existing Woodford ward (the parishes of Great Addington, Little Addington and Woodford)

**Notes:**

- 1 The whole of the 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: Final recommendations for East Northamptonshire**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2009)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Barnwell	1	1,509	1,509	-1	1,637	1,637	-1
2	Fineshade	1	1,515	1,515	0	1,644	1,644	0
3	Higham Ferrers Chichele	2	2,858	1,429	-6	3,100	1,550	-6
4	Higham Ferrers Lancaster	2	2,842	1,421	-6	3,085	1,543	-6
5	Irthlingborough John Pyel	2	2,809	1,405	-7	3,048	1,524	-7
6	Irthlingborough Waterloo	2	2,778	1,389	-8	3,014	1,507	-8
7	King's Forest	1	1,425	1,425	-6	1,547	1,547	-6
8	Lower Nene	1	1,620	1,620	7	1,757	1,757	7
9	Lyveden	1	1,595	1,595	5	1,731	1,731	5
10	Oundle	3	4,214	1,405	-7	4,572	1,524	-7
11	Prebendal	1	1,566	1,566	3	1,700	1,700	3

**Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for East Northamptonshire**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2009)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
12	Raunds Saxon	2	3,172	1,586	4	3,442	1,721	5
13	Raunds Windmill	2	3,155	1,578	4	3,423	1,712	4
14	Rushden Bates	2	3,019	1,510	-1	3,283	1,642	0
15	Rushden Hayden	3	4,924	1,641	8	5,335	1,778	8
16	Rushden Pemberton	3	4,935	1,645	8	5,352	1,784	8
17	Rushden Sartoris	2	3,122	1,561	3	3,387	1,694	3
18	Rushden Spencer	3	4,569	1,523	0	4,961	1,654	0
19	Stanwick	1	1,658	1,658	9	1,799	1,799	9
20	Thrapston Lakes	2	3,012	1,506	-1	3,267	1,634	-1
21	Thrapston Market	2	2,887	1,444	-5	3,132	1,566	-5

**Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for East Northamptonshire**

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2009)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
22 Woodford	1	1,526	1,526	1	1,655	1,655	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60,710</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>65,871</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,518</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,647</b>	<b>-</b>

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

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Northamptonshire Council.

# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the district of East Northamptonshire.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make ongoing assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be a closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of East Northamptonshire. East Northamptonshire'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 electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 8 October 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.<sup>1</sup> This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of East Northamptonshire is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful both in understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

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 any parish and town councils in the district. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of areas as part of this review.

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 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. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as nearly as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors 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 about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. 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. Indeed, we believe that consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews and that whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued for 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.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways 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 that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 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; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from another's. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, 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.

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

**Table 3: Stages of the review**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	12 July 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	4 October 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 February 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	23 May 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 12 July 2005, when we wrote to East Northamptonshire Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northamptonshire Police, the Local Government 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 East Northamptonshire Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 October 2006.

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

17 Stage Three began on 21 February 2006 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Northamptonshire in Northamptonshire*, and ended on 22 May 2006.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It is now 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 electoral changes Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

## Equal opportunities

19 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 the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

## National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 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 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 the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The district of East Northamptonshire is a predominantly rural district, located in the north of Northamptonshire county. It comprises the six towns of Rushden, Thrapston, Oundle, Raunds, Irthlingborough and Higham Ferrers and 53 villages. The population of the district is around 82,000 and the whole district is parished.

22 The Council presently has 36 members who are elected from 20 wards, a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district, 60,710 (December 2004), by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a district average of 1,686 electors (60,710 divided by 36), which the Council forecasts will increase to 1,830 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (65,871 divided by 36).

23 During the last review of East Northamptonshire, the Council forecast that there would be a growth of 4,239 electors between 1996 and 2001. Since the start of the last review the electorate has grown by 7,014 electors.

24 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the district average in percentage terms. In Fineshade ward, currently represented by one councillor, there are currently 1,311 electors, therefore the councillor represents 22% fewer electors than the current district average.

25 Under the existing electoral arrangements 10 of the 20 wards have variances of more than 10% from the average and two have variances of more than 20% from the average. This situation is not expected to improve by 2009. Of particular concern are Fineshade, Prebendal, Ringstead and Thrapston wards where the variances are significantly greater than was anticipated at the time of the PER.

26 Following meetings with council officers, the Committee was of the view that these imbalances were unlikely to improve given the planned developments and expected changes in numbers of electors in different wards over the next five years.

**Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in East Northamptonshire**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2004)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2009)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Barnwell	1	1,596	1,596	-5	1,731	1,731	-5
2	Dryden	1	1,479	1,479	-12	1,605	1,605	-12
3	Fineshade	1	1,311	1,311	-22	1,423	1,423	-22
4	Higham Ferrers	3	5,700	1,900	13	6,184	2,061	13
5	Irthlingborough	3	5,587	1,862	10	6,062	2,021	10
6	King's Forest	1	1,520	1,520	-10	1,650	1,650	-10
7	Lower Nene	1	1,593	1,593	-6	1,728	1,728	-6
8	Lyveden	1	1,498	1,498	-11	1,625	1,625	-11
9	Oundle	2	3,753	1,877	11	4,072	2,036	11
10	Prebendal	1	1,345	1,345	-20	1,460	1,460	-20
11	Raunds Saxon	2	3,315	1,658	-2	3,597	1,799	-2
12	Raunds Windmill	2	3,012	1,506	-11	3,268	1,634	-11

**Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in East Northamptonshire**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
13 Ringstead	1	1,329	1,329	-21	1,442	1,442	-21
14 Rushden East	3	4,707	1,569	-7	5,107	1,702	-7
15 Rushden North	3	5,349	1,783	6	5,804	1,935	6
16 Rushden South	3	5,671	1,890	12	6,153	2,051	12
17 Rushden West	3	4,842	1,614	-4	5,254	1,751	-4
18 Stanwick	1	1,658	1,658	-2	1,799	1,799	-2
19 Thrapston	2	3,919	1,960	16	4,252	2,126	16
20 Woodford	1	1,526	1,526	-10	1,655	1,655	-10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>60,710</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>65,871</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,686</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>-</b>

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 2004, electors in Fineshade ward had 22% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while Thrapston ward had 16% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Northamptonshire Council.



### 3 Draft recommendations

27 During Stage One three submissions were received, including a district-wide scheme from East Northamptonshire Council. We also received representations from Rushden Town Council and Stanwick Parish Council. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Northamptonshire in Northamptonshire*.

28 Our draft recommendations were based on the proposals of East Northamptonshire Council, which provided evidence in support of a 40 member council and achieved some improvement in electoral equality. However, we moved away from the Council's proposals in the area of Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We noted that the Council had not given the Rushden town area the correct allocation. Under a 40-member Council the town of Rushden is entitled to 13.55 councillors (14, rounded up), while the Council only allocated the area 13 councillors.

29 We noted that the urban area of Rushden town runs directly into the urban area of Higham Ferrers; we considered that the parish boundary between these two towns does not reflect a natural break between the two communities and that there is no obviously distinguishable boundary between them. Indeed, we noted that the boundary of Rushden and Higham Ferrers parishes cuts across a number of roads arbitrarily. To ensure the correct allocation and improved levels of electoral equality under a council size of 40, we proposed creating a three-member ward which would include electors from both Higham Ferrers and Rushden. As a consequence of our revised three-member Higham Ferrers Wharf ward, we proposed a number of other amendments to the Council's proposals for Higham Ferrers and Rushden in order to improve electoral equality throughout the area.

30 Across the district we proposed that:

- East Northamptonshire District Council should be served by 40 councillors, four more than at present, representing 22 wards, two more than at present
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards (Stanwick and Woodford) should retain their existing boundaries
- there should be new warding arrangements for the parishes of Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Raunds, Rushden and Thrapston

31 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards varying by no more than 9% from the district average and the number of electors per councillor in only seven wards varying by more than 5% in 2004, with only six wards varying by more than 5% by 2009.



## 4 Responses to consultation

32 During consultation on the draft recommendations report, 18 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the District Council. The representations may also be viewed on our website at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

### East Northamptonshire Council

33 The Council supported all our proposals across the district, except for our proposed changes in the area of Rushden and Higham Ferrers. The Council proposed reverting to its original proposals for this area in order to maintain the boundary between the towns of Rushden and Higham Ferrers, providing evidence of community identity, such as distinctive societies and associations and separate churches and schools. It also argued that its proposals would provide effective and convenient local government.

### Political groups

34 Higham Ferrers Conservatives objected to our proposed changes in the area of Rushden and Higham Ferrers, arguing that these would not reflect the strongly held community identities of both towns and would adversely affect effective and convenient local government. Wellingborough Conservative Association objected to our proposal for Rushden and Higham Ferrers on the basis of the differences between the two towns and their communities.

### Parish and town councils

35 Representations were received from six parish and town councils. Higham Ferrers Town Council objected to our proposals for Higham Ferrers and Rushden on the grounds of community identity and effective and convenient local government. Rushden Town Council also objected to our proposals for Rushden and Higham Ferrers, highlighting the separate identities of the two towns and identifying a clear boundary between the towns.

36 Oundle Town Council supported the proposal for an increase from two to three ward councillors for the Oundle area; Woodford Parish Council supported the proposal to leave Woodford ward unchanged; Easton on the Hill Parish Council stated that electoral equality is impossible to achieve between rural and urban wards; and Pilton, Stoke Doyle & Wadenhoe Parish Council argued that rural communities have seen many services diminish over recent years in favour of those in towns.

### Other representations

37 A further nine representations were received from Higham Ferrers Women's Institute, Towards a Safer Higham, Higham Chichele Society and local residents. One resident expressed support for our proposals in Higham Ferrers and Rushden, another indicated that they would have no objection to the proposal provided it was reflected by a modification of the town boundaries. The other seven representations objected to our proposals for the Rushden and Higham Ferrers area.



## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

38 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for East Northamptonshire.

