

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Kettering in Northamptonshire

Further electoral review

June 2005

Translations and other formats

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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

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. As a result of the poor levels of electoral equality in Kettering borough under the existing arrangements, The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee to review the electoral arrangements of the borough on 2 June 2004. The broad objective of this electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 11 wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average. The development that the Borough Council forecast for the five-year period that occurred between 1996 and 2001, during the last review was realised in some areas. However, in some rural areas less development occurred than was anticipated and in Slade ward further development has resulted in a particularly poor level of electoral equality.

The table below outlines the four 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	21 June 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 September 2005	Final deliberation prior to our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission

Submissions received

We received 22 submissions during Stage One including three different proposals for council size. The Borough Council, the Labour Group on the council and a local resident proposed borough-wide schemes based on council sizes of 37, 47 and 34 respectively. Kettering Liberal Democrats proposed to retain the existing arrangements. The majority of the remaining responses received related to electoral arrangements in the more rural areas of the borough. Six parish and town councils made comments relating to the council's proposals in their respective areas. 10 other respondents submitted proposals or comments in relation to Rothwell, Queen Eleanor and Spinney wards. A number of other comments were made by local councillors and residents regarding the process of the electoral review and the number of councillors elected to wards.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The Borough Council projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 8% from 66,470 to 71,486 over the five-year period from 2003 to 2008. It expects most of the growth to be in Kettering, Desborough, Rothwell and the existing Slade ward.

Council size

We received four different proposals for council size. The Borough Council proposed a council size of 37, the Labour Group proposed a council size of 47, a local resident proposed a council size of 34, the Liberal Democrat Group and six other respondents opposed reducing the existing council size. Having looked at the evidence available to us and considered issues of distribution, we are proposing to reduce the council size to 36.

General analysis

We are proposing 17 wards; three single-member, nine two-member and five three-member wards. In the rural areas of the borough we are adopting a local residents proposals and in Desborough and Rothwell we are adopting the proposals of the Borough Council. In Kettering town we have used the Borough Council's proposals as a basis with significant changes in order to improve the level of electoral equality.

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 Kettering contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 12 September 2005. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Kettering and welcome comments from interested parties. We 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:

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This report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent borough wards
1 All Saints	3	All Saints ward; part of Avondale ward; part of St Andrew's ward; part of St Mary's ward;
2 Avondale Grange	2	Part of Avondale ward; part of Warkton ward
3 Barton	2	Part of Barton ward (Barton Seagrave parish); part of Millbrook ward; part of Spinney ward
4 Brambleside	2	Brambleside ward; part of Avondale ward
5 Burton Latimer	3	Latimer ward; Plessy ward; part of Barton ward
6 Central	2	Part of St Mary's ward
7 Desborough Loatland	2	Part of Loatland ward (proposed Loatland parish ward of Desborough parish)
8 Desborough St Giles	2	St Giles ward (proposed St Giles parish ward of Desborough parish); part of Loatland ward
9 Ise Lodge	3	Part of Millbrook ward; part of Spinney ward
10 Northfield	1	Part of St Andrew's ward;
11 Pipers Hill	2	Pipers Hill ward; part of Warkton ward
12 Rothwell	3	Tresham ward; Trinity ward
13 Rural East	1	Queen Eleanor ward; part of Buccleuch ward (the parishes of Cranford, Grafton Underwood, Warkton and Weekley)
14 Slade	2	Unchanged Slade ward
15 St Michael's & Wicksteed	3	St Michael's ward; part of Wicksteed ward
16 St Peter's	2	St Peter's ward; part of Wicksteed ward
17 Welland	1	Welland ward; part of Buccleuch ward (Rushton parish)

Notes:

1. The borough comprises 26 parishes and the unparished town of Kettering.
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.

Figure 2: Committee’s draft recommendations for Kettering – 2003 electorate

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	3	5,892	1,964	6
2 Avondale Grange	2	3,715	1,858	1
3 Barton	2	4,055	2,028	10
4 Brambleside	2	3,516	1,758	-4
5 Burton Latimer	3	5,249	1,750	-5
6 Central	2	3,698	1,849	1
7 Desborough Loatland	2	2,655	1,328	-28
8 Desborough St Giles	2	3,867	1,934	5
9 Ise Lodge	3	5,636	1,879	2
10 Northfield	1	1,878	1,878	2
11 Pipers Hill	2	3,894	1,947	6
12 Rothwell	3	5,621	1,874	2
13 Rural East	1	2,086	2,086	14
14 Slade	2	3,564	1,782	-3
15 St Michael’s & Wicksteed	3	5,508	1,836	0
16 St Peter’s	2	3,441	1,721	-6
17 Welland	1	2,195	2,195	20
Totals	36	66,470	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,846	-

**Figure 2 (continued): Committee's draft recommendations for Kettering
– 2008 electorate**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	3	6,167	2,056	4
2 Avondale Grange	2	3,734	1,867	-6
3 Barton	2	4,089	2,045	3
4 Brambleside	2	3,905	1,953	-2
5 Burton Latimer	3	5,446	1,815	-9
6 Central	2	3,866	1,933	-3
7 Desborough Loatland	2	3,992	1,996	1
8 Desborough St Giles	2	4,060	2,030	2
9 Ise Lodge	3	5,840	1,947	-2
10 Northfield	1	1,935	1,935	-3
11 Pipers Hill	2	3,922	1,961	-1
12 Rothwell	3	6,090	2,030	2
13 Rural East	1	2,142	2,142	8
14 Slade	2	4,384	2,192	10
15 St Michael's & Wicksteed	3	5,677	1,892	-5
16 St Peter's	2	3,951	1,976	-1
17 Welland	1	2,286	2,286	15
Totals	36	71,486	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,986	-

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

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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Introduction

1 This report contains our draft proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Kettering, 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 Periodic Electoral Review (PER) has elapsed. It was agreed that the criteria for deciding which authorities should be investigated were that 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 In those local authority areas that meet the criteria we conducted research. 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 Kettering. The last review of Kettering 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 under the new arrangements took place on 6 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; and
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Kettering 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.

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 borough.

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. 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. 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 borough. 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 borough 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 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 the 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 political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

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

12 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 the most 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	21 June 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 September 2005	Final deliberation prior to our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission

14 Stage One began on 3 August 2004, when we wrote to Kettering Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northamptonshire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 Kettering Borough 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 21 June 2005 and will end on 12 September 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 electoral changes 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 the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

National Parks, AONBs 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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (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 borough of Kettering is bounded by Harborough in Leicestershire, and Corby, Daventry, East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. Centrally situated the borough enjoys excellent communication links with easy access to the motorway network.

21 In early 2004 The Boundary Committee undertook initial research into electoral imbalances that have occurred in local authority areas where the five-year forecast period following a PER has elapsed. We noted that in December 2003 in Kettering 11 wards varied by more than 10% from the borough average (48%) compared with six wards forecast by 2001 to vary by more than 10% under the previous electoral review (26%). 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 Kettering Borough Council on 2 June 2004.

22 The borough contains 26 parishes, but the town of Kettering itself is unparished and comprises 56% of the borough's total electorate.

