

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

Further electoral review

May 2006

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# Contents

What is the Boundary Committee for England?	5
Executive summary	7
1 Introduction	13
2 Current electoral arrangements	17
3 Draft recommendations	21
4 Responses to consultation	23
5 Analysis and final recommendations	25
Electorate figures	25
Council size	26
Electoral equality	27
General analysis	28
Warding arrangements	29
All Saints, Brambleside, St Andrew’s, St Mary’s and St Peter’s wards (Kettering town)	29
Avondale, Millbrook, Pipers Hill, St Michael’s, Spinney, Warkton and Wicksteed wards (Kettering town)	31
Buccleuch, Queen Eleanor, Slade and Welland wards (Rural wards)	34
Loatland, St Giles, Tresham and Trinity wards (Desborough and Rothwell)	37
Barton, Latimer and Plessy wards	39
Conclusions	41
Parish electoral arrangements	42
6 What happens next?	45
7 Mapping	47
Appendices	
A Glossary and abbreviations	49
B Code of practice on written consultation	53



# 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 the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Kettering is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake this review on 2 June 2004.

## 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 during the last review for the five-year period between 1996 and 2001 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.

Every review is conducted in four stages:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	21 June 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	13 September 2005	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

## Draft recommendations

We proposed that Kettering Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors, nine fewer than at present, representing 17 wards. We recommended that the boundaries of all the existing wards should be changed, except Slade ward which should be retained. As a result of our district warding we proposed new parish wards in Desborough.

## Responses to consultation

Our draft recommendations were generally supported, although we received some proposed amendments to the boundaries of wards in Kettering town from the Borough Council. The Labour Group on the Council opposed the reduction in council size, and two other respondents also considered the council size should not be reduced. A number of respondents reiterated their Stage One comments in relation to the existing Queen Eleanor ward which they considered should be retained. We received proposals to change three of the ward names outlined in our draft recommendations.

## Analysis and final recommendations

### Electorate figures

During Stage One the Borough Council forecast an 8% increase in the electorate and stated that it expected most of the growth to be in Kettering town, Desborough, Rothwell and the existing Slade ward. We received no further information in relation to these figures during Stage Three.

### Council size

The Borough Council supported our proposal to reduce the council size from 45 to 36 members. The Labour Group objected to this reduction and challenged the Borough Council's Stage One argument which supported a decrease in council size. Two other respondents also objected to a reduction in council size. We do not consider there is merit in reconsidering council size at this stage and are confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 36 as final.

### General analysis

We are proposing to confirm the boundaries of all the wards outlined in our draft recommendations. We do not consider that we received sufficient justification in any of the Stage Three submissions to move away from our draft recommendations, which provide good levels of electoral equality in the areas where alterations were proposed. We do, however, propose to rename the proposed Central and Rural East wards as William Knibb and Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch, respectively.

### What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 27 June 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

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

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

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

**Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary**

<b>Ward name (by borough council area)</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent borough wards</b>
1 All Saints	3	the existing All Saints ward; part of the existing Avondale ward; part of the existing St Andrew's ward; part of the existing St Mary's ward;
2 Avondale Grange	2	part of the existing Avondale ward; part of the existing Warkton ward
3 Barton	2	part of the existing Barton ward (Barton Seagrave parish); part of the existing Millbrook ward; part of the existing Spinney ward
4 Brambleside	2	the existing Brambleside ward; part of the existing Avondale ward
5 Burton Latimer	3	the existing Latimer ward; the existing Plessy ward; part of the existing Barton ward (Burton Latimer parish)
6 Desborough Loatland	2	part of the existing Loatland ward (the proposed Loatland parish ward of Desborough parish)
7 Desborough St Giles	2	the existing St Giles ward and part of the existing Loatland ward (the proposed St Giles parish ward of Desborough parish)
8 Ise Lodge	3	part of the existing Millbrook ward; part of the existing Spinney ward
9 Northfield	1	part of the existing St Andrew's ward
10 Pipers Hill	2	the existing Pipers Hill ward; part of the existing Warkton ward
11 Queen Eleanor & Buccluch	1	the existing Queen Eleanor ward (the parishes of Geddington and Newton & Little Oakley); part of the existing Buccluch ward (the parishes of Cranford, Grafton Underwood, Warkton and Weekley)
12 Rothwell	3	the existing Tresham ward and the existing Trinity ward (Rothwell parish)
13 Slade	2	the existing Slade ward (the parishes of Broughton, Cransley, Harrington, Loddington, Mawsley, Orton, Pytchley and Thorpe Malsor)
14 St Michael's & Wicksteed	3	the existing St Michael's ward; part of the existing Wicksteed ward

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

<b>Ward name (by borough council area)</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent borough wards</b>
15 St Peter's	2	part of the existing St Peter's ward; part of the existing Wicksteed ward
16 Welland	1	the existing Welland ward (the parishes of Ashley, Braybrooke, Brampton Ash, Dingley, Stoke Albany, Sutton Bassett, Weston by Welland and Wilbarston); part of the existing Buccleuch ward (Rushton parish)
17 William Knibb	2	part of the existing St Mary's ward

Notes

- 1 The borough comprises 27 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.
- 4 The boundaries of our final recommendations for Barton, Burton Latimer, St Michael's & Wicksteed and Slade wards are on slightly different boundaries to those recommended in our draft recommendations. They follow the parish boundaries of the altered Pytchley, Burton Latimer and Barton Seagrave parishes which were altered by an Order made by ODPM between the publication of our draft and final recommendations.