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

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

40 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 clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

41 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

42 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 identities and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate should also be taken into account, and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

43 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, or 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. We are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

### Electorate figures

44 As part of the previous review of East Northamptonshire, the Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 8% between 1996 and 2001. Between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate increased by 13%. The Council predicts that significant growth will continue, with the electorate increasing by 9% from 60,710 in 2004 to 65,871 by 2009.

45 In our draft recommendations we considered that these electorate projections predicted a very high growth rate, but concurred with the Council's evidence that this level of growth would be achieved given the number of outstanding planning permissions. We considered that the Council put forward reasonable evidence for these projections.

46 Nevertheless, we have some reservations over the methodology used by the Council in spreading the expected electorate growth evenly across all wards of the authority. In our experience this is an unusual approach and may lead to new electoral imbalances arising sooner rather than later.

47 Having said that, we received no comments on the Council's electoral forecasts during Stage Three. As we are reliant on the Council's experience and knowledge in relation to forecasting we must acknowledge that they represent the best estimates currently available.

## Council size

48 East Northamptonshire Council presently has 36 members. At Stage One the Council proposed a council of 40 members. It stated that 'The Council's powers and duties have expanded; it now looks at the community in a different light and seeks to influence the well-being of its inhabitants by engaging with partners, and delivers services in an innovative way.' It added that 'the greater involvement in community issues; the wider remit; and more cost-effective delivery of services has led to increased roles and responsibilities for Councillors'. The Council also outlined changes to its political management structure and adoption of a 'revised committee structure'.

49 It also highlighted changes to the Licensing Act 2003, stating that it 'is already impacting considerably on the role of [...] Councillors', and will continue to do so.

50 The Council described members' role as 'Champions' and stressed their community involvement and argued that 'the role of Councillors on outside bodies has changed significantly in recent years. The need to demonstrate community leadership, to engage in county-wide, regional (and sub-regional) issues, and to support the implementation of local responses to Government initiatives have all added weight to the complexity of the role Councillors need to play.'

51 The Council concluded that this shows that 'Councillors have a wide range of responsibilities quite apart from their representative role', adding that 'members are not "full time" Councillors drawing large allowances. There is a limited pool of Councillors to feed the extensive range of Council activities.'

52 We gave careful consideration to the evidence put forward by the Council. We consider that it highlighted a number of substantial changes to the roles of members since the last review, including the role of community involvement and the involvement in numerous committees and outside bodies. However, while it outlined these different functions, we did have some concerns that it did not fully quantify the impact of these different roles. As a consequence we wrote to the Council requesting additional evidence on the time spent on and level of involvement in these tasks.

53 We noted the additional evidence that the Council provided and concurred with its argument that members already face exacting demands and that the addition of four members would help address this. We therefore proposed adopting the Council's proposal for a council of 40 members.

54 At Stage Three East Northamptonshire Council reiterated its support for a council size of 40. No further representations regarding council size were received.

55 We therefore confirm our recommendation for a council size of 40 as final.

## Electoral equality

56 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 Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances below 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as possible, 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, 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 such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

57 At Stage One we noted the Council's proposals in East Northamptonshire would secure good levels of electoral equality, with no ward having a variance of over 9%. It explored a number of options to improve these variances, but concluded that these alternative options did not reflect community identities.

58 In our draft recommendations, in light of the limited community identity evidence provided, we did explore a number of options to see if these variances could be improved further. However, we concluded that given the size of the constituent parishes, the distribution of electors and the low councillor:elector ratio it was very difficult to address these variances without worsening electoral equality elsewhere in the district. For example, given the councillor:elector ratio of 1,647 (by December 2009), moving just 180 electors would worsen electoral equality by 10% in a single-member ward.

59 At Stage Three we received strong community identity evidence in opposition to our warding proposals in Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We therefore propose reverting back to the Council's Stage One proposals for this area, with some amendments to ensure access and strong boundaries.

60 Under our final recommendations the variances in Higham Ferrers Chichele, Higham Ferrers Lancaster, Rushden Bates, Rushden Hayden, Rushden Pemberton, Rushden Sartoris and Rushden Spencer will be 6% fewer, 6% fewer, fewer than 1%,

8% more, 8% more, 3% more and fewer than 1% than the district average by 2009. We propose confirming our draft recommendations across the rest of the district as final.

61 The district average for 2009 is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district, 65,871, by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 40 under our final proposals. Therefore the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 1,647.

## General analysis

62 At Stage One the Council put forward a single scheme for the whole district. As described in paragraph 53, we concurred with the Council's argument for an increase in council members of four, to give a council of 40 members. However, as described in paragraph 28, we also noted that the Council had not given the Rushden town area the correct allocation. Under a 40-member council the town of Rushden is entitled to 13.55 councillors (14, rounded up) by 2009, while the Council only allocated the area 13 councillors. In order to improve allocation and also a number of opposing electoral variances (under the Council's Stage One proposal, Higham Ferrers Chichele and Higham Ferrers Lancaster wards would both have an electoral variance of -6%, whereas Rushden Hayden and Rushden Pemberton would have variances of 6% and 7% respectively by 2009), we proposed a three-member ward taking in electors from both Higham Ferrers and Rushden towns.

63 Throughout the rest of the district the Council's proposals secured good levels of electoral equality and we adopted them without amendment.