23 The electorate of the borough is 66,470 (December 2003). The Council presently has 45 members who are elected from 23 wards. There are currently three single-member wards, 18 two-member wards and two three-member wards.

24 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,477 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,589 by the year 2008 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to uneven growth across the borough during the last electoral review, the number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 23 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average and three wards by more than 20%. The worst imbalance is in Welland ward where the councillor represents 24% more electors than the borough 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 borough 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 borough average or fewer electors than the borough average.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough – 2003 electorate

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	2	2,842	1,421	-4
2 Avondale	2	3,146	1,573	6
3 Barton	2	3,402	1,701	15
4 Brambleside	2	3,276	1,638	11
5 Buccleuch	1	1,150	1,150	-22
6 Latimer	2	2,534	1,267	-14
7 Loatland	2	3,500	1,750	18
8 Millbrook	2	3,059	1,530	4
9 Pipers Hill	2	2,392	1,196	-19
10 Plessy	2	2,715	1,358	-8
11 Queen Eleanor	1	1,297	1,297	-12
12 St Andrew's	3	4,140	1,380	-7
13 St Giles	2	3,022	1,511	2
14 St Mary's	3	4,182	1,394	-6
15 St Michael's	2	2,793	1,397	-5
16 St Peter's	2	3,441	1,721	16
17 Slade	2	3,564	1,782	21
18 Spinney	2	3,230	1,615	9

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough – 2008 electorate

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 All Saints	2	2,997	1,499	-6
2 Avondale	2	3,172	1,586	0
3 Barton	2	3,436	1,718	8
4 Brambleside	2	3,665	1,833	15
5 Buccleuch	1	1,213	1,213	-24
6 Latimer	2	2,606	1,303	-18
7 Loatland	2	4,837	2,419	52
8 Millbrook	2	3,171	1,586	0
9 Pipers Hill	2	2,409	1,205	-24
10 Plessy	2	2,840	1,420	-11
11 Queen Eleanor	1	1,315	1,315	-17
12 St Andrew's	3	4,314	1,438	-9
13 St Giles	2	3,215	1,608	1
14 St Mary's	3	4,353	1,451	-9
15 St Michael's	2	2,876	1,438	-9
16 St Peter's	2	3,951	1,976	24
17 Slade	2	4,384	2,192	38
18 Spinney	2	3,322	1,661	5

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough – 2003 electorate

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Tresham	2	2,792	1,396	-5
20 Trinity	2	2,829	1,415	-4
21 Warkton	2	2,615	1,308	-11
22 Welland	1	1,834	1,834	24
23 Wicksteed	2	2,715	1,358	-8
Totals	45	-	-	-
Averages	-	66,470	1,477	-

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough – 2008 electorate

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 Tresham	2	2,877	1,439	-9
20 Trinity	2	3,213	1,607	1
21 Warkton	2	2,619	1,310	-18
22 Welland	1	1,900	1,900	20
23 Wicksteed	2	2,801	1,401	-12
Totals	45	71,486	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,589	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2003, electors in Buccleuch ward were relatively over-represented by 22%, while electors in Welland ward were significantly under-represented by 24%. 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 Kettering Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

27 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Committee visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 22 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, the Labour Group on the council and a local resident. All of the submissions received may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Kettering Borough Council

28 The Borough Council proposed a council size of 37 members, eight fewer than at present, serving 17 wards, compared with the existing 23 wards. The Council proposed one single-member ward, 12 two-member wards and four three-member wards which it stated were based on existing communities within the borough. Under its proposed council size, three of its proposed wards would have more variances of more than 10% from the borough average by 2008.

Political Groups

29 The Labour Group on the Council proposed an alternative council size and a scheme based on minimal change. It proposed an increase of two councillors to 47. It proposed 24 wards comprising four single-member wards, 17 two-member wards and three three-member wards. Under its proposals under a council size of 47 a number of wards would have electoral variances of more than 10% by 2008. Kettering Liberal Democrats proposed to retain the existing arrangements.

Parish and town councils

30 Representations were received from four parish and one town council. Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council objected to the Borough Council's proposals and stated that it wished to retain the existing arrangements whereby a single member represents the parishes in the existing Queen Eleanor ward. The parish council submitted a petition in support of its proposal. Wilbarston Parish Council proposed some changes to the existing arrangements of the Slade and Welland wards in order to improve the level of electoral equality of the existing Welland ward. Rothwell Town Council opposed the Borough Council's proposal to form a three-member ward to represent the town and contended that the existing council size of 45 should be retained. Weston-by-Welland Parish Council stated that it would object to any proposal to combine the existing Welland ward with any other area. Weekley Parish Council considered that the review should not be undertaken at the current time.

Other representations

31 A further 14 representations were received from local councillors and local residents. One local resident considered that the existing council size should be reduced and

proposed a borough-wide scheme based on a council size of 34 members which he considered would provide for the optimum electoral arrangements across the borough. A local resident proposed that there should no change to the number of ward or town councillors in Rothwell and proposed some minor amendments to improve electoral equality. One local resident proposed that there should be no more than two members elected to any ward. Councillor Padwick (Queen Eleanor ward) objected to the Borough Council's proposals to reduce the council size and considered that the proposals for the rural areas were not locally supported. Six local residents proposed that the existing Queen Eleanor ward should be retained. Two local residents proposed that the existing Spinney ward should be retained. Councillors Gordon and Adams objected to the methods that the Borough Council adopted when formulating its scheme.

32 A local resident proposed that 25% of councillors should be independent and non-political. The Boundary Committee is unable to consider the political make-up of the wards and has therefore not taken this submission into account when forming its recommendations.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

33 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Kettering 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. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

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

- secure effective and convenient local government;
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- 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

35 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 of maintaining local ties.

36 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: 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 that to a minimum.

37 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 taken in to account and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

38 The recommendations do not affect county, borough 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

39 As part of the previous review of Kettering borough the Borough Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 7% between 1996 and 2001. However, between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by 9%. The growth has occurred mainly in Kettering town and Loatland, Plessy and Slade wards. This has resulted in a knock-on effect across the borough with many wards being either substantially under or over-represented. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2008, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 8% from 66,470 to 71,486 over the five-year period from 2003 to 2008. It expects most of the growth to be in Kettering, Desborough and Rothwell, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural Slade ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to local development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

40 During Stage One, we received a submission from Rothwell Town Council in which the Town Council claimed that the Borough Council's electorate projections for the area covered by its parish were incorrect. The Town Council claimed that a new housing development would result in substantially more electors in the parish in the near future than the Borough Council predicted. After we notified Kettering Borough Council of this alleged error, the Borough Council wrote to us, stating that it had yet to receive planning applications relating to the proposed housing project in question. Kettering Borough Council confirmed the electorate figures that were provided to us at Stage One, and we are content that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

41 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

42 Kettering Borough Council presently has 45 members. At Stage One we received detailed proposals from three respondents regarding council size and a further four who made comments regarding the issue. The Borough Council proposed a reduction in council size of eight members to 37. It stated that a council size of 37 'would not unduly impact on [councillors'] time commitment to the Borough and its residents'. It also stated that, given the council's present decision-making structure, the average member would attend 17.93 and 21.81 committee meetings per annum under a 45-member and a 37-member council, respectively. It added that, given the current number of appointments of councillors to outside bodies (108), the average member would hold 2.4 and 2.91 such places under council sizes of 45 and 37, respectively.