**Table 2: Final recommendations for Kettering borough**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2003)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2008)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	All Saints	3	5,892	1,964	6	6,167	2,056	4
2	Avondale Grange	2	3,715	1,858	1	3,734	1,867	-6
3	Barton	2	4,055	2,028	10	4,089	2,045	3
4	Brambleside	2	3,516	1,758	-4	3,905	1,953	-2
5	Burton Latimer	3	5,249	1,750	-5	5,446	1,815	-9
6	Desborough Loatland	2	2,655	1,328	-28	3,992	1,996	1
7	Desborough St Giles	2	3,867	1,934	5	4,060	2,030	2
8	Ise Lodge	3	5,636	1,879	2	5,840	1,947	-2
9	Northfield	1	1,878	1,878	2	1,935	1,935	-3
10	Pipers Hill	2	3,894	1,947	6	3,922	1,961	-1
11	Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch	1	2,086	2,086	14	2,142	2,142	8

**Table 2 (continued): Final Recommendations for Kettering borough**

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2003)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Rothwell	3	5,621	1,874	2	6,090	2,030	2
13 Slade	2	3,564	1,782	-3	4,384	2,192	10
14 St Michael's & Wicksteed	3	5,508	1,836	0	5,677	1,892	-5
15 St Peter's	2	3,441	1,721	-6	3,951	1,976	-1
16 Welland	1	2,195	2,195	20	2,286	2,286	15
17 William Knibb	2	3,698	1,849	1	3,866	1,933	-3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>66,470</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>71,486</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,846</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,986</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Kettering.

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. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

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

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

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of 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 on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

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

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

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

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of 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 and will be helpful in both understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for any parish and town councils in the borough. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the borough or parishes as part of this review. However, it should be noted that on 24 February 2006, following a review undertaken by the

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

Borough Council, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) made a parish boundary Order which amended the boundaries of Barton Seagrave, Burton Latimer and Pytchley parishes. These parish boundary changes are all minor. As part of our final recommendations we are proposing to tie the borough ward boundaries to the boundaries of these altered parishes. Therefore the boundaries of our final recommendations for Barton, Burton Latimer, St Michael's & Wicksteed and Slade wards are slightly different to those outlined in our draft recommendations. These changes do not affect the levels of electoral equality in any of our proposed wards.

8 The broad objective of an electoral review is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole, i.e. to ensure that all councillors in the local authority represent similar numbers of electors. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make-up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction, or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, we believe that consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and 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.

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

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring

or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from 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 district.

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

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

**Table 3: Stages of the review**

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Stage starts</b>	<b>Description</b>
One	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	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 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, Northamptonshire Local Councils' 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.

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

17 Stage Three began on 21 June 2005 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Kettering in Northamptonshire* and ended on 12 September 2005.

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

## Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

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

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

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

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

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The borough of Kettering is bounded by Harborough in Leicestershire, and Corby, Daventry, East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough in Northamptonshire. The borough contains 27 parishes, but the town of Kettering itself is unparished and comprises 56% of the borough's total electorate.

22 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. The borough average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a borough average of 1,477 electors (66,470 divided by 45), which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,589 by the year 2008 if the present number of councillors is maintained (71,486 divided by 45).

23 During the last review of Kettering the Borough Council forecast there would be an increase of approximately 4,000 electors between 1996 and 2001. However, electorate growth since that time has resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2003 electoral register showed that under these arrangements electoral equality across the borough met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in 11 of the 23 wards (48%) varies by more than 10% from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Welland ward where the councillor represents 24% more electors than the borough average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Kettering Borough Council on 2 June 2004.

**Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2003)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2008)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	All Saints	2	2,842	1,421	-4	2,997	1,499	-6
2	Avondale	2	3,146	1,573	6	3,172	1,586	0
3	Barton	2	3,402	1,701	15	3,436	1,718	8
4	Brambleside	2	3,276	1,638	11	3,665	1,833	15
5	Buccleuch	1	1,150	1,150	-22	1,213	1,213	-24
6	Latimer	2	2,534	1,267	-14	2,606	1,303	-18
7	Loatland	2	3,500	1,750	18	4,837	2,419	52
8	Millbrook	2	3,059	1,530	4	3,171	1,586	0
9	Pipers Hill	2	2,392	1,196	-19	2,409	1,205	-24
10	Plessy	2	2,715	1,358	-8	2,840	1,420	-11
11	Queen Eleanor	1	1,297	1,297	-12	1,315	1,315	-17
12	St Andrew's	3	4,140	1,380	-7	4,314	1,438	-9
13	St Giles	2	3,022	1,511	2	3,215	1,608	1

**Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Kettering borough**

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2003)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2008)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
14	St Mary's	3	4,182	1,394	-6	4,353	1,451	-9
15	St Michael's	2	2,793	1,397	-5	2,876	1,438	-9
16	St Peter's	2	3,441	1,721	16	3,951	1,976	24
17	Slade	2	3,564	1,782	21	4,384	2,192	38
18	Spinney	2	3,230	1,615	9	3,322	1,661	5
19	Tresham	2	2,792	1,396	-5	2,877	1,439	-9
20	Trinity	2	2,829	1,415	-4	3,213	1,607	1
21	Warkton	2	2,615	1,308	-11	2,619	1,310	-18
22	Welland	1	1,834	1,834	24	1,900	1,900	20
23	Wicksteed	2	2,715	1,358	-8	2,801	1,401	-12
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>66,470</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>71,486</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,477</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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



### 3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One 22 submissions were received, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, the Labour Group on the Council and a local resident. We also received representations from Kettering Liberal Democrats, Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley, Wilbarston, Weston by Welland and Weekley parish councils, Rothwell Town Council and 13 other representations from local councillors and residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Kettering in Northamptonshire*.

26 Our draft recommendations were based on the proposals of the Borough Council in Rothwell and Desborough and on a local resident's proposals in the rural areas of the borough. In Kettering town we attempted to use the Borough Council's proposals as a basis for our proposals but made changes in most areas in order to improve the level of electoral equality.

27 We proposed that:

- Kettering Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors, nine fewer than at present, representing 17 wards, six fewer than at present
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be changed, except Slade ward which should be retained
- there should be new warding arrangements for Desborough parish. We proposed that the parish ward boundary between the two existing wards should be altered to be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundary

28 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 17 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward varying by more than 10% from the average by 2008.



## 4 Responses to consultation

29 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report we received 17 representations, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Borough Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

### Kettering Borough Council

30 The Borough Council supported a council size of 36 as well as our recommendations across most of the borough. However, it proposed two amendments in Kettering town. It proposed an amendment to the area around the existing Warkton ward and proposed transferring three streets from the proposed Ise Lodge ward into the proposed Barton ward. It also proposed to rename the proposed Rural East ward as Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch and to rename the proposed St Michael's & Wicksteed ward as Southfield.

### Political groups

31 The Labour Group on the Borough Council opposed the reduction in council size and stated that the Borough Council had not provided convincing evidence that demonstrated a reduction of members on the council could be justified.

### Parish and town councils

32 Representations were received from one town council and four parish councils. Rothwell Town Council objected to the town's representation being reduced from four borough councillors to three borough councillors. Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council objected to the proposed Rural East ward and stated they wished the existing Queen Eleanor ward to be retained. Barton Seagrave, Weston by Welland and Cransley parish councils supported our draft recommendations.

### Other representations

33 A further 10 representations were received from local political parties, councillors, local residents and a community group. The Desborough Labour Party and a local resident proposed that the main road and railway in Desborough should be used as the boundary between the two proposed borough wards. Two local residents objected to the proposed Rural East ward and considered that the existing Queen Eleanor ward should be retained. One of these residents also objected to the name of the proposed ward. We also received proposals for name changes from Councillors Jenny and Larry Henson (both St Michael's ward) who proposed that the proposed St Michael's & Wicksteed ward should be called Cytringham South or South Cytringham. A community group called EKTA and a local resident both objected to the name of the proposed Central ward. EKTA proposed renaming it William Knibb, whereas the local resident proposed retaining the existing name of St Mary's. Two local residents opposed the reduction in council size. A local resident made no specific proposals in relation to the boundaries or names of the wards proposed.



## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

34 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Kettering borough.

35 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Kettering Borough 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
- 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

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

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

38 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 should also be taken into account and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

39 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

### Electorate figures

40 As part of the previous review of Kettering 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 had 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. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecast figures for the borough 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.

41 We recognise that forecasting electorates is difficult, and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, we accepted that they were the best estimates that could reasonably be made at that time.

42 We received no comments on the Council's electoral forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

## Council size

43 Kettering Borough Council presently has 45 members. At Stage One we received detailed proposals from three respondents regarding council size. The Borough Council proposed a reduction in council size of eight members to 37. The Labour Group on the Council proposed a council size of 47, an increase of two members, and a Kettering resident, Mr Christopher Nelson, proposed a council size of 34, a reduction of 11 members. Following a request for further information regarding the council size from these respondents we considered that based on the submissions received a stronger case had been made for a reduction in council size.

44 We noted that Kettering can be divided into distinct areas which cover different communities (the settlements of Kettering, Desborough, Rothwell and Burton Latimer). In order to respect the boundaries between these areas while providing the correct allocation of councillors and therefore the best levels of electoral equality available we noted that a council size of 37, as proposed by the Borough Council, would result in wards that include electors from both urban and more rural areas. We therefore considered that in order to provide a good level of electoral equality and in order to reflect community identity a council size of 36 would be the most appropriate council size for Kettering.