64 At Stage Three the Council objected to our proposals for Rushden and Higham Ferrers. The Council requested that we reconsider its Stage One proposals, putting forward good evidence for the differences between Higham Ferrers and Rushden and therefore maintaining the existing boundary between them. It acknowledged that under its proposals Rushden would not receive the correct allocation but stated that 'the community has not made a case for an increase from 12 to 14 Councillors and fully supports the Council's proposed increase to 13'. We note that a council size of 41 would give Rushden the correct allocation, but given the lack of any community identity evidence for this we are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 40 as final.

65 We received a number of other objections to our proposals for Rushden and Higham Ferrers. Therefore, in light of the strong objections and good community identity evidence received, we propose a significant amendment to our proposals in the towns of Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We concur with the argument that our draft proposal to create a ward straddling the parish boundary between Rushden and Higham Ferrers would not reflect community identities and therefore propose reverting to the Council's original proposal for five wards in Rushden and two wards in Higham Ferrers, subject to some minor modifications to improve access and strengthen boundaries.

66 In the remainder of the district we received very limited comments and therefore, in light of the good electoral equality that our draft recommendations secured, we propose confirming them as final.

## Warding arrangements

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

- Barnwell, Dryden, Fineshade, King's Forest, Lower Nene, Lyveden, Oundle and Prebendal wards (page 31)
- Irthlingborough, Raunds Saxon, Raunds Windmill, Ringstead, Thrapston, Stanwick and Woodford wards (page 33)
- Higham Ferrers, Rushden East, Rushden North, Rushden South and Rushden West wards (page 34)

68 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 12, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

### Barnwell, Dryden, Fineshade, King's Forest, Lower Nene, Lyveden, Oundle, and Prebendal wards

69 Under the existing arrangements Barnwell, Dryden Fineshade, King's Forest, Lower Nene, Lyveden, Oundle and Prebendal wards are all parished. Table 5 below shows the constituent parts of these wards. Table 4 (pages 20–21) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

**Table 5: Existing arrangements**

Ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Barnwell	Parishes of Barnwell, Clopton, Hemington, Lilford-cum-Wigsthorpe, Luddington, Polebrook Thorpe Achurch, Thurning and Titchmarsh	1
Dryden	Parishes of Aldwinkle, Islip, Lowick , Pilton, Stoke Doyle, Twywell and Wadenhoe	1
Fineshade	Parishes of Collyweston, Duddington-with-Fineshade, Easton on the Hill and Wakerley	1
King's Forest	Parishes of Blatherwycke, Bulwick, Deene, Deenethorpe, Harringworth, King's Cliffe and Laxton	1
Lower Nene	Parishes of Ashton, Cotterstock, Fotheringay, Glapthorn, Lutton, Tansor and Warmington	1
Lyveden	Parishes of Benefield, Brigstock and Sudborough	1
Oundle	Parish of Oundle	2

**Table 5 (continued): Existing arrangements**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Prebendal	Parishes of Apethorpe, Nassington, Southwick, Woodnewton and Yarwell	1

70 At Stage One, in the north of the district the Council proposed a number of small amendments to the existing wards to improve electoral equality. It proposed a revision to the existing Barnwall ward, adding Aldwinckle parish from Dryden ward and transferring Polebrook parish to Lower Nene ward. It proposed adding the parish of Harringworth, currently in Kings' Forest ward, to the existing Fineshade ward and Apethorpe parish, currently in Prebendal ward, to the existing King's Forest ward. The Council proposed removing Fotheringhay parish from Lower Nene ward and adding Polebrook parish. It proposed removing Benefield parish from Lyveden ward, but adding Twywell and Lowick parishes. The Council provided limited community identity evidence for these proposals.

71 The Council acknowledged that 'the town of Oundle cannot now achieve electoral equality with two councillors and adding a third would not improve equality'. It therefore proposed adding Benefield, Pilton, Stoke Doyle and Wadenhoe parishes and an additional councillor. Finally, it proposed adding Fotheringhay and Glapthorn parishes to the existing Prebendal ward.

72 At Stage One we received no other comments regarding these wards. We gave careful consideration to the evidence received and noted that the Council's proposals secured good levels of electoral equality. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals without amendment.

73 At Stage Three we received four submissions regarding this area. The District Council welcomed our recommendations in the district outside of Higham Ferrers and Rushden and raised no objections to the recommendations for this area. Oundle Town Council stated that 'there is no objection [to] an increase from 2 to 3 ward councillors for Oundle and environs'. Easton on the Hill Parish Council stated that electoral equality is impossible to achieve between rural and urban wards, and Pilton, Stoke Doyle & Wadenhoe Parish Council stated that it had 'no specific issue with the main body of the document' but argued that rural communities have seen many services diminish over recent years in favour of those in towns.

