



Democracy and Standards Committee

26th July 2021

Report Title	Parliamentary Boundary Review	
Report Author	Martin Hammond, Executive Director, Martin.Hammond@northnorthants.gov.uk	
Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
North MO		
North S151		
Other Director/SME		

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Extracts from the Boundary Commission report including maps

Appendix B – Make up by ward of proposed constituencies

Appendix C – Parish map for reference purposes only

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To outline the proposals for changes to parliamentary boundaries as they affect residents of North Northamptonshire and to seek members' views on the submission of a consultation response to the Commission in time for its 2nd August deadline.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report outlines the proposals being made by the Boundary Commission for England as they affect North Northamptonshire's residents and examines what changes might be made to improve the proposals and bring more of the Council's residents into the three constituency areas proposed.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Members are invited to consider the proposed boundary changes and determine what points they wish to be made within a consultation response to the Commission.

Reason for Recommendations – to secure the best possible arrangements for local people to be represented within Parliament and for the Council to develop effective relationships with the MPs covering its area.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 Parliamentary constituency boundaries were last changed in 2010, following a review conducted in 2000-2007. The Boundary Commission is required to conduct reviews of constituency boundaries every 8-12 years. Two reviews conducted in the last ten years have not secured Parliamentary approval, in part because of controversy around a starting assumption that the number of UK constituencies should reduce from 650 to 600.
- 4.2 This latest review – the 2023 review- is based on retaining the overall number of constituencies at 650 and seeking to create constituencies that are – with five named exceptions – very close to each other in terms of size. Parliament has instructed the boundary commission to aim for an average constituency size of 73,393 electors, and to stay within the range of 69,724 - 77,062 electors. (The average size of an English constituency is 72,000 at present).
- 4.3. The Commission's objectives in drawing up constituency boundaries is therefore to stay within these parameters, but also to reflect natural community boundaries, and as far as possible not to have parliamentary constituencies which cross local authority boundaries.
- 4.4. The building blocks for making up constituencies are local authority wards, but sometimes it is necessary to split wards between constituencies to achieve the right electorate numbers; again, the Commission's last resort is to cross local authority boundaries when splitting a ward. The difficulty locally is that the wards are very large compared to the average size of local authority wards in a non-city environment, both in population and geographical size, and, in the words of the Commission "*the wards used for these constituency reviews are unusually large.... Our proposals are therefore limited by the difficulties posed by these wards, including the inability to prevent division of some communities without an unreasonable number of wards split or geographically expansive constituencies that do not reflect local ties*"
- 4.5. The data used by the Commission is not exactly the same as the situation today, because it was data captured in 2020 which then had some growth assumptions applied to it.
- 4.6. For ease of comprehension, this report refers to the Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough constituencies as "home" constituencies and to the boundaries between them as "internal" boundaries to easily distinguish them from neighbouring constituencies covering west Northamptonshire and other counties.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. Current arrangements

- 5.1.1. North Northamptonshire is covered by three parliamentary constituencies which sit wholly within and aligned to its external boundary, except for the southern parts of the Earls Barton ward, where 4 parishes are included within the Daventry constituency now.

5.1.2 The three home constituencies are however of differing sizes, with Kettering being lower than the average and the other two being significantly higher. Overall, there are deemed by the Commission to be 245,381 parliamentary electors in North Northamptonshire, which is greater, under these rules, than the maximum permitted for three MPs to represent. (231,186), so it is inevitable that some parts of the council's area will be represented within other constituencies, and more so than now.

5.2. Proposals

5.2.1. The Commissions' proposals are set out in Appendix A, and on the attached maps.

In broad terms this means: -

- A) CORBY – to reduce its size, the current constituency loses Raunds, which transfers to the Wellingborough constituency.
- B) KETTERING – to increase its size, the parish of Finedon (not the whole ward) is included within it
- C) WELLINGBOROUGH – whilst gaining Raunds, the constituency then loses Finedon as set out above, but also the rest of the Earls Barton ward not already in Daventry constituency, plus the southern half of Irchester ward, to constituencies predominantly covering parts of West Northamptonshire council area.

5.2.2. The following table sets out the existing and proposed constituency size.

Constituency	Electorate now	Proposed electorate	"Headroom"
Corby	85,415	76,706	356
Kettering	72,469	76,354	708
Wellingborough	78,837	76,250	812
TOTAL	236,721	229,310	1876

Parts of North Northamptonshire excluded from these constituencies: -

Area	Electorate	Proposed Constituency
Part of Irchester ward – Bozeat, Grendon and Wollaston	5,010	South Northamptonshire (proposed constituency size of 76,555)
All of Earls Barton ward including Isham, Harrowden, Redhill Grange and the area of Wellingborough North	10,791	Daventry (proposed constituency size of 76,539)

A breakdown of each constituency by ward is shown at Appendix B.

