

Record of a Public Hearing held into the Provisional
Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries
Commissioner for Northern Ireland in respect of the proposed Inner
East Local Government District held at the
Templeton Hotel, Templepatrick on 8 and 9 February 2007

*The Assistant Commissioner, Dr Bill Smith, opened the public
hearing at 09.45am.*

<p>Dr Bill Smith, Assistant Commissioner</p>	<p>Good morning, everyone. I am pleased to open this public hearing into the proposed local government district of Inner East. My name is Bill Smith and I have been appointed as the Assistant Commissioner to conduct this hearing on behalf of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland. I will begin by outlining how the proceedings will be conducted. Please turn off any mobile phones and other electronic devices.</p> <p>This hearing will consider the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the name and boundary of the proposed district of Inner East; the name, number and boundaries of its constituent wards; and the representations which people have already made or make today in respect of those recommendations. The Commissioner has asked me to present my written report to him within four weeks of this hearing. In so doing, I will take full account of all the representations that are put to me whether oral or written.</p> <p>I want to stress two points. Firstly, that I am independent of the Commissioner. I am here to listen to the evidence and information about his Provisional Recommendations, not to justify or defend them. In due course, the Commissioner will rather accept or reject my findings and recommendations.</p> <p>Secondly, I will not be able to consider any representations on matters outside the legislative framework governing the Commissioner's work. For example, although I would be glad to acknowledge them, I cannot consider arguments for an alternative number of local government districts to the seven already prescribed in the legislation.</p> <p>I have with me Mandy Morrison, the Secretary to the Commissioner. Please feel free to approach her at any time with any queries about the conduct of the hearing and she will be happy to help you. The hearing is being recorded and the record will be available on the Commissioner's website as soon as practicable.</p> <p>Copies of the Commissioner's Provisional</p>
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	<p>Recommendations are available for consultation at the desk outside along with copies of the Procedure Guide. Also available are bound copies of written submissions relating to the Inner East district which were made to the Commissioner during the consultation period which ended on 5 January.</p> <p>The main purpose of this hearing is to obtain local views. If you have an opinion on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations, this is your opportunity to make it heard. I must stress that what you cannot do is reserve your position until you have seen my report. It will not be possible to make submissions to me after this hearing has concluded. I have already examined the written representations received during the consultation period and I will be taking them into account whether or not they are mentioned again today.</p> <p>Let me say a word about the procedure. Please when you are speaking make sure that everyone can hear you by talking distinctly into the microphone in front you. We can show how the microphone operates if anyone needs assistance with that and it would be helpful if you could start by giving us four essential pieces of information. Firstly your name, secondly whether you are speaking in a personal or representative capacity, thirdly if the latter which organisation you represent, and fourthly whether or not you have made a written submission. Do not be nervous. The hearing is informal and we will not be trying to pick holes in your argument.</p> <p>After the hearing is over, I may decide to visit the areas under consideration. If there is a particular boundary or feature that you want me to look at, please let me know. In terms of the practical details of the room, if the fire alarm sounds that will not be a practice; it will be the real thing and the evacuation arrangements are that you evacuate the room through these doors behind me and down the stairs. I probably do not need to remind you that the building is completely non-smoking and although there is no connection with that statement the toilets are at the bottom of the stairs. We have two days available if necessary and today I intend to adjourn after everyone who wishes to speak has had their say. I then intend to reconvene the hearing at 9:30am tomorrow.</p> <p>One person has indicated that he wishes to speak, Councillor Smyth, and I should be grateful if you would proceed.</p>
<p>Mr John Smyth, Councillor, Antrim Borough Council</p>	<p>Thank you, Mr Commissioner. I welcome you to the Borough of Antrim. Sorry for such a poor representation from concerned people. My name is John Smyth and I am a councillor on Antrim Borough Council. However, I am here in a private capacity. Also, I live in the Steeple and</p>