43 The Labour Group on the Council proposed a council size of 47, an increase of two members. However, its proposal was supported by minimal evidence. It stated that dealing with the council size issue is essential to avoiding councillor workloads, which exclude sections of society, such as carers, from seeking office.

44 A Kettering resident, Mr Christopher Nelson, proposed a council size of 34, a reduction of 11 members. He argued that the present council size for Kettering was

unjustified given its population. He compared the populations of other local authorities in the East Midlands and he established that Kettering has a substantially smaller population than most other districts in the region, which have similar council sizes. Mr Nelson concluded that if the council size for Kettering was to be based on councils with similar populations, Kettering's council size should be between 33 and 37. He added that a council size between 33 and 37 would be justified given that the Borough Council has moved away from a committee-based decision-making structure and has adopted a cabinet structure. He argued that this change has resulted in less 'direct involvement by individual councillors in the recommendation of decisions to full council'. Mr Nelson stated that, having determined that the appropriate range of council sizes would be between 33 and 37, the optimum council size would be 34. He claimed that such a size would facilitate boundaries, which would result in 'maintaining areas with strong community identities and uniting areas with similar problems and needs'.

45 Councillors Gordon and Adams also considered that the 'task and finish group' formed to consider a response for the FER of Kettering was flawed and that council size had not been properly considered in the first instance. Having considered the evidence provided by the Borough Council, the Labour Group on the Council and Mr Nelson for their specific council size proposals we were not sufficiently convinced that they had made a good case for any of the proposed council sizes. Therefore, we issued a letter requesting that the Borough Council, the Labour Group and Mr Nelson, who proposed specific council sizes provide further evidence to support their respective, proposed council sizes.

46 In its response to our request for further evidence, the Borough Council outlined the membership and meeting frequency of area forums, devolved local representational bodies and partnership bodies. It detailed the representational activities of councillors by indicating the number of surgeries held in each ward and the associated number of councillors in attendance. It stated that, since the end of Stage One, the council has agreed to abolish the Mawsley Liaison Forum and the Overview Committee, the latter having nine members and had been meeting five times per year. However, it stated that the frequency of Licensing Committee meetings, which the Borough Council did not specify, 'are likely to increase' due to new arrangements under the Licensing Act 2003.

47 The Borough Council argued that its current councillor:elector ratio demonstrates that Kettering Borough Council 'would be able to function with a smaller number of members'. It claimed that, of the 29 local authorities in the Tamworth Benchmarking Group, only four have councillor:elector ratios which are lower than that of Kettering. It stated that Kettering has the lowest councillor:elector ratio in Northamptonshire. The Borough Council concluded by stating that 'a reduction in the number of meetings that members are required to attend is being actively sought, adding that 'this was demonstrated by the recent removal of a Scrutiny Committee (that did not have a clear role, or a workload that warranted its future existence), and the reduction in the number of meetings of the Full Council by two per annum'.

48 In its response to our request for further evidence, the Labour Group provided a detailed breakdown of the activities of councillors. It detailed the number of meetings councillors attended in the 12-month periods June 2002 to May 2003 and June 2003 to May 2004. It also detailed the number of councillors who are representatives on outside bodies, such as school governing boards. It stated that the frequency of meetings of the Licensing Committee would be between 60 and 70 meetings per year, compared with

only nine during the 12-month period between June 2003 and May 2004. The Labour Group argued that, given the forecast population growth in the period after 2008 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's 'Milton Keynes & South Midlands' proposals, 'it would be wrong to decrease the size of the council'.

49 In response to our request for further evidence, Mr Nelson stated that he would not provide any further argumentation or evidence in support of his proposal for a specific council size of 34. However, he did express his support for the Borough Council's proposals to reduce the council size.

50 We have considered the evidence put forward and are of the view that the Labour Group have not provided any detailed evidence as to why the council could be better represented by 47-members. The Labour group provided details of the number of councillors on each Committee as well as outside bodies. The Borough Council also provided this information on Committee membership and compared it to the membership under the previous Committee-based structure. The Borough Council stated that this showed that the role of members on committees have reduced in both number and frequency with the introduction of a new management structure. The Borough Council used this to justify a reduction in council size. It argued that fewer meetings freed up more time for councillors to act in their representational and liaison roles and given the evidence available to us have concluded that of the options put to us, a council size of around 37 would best reflect the statutory criteria. The Labour Group did not link the existing Committee membership to their proposed council size of 47. We found the arguments in relation to the role of councillors on committees and outside bodies put forward by the Borough Council, to be more convincing. We also noted the evidence that improvements in communication through IT have allowed councillors to operate more effectively and efficiently.

51 When deciding on the appropriate council size we do not compare councils with other authorities, we can also only have regard to electorate figures over the next five years. As a result we have not taken account of the comparisons provided by the Borough Council. We have also not been convinced that the increase in population over the next five years provides justification for an increase in council size to 47. The Labour group also argued that larger wards, resulting from a reduction in council size, could act as a disincentive to potential councillors and that the retention of councillors in Kettering was already a problem. No evidence was provided to suggest that maintaining a higher number of councillors would make it easier for the council to retain councillors and/or prevent potential candidates standing for office.

52 We consider that based on the submissions received a stronger case has been made for a reduction in council size, as opposed to an increase in council size of two. We therefore propose reducing the council size of Kettering as part of our draft recommendations. The Borough Council proposed a council size of 37. We noted that Kettering can be divided into distinct urban areas which cover different communities (the settlements of Kettering, Desborough, Rothwell and Burton Latimer and the rural areas that surround these settlements). In order to respect the boundaries between these areas while providing the correct allocation of councillors and therefore electoral equality it is not possible to recommend a council size of 37. A council size of 37 would result in wards that include electors from both urban and more rural areas. However, a council size of 36 enables us to provide good electoral equality and reflect the communities of Kettering.

53 Therefore, having been convinced that there is a good case for reducing the council size of Kettering Borough Council, and having considered the provision of electoral equality and the reflection of community identity we propose a council size of 36 for Kettering. We welcome comments from local people at Stage Three on our proposed council size, especially on our decision to respect the distinct communities we have identified within the borough.

Electoral equality

54 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 borough 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. We are proposing a Welland ward, which by 2008 will have 15% more electors than the borough average. We consider that this level of electoral inequality is justified in this area as it enables the towns in the area not to be combined with more rural parishes.