5.2.3. It is clear that the Commission has gone as close to the maximum size for most Northamptonshire constituencies as it dares and has had to cross one of its own red lines and split a ward (Irchester) between two constituencies predominantly serving two different local authority areas. The Commission's proposals nevertheless mean that nearly 8,000 electors are newly transferred out of the three "home" constituencies compared to today.

5.2.4. None of the three North Northamptonshire constituencies have very much headroom to include within them areas which are currently excluded.

5.3. Views expressed by NNC Members

Members were asked for their views on the proposals ahead of this meeting, so that they could be included within the report.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Points made</u>
Cllr John McGhee Cllr Mark Pengelly Cllr Jean Addison on behalf of the Labour Group	In support of the proposals/ have no issues.
Cllr Clive Hallam	Opposed to the inclusion of all of Earls Barton ward within the Daventry constituency as Daventry is too remote and that parts of the Wellingborough urban area would therefore be detached from the rest of the town.
Cllr Lee Wilkes	Opposed to the inclusion of Raunds, Stanwick and Hargrave in the Wellingborough constituency, with which these communities have little connection; suggests the line of the A6 is a better natural border between Wellingborough and Corby/East Northants constituencies.
Cllr Emily Fedorowycz	Opposed to the loss of Wollaston, Bozeat, Easton Maudit, Grendon and Strixton from a constituency that sits within North Northamptonshire.

5.4. Alternative approaches

5.4.1 There are three main issues for how the Council's area is represented in Parliament that arise from these proposals

- a) Whether the revised boundaries between the three home constituencies are effective in terms of community representation and reflect local ties.
- b) Whether it is possible to minimise the number of electors who are transferred to west Northamptonshire constituencies in Irchester and Earls Barton wards.
- c) How to avoid a situation where the urban area and parish of Wellingborough is split between three constituencies.

5.4.2. INTERNAL CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

The main issues arising from the boundary changes are

- Whether Irthlingborough has stronger links to and therefore a better claim to be included within the Wellingborough constituency than Raunds
- Whether Finedon has stronger links with Wellingborough than Kettering, particularly given that part of the Stanton Cross urban extension is in that part of the Finedon ward being transferred to Kettering, which has the effect of splitting part of Wellingborough urban area into another constituency, a consequence that the Commission might not have been sighted on, dealing as it was with electorate numbers.

5.4.3. EXTERNAL CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

- 5.4.3.1. Under the proposals, five MPs would have some interest in parts of North Northamptonshire. Whilst this is potentially better than three, in terms of representation within Parliament, in reality, the two west Northamptonshire MPs will have wider concerns within their overall constituencies. Potential conflicts of interest could arise between projects in North Northamptonshire competing for funds with projects elsewhere in their constituency, for example. Part of Earls Barton ward is already in the Daventry constituency and the ward members attest that the Daventry MP is inevitably more remote than the Wellingborough MP is able to be.
- 5.4.3.2. None of the villages proposed for inclusion within Daventry and South Northamptonshire constituencies have much, if anything, in common with the main centres of both those constituencies.
- 5.4.3.3 The Earls Barton ward moreover includes the development area of Wellingborough North, which was conceived as an urban extension and Redhill Grange, which is an urban extension, both of which are within the parish of Wellingborough, and therefore the effect of the boundary change is to split off parts of Wellingborough urban area into another constituency. This impact also may not have been visible to the Commission dealing as they are mostly in electorate numbers, but clearly undermines the desire to keep natural communities together.

6. SOLUTIONS – INTERNAL BOUNDARY CHANGES

- 6.1. It is possible to re-align internal constituency boundaries and still stay within the 77,000-upper limit of voters, using the 2020 data that the Commission have used.
- 6.2. Given that the boundary changes impede on the integrity of the greater Wellingborough urban area (that is, the existing town plus its planned and existing urban extensions), it is possible to include all of Finedon ward in the Wellingborough constituency, which then retains Stanton Cross in its entirety in that constituency. It also satisfies the views of Finedon residents, as captured by the former Borough of Wellingborough in the consultation stage of the last review, that they would prefer to stay within Wellingborough.
- 6.3. To balance out the loss of 3500 voters, the Kettering constituency would need to gain voters from elsewhere and the best solution might be the transfer of voters from villages adjoining it in Stanion and Little Stanion, Rockingham Cottingham, Middleton and East Carlton (3493 voters) all of which are part of Corby Rural ward. This would involve the splitting of that ward between constituencies.
- 6.4. This in turn would give enough headroom for Raunds to be retained within the Corby and East Northants constituency and exchanged for part of Irthlingborough ward. Splitting Irthlingborough ward so that the settlements of Crow Hill, Great and Little Addington, Denford, Ringstead and Woodford (all northeast of the line of the A6) remained within the Corby constituency would mean that 5812 electors would transfer to Wellingborough constituency and 4038 would stay in the Corby one.
- 6.5. The net effect of these changes would create constituencies of the following sizes