am chairman of Steeple Community Association. Assistant Commissioner, I find the proposed changes to create the Inner East district most disturbing. The parish of Antrim has been in existence for over 100 years and now the proposal is to do away with it entirely. Within that parish, there have been 36 townlands. There are new boundaries concerning Steeple ward, I think 2,949 is the proposed numbers living in it. I live in the Steeple Estate, I am chairman of the Steeple Community Association and what I cannot distinguish in your proposal is the removal of Birch Hill Park, Central Park, Oaktree Drive from the Steeple ward. I am not too sure if you are aware of the area concerned. That is a small map I have and you can distinguish Steeple ward there in that corner. As far as I can recall, the Steeple Estate extended to Fountain Hill and Stiles Way, which are the two roads either side of it. Now it would appear you intend to relegate these homes to Rathenraw ward, which I find crazy.

Looking through your documents it is a case of manipulation or gerrymandering to keep the wards in around the 3,000 mark. Even from your own map, a natural line is Stiles Way, Fountain Hill. There are approximately 250 homes in this affected area. The area of the countryside where these people live has a natural feature, mainly the main road, which clearly separates and distinguishes the true Steeple ward. Our community clearly identifies very strongly with their particular ward and they know every house, street, person and natural feature. The renowned Steeple Tower, for example, is in that borough. Ward names identify us as a people. They give us a sense of history, culture and heritage. They tell us the way we viewed and used the landscape over the years. They are hugely important. I would urge the Commissioner to change this injustice, as I would call it.

My next concern is the proposed name of the Rathenraw ward, which is closely linked to this area. Again the numbers are 3,038. Let me keep my submissions in two parts but they are linked together and arguments apply. As a Unionist, I have a grave concern that a place name which is perceived by my community as being a nationalist/republican area is being placed on the whole ward. I have no qualms with the people who chose to live Rathenraw: that is their choice. However, to cover the whole area with this name is totally inappropriate. This place name is registered as a socially deprived area. Now to label places like the Belfast Line, Greyside Gardens, Knockmoyle, The Folly, Ashgreen, Stiles Estate as Rathenraw ward is totally wrong. I would suggest that names that were associated with the parish of Antrim such as Bleerick or Hungry Hall should be used. It would cause no alienation. Again, Greystone Estate could be added into this ward and Steeple taken out to balance the 3,000

	<p>mark if numbers are what we are so worried about. The Greystone ward would also include a school in the new ward for voting purposes as there are concerns over the future of Rathenraw Integrated School in Rathenraw ward.</p> <p>Again, Commissioner, I thank you for your time and I hope you will take on board my concerns as a representative of the Steeple Community. Again, my preferred name would be for the Rathenraw ward would be for Bleerick and if you want to ask me a few questions I will try my best to answer them.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Thank you very much, Councillor Smyth. Political affiliations are not something that I can take into account but there is obviously the consideration that ward boundaries should be readily identifiable and, under that rule it is appropriate for me to consider the sense of community that you are talking about. But I wonder in terms of your first proposal whether there is a specific boundary line that you would like to see and if you could describe that in detail for us.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>As you see from the map, Fountain Hill, Stiles Way... I do not think we have a map handy. Perhaps one of your own maps.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>I do not want to interfere with the recording process but it might be easier if we look at the map together. If you join me here perhaps we can both use this microphone.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>Mr Commissioner, this is Steeple Estate and here is the Round Tower which affects this whole area. I live in this part here, Steeple ward, at 55 Birchill Park. And from what I can see, the proposal is to remove this piece here and put it into Rathenraw ward.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Okay, like that.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>Yes. As you see, you have Stiles Way and this is Fountain Hill. These are two main roads.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>So what is this area bounded by Oaktree Drive?</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>That is Parkhall Road.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Parkhall Road, Fountain Road.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>Fountain Hill.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Fountain Hill and Stiles Way, that segment would be —</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>....moved into the Rathenraw ward.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>So your proposal is that that should not happen.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>No.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>OK.</p>
Mr Smyth	<p>As you can see, this is the Steeple Estate , that is the main Steeple Road going this way, Stiles Way and then there is a main road right through the middle here.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>There may be implications for the electoral equality principle. The principle that the Commissioner has laid down is that there should not be more than 10% variance in terms of the electoral population of each ward and it may be that if we do that, it would upset the electoral balance between the wards. So there would then be knock-on implications for other wards, for example, it may make</p>