74 We have given careful consideration to the responses received and note that no objections have been received regarding any of the wards. In light of the good electoral equality that these wards secure, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

75 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–14) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Barnwell, Fineshade, King's Forest, Lower Nene, Lyveden, Oundle and Prebendal wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

## Irthlingborough, Raunds Saxon, Raunds Windmill, Ringstead, Thrapston, Stanwick and Woodford wards

76 Under the existing arrangements Irthlingborough, Raunds Saxon, Raunds Windmill, Ringstead, Thrapston, Stanwick and Woodford wards are all parished. Table 6 below shows the constituent parts of these wards. Table 4 (on pages 20–21) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

**Table 6: Existing arrangements**

Ward	Constituent areas	Councillors
Irthlingborough	Parish of Irthlingborough	3
Raunds Saxon	Raunds Saxon parish ward of Raunds parish	2
Raunds Windmill	Raunds Windmill parish ward of Raunds parish	2
Ringstead	Parishes of Denford and Ringstead	1
Thrapston	Parish of Thrapston	2
Stanwick	Parishes of Hargrave and Stanwick	1
Woodford	Parishes of Great Addington, Little Addington and Woodford	1

77 At Stage One the Council acknowledged that the existing Irthlingborough ward contains too many electors to be served by three members. It therefore proposed dividing the ward and parish in two, to create a two-member Irthlingborough John Pyel ward and two-member Irthlingborough Waterloo ward.

78 The Council proposed retaining the existing Stanwick ward, stating that ‘no change is proposed for this ward because the changes proposed in other wards keep it within the 10% variance and it will retain its community identity’.

79 In Thrapston, the Council acknowledged that electoral equality could not be achieved with three councillors. It therefore proposed dividing the ward and the parish in two and combining its constituent parts with parts of neighbouring wards. It proposed creating a two-member Thrapston Lakes ward, comprising Islip parish and the northern part of Thrapston parish. It also proposed creating a two-member Thrapston Market ward comprising Denford and Ringstead parishes and the southern part of Thrapston parish. The Council proposed minor amendments to the existing Raunds Saxon and Raunds Windmill wards, including the transfer of a small number of roads. This would improve electoral equality. The Council proposed no change to the existing Woodford ward.

80 The Council provided only very limited evidence to support its proposals for these wards. We received no other representations. We gave careful consideration to the evidence received and we noted that the Council’s proposals secured reasonable levels of electoral equality. We did have some concerns about the levels of electoral

equality in its Irthlingborough John Pyel and Irthlingborough Waterloo wards and its Stanwick ward. We considered options to improve these variances, but noted that this was not possible without significantly affecting the electoral equality in neighbouring wards. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals without amendment.

81 At Stage Three, Woodford Parish Council expressed support for our proposal to retain the existing Woodford ward. The District Council welcomed our recommendations in the district outside of Higham Ferrers and Rushden and raised no objections to the recommendations for this area. No other representations regarding these wards were received.

82 We note that no objections have been received regarding any of the wards. We therefore propose broadly confirming our draft recommendation for these wards as final.

83 Two minor corrections have been made to the electorate figures and mapping. The two Irthlingborough wards were incorrectly labelled as Irthlingborough Waterloo and Irthlingborough Diamond on the draft recommendations maps. The maps have now been corrected. The north-easterly ward is Irthlingborough Waterloo and the south-westerly ward is Irthlingborough John Pyel.

84 In addition, the 2004 electorate figures for Raunds Saxon and Raunds Windmill in the draft report did not reflect the Council's proposed minor boundary change within Raunds. These figures have now been corrected to account for the 143 electors (in 2004) moved from Raunds Saxon into Raunds Windmill. These amendments do not affect electors or ward boundaries.

85 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–14) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Irthlingborough John Pyel, Irthlingborough Waterloo, Raunds Saxon, Raunds Windmill, Thrapston Lakes, Thrapston Market, Stanwick and Woodford wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 2, Map 3 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

## Higham Ferrers, Rushden East, Rushden North, Rushden South and Rushden West wards

86 Under the existing arrangements Higham Ferrers, Rushden East, Rushden North, Rushden South and Rushden West wards are all parished. Table 7 below shows the constituent parts of these wards. Table 4 (on pages 20–21) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

**Table 7: Existing arrangements**

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Higham Ferrers	Parishes of Chelveston cum Caldecott, Newton Bromswold and Higham Ferrers	3
Rushden East	Rushden East parish ward of Rushden parish	3
Rushden North	Rushden North parish ward of Rushden parish	3
Rushden South	Rushden South parish ward of Rushden parish	3
Rushden West	Rushden West parish ward of Rushden parish	3

87 At Stage One the Council proposed creating two two-member wards, Higham Ferrers Chichele and Higham Ferrers Lancaster wards. Under its proposals Higham Ferrers Chichele and Higham Ferrers Lancaster wards would both have 6% fewer electors than the district average by 2009.

88 In Rushden, the Council proposed dividing the existing Rushden South ward given the large amount of development that has occurred since the last review. It proposed creating a two-member Rushden Bates ward and a two-member Rushden Sartoris ward. These wards would have 2% more and 3% more electors than the district average by 2009. It also proposed a number of other minor amendments to the other existing wards. It also proposed renaming the existing wards to 'reflect the history of the areas of the town covered by the new wards'. Rushden East ward would be renamed Rushden Hayden ward and have 6% more electors than the district average by 2009. Rushden North ward would be renamed Rushden Spencer ward and have 1% more electors than the district average by 2009. Rushden West ward would be renamed Rushden Pemberton ward and have 7% more electors than the district average by 2009.

