

West Northamptonshire

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Comment text:

Dear Sir/Madam

I attach the response to the consultation on behalf of Northampton Town Council. The response focuses specifically on the proposed ward changes to Northampton parish.

If you require any further information then please let me know.

Attached Documents:

- Consultation Responsev4.docx

Consultation Response – Electoral Arrangements – West Northamptonshire (Northampton Town parish wards)

Northampton Town Council is a unique parish council and the current arrangement of wards has served the town well. Residents are familiar with their neighbours, live in similar types of housing, in similar neighbourhoods, face the same challenges and have much in common.

Northampton Town Council is largest town council by population in the country, consisting of 21 wards, each the equivalent size of many parish councils.

NTC have considered the proposal put forward by the boundary commission and is unanimously of the opinion that the current parish ward boundaries should remain as they are. The reasons for this are:

- The current arrangements reflect the identities and interests of local communities, secure effective and convenient local government and offer greater equality of representation than the proposed wards do.
- Northampton Town Council (NTC) is a new council (2 years old) and is working hard to establish itself within the principle council area of West Northamptonshire
- Continuity is key for parishioners to avoid confusion and promote confidence in local democracy
- The current NTC wards are based on historic communities many of which identify strongly with the current ward in which they reside
- The current wards are established communities many of which have residents' associations based along those lines, community centres which take the name of their ward
- The Town Council has had much success in its wards, expanding bloom projects on a ward basis to cover the whole town, and offering grants through councillors to support projects in their wards
- The Town Council has built strong community links within the existing wards with clubs, societies, charities and residents associations

History

Many of the wards have long history dating back centuries, for example Semilong. The strong identity that residents have with the Semilong area is considerable and the loss of this ward and the area will be detrimental to this.

The proposal removes Abington from the ward map completely. Abington is a neighbourhood which lends its name to a prominent Green Flag park used by all of Northampton.

The proposal will disrupt these communities and their identities, the opposite of what town and parish councils are supposed to stand for and what we understand the intention of the boundary commission to be.

Electoral Arrangements

Table 1 below illustrates the electorate for each ward if the current arrangement remains.

WARD	Year 2021	Year 2028	No. of Cllrs.	Electorate per Cllr 2021	Electorate per Cllr 2028
Abington	7015	7442	2	3507	3721
Boothville	3328	3487	1	3328	3487
Briar Hill	2989	3096	1	2989	3096
Brookside	3887	4022	1	3887	4022
Castle	10331	11211	3	3443	3737
Eastfield	2750	3854	1	3750	3854
Headlands	3811	3948	1	3811	3948
*Kings Heath	3422	4522	1	3422	4522 *
Kingsley	4063	4165	1	4063	4165
Park	3742	3808	1	3742	3808
Parklands	3675	3880	1	3675	3880
Phippsville	3071	3152	1	3071	3152
Rectory Farm	3687	3874	1	3687	3847
Riverside	3500	3629	1	3500	3629
Rushmills	2705	2860	1	2705	2860
Semilong	3880	4040	1	3880	4040
Dallington Spencer	3981	4026	1	3981	4026
St James	5165	5262	1	5165	5262
Talavera	7740	7965	2	3870	3983
Trinity	3030	3149	1	3030	3149
Westone	3523	3575	1	3523	3575
TOTAL	90295	94965	25		

Northampton Town Council Wards 2021 - 2028

*Only significant increase.

Proposed lost ward names

Table 1 above illustrates:

- The present electorate per ward is broadly consistent
- The forecasted growth, which is not big, would also mean the current arrangement is balanced population wise.
- Councillors know their communities and serve them well

Table 2 below illustrates the proposed electorate per councillor if the boundary commission proposals are adopted

Proposal from Boundary Commission for Northampton Town Council wards

WARD	Year 2024 total electors	No. of Cllrs	Electorate per Cllr	Average electors per Cllr	Above/ below average per Cllr	% of total electorate
Billing Aquadrome	1006	1	1006*	3796.96	-2790	0.2649 *
Blackthorn and Rectory Farm	7654	2	3827	3796.96	+31	2.0158
Briar Hill	3096	1	3096	3796.96	-700	0.8154
Castle	1287	3	4290	3796.96	+494	3.3901
Dallington Spencer	13769	3	4589*	3796.96	+793	3.6263 *
Headlands	13852	3	4617*	3796.96	+821	3.6484 *
Marina	145	1	145*	3796.96	-3651	0.0382 *
Moulton Leys	1959	1	1959*	3796.96	-1837	0.5159 *
Parklands	3848	1	3848	3796.96	+52	1.0134
Phippsville	9089	2	4544*	3796.96	+748	2.3938*
Queens Park	2336	1	2336	3796.96	-1460	0.6152
St George	8845	2	4422 *	3796.96	+626	2.3295 *
Talavera	8207	2	4103	3796.96	+307	2.1615
Weston	8246	2	4123	3796.96	+327	2.1717
TOTAL	94924	25				25

Above average electorate numbers

Below average electorate numbers

Significantly above or below *

- The proposed numbers are far less consistent compared to the current arrangements

- The two outliers (Billing Aquadrome and Marina) are massively out of sync and over represented
- Similarly, Moulton Leys, and Queens Park have a disproportionate overrepresentation
- The current arrangement is convenient in terms of arranging local government elections, and for the electorate who know their ward and where to go to vote
- The current ward boundaries are proven in providing secure effective and convenient local government.

As detailed, Northampton is unique in parish council terms and therefore should be considered when looking at the wards. The Town Council's size, population and diversity are all factors that help make it what it is and these are effectively reflected in the current ward arrangements.

It is the considered view of councillors that there should be no change to the current ward boundaries. The changes proposed take no account of the demographic or socio-economic nature of our diverse and multicultural communities. There is no logic in destroying the community cohesion which has built up over many years of engagement and hard work.

For all the above reasons NTC asks that the Boundary Commission do not amend the current Town Council ward boundaries.