	Rathenraw —
Mr Smyth	Too one-sided.
Dr Smith	Yes, not in terms of the political balance but in terms of the number of electors in each ward.
Mr Smyth	My proposal then is that if you take this bit out of Rathenraw and put a piece of Greystone back into it on the other side, that would balance your numbers.
Dr Smith	So the proposed compensating factor would be to include a bit of ...
Mr Smyth	Greystone Estate.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Smyth	That would take in a part of Brantwood Gardens on the other side, so we will take 250 voters out of this side and you get 250 voters on the other side.
Dr Smith	Although, in turn that might upset the sense of identity for the people of the Greystone Estate. That would then be breaking them up. But that is an interesting proposal.
Mr Smyth	The Greystone Estate is a natural boundary to that and, in the larger map, you see coming from the roundabout there is natural boundary here. It all fits in together. I have got a map where you might see it better. Again you have a large roundabout at the top of the road and the proposal is that half way down the road be turned into Rathenraw ward and into Muckamore ward at the other end. So again the natural boundaries are there.
Dr Smith	In terms of roads.
Mr Smyth	Yes.
Mr Smyth	Again this is this part here.
Dr Smith	Yes. So this part.
Mr Smyth	You see the natural boundary there where Stiles Way comes right down here and the proposal to just drop in this wee bit here.. It looks very natural, surely to ...
Dr Smith	Yes. And then the compensating...
Mr Smyth	This is the Greystone Estate here and the Muckamore end. This is Greystone Estate and this is Brantwood Gardens. Then down onto the Belfast Line, what I suggest is if we took the corner out to here —
Dr Smith	Into Rathenraw?
Mr Smyth	Yes.
Dr Smith	Like that.
Mr Smyth	Yes.
Dr Smith	But then the other possibility is that that would make Steeple too big.
Mr Smyth	If you move one piece some where in the jigsaw you have to move something else. You have another piece here you will have to move. Unfortunately I have not looked at the other end of the borough.
Dr Smith	All right. We can look at the various possible ways that that could be done. That is likely to be the problem if there is one but I will certainly look at it.
Mr Smyth	OK. And again those other names, such as Hungry Hall, these are all townlands in this area here.
Dr Smith	Yes.

Mr Smyth	This is a Rathenraw Estate here. There have been a lot of issues over the years with this particular area. This is the main Belfast Line, Belfast Road which goes from Antrim into Belfast. Again half of this is in Massereene ward and half of the road in the proposed Rathenraw ward. And so there is are a lot of social issues such as housing.
Dr Smith	What would you propose? What would you want us to do about that?
Mr Smyth	I would just change the name on it.
Dr Smith	To Bleerick. Where does Bleerick come from?
Mr Smyth	It is one of these townlands.
Dr Smith	Why Bleerick rather than one of the other townlands.
Mr Smyth	Well, I think it is a name that does not have any connotations with it. Nothing perceived by any side
Dr Smith	It is more neutral?
Mr Smyth	Yes.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Smyth	I actually have a list of the townlands
Dr Smith	We will go with your preference.
Mr Smyth	Is there any thing else?
Dr Smith	No, that is great, I do not think we need any more clarification.
Mandy Morrison, Secretary to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner	Councillor Smyth, I see you spoke to further detail than what was in your representation. It would be helpful if you could give us such a submission if you do not mind, just to substantiate exactly what you have said on record. Thank you.
Mr Smyth	I am sorry, Mr Commissioner, those are the parish of Antrim, County Antrim townlands. That is all the names that were in that at one time.
Dr Smith	All right.
Mr Smyth	The preferred name is Bleerick.
Dr Smith	OK. Thank you very much, Councillor Smyth. Is there anybody here present who wishes to speak? In that case if everyone who wants to speak has had a full opportunity to air their views, I propose to adjourn the hearing until 9:30am tomorrow morning. The basis for that is that we know that there are people who have told us that they will be turning up to speak tomorrow morning. Councillor Smyth and anyone else, if you wish to hear what is said tomorrow you are very welcome to come again, but there will be no further discussion today. Thank you very much. I declare this hearing adjourned.
	<i>Adjournment</i>