89 We received no other comments regarding these wards. We gave careful consideration to the evidence received. As mentioned in paragraph 62, we noted that the Council had not given Rushden town area the correct allocation of councillors. Under a 40-member Council the town of Rushden is entitled to 13.55 councillors (14, rounded up), while the Council's proposals only allocated the area 13 councillors. As a consequence this area did not receive sufficient representation. Given our intention to endorse the Council's 40-member council we proposed an amendment to give the area the correct allocation. We noted that the urban areas of Rushden town run directly into the urban areas of Higham Ferrers and that there is no obviously distinguishable boundary between them. We therefore proposed creating a three-member Higham Ferrers Wharf ward which would include electors from both Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We considered that the boundary between these two towns does not reflect a natural break between the two communities. As a consequence of our proposal we proposed a number of amendments to the Council's proposed wards in Rushden in order to improve electoral equality.

90 We considered that these amendments secured the best available levels of electoral equality, while still representing community identities and providing strong boundaries.

91 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Higham Ferrers Wharf, Higham Ferrers Chichele, Rushden Bates, Rushden Hayden, Rushden Pemberton, Rushden Sartoris and Rushden Spencer wards would have 1% fewer, 2% more, 2% more, 1% more, 3% more, 3% more and 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2009.

92 At Stage Three we received 14 representations regarding our proposed Rushden and Higham Ferrers wards.

93 East Northamptonshire Council argued against the draft recommendations relating to Higham Ferrers and Rushden, commenting that they were 'totally unacceptable to the Council, the two Town Councils and their communities'. The Council acknowledged that 'the projected electorate of Rushden would [...] be strictly entitled to 13.55 Councillors' in a council of 40. However, it stated that 'the community has not made a case for an increase from 12 to 14 Councillors and fully supports the Council's proposed increase to 13'. It concluded by stating that it 'has spent a considerable amount of time exploring other options which might overcome the anomalies identified in the Committee's proposals' but found that 'these options do not result in acceptable variances'. It therefore requested that we reconsider its original proposals for the warding of Higham Ferrers and Rushden.

94 The Council outlined specific examples of 'the two communities operating quite separately', including the two communities having their own distinctive societies, groups and associations, drawing their membership from Rushden or Higham Ferrers only. It stated that 'the Rushden section of East Northamptonshire On Line [sic] lists around 100 different organisations with roots in the town', adding that 'over 50 organisations relating specifically to Higham Ferrers are highlighted in the local town directory published jointly by the Town Council and East Northamptonshire Council in 2002, and the Higham Ferrers section of East Northamptonshire On Line'.

95 The Council stated that 'The towns of Higham Ferrers and Rushden are distinct communities [...] The point on the former A6 where the towns converge is still known as the Toll Bar today, reflecting the former toll cottage at this point'. It also argues that 'Community Safety arrangements are focussed on the two separate towns' and that 'Rushden and Higham Ferrers have their own established Church and others' as well as 'separate libraries, and their own schools' and 'recreation areas and meeting places are also separate in the two towns'. The Council stated that 'Reflecting the heritage of Higham Ferrers, that town has a Conservation Area and there are many historic buildings. By contrast, there are few listed buildings in Rushden and the town does not have a Conservation Area.'

96 The Council also argued that the proposals would not provide effective and convenient local government and that our three-member ward crossing the town boundary between Higham Ferrers and Rushden would create confusion for the electorate.

97 We received a number of other objections to our draft recommendations. Higham Ferrers Conservatives objected to our proposals in the area, and Towards a Safer

Higham urged us to reconsider our proposals and adopt those originally proposed by East Northamptonshire Council. Higham Chichele Society objected to the proposed warding in Higham Ferrers and Rushden, and Higham Ferrers Town Council asked us to reconsider our recommendations in the area. Rushden Town Council objected, stating that 'both towns have their own separate identity which is fiercely defended'. Wellingborough Conservative Association expressed 'major concerns' regarding the proposal for the merger of parts of parish wards from Higham Ferrers and Rushden to create a new district ward. Higham Ferrers Women's Institute objected to our proposal to create a ward with parts of Rushden and Higham Ferrers.

98 We received six submissions from residents regarding our proposals in the area. Four submissions received from residents objected to our proposals for the warding of Higham Ferrers and Rushden. However, one resident expressed support for our proposals, stating that 'we have no objections to the proposed changes to the boundaries between [Higham Ferrers and Rushden]', and another resident stated, 'I have no objection to the boundary being changed permanently' if this was reflected by a modification of the town boundaries.

99 We have given careful consideration to the submissions received. We note the strong objections and good level of community identity evidence put forward by the Council and consider that this outweighs the very limited argumentation received in support of our draft recommendations. We note the evidence of separate community groups and societies, separate libraries, schools and churches as well as separate meeting and recreation areas. We also note that the Council acknowledges that under their proposals Rushden would not receive its full allocation of councillors; however, we consider that it put forward strong community identity evidence to counter this. Therefore, as a result of the evidence received, we propose a significant amendment to our proposals in the towns of Higham Ferrers and Rushden. We are persuaded that our proposal to create a ward straddling the parish boundary between Rushden and Higham Ferrers would be detrimental to community identities and therefore we propose reverting to the Council's original proposal of five wards in Rushden and two wards in Higham Ferrers, subject to some modifications to improve access and boundaries. In light of the strong community evidence provided we propose keeping the towns of Rushden and Higham Ferrers separate for warding purposes.