45 During Stage Three the Borough Council supported our proposal for a council size of 36, one councillor fewer than they had proposed during Stage One. The Labour Group objected to the proposed reduction in council size and contested the arguments the Council had used in its Stage One submission in relation to council size. The Labour Group asserted that the proposal to decrease the council size did not have due regard for the community leadership role of councillors. However, it did not provide further evidence detailing how the leadership role of councillors would not be effectively carried out under a council size of 36. The Labour Group contested a number of the more specific details of the arguments the Council had used in its Stage One submission in relation to council size. For example, it rejected the Council's point that the introduction of a 'response centre', improvements to the Council's website and the introduction of E-government initiatives would reduce the amount of face-to-face contact councillors would have with constituents, as well as reducing attendance at meetings; it stated that there was no evidence to justify these arguments. It also made comments regarding the arguments used in relation to the number of meetings of the council and membership of councillors on other bodies and the impact these would have on councillors' work schedules. The Labour Group

asserted that the council had not provided convincing evidence that demonstrated a reduction in council size could be justified.

46 The Labour Group's Stage Three submission did not provide an alternative council size, though we note that during Stage One it proposed that the council size should be increased to 47 members.

47 Two local residents also opposed a reduction in council size. One of these residents considered that a reduction in council size would result in a 'poorer service'. The second of these residents considered that the council size should be increased to 60.

48 As part of our final recommendations we do not propose to move away from a council size of 36. We note the submissions from the two local respondents regarding council size but do not consider that either of them provided any evidence in support of their assertion to increase or retain the council size, and we have not been persuaded by their submissions. We also note the concerns of the Labour Group. However, we do not consider that it has provided any substantive justification to move away from our decision to reduce the council size from 45 to 36. We consider the Borough Council provided sufficient information to reduce the council size as part of its Stage One submission and in the further information it provided. The Labour Group's Stage Three submission does not consider the wider issue of council size under the new cabinet structure but unpicks specific points regarding technology and the number of meetings undertaken. It does not enter into discussion about the broader issues of the political management structure and it has not provided an alternative at this stage. We do not consider that it has provided any further information or evidence that would enable us to consider adopting an alternative council size. We consider that the individual points that the Labour Group have made are not in themselves justification to invite further representations or further discussion on council size.

49 We are satisfied that we have not received justification to move away from our draft recommendations and we do not consider that further consultation on council size at Kettering Borough Council would be likely to add significantly to the evidence on the issue from either the Council or the Labour Group, and we are therefore endorsing a council size of 36 as part of our final recommendations.

## Electoral equality

50 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality, seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully

justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

51 The borough average number of electors per councillor is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the borough (71,486 by 2008) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 36 under our final proposals. Therefore the borough average under our final recommendations is 1,986 by 2008.

## General analysis

52 When forming our draft recommendations we concurred with the Council that the borough contains four 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 and Rothwell parish. In our draft recommendations we proposed wards where there is some evidence of consensus between respondents and where they provide good levels of electoral equality. We proposed 17 wards: three single-member, nine two-member and five three-member wards. In the rural areas of the borough we adopted the proposals of Mr Nelson, a local resident, and in Desborough and Rothwell we adopted the proposals of the Borough Council. In Kettering town we attempted to use the Borough Council's proposals as a basis for our proposals but made changes in many areas in order to improve the level of electoral equality.

53 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.

54 We consider that our draft recommendations generally reflect the natural boundaries between settlements in the borough. As we proposed a council size of 36 it was difficult to adopt in full any of the proposals that we received as they were based on a different councillor:elector ratio. However, we consider that our proposals reflect a number of the respondents' representations and provide a good level of electoral equality across the borough.

55 During Stage Three our draft recommendations were generally supported. A number of alternative boundaries were proposed by the Borough Council in Kettering town and by two respondents in Desborough. These representations were made to reflect community identity and to provide stronger boundaries. We also received a number of representations objecting to the amendments proposed to the existing Queen Eleanor ward which had also been made during Stage One. When forming our final recommendations we considered that we did not receive sufficient evidence to justify moving away from the boundaries outlined in our draft recommendations. However, we did receive a number of proposals to change the names of the wards

that we proposed. We have made two ward name changes where there has been some consensus or where we consider the proposed name better reflects the area.

56 On 24 February 2006 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) made a parish boundary Order which amended the boundaries of Barton Seagrave, Burton Latimer and Pytchley parishes. We have used these boundaries as part of our final recommendations which means that the ward boundaries proposed are slightly different from the ones detailed in the draft recommendations. However, the changes are very minor and will not affect the level of electoral equality as there is only one household in these areas. We note that by using these parish boundaries we have moved away from the ward boundaries outlined in our draft recommendations but consider that by using these parish boundaries we are able to continue to use whole parishes as the constituent parts that form the borough wards. We consider that where the other statutory criteria allow, this provides effective and convenient local government.