	Friday 09 February 2007
Dr Smith	Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is 9:35am on Friday 9 February and I am pleased to reopen this public hearing into the proposed local government district of Inner East. I have advised our one attendee of the procedures and I am now pleased to invite Mr David Ford of the Alliance Party to comment on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations. Mr Ford.
Mr David Ford, Alliance Party Leader, Councillor Antrim Borough Council	<p>Thank you very much, Mr Assistant Commissioner. Thank you also for facilitating me this morning after my domestic arrangements changed yesterday. I would first of all like to start by making a few general points about the way the procedures are done before making some specific points about Inner East. And I should in that context declare my interest that I am here not merely as representing the Alliance Party but also as a councillor in the Borough of Antrim and the outgoing MLA for South Antrim constituency.</p> <p>The party welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and I would stress first of all, just to place on the record, that my participation today does not mean that we have accepted the seven-council-model. We still believe it is not right but we are here to do justice to the comments put forward in the Provisional Recommendations by the Commissioner. It is clear to us that there was considerable time constraint in the preparation of those proposals but we do not believe that the Commissioner had adequate time. We believe that there are a number of minor changes which ought to be made to make improvements.</p> <p>Unfortunately also the information which is available to those wishing to comment does not extend to the number of electors in small areas under consideration and therefore it is difficult to give a full and detailed response. We can only talk about broad general principles.</p> <p>In the context of those principles, we believe that attention does need to be given to wards, because in many cases the way wards are laid out will determine how DEAs are drawn up and this will create problems for coherence in terms of local government representation in the future. We see a number of difficulties within these proposals where in some cases housing estates and logical housing units in urban areas have been split and in other cases townlands in rural areas have been split. We believe that that is something which requires attention, because boundaries should fit within the existing pattern: that townlands in rural areas should be based on major features like railways or main roads or industrial estates, which split communities within urban areas.</p>

	<p>We believe that there are number of problems, not least in Inner East where wards have been created which contain perhaps a significant rural area with population at either end of it, which is going to create difficulties in getting any level of coherence in the future.</p> <p>In terms of the name of the proposed Inner East, Alliance has no suggestion to make. We think it is an unfortunate and entirely incongruous amalgamation of four entirely separate and distinct communities, and it is impossible to find any name which logically joins together the four constituent parts, as indeed the Commissioner said himself when he launched the Provisional Recommendations.</p> <p>As far as the external boundary is concerned, we believe that it is by and large the best boundary that can be produced in current circumstances. In particular, the M2 as the boundary between Newtownabbey and Belfast is clearly established and the most obvious line of separation on the ground. And the suburban changes in the southwest of Belfast seem to us to fairly well fit the boundary between those who would regards themselves as having moved from Belfast and effectively still living within the Belfast community, and those who live within a definable Lisburn area.</p> <p>There are, however, a few points which are described in the Provisional Recommendations as defacements where we think there have been minor changes that are completely unnecessary. One I would highlight — just because it happens to be close to my own house — is the change of the northern boundary between Antrim and Ballymena from the northern boundary of Maxwells Walls townland to along a couple of roads which do not have any historical basis. It is a boundary which has existed for generations between electoral divisions and it seems that messing around with townland boundaries has achieved nothing. There is not even a person who lives within the area affected. So we would regret changes made like that and feel they are entirely unnecessary.</p> <p>If I could look at some of the individual wards, Assistant Commissioner, I do not know whether you would wish me to go through the written submissions we have made in any great detail or whether you would prefer to ask questions as to how I have done it.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Thank you very much, Mr Ford. I would like first to acknowledge all that you have said so far in terms of the seven-council model. As you know that is outside my remit.</p> <p>I regret if it was difficult to get information on the number of electors in the small chunks that are under consideration, but I hope that it will be possible when we are looking at your detailed proposals to discuss what the implications</p>