Corby and East Northamptonshire	76641
Kettering	76270
Wellingborough	76399

as a consequence of the changes summarised here compared to the BCE proposals

Constituency	Gains	Losses	Net
Corby	Raunds (9240)	Part Corby Rural (3493) Part Irthlingborough (5812)	-65
Kettering	Part Corby Rural (3493)	Part Finedon (3577)	-84
Wellingborough	Part Irthlingborough (5812) Part Finedon (3577)	Raunds (9240)	+149

7. SOLUTIONS – EXTERNAL BOUNDARY CHANGES

- 7.1 There are several ways to ameliorate the loss of voters to west Northamptonshire constituencies, by using the available headroom within – in this case- Kettering and Wellingborough constituencies to transfer communities, although this would involve splitting wards.
- 7.2. The headroom within the current proposals for Kettering constituency and Wellingborough proposals are approximately 708 and 812; if the proposals within section 6 above are adopted, the headroom changes to 792 and 673 respectively

7.3. Option A

Transferring individual settlements. The areas excluded from the North Northamptonshire constituencies are

IRCHESTER WARD – currently in Wellingborough constituency

Parish	Electorate	Possible scenario
Wollaston	2731	This is too large a parish to transfer into Wellingborough constituency without having to remove somewhere else
Strixton	32	All of the parishes here would be physically detached from Wellingborough constituency if Wollaston were not included it, so it is not possible to deal with them separately from Wollaston
Grendon	460	
Easton Maudit	83	
Bozeat	1704	
Total	5010	

EARLS BARTON WARD – currently in Wellingborough constituency

Parish	Electorate	Possible scenario
Isham	661	Include in Kettering constituency?
Redhill Grange (part of Wellingborough parish)	755	Include in Wellingborough constituency
Glenvale Park (Wellingborough north urban extension)	0	Include in Wellingborough constituency
Little Harrowden	706	Include in Wellingborough instead of Redwell Grange?

Great Harrowden	84	Include in Wellingborough along with Little Harrowden?
Hardwick	71	Cannot be included in Wellingborough as well as the Harrowdens without breaching the electorate limit
Orlingbury	400	Cannot be included in either Kettering or Wellingborough as well as the Redwell Grange and Isham
Great Doddington	916	Too large to be included in Wellingborough
Wilby	532	Could be included in Wellingborough but at the expense of including Redwell Grange or the Harrowdens
Total	4125	

EARLS BARTON WARD – currently in Daventry constituency

Parish	Electorate	Possible scenario
Ecton	411	These parishes taken together are too large to include in the Northampton North constituency which has headroom of 5848 electors and would make Daventry too small anyway.
Earls Barton	4825	
Mears Ashby	381	
Sywell	800	
Total	6417	

In conclusion, this option allows some areas to be moved into both the Kettering and Wellingborough constituencies, but entails a three-way split of the ward, which the Commission is very unlikely to want to do. As a priority therefore, it is suggested that the areas physically within Wellingborough parish, but included within Earls Barton ward, should be recommended for retention within the Wellingborough constituency.

Note – adopting the changes proposed in section 6 above would not allow some of the options in the tables above to be implemented and indeed Redhill Grange's inclusion in the Wellingborough constituency on top of those changes in section 6 would exceed the limit by 82 voters.

7.4. Option B

Moving more wards or parishes between the three home constituencies (on top of those proposed in section 6) might enable maximum use of the total headroom of 1800 electors, but in reality there are no options which would help absorb communities of the size of those in Earls Barton ward.

7.5. Option C

The transfer of other parts of North Northamptonshire less closely linked to its economic and social core, to other constituencies. There are four other constituencies outside Northamptonshire with a large enough boundary with this council's area, and three of them have more room to take in more electors than do other most constituencies in Northamptonshire.

Constituency	Electorate	Headroom	Adjacent NN ward
North Bedfordshire	76319	743	Rushden South, Higham Ferrers, Raunds
NW Cambridgeshire	73556	3506	Oundle, Thrapston
Newport Pagnell	70,620	6452	Irchester
Harborough	71190	6167	Desborough, Corby Rural
Rutland and Stamford	70895	5872	Oundle

There would be little logic for transferring most of these wards into another constituency – they would either be too large or would have no identifiable links to those other constituencies. The only exception might be transferring the Wollaston and Bozeat part of Irchester ward into the Newport constituency which does have headroom for this – but not the whole of Irchester ward - and on the basis there are links with the most northerly part of Buckinghamshire for those villages. However, the Commission has avoided creating constituencies which cross county borders, - the exception being Rutland and Stamford. Moving individual parishes into adjacent counties is likely to be viewed unfavourably by the Commission.