General analysis

55 We established that the borough contains five distinct areas, which, in order to best reflect community identities, should be covered, where possible by a ward or wards which only include settlements enclosed in their respective areas: Kettering town (unparished) and Barton Seagrave parish; Burton Latimer parish; Desborough parish, Rothwell parish and the surrounding rural area. Having established these areas and a council size of 36 it has been difficult to adopt wards, particularly in Kettering town, which are based on a different council size as they are based on a different councillor:elector ratio and consequently would result in wards with poor levels of electoral equality. Given the distribution of population across the borough it has proven difficult to achieve good levels of electoral equality in the rural areas while reflecting community identities. To improve the level of electoral equality in these areas it would be necessary to ward a number of parishes which, given the distribution of electors in the parished areas, we did not think would reflect community identity in the area. We consider that the poorer levels of electoral equality in these wards are justified. In the unparished Kettering town we consider that high levels of electoral equality should be achievable given the more densely populated nature of the area where we are not constrained by the desirability of using parishes as building blocks for the ward.

56 Given that we are proposing a council size of 36, we would be unable to adopt any of the borough-wide schemes put forward at Stage One in their entirety. However, we have proposed wards where there is some evidence of consensus between respondents and where they provide good levels of electoral equality. We are proposing 17 wards; three single-member, nine two-member and five three-member wards. In the rural areas of the borough we are adopting the proposals of Mr Nelson, local resident and in Desborough and Rothwell we are adopting the proposals of the Borough Council. In Kettering town we have attempted to use the Borough Council's proposals as a basis for our proposals but have made changes in most areas in order to improve the level of electoral equality.

57 During Stage One we received a number of submissions relating to the process and timing of the review. Seven respondents considered that the timing of the review was premature in view of the considerable growth which is planned in the area as part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-regional strategy. We acknowledge that growth over time will affect the levels of electoral equality within Kettering. Given the difficulty in projecting such growth over a long period of time we consider that it is necessary to look to improve levels of electoral equality over a five-year period. The existing levels of electoral equality are so poor that we do not consider that further delay is warranted. The Kettering Borough Council Labour Group (the Labour Group) wished for it to be noted that the Borough Council's official submission was not wholly supported and that they considered it reflected the views of the Conservative Group on Kettering Borough Council. In submitting its proposals the Labour Group stated that its proposals 'have given due consideration to community identity, natural boundaries, projected growth, proper democratic representation and accountability'.

Warding arrangements

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

- a All Saints, Brambleside, St Andrew's, St Mary's and St Peter's wards (Kettering town) (page 31)
- b Avondale, Millbrook, Pipers Hill, St Michael's, Spinney, Warkton and Wicksteed wards (Kettering town) (page 33)
- c Buccleuch, Queen Eleanor, Slade and Welland wards (Rural wards) (page 36)
- d Loatland, St Giles, Tresham and Trinity wards, (Desborough and Rothwell) (page 39)
- e Barton, Latimer and Plessy wards (page 41)

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

All Saints, Brambleside, St Andrew's, St Mary's and St Peter's wards (Kettering town)

60 Under the existing arrangements each of these wards, in the north and west of Kettering town, are wholly unparished. Table 4 (page 18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

61 The only submissions that we received relating to this area were from the respondents who submitted borough-wide schemes: Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group and a local resident. Under a council size of 36, Kettering town, including Barton Seagrave parish is entitled to 22 councillors. We consider that in order to ensure the correct allocation of councillors between settlements of the borough Kettering town should be represented by 22 councillors. Only the Borough Council proposed a scheme that allocated the town 22 councillors. As detailed above, the Labour Group's proposals were based on a council size of 47, of which 28 councillors would be allocated to Kettering town. Similarly, Mr Nelson, a local resident proposed a council size of 34 and proposed that Kettering town should be represented by 21 councillors. It has therefore been very difficult to adopt any of these proposals as they are based on a different allocation of councillors. Allocating a different number of councillors to Kettering town would inevitably lead to poor levels of electoral equality as the average number of electors represented by each councillor would be different to that under a council size of 36.

62 The Borough Council proposed five new wards in this area. It proposed two-member All Saints, Brambleside, Central, Northfield and St Peter's wards. Its proposed All Saints ward is 'largely based' on the existing ward of the same name. It would comprise KA and KB polling districts from the existing All Saints ward (that area largely to the east of Bath Road and east of Rockingham Road extending as far north as Blandford Avenue and south to Park Avenue). This revised ward would also include electors from the existing Avondale ward (that area west of Bath Road around Byron Road, North Park Drive and Scott Road). It would also comprise part of the existing Brambleside ward (an area around Browning Avenue, including Burns Road and Kipling Road). In addition it would contain an area from the north of the existing St Andrew's ward (that area bounded to the north west by Northfield Drive and the north east by Rockingham Road). Its proposed St Peter's ward would be based on the existing St Peter's ward but would also include that area of development, including Abbots Close and Thurston Drive, currently in Wicksteed ward.

63 The Borough Council's revised Brambleside ward would comprise most of the existing Brambleside ward (that area north of the existing All Saints ward and bounded to the north by the A43). It would not however contain that area around Browning Avenue which the council proposed be included in its revised All Saints ward, as described above. The council stated that the '[Brambleside] estate now has its own school, community association and shopping area' and that the ward boundaries reflect these considerations. The council's proposed Central ward would comprise an area east of London Road and Silver Street, north of St Mary's Road, west of Windmill Avenue and south of King Street. It stated that 'the area contained within this proposed ward ... can be identified as a discrete community with clear and identifiable boundaries'. The Borough Council's proposed Northfield ward would be bounded to the west by the railway line which runs north-south through Kettering town. It would extend

east to Rockingham Road and also include King Street, Regent Street, Havelock Street and Wood Street. It would share its northern boundary with the council's proposed Brambleside and All Saints wards and its southern boundary would be Northampton Road.

64 By 2008, under a council size of 36, the Borough Council's proposed All Saints, Brambleside and St Peter's wards would have 10%, 13% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average. Its proposed Central and Northfield wards would have 7% and 1% more respectively.

65 The Labour Group proposed wards based on the existing arrangements. Its proposed All Saints, Brambleside, St Andrew's and St Mary's wards would be identical to the existing wards of the same name and St Peter's ward would be based on the existing ward subject to the transfer of a small area to improve electoral equality. The Labour Group did not provide evidence to support retaining wards which by 2008 will secure such poor levels of electoral inequality.

66 The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area and that wards should comprise communities.

67 We have carefully considered the proposals that we received in this area. We consider that in Kettering borough the settlements of Kettering, Desborough, Rothwell and Burton Latimer should, where possible, be represented without being combined with more rural areas. In order to do this, it has been necessary to ensure the correct allocation of councillors within these areas. The town of Kettering is entitled to 22 councillors and we have therefore been constrained in adopting any proposals that do not allocate the town this many councillors. As noted previously only Kettering Borough Council made proposals that allocated Kettering 22 councillors. We note that the Borough Council's proposed wards in this area of Kettering town would have varying levels of electoral equality by 2008. While we would look to adopt locally generated proposals we do not consider that the Borough Council has provided sufficient evidence to persuade us to adopt its proposals in this area given the level of electoral equality secured under its scheme. Given that there are alternative options to us we are proposing a number of our own wards which we consider use stronger boundaries whilst providing a better level of electoral equality.