	<p>might be. We can look at scenarios that I can then go away with. I will have access to information on the significance in terms of electoral equality of what you are proposing and I will be able to look at that.</p> <p>In terms of wards and their boundaries, I note what you say about following natural lines, and when we come to look at your specific proposals we can take into account that principle. I am disappointed that you do not have a suggestion on the name because we would very much welcome any suggestions. So if during the course of this discussion anything occurs to you, I would be grateful if you share it with me. And in terms of defacements, I note what you say about changing traditional townland boundaries. Again it would be helpful if, as we look at the map at specific proposals in your written submission, we could consider the implications of that principle.</p> <p>It would be helpful now to turn to your written submission and to go through each of the points in it in turn. The first concerns Randalstown where you are suggesting that the boundary be moved westwards from the current development limit of the town and that the area to the north of the ward be transferred in compensation. Now, we have looked at one possible way of doing that and I have a map here which shows what might happen if that were done.</p>
Dr Smith	Do you want to take us through this?
Mr Ford	<p>Yes, certainly. I see from the map the proposal that would effectively take out to what I think is the next townland boundary to the west of the urban part of Randalstown and then come in fairly close to the north of the development limit. That would seem to me to create significantly more coherence. It would be illogical, if there is any further development immediately to the west of the current built-up area in Randalstown, for that to be placed within two wards rather than keeping Toome as more rural ward and enabling Randalstown to develop in that particular respect.</p> <p>There are issues also where this then relates across into Tardree ward and Shane's Castle ward. It might also mean that slightly more of Shane's Castle ward could be transferred into Randalstown maintaining a coherence there and enabling Shane's Castle to be based more on the urban population at the west of Antrim town. It is one of those difficult wards which has population at two ends and nothing much in between.</p>
Dr Smith	The difficulty with this scenario is that, in terms of the electoral equality principle, it reduces Randalstown to 2,291 and then increases this one which is Tardree to 3,306. This figure is too small in terms of the 10% variance principle.
Mr Ford	I do not see how we are increasing Tardree when there is no change on the map that you have before you on the boundary between Randalstown and Tardree.

Dr Smith	Well, I guess Tardree takes in this chunk.
Mr Ford	Sorry that is ...
Dr Smith	The area east of the river Maine.
Mr Ford	Yes, which is not what we were suggesting. We were suggesting, if anything, that more of the Randalstown end of Tardree should go into Randalstown, so that is actually contrary to the suggestion that you are making.
Dr Smith	All right. We will look at that again to see if there is a scenario that we can come up with that accommodates your proposal.
Mr Ford	Then the knock-on effect of that runs into the Shane's Castle ward where we believe there is a major problem in that it is taking two distinct units of population within Antrim — the Ballymena Road, Randalstown Road area and the Springfarm area — alongside the eastern part of Randalstown. One suggestion we see which might fit better would be to take that into the railway route: to run the eastern boundary of Shane's Castle ward along the railway line, which would therefore leave the Springfarm area to go with Steeple whilst taking in all the of the Ballymena Road, both sides of it, and the Oriel Road population area into Shane's Castle. At the moment both the Springfarm community and the Ballymena Road community are split by the ward boundary between Shane's Castle and Steeple.
Dr Smith	All right, most of that, yes, I do not see any immediate problem with that suggestion either.
Mr Ford	We do not have the figures for the exact populations but they appear to balance.
Dr Smith	Yes, subject to the electoral equivalence principle we will certainly look at that. So the proposal is that the boundary be the railway line leaving all of the Springfarm in the Steeple ward.
Mr Ford	Yes.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Ford	<p>We then move across to between Steeple and Rathenraw. I agree with the submission that was made yesterday regarding the inclusion of part of the Steeple Estate around Birch Hill Park within Rathenraw ward when logically it should tie in with the rest of the Steeple area. That would mean that Steeple ward would consist of Springfarm area and Steeple/Park Hall, which is a reasonably coherent unit. We certainly would not wish to couch it in terms of some of the language which has been expressed about the people of Rathenraw, but we do believe that there is a logical community boundary between the Steeple and Rathenraw, which should be reflected along Stiles Way and Fountain Hill as the major road rather than through the estate.</p> <p>However, there is then a further problem within the Rathenraw ward. The boundary proposed between Rathenraw and Muckamore actually runs down the main driveway of Brantwood Gardens Housing Estate. It seems</p>