7.6 Option D – agreeing with the Commission's proposals

7.7 Other issues

7.7.1. Ward structure

It is expected that North Northamptonshire wards will be reviewed in the next two years to reflect the demographic changes since they were originally designed as county council divisions ten years ago. As wards are the building blocks for parliamentary constituencies, it may be that there will be some consequences for alignment with Parliamentary boundaries thereafter, or some constraints placed on that review by the eventual parliamentary boundaries. Members will need to be aware therefore that this review may well impact on the authority's own ward boundaries.

7.7.2. Nomenclature

The Wellingborough constituency has been renamed *Wellingborough and Raunds*, although this appears a little odd, given that the constituency also includes Rushden and Higham Ferrers, both larger places than Raunds. Depending on the option members prefer for boundary changes, it is suggested that the constituency name might more fairly be retained simply as Wellingborough or perhaps some alternative -e.g., *Wellingborough and Rushden* or *Wellingborough and the Nene Valley*. Members' views on this are invited.

Members are also asked if they are comfortable with the suggested change to the name of the Corby constituency to *Corby and East Northamptonshire*.

7.8. Summary

- 7.8.1. The strict population limits applied to this review have meant that it is much harder to take into account community identity. This means that 15,000 or so residents of North Northamptonshire are proposed to be represented by MPs predominantly serving the interests of west Northamptonshire.
- 7.8.2. This is compounded by the fact the building blocks in North Northamptonshire – the wards – are unusually large and the Commission recognises that this has made it even harder to reflect local communities in constructing constituency boundaries. Whilst the Commission is unlikely to want to see more wards divided than it has already proposed, there is an argument that in the case of Northamptonshire and pending a review of ward boundaries in any case in the next two years, more flexibility is required.
- 7.8.3 The proposals do not, in any case, auger well for the medium term, as the growth rate planned for Northamptonshire will take electorate numbers past the current limits within a short space of time.
- 7.8.4 The opportunities to change boundaries to accommodate more North Northamptonshire residents within one of the three home constituencies is limited by the fact that all three proposed constituencies are close to the maximum electorate size, and by the geography and demography of the areas affected.
- 7.8.5 The Commission's proposals – particularly regarding Finedon, Raunds, Irchester and Earls Barton wards - are likely to generate concern and do not particularly reflect community identities, service delivery patterns or work and leisure patterns.
- 7.8.6. Two of the proposed changes cut into the area of Wellingborough parish and therefore divide existing and future urban extensions from the town they relate to, meaning three MPs would have constituencies which overlap with the same parish area. This can be solved by moving all of Finedon into the Wellingborough seat and varying the boundary with Daventry to respect the parish boundary not the ward boundary.

- 7.8.7 It is feasible to resolve some of the issues by shifting boundaries between the three home constituencies as set out in section 6, which would restore one ward split by the proposals but require two other wards to be divided.
- 7.8.8 The Boundary Commission will particularly want to avoid constituencies straddling county boundaries, as these are also public service delivery boundaries. There is no meaningful way in which other parts of North Northamptonshire can be joined to other constituencies in preference to the situation in Earls Barton ward or Irchester ward.
- 7.8.9. The only way to reduce the transfer of areas into the Daventry constituency is the piecemeal retention of individual parishes within the Earls Barton ward which would represent an unattractive three way split for that ward. The priority however would be to keep all of Wellingborough parish in the Wellingborough constituency by retaining Redhill Grange in Wellingborough, even though this would be tight numerically to do so.

8. Implications (including financial implications)

8.1. Resources and Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8.2. Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

8.3. Risk

There are no risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

8.4. Consultation

The Council is a consultee. In the short space of time since the proposals were published, there has not been the time for the Council to carry out any wider consultation. All members were invited on 25th June to comment on the proposals in time for this report.

8.5. Consideration by Scrutiny

This committee is delegated to consider matters of this kind without wider reference to the scrutiny process. The matter is also on the full Council agenda for the 28th July.

8.6. Climate Impact

There are no significant climate change implications arising from this report.

8.7. Community Impact

The arrangement of parliamentary constituencies is important to the democratic process and the area's effective representation in Parliament, and the

relationship between the Council and its MPs is often critical to the success of the Council in lobbying, bidding and seeking support for its activities. This report highlights the issues that arise from some parts of the area being represented by MPs with cross authority constituencies.

9. Background Papers

The Commissions' proposals as published June 2021
Consultation by BCW on changes to parliamentary boundaries Nov 2106
Local electoral register information
Emails from individual members during July 2021.