68 We have proposed a Brambleside ward based on the Borough Council's proposals in the north of the town but in order to improve electoral equality propose transferring the area north of the playing field and North Park recreation ground from the existing Avondale ward into this proposed ward. We note the desirability of transferring a small number of electors in Weekley parish into this proposed Brambleside ward. We acknowledge that this area is overspill from the town and is likely to have a stronger community of interest with Kettering town than the parished area of the borough. However, in order for these electors to be included in an urban Kettering ward, Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the borough. In order to comply with this legislation it would be necessary for us to ward the parish of Weekley, making that area of overspill a parish ward of Weekley. We do not consider that that area of overspill from Kettering town has a sufficient number of electors (around 50) to justify forming a parish ward and we would normally only do so if there were a minimum

of 100–150 electors. We have therefore proposed that this area of overspill be retained with the rest of Weekley parish in a Rural East ward.

69 We have adopted the Borough Council's proposed St Peter's ward as we note that by 2008 it will have an excellent level of electoral equality and also consider that its eastern boundary which follows the railway line is very strong and should not be breached. In the remainder of this area we are proposing our own wards which we consider to have good levels of electoral equality and which are tied to strong boundaries in the town. We have proposed a three-member All Saints ward, similar to the Borough Council's proposed ward of the same name. However, we propose that the ward extends further south encompassing that area north of Montagu Street. This ward's western boundary would also not deviate from Rockingham Road which we consider provides a stronger boundary than the Borough Council's proposal. We also note that using this boundary provides a good level of electoral equality.

70 We have also proposed a two-member Central ward. This ward's northern boundary would be Montagu Street and Lower Street, and it would extend south as far as the southern boundary of the existing St Mary's ward – Northampton Road and north of St Mary's Road. Its western boundary would be the railway line and its eastern boundary would follow St Mary's Road and Windmill Avenue. We have proposed a single-member Northfield ward. This would utilise the railway line as its western boundary and Rockingham Road as its eastern boundary. It would retain the same northern boundary as the existing St Andrew's ward and would extend south as far as Lower Street and Northall Street. Both these wards would have a good level of electoral equality by 2008.

71 We recognise that it has been difficult to adopt a locally generated scheme in Kettering as we proposed an alternative council size to the locally generated schemes that we received. In Kettering we have been able to form wards which are loosely based on those of the Borough Council's. In the absence of community identity arguments to justify the Borough Council's proposals we have looked to provide a greatly improved level of electoral equality and also to use strong boundaries. Our proposed wards would not vary from the borough average by more than 4% by 2008.

72 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 10) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for All Saints, Brambleside, Central, Northfield and St Peter's wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a.

Avondale, Millbrook, Pipers Hill, St Michael's, Spinney, Warkton and Wicksteed wards (Kettering town)

73 Under the existing arrangements each of these wards is wholly unparished. Table 4 (page 18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

74 Under a council size of 36, Kettering town is entitled to 22 councillors. As detailed above, the Labour Group's proposals were based on a council size of 47, of which 28 councillors would be allocated to Kettering town. Having decided to adopt a council size of 36 it has been very difficult for us to adopt any of the wards proposed by the Labour Group as the wards it proposed are based on a different councillor:elector ratio and

would have the incorrect allocation of councillors. Under a council size of 36, 22 councillors are allocated to Kettering town (including Barton Seagrave parish). We have therefore not adopted any of the Labour Group's proposals in this area. Mr Nelson proposed a council size of 34. His proposed ward boundaries in Kettering town would also result in the incorrect allocation of councillors in Kettering town and note that further correspondence from the local resident resulted in him supporting the council's proposed reduction in council size. We have therefore not adopted any of his proposals in this area.

75 Kettering Borough Council proposed four new wards in this area. It proposed a three-member Avondale Grange ward, a two-member St Michael's ward, a two-member Park ward and a three-member Ise Lodge ward.

76 The Borough Council proposed an Avondale Grange ward comprising the majority of the existing Avondale and Warkton wards. It proposed that the area of Avondale ward, west of Bath Road around Byron Road, North Park Drive and Scott Road be included in the revised All Saints ward, as described above. It did not propose to include that area south of East Avenue in the existing Warkton ward in its proposed Avondale Grange ward. In support of this ward the Borough Council noted that 'the proposed new ward would have a combination of similar style properties in the vast majority of its area'. Its proposed St Michael's ward would comprise the existing St Michael's ward which comprises an area bounded to the west by the railway line and to the east by London Road. It would also include that part of the existing Wicksteed ward, broadly to the west of Pytchley Road. This proposed ward would extend as far south as the A14 bordering Broughton and Pytchley parishes.

77 The Borough Council's proposed Park ward would comprise the existing Pipers Hill ward and part of Warkton and Wicksteed wards. The ward's western boundary would be broadly coincident with London Road and Pytchley Road. Its eastern boundary would follow the existing ward boundary along the River Ise and extend as far south as the A14. The area transferred out of the council's proposed Avondale Grange ward south of East Avenue would comprise the northern part of this proposed Park ward. The Borough Council considered that its proposed Park ward 'comprises a number of small communities, which are geographically linked, but would be too small individually to form a discrete ward'. The council's proposed Ise Lodge ward in the east of Kettering town would comprise the majority of the existing Millbrook and Spinney wards. The Borough Council considered that the existing boundary that divides Millbrook and Spinney wards is 'arbitrary' and that 'electors do not identify with the existing wards'. The majority of the western boundary of its proposed Ise Lodge ward would be the River Ise. However, the Borough Council proposed to breach the river further north so that part of the existing Warkton ward, west of the river, (that area around Deeble Road), is included in its proposed Ise Lodge ward. In the south of the proposed ward the council proposed to transfer electors around Buckingham Court and Hartley Drive from the existing Spinney ward to its proposed Barton ward.

78 By 2008, under a council size of 36, the Borough Council's proposed Avondale Grange ward would have 11% fewer electors than the borough average. St Michael's ward, Park ward and Ise Lodge ward would have 5%, 5%, and 3% more electors than the borough average, respectively.

79 The Labour Group proposed wards in this area based on the existing arrangements. Its proposed Avondale, Warkton and Wicksteed wards would be identical to the existing wards of the same name. It also proposed a Millbrook ward comprising most of the existing Millbrook ward and part of the existing Spinney ward. The remainder of its proposed Spinney ward would form a revised Spinney ward. That area transferred out of the existing Millbrook ward would be combined with the existing Pipers Hill ward to form a revised Pipers Hill ward. It proposed a St Michael's ward comprising the existing ward of the same name plus that small area transferred out of its proposed St Peter's ward. As stated above, we have not adopted any of the Labour Group's proposals as the wards are based on a different councillor: elector ratio than that which we are recommending and would result in poor levels of electoral equality which we received no evidence to justify adopting.

80 The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area and that wards should comprise communities.

81 We received representations from two local residents regarding the area of the Spinney ward. Both considered that the existing Spinney ward should be retained. The residents noted that 'the ward has distinct character and issues. It also includes open countryside to the north, east and south east, which is understood to be earmarked for major development'. They considered that neighbouring wards 'have different environmental and social characteristics'.