	<p>to me that to take a housing estate of approximately 200 houses and split it by the only entrance in and out is completely illogical. It is almost a question of, if the Birchill Park area has been removed from Rathenraw then it may well be that the whole of Brantwood Gardens would fit into Rathenraw on an equalisation basis. Whichever way it is done, all of Brantwood Gardens should be in one ward or the other. This is especially so when, on the basis of counting wards from the north west, it is highly likely that there will be a DEA boundary in that area and it would be completely illogical to have the two sides of Brantwood Gardens working in two different DEAs.</p>
Dr Smith	So that is this line here.
Mr Ford	No. That is just there.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Ford	<p>The Greystone Estate can logically enough stay with Muckamore. That does raise the question as to whether the name Rathenraw is the most appropriate name for something which consists of three relatively distinct units: Rathenraw Estate, Stiles Estate and the Greystone Road Housing to the southern end of the ward. I suspect given that Greystone Housing Estate is not within it, it is difficult to incorporate the name Greystone. But since Stiles is most central — and indeed Stiles has been a ward name since 1973 — it might well be that Stiles would be a preferable name to Rathenraw as the more central area of the three distinct units.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>So Stiles is the proposed name for what the Provisional Recommendations has as Rathenraw.</p> <p>In terms of those boundary changes again we will look at the implications in terms of the variance principle.</p>
Mr Ford	<p>Looking then to the north of Antrim town, the proposals for Tardree ward appear to us to contain considerable difficulties, and I declare an interest as a resident of that ward as well as everything else. We have already proposed that there might well be some movement at the western end of it into Randalstown to make up numbers but it consists of a community which looks towards Randalstown. The community which is the northern part, going down towards Parkgate village and then a small and cut-off unit, the other side of the Sixmilewater River. It is somewhat unfortunate that 10 or 12 years ago at the time of the last revision exactly the same error was made when the boundary then between Parkgate and Templepatrick was originally proposed to run more or less east/west yet the river runs south west to north east.</p> <p>Our proposals would be that the M2 — once you pass to the east of Rathbeg motorway junction, it is an inappropriate boundary, — does not separate communities. It is certainly a logical cut-off to the urban wards and has been for sometime. Once you pass to the east of Rathbeg it is not a community division; it is merely</p>