## Warding arrangements

57 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 29)
- b Avondale, Millbrook, Pipers Hill, St Michael's, Spinney, Warkton and Wicksteed wards (Kettering town) (page 31)
- c Buccleuch, Queen Eleanor, Slade and Welland wards (rural wards) (page 34)
- d Loatland, St Giles, Tresham and Trinity wards, (Desborough and Rothwell) (page 37)
- e Barton, Latimer and Plessy wards (page 39)

58 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

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

59 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.

60 During Stage One Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group, the Liberal Democrat Group and a local resident made proposals in this area.

61 During Stage One, 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, Brambleside and St Peter's wards were largely based on the existing wards of the same name. 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; and its proposed Northfield ward would be bounded to the west by the railway line and would extend east to

Rockingham Road and also include King Street, Regent Street, Havelock Street and Wood Street.

62 The Labour Group proposed that all of the wards in this area should be retained, with one amendment to St Peter's ward to improve electoral equality. The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area. The local resident proposed wards in Kettering town which would give an incorrect allocation of councillors to the town but which were based on linking areas with similar concerns.

63 We considered 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 was necessary to ensure the correct allocation of councillors within these areas. The town of Kettering is entitled to 22 councillors, and we were therefore constrained in adopting any proposals that would not allocate the town this many councillors.

64 We adopted the Borough Council's proposed St Peter's ward and proposed All Saints and Brambleside wards based on the Borough Council's proposals. We also proposed our own two-member Central ward and a single-member Northfield ward.

65 Under our draft recommendations the proposed wards in this area would not have variances of more than 4% from the borough average by 2008.

66 During Stage Three we received general support for the proposed All Saints, Brambleside, Central, Northfield and St Peter's wards. The Borough Council supported the boundaries of these proposed wards with the exception of Central ward where it proposed an amendment, discussed in paragraph 83. We received no other comments on the boundaries of the proposed wards but received two proposals for alternative ward names for the proposed Central ward. A local resident, Mr Scrimshaw, considered that the name St Mary's should be retained in the area as the existing St Mary's ward is not greatly different from the proposed Central ward. He considered that the name Central would 'cause confusion' for the electorate as it is the name of a county division which covers a different area of the borough. He noted that if the name St Mary's was not retained then he would support a name 'with some kind of local significance'. Mr Scrimshaw also opposed the reduction in the number of councillors for this ward and considered that the 'economic disadvantage' in the ward compared to more rural areas justified greater representation for the ward.

67 EKTA, a community group, also objected to the name of the proposed Central ward, which it considered 'has no local links'. It considered that a better name for the ward would be 'William Knibb', a local historical figure.

68 Having considered the representations received we have decided largely to endorse the draft recommendations for all the wards in this area and are confirming the boundaries of the proposed All Saints, Brambleside, Central, Northfield and St Peter's wards as final. We are, however, proposing to rename the proposed Central ward as William Knibb. We acknowledge the possibility of confusion with the Central county division and consider that, in light of the support for a name with more local significance, the name William Knibb is a better alternative. We also note the objection to the reduction in the number of councillors in this ward. However, we do

not consider that the economic circumstances of an area justify it being allocated more councillors than it is entitled to. Under a council size of 36 this ward is entitled to two councillors and will have a good level of electoral equality with just 3% fewer electors than the borough average. We therefore do not consider that an additional councillor in this area is justified.

69 In light of the broad support for our draft recommendations in this area, which provide excellent levels of electoral equality, we propose confirming them as final, with the exception of the name of the proposed Central ward which we propose to rename as William Knibb.

70 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for All Saints, Brambleside, Northfield, St Peter's and William Knibb wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a.

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

71 Under the existing arrangements Avondale, Millbrook, Pipers Hill, St Michael's, Spinney and Warkton wards are wholly unparished. Wicksteed ward is mostly unparished. However, following the parish boundary Order made by ODPM in February 2006, Wicksteed ward also comprises a small part of Barton Seagrave parish which contains no electors 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.

72 Kettering Borough Council proposed four new wards in this area during Stage One. 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.

73 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. It did not propose to include the 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 and would also include part of the existing Wicksteed ward, broadly to the west of Pytchley Road.

74 The Borough Council's proposed Park ward would comprise the existing Pipers Hill ward and part of Warkton and Wicksteed wards. The Council's proposed Ise Lodge ward in the east of Kettering town would comprise the majority of the existing Millbrook and Spinney wards. 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.

75 During Stage One the Labour Group proposed wards in this area based on the existing arrangements. The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area. A local resident proposed wards in

Kettering town which would give an incorrect allocation of councillors to the town but which were based on linking areas with similar concerns. We received representations from two local residents who considered that the existing Spinney ward should be retained.

76 We carefully considered the proposals that we received in this area during Stage One. As discussed previously, due to the different council sizes proposed we were not 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. Given the limited evidence provided to us in this area regarding community identity we sought to secure greatly improved levels of electoral equality across the area and looked to balance this against community identity, where some evidence existed.

77 As part of our draft recommendations in this area we proposed an Avondale Grange ward, Pipers Hill ward, Ise Lodge ward and St Michael's & Wicksteed ward. These wards were loosely based on the Borough Council's proposals but with amendments to improve electoral equality and to provide for strong boundaries. We proposed 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 proposed 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 considered forms a strong boundary in this area.