82 We have carefully considered the proposals that we received in this area. As discussed previously, due to the different council sizes proposed we have not been able to adopt any locally generated schemes. Only Kettering Borough Council proposed that Kettering town be represented by 22 councillors, to which the town is entitled to under a council size of 36. We note the limited evidence provided to us in this area regarding community identity. Therefore we have sought to secure greatly improved levels of electoral equality across the area and looked to balance this against community identity, where some evidence exists.

83 In this area we are proposing an Avondale Grange ward, Pipers Hill ward, Ise Lodge ward and St Michael's & Wicksteed ward. These wards are loosely based on the Borough Council's proposals but with amendments to improve electoral equality and to provide for strong boundaries. We are proposing a two-member Avondale Grange ward comprising most of the existing Avondale ward plus the northern half of the existing Warkton ward which is broadly north of Elizabeth Road. To the south of this ward we are proposing a Pipers Hill ward. This ward's eastern boundary would be the river that separates the existing Millbrook ward from the rest of the town. Its western and southern boundary would be London Road which we consider forms a strong boundary in this area and forms the boundary of the existing Pipers Hill ward.

84 To the east of the river we are proposing an Ise Lodge ward based on the Borough Council's proposals which combine the existing Millbrook and Spinney wards. However, we do not propose to include that area to the west of the river from the existing Warkton ward as we do not consider that any evidence has been provided to justify using a weaker boundary than the river which we consider is an excellent boundary in the area. We note the two local residents' proposal to retain the existing Spinney ward. However, we do not consider they have provided any evidence that combining the existing Spinney and Millbrook wards would not satisfactorily reflect community identity. We note

that there is no clear distinction to differentiate between the current Millbrook and Spinney wards. We note further that the Borough Council's proposals would provide for strong boundaries in the area and for a good level of electoral equality.

85 We are also supporting the Borough Council's proposal to transfer part of the existing Spinney ward to a revised Barton ward. We note the Borough Council's comments that those residents 'see themselves largely as belonging to Barton Seagrave'. Although we do not consider that this is strong evidence we note that it is necessary to transfer some electors out of this ward in order to improve electoral equality in both the proposed Barton ward and Ise Lodge wards. While not ideal we consider that this area is most clearly separated from the rest of the proposed Ise Lodge ward and that it is better to transfer this area than breaching the river to the west. We are also proposing to transfer a small area from the existing Millbrook ward in to the proposed Barton ward. This area is to the west of that part of Spinney ward being transferred to the proposed Barton ward. We consider that by transferring this area we are able to strengthen the ward boundaries in the area so that the area around the junction of Barton Road and St Botolphs Road is included in the same ward.

86 We are proposing a St Michael's & Wicksteed ward comprising the existing St Michael's ward and most of the existing Wicksteed ward (less that area of development that has been transferred to the proposed St Peter's ward). We consider that this ward has strong boundaries and would secure a good level of electoral equality by 2008.

87 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 10) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for Avondale Grange ward, Pipers Hill ward, Ise Lodge ward and St Michael's & Wicksteed ward. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a included at the back of this report.

Buckleuch, Queen Eleanor, Slade and Welland wards (Rural wards)

88 Under the existing arrangements Buckleuch ward comprises the parishes of Cranford, Grafton Underwood, Rushton, Warkton and Weekley; Queen Eleanor ward comprises the parishes of Geddington and Newton & Little Oakley; Slade ward comprises the parishes of Broughton, Cransley, Mawsley, Harrington, Loddington, Orton, Pytchley and Thorpe Malsor; Welland ward comprises the parishes of Ashley, Brampton Ash, Braybrooke, Dingley, Stoke Albany, Sutton Bassett, Weston by Welland and Wilbarston. Table 4 (page 18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

89 We received submissions relating to this area from Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, four parish councils, a borough councillor and six local residents. The respondents who submitted borough-wide schemes proposed that this area be allocated four councillors in total, with the exception of Kettering Borough Council which allocated this area five councillors. Under a council size of 36 we have concluded that this area is entitled to four councillors.

90 The Borough Council proposed three wards in this area. It proposed a two-member Rural East ward, a two-member Rural South ward and a one-member Rural West ward. Its proposed Rural East ward would comprise the existing Buckleuch and Queen

Eleanor wards and part of Welland ward (the parishes of Stoke Albany and Wilbarston). Its proposed Rural South ward would comprise part of the existing Slade ward (the parishes of Broughton, Mawsley and Pytchley). Its proposed Rural West ward would comprise the remainder of the existing Slade ward (the parishes of Cransley, Harrington, Loddington, Orton and Thorpe Malsor) and the remainder of the existing Welland ward (the parishes of Ashley, Brampton Ash, Braybrooke, Dingley, Sutton Bassett and Weston by Welland).

91 In support of these proposals the Borough Council stated that ‘the proposed wards provide part of the suggested solution to the electoral imbalance that currently exist’ and that the wards had been formed ‘on the basis of ensuring that purely rural communities were retained’. Under a council size of 36 these wards would have 7%, 13% and 15% fewer electors than the borough average.

92 The Labour Group proposed wards in this area based on the existing arrangements. It proposed that the existing Buccleuch and Queen Eleanor wards be retained. Slade and Welland wards would retain the same boundaries as the existing wards of those names subject to Braybrooke parish being transferred from Welland ward to Slade ward. In addition Mawsley parish would form a single-member Mawsley ward. The Labour Group did not provide evidence in support of its proposals, and its proposed wards would have poor levels of electoral equality under a council size of 36.

93 Mr Nelson, the local resident, proposed a single-member Buccleuch ward comprising Queen Eleanor ward and part of Buccleuch ward (the parishes of Cranford, Grafton Underwood, Warkton and Weekley), a two-member Slade ward comprising the existing Slade ward and a single-member Welland ward comprising the existing Welland ward and the remainder of Buccleuch ward (Rushton parish). He did not provide evidence in support of his proposals but considered that his proposals attempted to avoid combining geographically unconnected areas.

94 The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area and that wards should comprise communities.

95 Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council objected to a reduction in council size and considered that it would ‘undoubtedly reduce the “quality of outcomes” which the Borough Council objectives are to increase’. It considered that multi-member wards make it ‘more difficult for the electorate to identify with their borough councillor’. It specifically objected to the Borough Council’s proposed two-member Rural East ward. This ward would combine Queen Eleanor ward, (in which Geddington and Newton & Little Oakley parishes are contained) with the existing Buccleuch ward and Stoke Albany and Wilbarston parishes from Welland ward. It considered that the ‘size of the proposed ward ... would significantly increase the workload and travel requirements and could make it more difficult to attract high-quality individuals to the role’. The parish council also submitted a petition which stated that ‘Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley form a distinct community and should remain a single ward of Kettering Borough Council’. The parish council noted that the petition was signed by over 300 people, over 20% of the electorate.