	a line that happens to be on the map. Effectively you can take it from there to Sandyknowes as being inappropriate. We believe that Tardree ward should include the rural area to the north of the Sixmilewater river coming down as far as the Dunadry area, which is more or less the current boundary and therefore should shed the Ballymartin area south of the river to Templepatrick. On the presumption that the polling station for that area is likely to be in Parkgate, it would seem entirely inappropriate that people from Ballymartin should have to travel through Doagh or through Templepatrick to cross the river unless we are proposing to build a new bridge for them.
Dr Smith	Essentially the boundary then would move from the motorway...
Mr Fordto the river. We believe it is a much more coherent boundary and it has been a historic boundary.
Dr Smith	From the map the population of that area does not seem to be ...
Mr Ford	I think the population is sufficiently insignificant that it will probably add slightly more to Tardree than it will remove. It is a fairly sparsely populated rural area that is unlikely to make any significant difference.
Dr Smith	We will look at the implications of that.
Mr Ford	But again it is one of those cases where we do not believe that the motorway is a suitable boundary in a rural area. It is not a community boundary; the river is much more a community boundary.
Dr Smith	All right.
Mr Ford	Then in the southern part of the Antrim rural area we believe there are some problems by the simplistic use of the Seven Mile Straight as a ward boundary.
Dr Smith	Yes.
Mr Ford	The Seven Mile Straight is actually a line of communication which brings people together.
Dr Smith	That is here.
Mr Ford	You have places like Loanends, for example, which are a focus for school and church. To have a ward boundary artificially constructed along the road is completely illogical in that position. We believe that it should return to more or less the current boundary between the Aldergrove and Clady wards.
Dr Smith	Now, let us see where that is..
Mr Ford	Sorry, I do not have the current boundaries with me but the boundaries are based on the townlands in the area, not on a simplistic run along the Seven Mile Straight. And we believe that there are options there to make changes.
Dr Smith	So to return to the current boundaries.
Mr Ford	Well there is something closer to the current boundaries which would take account of the townlands and the local community patterns in that area would be more logical.
Dr Smith	You said that the Umgall/Craigarogan area could also be added to Templepatrick from Mallusk.
Mr Ford	Yes, that is that salient there which runs into Templepatrick

	wards and it would straighten it off given that Templepatrick is potentially somewhat under numbers.
Dr Smith	So where would the line be then?
Mr Ford	By the townland boundaries, which is where the current borough boundary runs and which ought to be marked in that map but is not.
Dr Smith	Mandy, are the townland boundaries marked on the Ordnance Survey maps that we have?
Mr Ford	Yes, there is the potential to create a boundary which would make that a straighter run and avoid that peculiar salient.
Dr Smith	That is roughly there.
Mr Ford	I am sorry, I do not have the detail with me.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Ford	There is also slight issue of imbalance between Aldergrove and Crumlin wards. I know you are not allowed to take account of future growth, but it does seem to be illogical for Crumlin to be already starting off larger than Aldergrove when we know it is an area of some growth. The current boundary between Aldergrove and Crumlin at that point is based on the river rather than based on the roads north of the town.
Dr Smith	Yes, the proposal is to remove it to the roads.
Mr Ford	Yes, our proposal would be to move it back to the roads. It does not make a huge difference but again it respects the current boundaries and makes a better balance even without anticipating growth..
Dr Smith	I am not sure that electors are required for the Antrim town wards as your written submission suggested.
Mr Ford	Certainly the logic of that would be that some small areas beyond Muckamore village, the south of the proposed Massereene ward, logically look towards Antrim and could move in that direction if required. That would make it more necessary to move the Crumlin boundary, but that is probably not going to come through on the way we are looking at Antrim at the moment.
Dr Smith	But you are not proposing adjusting it?
Mr Ford	We are not specifically proposing it but say...
Dr Smith	The northern boundary of...
Mr Ford	No, we are saying that there may be the possibility of slightly taking from Aldergrove into Massereene or even Aldergrove into the Muckamore ward, which might be compensated for better by Crumlin. But I think at the moment there is a case to be made to change that boundary in Crumlin anyway.
Dr Smith	Muckamore is that one is it?
Mr Ford	Yes.
Dr Smith	OK.
Mr Ford	In terms of the Ballyclare area, which is the next one I want you to look at, we believe the page 84 map shows in detail where there are difficulties as matters are currently proposed. We have two very tight urban wards, one of which already meanders across the Sixmilewater River