78 To the east of the river we proposed an Ise Lodge ward based on the Borough Council's proposals which combined the existing Millbrook and Spinney wards. We noted the two local residents' proposal to retain the existing Spinney ward. However, we did not consider that they provided any evidence that combining the existing Spinney and Millbrook wards would not satisfactorily reflect community identity.

79 We also supported the Borough Council's proposal to transfer part of the existing Spinney ward to a revised Barton ward in order to improve electoral equality in both the proposed Barton ward and Ise Lodge wards. While not ideal we considered that this area is most clearly separated from the rest of the proposed Ise Lodge ward and that it was better to transfer this area than breaching the river to the west.

80 We proposed 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 had been transferred to the proposed St Peter's ward). We considered that this ward would have strong boundaries and would secure a good level of electoral equality by 2008.

81 Under our draft recommendations, none of the wards in this area would have an electoral variance greater than 6% by 2008.

82 During Stage Three we received representations from the Borough Council and two borough councillors in relation to the Avondale Grange, Pipers Hill, Ise Lodge and St Michael's & Wicksteed wards that we proposed in this area. The Borough Council proposed that the proposed Avondale Grange, Pipers Hill and a small part of the Central ward be reconfigured to provide an alternative pattern of warding in this

area. Its proposal would still result in the area being represented in total by five councillors but in a completely different arrangement of wards.

83 The Council proposed transferring nearly 2,000 electors from the area around Windmill Avenue into the proposed Avondale Grange ward and increasing its representation from two members to three members. It proposed retaining Central ward's representation of two councillors but proposed transferring approximately 100 electors from St Mary's Road into it. The number of electors that it proposed transferring out of Pipers Hill ward would have the result of reducing the number of councillors representing this revised ward from two members to one. The level of electoral equality in this revised pattern of warding would be slightly poorer than the levels outlined as part of our draft recommendations. Avondale Grange and Central wards would have 5% and 6% fewer electors than the borough average respectively by 2008 and Pipers Hill would have 8% more than the borough average by 2008.

84 The Borough Council stated that the rationale behind this proposal was to retain the whole of the existing Warkton ward, albeit with additional areas in one ward 'in order to ensure that any assistance allocated to this area as a result of its status in the Indices of Deprivation, is neither diluted nor lost altogether'. It stated that Warkton ward is currently included in a category of deprived area status and therefore 'receives additional support and aid to enhance its development'.

85 The Borough Council also stated that the name of the proposed St Michael's & Wicksteed ward should be changed to Southfields as the proposed name is too long. It considered that 'local knowledge of the area [provides] this alternative'. Councillors Jenny and Larry Henson (both representing St Michael's ward) objected to the Borough Council's suggested name of Southfields stating that this is the name of just one of three schools in the area and that it would be 'unfair' to exclude the other schools. They further concluded that the name Southfields 'lacks resonance'. They proposed two alternatives: Cytringham South or South Cytringham, noting that Cytringham is the 'old name for Kettering'.

86 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations as final for all of these wards. We have considered the arguments put forward by the Borough Council for making significant changes to the warding arrangements in relation to the existing Warkton ward. We note that the Borough Council acknowledge that its proposal in this area is primarily intended to ensure funding and support for a deprived status ward. However, the Committee has not in the past considered recommending warding patterns simply in order to ensure funding for deprived status wards is maintained as it does not consider that in itself the deprived status of an area is a reflection of community identity. The Borough Council also stated that the housing in the proposed ward was similar. However, we do not consider that this is sufficient evidence of a reflection of community identity. We also note that our recommendations provide a slightly better level of electoral equality than the Borough Council's proposals and given the arguments received for change consider that our proposals secure a better balance between electoral equality, community identity and effective and convenient local government. Therefore, we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area.

87 We note the two alternative names for the proposed St Michael's & Wicksteed ward. We do not consider that either the Borough Council or Councillors Jenny and

Larry Henson have provided sufficient evidence to justify adopting one proposal over the other. We consider that the Borough Council has not provided any evidence as to the suitability of the name Southfields locally. We note that Councillors Jenny and Larry Henson also considered renaming Brambleside North ward as Cytringham North but in light of the fact that no other wards in Kettering would include this name we do not propose to adopt it either in the north or south. In the absence of any other alternatives we propose to support the name St Michael's & Wicksteed and endorse it as part of our final recommendations.

88 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Avondale Grange ward, Pipers Hill ward, Ise Lodge ward and St Michael's & Wicksteed ward. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a included at the back of this report.

## Buccleuch, Queen Eleanor, Slade and Welland wards (rural wards)

89 Under the existing arrangements Buccleuch 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 Thorpe Malsor, and following the parish boundary Order made by ODPM in February 2006, a small part of Barton Seagrave parish which contains no electors; 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.

90 During Stage One, 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.

91 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 Buccleuch 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).

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.

93 Mr Nelson, a 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).

94 The Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area. Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council objected to the Borough Council's proposed two-member Rural East 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.