96 We also received seven other submissions objecting to any proposal to change the existing Queen Eleanor ward. Councillor Padwick (Queen Eleanor ward) objected to Kettering Borough Council’s proposals for the borough, stating that ‘there has been no

political or community consensus on the proposals submitted [particularly] ... within the rural area'. He considered that a reduction in council size during a time of development resulting in an increased number of electors per councillor would be 'likely to make the workload of each councillor more difficult to manage, and will discourage a broad cross-section of the community from putting themselves forward as candidates for election'. He noted that the two-member Rural East ward that Kettering Borough Council proposed was 'opposed by most of the parish councils that would lie within it'. He considered that Geddington and Newton & Little Oakley are 'communities with historic links forming a tight and cohesive community in the north east of the borough – with Wilbarston and Stoke Albany, which look clearly towards the Welland Valley and to Market Harborough in the north west'.

97 The other six respondents all considered that the existing Queen Eleanor ward should be retained for reasons of community identity which they consider is reflected in the existing ward. One local resident noted that the ward 'covers a long-established parish area which has a population of a size and unity which can and does have a good working relationship with the borough councillor'. Another resident noted that a safety 'walking bus' scheme was set up with the support of the Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council and other local organisations in the community'. The respondents also objected to the principle of multi-member wards in the area and considered that single-member wards increased turnout at elections.

98 Wilbarston Parish Council proposed to improve the level of electoral equality in the existing Welland ward (in which Wilbarston parish is contained). It proposed to transfer Braybrooke parish from Welland ward to Slade ward. Under a council size of 36 this would result in Welland ward having 25% more electors than the borough average by 2008. Slade ward would have 21% fewer electors than the borough average. It also considered that in order to accommodate the growth in Slade ward due to development in Mawsley parish, an alternative proposal would be to create a new ward solely for Mawsley parish, currently in Slade ward, which would result in the revised Slade ward having 14% fewer electors and the proposed Mawsley ward having 34% fewer electors than the borough average. It did not provide any evidence in support of these proposals and stated that they were made in order to improve the existing poor levels of electoral equality based on the existing council size.

99 Weekley Parish Council did not make a proposal but objected to the timing of the review. It 'considers that to undertake such a review is premature, when the future of the whole area is to be subject to such enormous change (Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-regional strategy). Weston-by-Welland Parish Council stated that the existing Welland ward should be retained and that it currently 'reflect[s] the identities and interests of the area'.

100 We have carefully considered the proposals we received in relation to this area. We note that the respondents have all attempted to ensure that this rural parished area is not combined with the towns in the borough and we are also recommending wards that do not combine urban and rural areas. In order to achieve this it has been more difficult to form wards in the rural areas with levels of electoral equality as good as that in the unparished areas. This is due to the size and distribution of wards around the borough. Improved electoral equality could be achieved through parish warding. However, we did not receive any proposals in this area to do so and having considered the distribution and settlement pattern of parishes across the borough, we considered

that this would not reflect community identities. We consider that in these areas the poorer levels of electoral equality are a better alternative than combining urban and rural areas or parish warding. We have not been persuaded by the Labour Group or Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to retain wards based on the existing arrangements in the rest of this area, as we received no evidence to justify the poor levels of electoral equality that they would provide.

101 We have proposed the same wards in this area that Mr Nelson put forward as part of his borough-wide scheme. We consider that this configuration of wards provides the best level of electoral equality for the rural parished areas of the borough, without combining urban and rural areas.

102 We are adopting Mr Nelson's proposals in this area as we consider that they provide for the best levels of electoral equality whilst forming wards which are geographically well linked. We are proposing a single-member Rural East ward comprising Queen Eleanor ward and part of Buccleuch ward (the parishes of Cranford, Grafton Underwood, Warkton and Weekley). We propose to call this ward Rural East as we consider that this does not give undue prevalence to the names of the existing wards in the area. However, we welcome further views on this name during Stage Three. We note that this proposal combines Queen Eleanor ward with other parishes which a number of respondents opposed. However, we did not receive sufficient evidence to justify retaining the Queen Eleanor ward which will have 17% fewer electors than the borough average by 2008. We consider that the Rural East ward that we are proposing links parishes that are geographically well linked and provides for an acceptable level of electoral equality across the rural wards in the borough.

103 We are also proposing a two-member Slade ward comprising the existing Slade ward, and a single-member Welland ward comprising the existing Welland ward and the remainder of Buccleuch ward (Rushton parish). We note that by 2008, under our proposals Rural East, Slade and Welland wards will have 8%, 10% and 15% more electors than the borough average. While we note that our proposed Welland ward would have 15% more electors than the borough average by 2008 we note that our options in the area are somewhat limited if we are to avoid mixing rural and urban areas. However, in formulating a scheme for the rural area as a whole we consider that our proposals reflect the statutory criteria.

104 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 10) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations Rural East, Slade and Welland wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Loatland, St Giles, Tresham and Trinity wards (Desborough and Rothwell)

105 Under the existing arrangements Loatland ward comprises Loatland parish ward of Desborough parish and St Giles ward comprises St Giles parish ward of Desborough parish. Tresham ward comprises Tresham parish ward of Rothwell parish and Trinity ward comprises Trinity parish ward of Rothwell parish. Table 4 (page 18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

106 We received submissions relating to these two towns from Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrat Group, Rothwell Town Council and Mr Nelson who submitted a borough-wide scheme. Under a council size of 36, the town of Rothwell is entitled to three councillors and Desborough is entitled to four councillors. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area but provided no evidence to justify retaining warding arrangements that result in poor levels of electoral equality. By 2008 the variances in this area would be particularly poor with each ward having between 19% and 30% more or fewer electors than the borough average. The Borough Council and Mr Nelson proposed revised arrangements.

107 In Desborough, the Borough Council proposed two wards. It proposed a two-member Desborough Loatland ward and a two-member Desborough St Giles ward. It proposed a Desborough Loatland ward based on the existing Loatland ward, with an area generally north of Victoria Union Street and Lower Street being transferred into its proposed Desborough St Giles ward. This Desborough St Giles ward would comprise this area from the existing Loatland ward alongside the existing St Giles ward. These amendments to the existing arrangements were made to improve electoral equality, given the development that is forecast in the north of the town. By 2008 neither of these wards would have more than 2% more electors than the borough average.

108 Mr Nelson proposed a three-member Desborough ward comprising the existing Loatland and St Giles wards. Initially this ward would have 9% more electors than the borough average. However, due to the development that is planned, by 2008 the ward would have 35% more electors than the borough average.

109 In Rothwell, the Borough Council proposed to combine the existing Tresham and Trinity wards into a three-member Rothwell ward. To support this proposal, the council stated that residents of Rothwell identify with the town 'rather than as living in either of the Tresham or Trinity wards'. It went on to state that Rothwell 'is a distinct community'. Mr Nelson also proposed combining the existing wards into a three-member Rothwell ward.

110 Rothwell Town Council stated that it did not want to see the town represented all in one ward and wished to maintain the status quo, whereby the town is represented in two two-member wards. It stated that it did not wish to see a decrease in the council size of the district as this would result in decreased number of councillors representing Rothwell town. In support of its proposal it described the development that is due to take place in the town, noting that the Strategic Development Area proposals for Rothwell may result in development of 'up to 750 new houses in the near future'. It acknowledged that in order to retain four borough councillors for the town it would be necessary to retain a council size of around 45 which it proposed was retained 'to ensure that Rothwell is represented at the borough in the widest way possible'. We contacted the Borough Council in relation to Rothwell Town Council's comments regarding the development in the town that could be in place before 2008. It responded stating that 'no planning applications have been submitted, and therefore using the criteria that the Group responsible for the Council's submission used for 2008 projections, this was not included in the figure'.