100 In light of our decision that the two towns of Rushden and Higham Ferrers should remain separate, we reconsidered the Council's Stage One proposal. We considered it might be possible to secure some improvement to the electoral variances and ward boundaries under the Council's proposals in Rushden and therefore examined a number of options. Under its Stage One proposals by 2009 Rushden Bates would have 2% more electors than the district average, Rushden Hayden 6% more, Rushden Pemberton 7% more, Rushden Sartoris 3% more, and Rushden Spencer 1% more electors than the district average.

101 We considered an option that included breaching the railway line and would have provided all five wards in Rushden with a variance of 4% by 2009. However, we concluded that the disused railway line should be maintained as a strong boundary between Rushden Spencer and Rushden Hayden and that Irchester Road should be maintained as a strong boundary between Rushden Spencer and Rushden Pemberton and therefore decided not to propose this option. We also looked at the option of partly using Park Road as the boundary between Rushden Bates and

Rushden Sartoris, partly using Newton Road as the boundary between Rushden Bates and Rushden Hayden and partly using Wellingborough Road as the boundary between Rushden Hayden and Rushden Pemberton. However, we concluded that only marginal improvements to electoral equality under this option would be achieved and would not warrant the numerous boundary changes needed. We note that the Council's proposals utilise strong boundaries and we have therefore not been persuaded that improved electoral equality in Rushden Hayden (with a variance of 8% by 2009) and Rushden Pemberton (8% by 2009) can be achieved without significantly moving away from these boundaries.

102 However, we do propose one minor boundary change to improve access for electors. We propose transferring Russell Court and Dell Place (79 electors) into Rushden Hayden ward from Rushden Bates ward to ensure road access into their own ward. This change would worsen Rushden Hayden ward's electoral variance from 6% to 8%, but would result in Rushden Bates ward having a level of electoral equality equal to the district average by 2009.

103 The Council highlighted a small error in its Stage One submission. Its proposal contained an error in the figures in Rushden Pemberton and Rushden Spencer. Rushden Pemberton should have an additional 46 electors, while Rushden Spencer should have 46 electors less. This discrepancy of 46 electors has now been corrected in the figures for these two wards, as reflected in the variances listed above.

104 Apart from these amendments, we propose adopting the Council's proposals for Rushden as final.

105 In Higham Ferrers, we note the Council's request that we reconsider its Stage One proposals. It provided good community identity evidence in support of keeping Higham Ferrers separate from Rushden for district warding purposes. We therefore propose reverting to the Council's original proposal of two two-member wards, subject to some amendments to improve access and to rectify minor errors made by the Council at Stage One. We noted a discrepancy between the allocation of streets in the Council's submission at Stage One and the allocation of streets in its submission at Stage Three, which was due to an error in its figures and the mapping provided to us at Stage One.

106 We note that we received no community identity evidence in support of the Council's proposed boundary between the two Higham Ferrers wards.

107 The Council's Stage Three submission revised the allocation of streets between Higham Ferrers Chichele and Higham Ferrers Lancaster and would leave School Lane, Roman Way, Saxon Close, Villa Rise, Temple Court and a part of Linden Avenue with no access to their Higham Ferrers Chichele ward. We therefore propose moving these electors to Higham Ferrers Lancaster in order to provide access. In order to improve electoral equality further between the two Higham Ferrers wards, we also propose moving the northern part of Wood Street, Saffron Road, Spring Gardens, The Hawthorns and The Old Vineyard from Higham Ferrers Lancaster into Higham Ferrers Chichele. The southern part of Wood Street, Chamberlain Way and Hachenburg Place would remain in Higham Ferrers Chichele ward.

108 The amendments in Higham Ferrers are minor and would ensure access and electoral equality. The electoral variance in both Higham Ferrers wards would therefore be -6% by 2009.

109 The two two-member wards in Higham Ferrers are called Higham Ferrers Chichele and Higham Ferrers Lancaster in our final recommendations. We propose an amendment to the ward names of the two Higham Ferrers wards following an error in our draft recommendations. The eastern ward in Higham Ferrers was incorrectly labelled Higham Ferrers Chichele in our draft recommendations. This has been corrected so that the western ward is now Higham Ferrers Chichele. We also recognise that the second ward in Higham Ferrers was called Higham Ferrers Wharf in error. We therefore propose adopting the Council's original proposal to name the second ward Higham Ferrers Lancaster.

110 Under our final recommendations the proposed Higham Ferrers Chichele, Higham Ferrers Lancaster, Rushden Bates, Rushden Hayden, Rushden Pemberton, Rushden Sartoris and Rushden Spencer wards would have 6% fewer, 6% fewer, less than 1%, 8% more, 8% more, 3% more and less than 1% electors per councillor as the district average by 2009.