95 We also received seven other submissions objecting to any proposal to change the existing Queen Eleanor ward. Councillor Padwick (Queen Eleanor ward) considered that the Council's proposed Rural East ward 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'.

96 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.

97 Wilbarston Parish Council proposed to transfer Braybrooke parish from Welland ward to Slade ward. Weston by Welland Parish Council stated that the existing Welland ward should be retained.

98 We carefully considered the proposals we received during Stage One in relation to this area. We noted that the respondents attempted to ensure that this rural parished area would not be combined with the towns in the borough and we also recommended wards that do not combine urban and rural areas. In order to achieve this it was 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 parishes 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 parish warding would not reflect community identities. We considered 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's 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.

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

100 We proposed 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 noted that this proposal would combine 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 would have 17% fewer electors than the borough average by 2008. We considered that our proposed Rural East ward would combine parishes that are geographically well linked and would provide for an acceptable level of electoral equality across the rural wards in the borough.

101 We also proposed 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 noted that by 2008, the wards in this area would have poorer levels of electoral equality than in the unparished areas of the borough. However, we considered that this was a better reflection of the statutory criteria in this area than combining rural and urban areas.

102 Under our draft recommendations, none of the wards in this area would have an electoral variance greater than 15% by 2008.

103 During Stage Three, we received a number of submissions in relation to the proposed Rural East, Slade and Welland wards. The Borough Council supported the boundaries of the wards outlined in our draft recommendations in full. Geddington, Newton & Little Oakley Parish Council and two local residents objected to the proposed Rural East ward and stated that they wished for the existing Queen Eleanor ward to be retained. The Parish Council considered that the draft recommendations were an improvement on the Borough Council's Stage One submission but raised concerns in relation to the perceived increase in workload and considered that 'the quality of service would be reduced' compared to the existing arrangements for the Queen Eleanor ward. The two local residents who also objected stated that the existing arrangements worked well and that therefore the status quo should be retained.

104 The Borough Council proposed to rename the proposed Rural East ward as Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch, stating that this would be more appropriate due to the 'geographical area of the ward is wholly situated on the Duke of Buccleuch's estate'. One of the local residents who objected to the Rural East ward also objected to the name but proposed no alternative.

105 Weston by Welland and Cransley parish councils supported our draft recommendations but did not provide any further evidence.

106 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for all of these wards, with the exception of the name of the proposed Rural East ward which we are proposing to rename Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch. We have considered the arguments put forward by the parish council and local residents to retain the existing Queen Eleanor ward. However, none of the respondents have provided any further evidence of community identity than we received during Stage One of the review and we therefore have not been persuaded to retain a ward which by 2008 would have 33% fewer electors than the borough average.

107 We consider that the name Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch is a better reflection of the local area than the proposed Rural East ward name and consider in light of the opposition for the name from the local resident that the Borough Council has provided some justification for this ward name change.

108 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch, Slade and Welland wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

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

109 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.

110 During Stage One, 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.

111 During Stage One, 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.

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

113 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.

114 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 borough as this would result in decreased number of councillors representing Rothwell town.

115 We carefully considered the proposals that we received in relation to Desborough and Rothwell. We did not consider that we received any evidence to justify retaining the existing wards that would by 2008, have significant levels of electoral inequality. Because of our decision to adopt a council size of 36, Desborough is entitled to four councillors and Rothwell three councillors. We were therefore unable to adopt any proposals that did not allocate these areas the correct number of councillors.

116 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 adopted the Borough Council's proposals in this area and recommended a Desborough Loatland ward and Desborough St Giles ward as we noted these wards would provide a good level of electoral equality by 2008. To reflect the borough warding arrangements we also proposed revised electoral arrangements for the town council.

117 In Rothwell town we adopted 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 were therefore unable to adopt Rothwell Town Council's proposals to retain two two-member wards.

118 Under our draft recommendations, none of the wards in this area would have an electoral variance greater than 2% by 2008.

119 During Stage Three we received four submissions in relation to the Desborough Loatland, Desborough St Giles and Rothwell wards we proposed as part of our draft recommendations. The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations in this area. We received a submission from the Desborough Labour Party and a local resident to use the B576 and the railway line as the boundary between the two district wards in Desborough. The Desborough Labour Party considered that this would be a more natural boundary and would be 'easier for those living there', 'easier for administration purposes' and would 'ensure streets are not split between two wards'.

120 Rothwell Town Council reiterated its Stage One objection to the reduction in council size as this would result in Rothwell town being allocated three councillors, one fewer than at present which it felt was not suitable for a growing town. It also considered that 'residents have got used to voting for two wards for both the town and borough councils' and that it would be confusing to have two wards for the town and one ward for the borough. It considered that it would 'accept having one ward for

all elections ... provided this would allow Rothwell to retain four representatives on Kettering Borough Council'.

121 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for all of these wards in full. We have considered the arguments to change the boundary between the two Desborough wards and we consider this argument has some merit. However, we note that the boundary proposed by the two respondents would still split streets between wards and have not been sufficiently persuaded that the boundary they proposed would make it easier administratively or for those living there.