111 We have carefully considered the proposals that we received in relation to Desborough and Rothwell. We do not consider that we have received any evidence to

justify retaining the existing wards that would by 2008, have significant levels of electoral inequality. Because we are adopting a council size of 36 we note that the town of Desborough is entitled to four councillors and Rothwell three councillors. We have therefore been unable to adopt any proposals that do not allocate these areas the correct number of councillors.

112 In Desborough we were not persuaded by Mr Nelson's proposal to retain the existing arrangements, given the level of electoral equality would be very poor by 2008. We propose to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area and are recommending a Desborough Loatland ward and Desborough St Giles ward. We consider that the town should be represented by four councillors and consider that the Borough Council's proposals would provide a good level of electoral equality by 2008. We note that there is no clear area in the town to divide the town between two two-member wards but are satisfied that the Borough Council's proposals provide for the best boundary to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. Due to the need to recommend borough wards which do not cross parish ward boundaries we have also proposed revised electoral arrangements for the town council which are outlined on page 43.

113 In Rothwell town we are proposing to adopt the proposals put forward by the Borough Council and Mr Nelson, which contain the town in one three-member ward. As noted previously, under a council size of 36 the town is entitled to three councillors and we are therefore unable to adopt Rothwell Town Council's proposals to retain two two-member wards. We are not persuaded by the argument that Rothwell Town Council put forward regarding retaining four councillors to represent the town. We received no evidence of community identity in support of retaining two district wards and in light of our decision to adopt a council size of 36 we consider that the town should be represented by three councillors.

114 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 10) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for the proposed Desborough Loatland, Desborough St Giles and Rothwell wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2b accompanying this report.

Barton, Latimer and Plessy wards

115 Under the existing arrangements Barton ward comprises Barton Seagrave parish and a small area from Burton Latimer parish which does not contain any electors. Latimer ward comprises Latimer parish ward of Latimer parish and Plessy ward comprises Plessy parish ward of Burton Latimer parish. Table 4 (page 18) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2003 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2008 if the existing arrangements remained in place.

116 We received submissions relating to this area from Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group and Mr Nelson who submitted a borough-wide scheme. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area.

117 Kettering Borough Council proposed two new wards in this area. It proposed a two-member Barton ward and a three-member Burton Latimer ward. Its proposed Barton ward would comprise the existing Barton ward plus those electors around

Westminster Drive, Buckingham Court and Hartley Drive from the existing Spinney ward, as described previously in relation to the council's proposed Ise Lodge ward. In support of this ward the council stated that 'the residents of those streets [around Buckingham Court and Hartley Drive] have traditionally seen themselves to be part of the community of Barton Seagrave' and that 'the proposal would largely create an homogenous community'. It noted that 'the council's A6 Towns Forum supported moving the streets into the proposed Barton Seagrave ward'.

118 The Borough Council's proposed Burton Latimer ward would combine the existing Latimer and Plessey wards into a three-member ward. It would also include that small part of Burton Latimer parish, with no electors, currently in Barton ward. Including this area would unite the parish in one ward. The Borough Council stated that residents in the Latimer and Plessey areas tended to identify with the whole area and not with the existing wards and that the area 'is a distinct community in its own right'.

119 Mr Nelson proposed the same three-member Burton Latimer ward as the Borough Council and proposed to retain the existing Barton ward with one amendment. He proposed to transfer 'those electors of the current Spinney ward that reside on the northern side of Barton Road and the Westminster Drive housing development which emerge immediately from Barton Road, into the new Barton ward'. This is broadly the same area that the Borough Council also proposed to transfer from the existing Spinney ward to a revised Barton ward. Mr Nelson considered that 'the boundaries of ... Ise Lodge and Barton Seagrave are a little blurred ... with some residents towards the south of the existing Spinney ward considering themselves residents of Barton Seagrave more than ... Ise Lodge'.

120 We have carefully considered the proposals we received regarding this area. We do not consider that we have received any evidence to justify retaining the existing wards that would by 2008 have poor levels of electoral equality. We note that both the Borough Council and Mr Nelson consider that residents in the south of the existing Spinney ward look south towards Barton Seagrave. We are adopting the Borough Council's proposed Barton ward as this provides a good level of electoral equality. We acknowledge the two local residents' wish to retain the existing Spinney ward. However, in order to provide a scheme across the borough which provides a good level of electoral equality we consider it is necessary to transfer electors from this ward in to the proposed Barton ward. We also consider that combining the existing Latimer and Plessey wards into a three-member Burton Latimer ward is the best option in this area. We note that this ward will have 9% fewer electors than the borough average by 2008 and we have looked into ways of improving this level of electoral inequality. However, this would involve transferring part of the surrounding parishes into this area. We note that Burton Latimer is separated from the rest of these parishes and consider that containing the parish in one ward justifies this level of electoral inequality.

121 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 10) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our draft recommendations for the proposed Barton and Burton Latimer wards. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a at accompanying this report.

Conclusions

122 Table 5 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 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Draft recommendations	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
Number of councillors	45	45	36	36
Number of wards	23	23	17	17
Average number of electors per councillor	1,477	1,589	1,846	1,986
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	11	12	3	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	3	5	1	0

123 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Kettering Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 11 to 3. By 2008 only Welland ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to decrease the council size and are recommending a council size of 36 members.

Draft recommendation:

Kettering Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 17 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

124 As part of an FER The Boundary Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the Borough 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 borough 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.

125 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 and borough councils. Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997. If a district or borough 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.

126 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 borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parish of Desborough to reflect the proposed borough wards.

127 The parish of Desborough is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards: Loatland and St Giles, each represented by six councillors.

Draft recommendation:

Desborough Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: St Giles (returning 6 councillors) and Loatland (returning 6 councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2b.

128 Rothwell Town Council requested that the current parish electoral arrangements be maintained. Given that our draft recommendations do not require us to revise the parish arrangements in the town we do not propose changing the parish electoral arrangements at this stage. The parish will continue to be represented by 12 parish councillors on the existing boundaries of the two parish wards. We welcome further comments, particularly from Rothwell Town Council regarding its parish electoral arrangements.

5 What happens next?

129 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Kettering contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 12 September 2005. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

130 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements of Kettering and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

131 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

or by emailing us at reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

132 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, the 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 Kettering Borough Council, at the Committee's offices in Trevelyan House and on its website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. The facility to put submissions on our website was not available during Stage One.

133 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 Commission, which cannot make the electoral change Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

6 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Kettering borough:

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Kettering borough.

Sheet 1, Map 1 illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Kettering borough, including constituent parishes.

Sheet 2, Map 2a illustrates the proposed boundaries in Kettering town.

Sheet 2, Map 2b illustrates the proposed boundaries in Desborough.

Appendix A

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), 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.