111 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9–14) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Higham Ferrers Chichele, Higham Ferrers Lancaster, Rushden Bates, Rushden Hayden, Rushden Pemberton, Rushden Sartoris and Rushden Spencer wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 3 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

## Conclusions

112 Table 8 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

**Table 8: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements**

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	36	36	40	40
Number of wards	20	20	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	1,686	1,830	1,518	1,647
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	10	10	0	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	2	2	0	0

113 As shown in Table 8, our final recommendations for East Northamptonshire Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 10 to none. By 2009 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 9%. We propose to increase the council size and are recommending a council size of 40 members.

### **Final recommendation**

East Northamptonshire Council should comprise 40 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

## Parish electoral arrangements

114 As part of an FER the Boundary 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 Boundary 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 Boundary Committee

cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an FER.

115 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with district councils.<sup>2</sup> 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.

116 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government 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 Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Raunds, Rushden and Thrapston to reflect the proposed district wards.

117 During Stage One we received proposals for revised town council electoral arrangements from Rushden Town Council, which included an increase of one in council size to 21 and which we have reflected in our final recommendations below.

118 At Stage Three we received no further comments relating to parish and town council electoral arrangements. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Irthlingborough, Raunds and Thrapston as final.

119 Due to the changes to our draft recommendations in Higham Ferrers and Rushden, we recommend revised parishing arrangements for the towns of Higham Ferrers and Rushden.

120 The parish of Higham Ferrers is currently served by 16 councillors and is unwarded. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

121 However, as stated in paragraph 105, we propose modifying our draft recommendations for district ward boundaries in Higham Ferrers and consequently propose modifications to parish electoral arrangements.

**Final recommendation**

Higham Ferrers Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Higham Ferrers Chichele (returning eight councillors) and Higham Ferrers Lancaster (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

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<sup>2</sup> Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

122 The parish of Irthlingborough is currently served by 12 councillors and is unwarded. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of the electorate represented in each ward.

123 We received no further comments on these proposals at Stage Three and are therefore confirming them as final.

**Final recommendation**

Irthlingborough Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Irthlingborough John Pyel (returning six councillors) and Irthlingborough Waterloo (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

124 The parish of Raunds is currently served by served by 12 councillors, representing two wards. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of the electorate represented in each ward.

125 We received no further comments on these proposals at Stage Three and are therefore confirming them as final.

**Final recommendation**

Raunds Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Raunds Saxon (returning six councillors) and Raunds Windmill (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

126 The parish of Rushden is currently served by 20 councillors and divided into four wards, Rushden North (served by five councillors), Rushden East (served by five councillors), Rushden South (served by five councillors) and Rushden West (served by five councillors). During Stage One Rushden Town Council put forward comments about the allocation of members for its parish wards. It stated that 'Spencer, Hayden and Pemberton [should have] five members each', while 'Sartoris and Bates [should have] three members each'. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area. We proposed that Rushden Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, representing five wards: Rushden Bates (returning three councillors), Rushden Hayden (returning four councillors), Rushden Pemberton (returning five councillors), Rushden Sartoris (returning three councillors), Rushden Spencer (returning three councillors) and Rushden Spencer Park (returning two councillors).

127 However, as stated in paragraph 99, we propose modifying our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in Rushden and consequently propose modifications to parish boundaries. We note the comments of Rushden Town Council received at Stage One, and given our decision to adopt the Council's district warding proposals for the town of Rushden with only one minor amendment we recommend

adopting a council size of 21, as proposed by Rushden Town Council at Stage One, which provides the correct allocation for all five parish wards.

**Final recommendation**  
Rushden Town Council should comprise 21 councillors, an increase of one, representing five wards: Rushden Bates (returning three councillors), Rushden Hayden (returning five councillors), Rushden Pemberton (returning five councillors), Rushden Sartoris (returning three councillors) and Rushden Spencer (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.

128 The parish of Thrapston is currently served by served by 13 councillors and is unwarded. In our draft recommendations we proposed changes to the electoral arrangements of the parish in order to reflect our proposals for district wards in the area, and allocated parish councillors on the basis of the size of electorate represented in each ward.

129 We received no further comments on these proposals at Stage Three and are therefore confirming them as final.

**Final recommendation**  
Thrapston Town Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Thrapston Market (returning five councillors) and Thrapston Lakes (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large maps at the back of the report.



## 6 What happens next?

130 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in East Northamptonshire and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.<sup>3</sup>

131 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before **24 October 2006**, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

**The Secretary  
The Electoral Commission  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

**Email: [implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk)**

**The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.**

The full report is available to download at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

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<sup>3</sup> Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).



## 7 Mapping

### Final recommendations for East Northamptonshire

133 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for East Northamptonshire district.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for East Northamptonshire district, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Thrapston town.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed boundaries in the towns of Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Rushden.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed boundaries in the towns of Higham Ferrers, Raunds and Rushden.



# Appendix A

## Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
The Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the district
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved;</li> <li>– access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided;</li> <li>– wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected;</li> <li>– established farming use is effectively maintained’</li> </ul>
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single district or borough enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the district average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district council

## Appendix B

### Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm](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 B1: 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.