122 We acknowledge the concern of Rothwell Town Council in relation to the reduction of district councillors representing the town. However, as detailed in our draft recommendations, under a council size of 36 the town is entitled to just three councillors and we are therefore not persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations in this area.

123 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for the proposed Desborough Loatland, Desborough St Giles and Rothwell wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2b accompanying this report.

## Barton, Latimer and Plessy wards

124 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 Burton Latimer parish and following the parish boundary Order made by ODPM in February 2006 also contains a small part of Barton Seagrave and Pytchley parishes which contain no electors. 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.

125 During Stage One we received submissions relating to this area from Kettering Borough Council, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group, Mr Nelson and two local residents. The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in this area. The two local residents considered that the existing Spinney ward should be retained.

126 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'.

127 The Borough Council's proposed Burton Latimer ward would combine the existing Latimer and Plessy wards into a three-member ward.

128 Mr Nelson proposed the same three-member Burton Latimer ward as the Borough Council and proposed broadly to retain the existing Barton ward but proposed to include broadly the same area that the Borough Council proposed transferring from the existing Spinney ward to its proposed revised Barton ward.

129 We carefully considered the proposals we received during Stage One regarding this area. We did not consider that we had received any evidence to justify retaining the existing wards that would by 2008 have poor levels of electoral equality. We noted that both the Borough Council and Mr Nelson considered that residents in the south of the existing Spinney ward look south towards Barton Seagrave. We adopted the Borough Council's proposed Barton ward as this would provide a good level of electoral equality. We acknowledged 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 considered it would be necessary to transfer electors from this ward in to the proposed Barton ward. We also considered that in light of our proposals in the rest of this area and the satisfactory level of electoral equality that it would provide, combining the existing Latimer and Plessey wards into a three-member Burton Latimer ward would be the best option in this area.

130 Under our draft recommendations, none of the wards in this area would have an electoral variance greater than 9% by 2008.

131 Our draft recommendations in relation to the proposed Barton and Burton Latimer wards were generally supported by respondents during Stage Three. The Borough Council proposed an amendment to the boundary between the proposed Barton and Ise Lodge wards. It reiterated its Stage One proposal to transfer the area to the east of Warkton Lane, around Poplars Farm Road, Ridgway Road and Westleigh Road from the proposed Ise Lodge ward into the proposed Barton ward. It stated that 'the properties in these streets 'form part of the same community as those that have been moved from the existing Spinney ward into the BCFE proposed Barton ward'. It considered that the characteristics of the housing is also much more alike.

132 Barton Seagrave Parish Council supported the draft recommendations but provided no further evidence.

133 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for all of these wards. We have considered the arguments put forward by the Borough Council to transfer those properties to the east of Warkton Lane into Barton ward but do not consider that sufficient evidence of community identity has been provided to justify the resultant decrease in electoral equality. We note that the level of electoral equality is only marginally worsened by the Borough Council's proposals but do not consider that the type of housing, nor the assertion that the residents in these streets look to Barton Seagrave justifies moving away from our draft recommendations. While we note the proposal we do not consider that the Council has provided us with substantive evidence as to community identity in this area. We also note the support for our draft recommendations from Barton Seagrave Parish Council.

134 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 11) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for the proposed Barton and Burton Latimer wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a accompanying this report.

## Conclusions

135 Table 5 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2003 and 2008 electorate figures.

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

	Current arrangements		Final 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 of more than 10% from the average	11	12	3	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	3	5	1	0

136 As shown in Table 5, our final 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 three. 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.

### **Final recommendation**

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

## Parish electoral arrangements

137 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.

138 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.

139 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, during Stage One we proposed consequential warding arrangements for the parish of Desborough to reflect the proposed borough wards. We did not receive any proposals to amend parish warding in the borough during Stage Three and are therefore endorsing our draft recommendations for Desborough as final.

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

### **Final recommendation:**

Desborough Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: St Giles (returning six 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.

141 During Stage One, Rothwell Town Council requested that both the borough and parish electoral arrangements for Rothwell be maintained. As part of our draft recommendations we proposed altering the boundaries of the borough wards in the town but as there was no requirement to alter the parish wards and the town council had proposed they remain we did not recommend altering the boundaries of the parish wards. As part of its Stage Three representation Rothwell Town Council reasserted its Stage One proposals and stated that unless the town is represented by four councillors it would be unwilling to see the town council electoral arrangements altered. Therefore, we are recommending that the parish ward boundaries remain unaltered and on the same boundaries of the existing borough wards which are to be abolished.

142 The town council will continue to be represented by 12 town councillors on the existing boundaries of the two parish wards. It is open to the Borough Council to change these parish electoral arrangements as part of a Section 17 review of the Local Government & Ratings Act 1997.



## 6 What happens next?

143 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Kettering and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.<sup>2</sup>

144 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 27 June 2006, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representation made to them by that date.

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

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667**

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

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).



## 7 Mapping

### Final recommendations for Kettering borough

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries:

**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

## Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either. The third column in Table 1 refers to the constituent parts of an existing ward.
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

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

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

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

## Appendix B

### Code of practice on written consultation

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

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

**Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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.