	<p>anyway and yet a section of the population which is part of the south of the town along the Mill Road is in Ballyrobert rural ward. This is indeed a replication of the current situation but the growth has occurred since the boundaries were done. And we also have the anomaly of Ballycorr to the north east of the town being placed within Doagh ward, which it is not. It is not the worst anomaly in the entire proposal but it does not seem to be particularly helpful. It may be rural, but I think if you look at it from the larger scale the only contact that Ballycorr has with Doagh is by going straight to the middle of Ballyclare. It does seem a little illogical. The current Doagh ward is really that area, purely the western part of the proposal, which is Doagh and Kilbride. That is a logical unit. We think there might be virtues in looking in a slightly different way and splitting Ballyclare sectorally three or even four ways rather than trying to have two tight urban wards and two rural wards which are not really rural.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>I see what you mean although I suspect that the difficulty with that would be again around the electoral equality principle in that you have a population of around 6,100. If you divide it into three, the average would be only 2,000.</p>
Mr Ford	<p>I am saying by looking at Doagh and including it with those two, you might be get a better equivalent with, say, Doagh, Kilbride and the Doagh Road area of Ballyclare forming one ward and the other two divided sectorally. But we then still have to deal with Ballyrobert.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Yes, so it has implications for Doagh and Ballyrobert.</p>
Mr Ford	<p>It has implications for Doagh and Ballyrobert. When I say specifically sectorally, it is looking at the overall balance of those three or four wards to try to get slightly more coherence than there is currently. Because again Ballyrobert, by containing places like Straid and Ballynure, has no logical limit. They would all have the focus towards Ballyclare and we wonder whether a split into four sectors based on Ballyclare might have some advantages. It is not an easy one to solve in anyway.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>Yes, greater Ballyclare.</p>
Mr Ford	<p>Just while we are there, I did not specifically mention it but part of the other problem with the Mallusk ward is created by the shape of that salient out towards the motorway junction because the motorway has been made the boundary. There is absolutely no reason why an area there round Carnanee which logically looks towards Templepatrick should not be incorporated into the Templepatrick ward.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>So the boundary would then be...</p>
Mr Ford	<p>So the boundary would then simply be across.</p>
Dr Smith	<p>There is no natural line there to take out the salient.</p>
Mr Ford	<p>There is a townland line that would take that out because again people along that direction of the Carnanee Road come down towards the Antrim Road and Templepatrick. There is a logical run through.</p>

Dr Smith	I will look at that. So the proposal then in relation to Ballyclare is to look at the idea of Ballycarry in the context of Doagh and Ballyrobert.
Mr Ford	Yes, look at the four wards together and see if it is not possible to introduce a sectoral alternative.
Dr Smith	When you say sectoral you mean rural or urban?
Mr Ford	No, I mean a division which would effectively start at the centre of Ballyclare with a northeast, southeast, southwest and northwest quadrant.
Dr Smith	So each would combine rural and urban.
Mr Ford	Each would combine rural and urban.
Dr Smith	All right.
Mr Ford	The next ward we would want to look at is Knockagh, which is an extremely unfortunate ward. It is one of those which is elongated in the rural part and has its population all scattered around the periphery. Upper Woodburn and the Knockagh is one distinct area. The upper part of Greenisland is another area. Upper Monkstown is a different area and a section of Jordanstown which is cut off is completely out with any contact with the rest of them and indeed has no physical contact other than by driving out through Jordanstown Estate. We think the absolute minimum to make any coherence on that would be to ...
Dr Smith	Yes, I am not sure whether this is in the booklet or not.
Mr Ford	I do not think it is. This appears to have been prepared in recognition on our session.
Dr Smith	Yes, this is the green line and an accurate representation of your suggestion. This is a map that I prepared in advance.
Mr Ford	Yes, the absolute minimum would be that part of Jordanstown.
Dr Smith	This salient there.
Mr Ford	That salient between the two railway lines, or at least the urban bit of it, should be transferred to Jordanstown ward. I think there may be one or two farm level crossings there but this area relates solely to Jordanstown. That should transfer into Jordanstown, potentially then meaning that this bit of new housing along the upper road of Monkstown would transfer the other way.
Dr Smith	To Knockagh.
Mr Ford	To Knockagh.
Dr Smith	Then that again...
Mr Ford	Sorry, your new map is confusing me. Let me go back to my own map. No, sorry that bit is required at the moment to make up Jordanstown. It probably could go into Knockagh to make up the numbers there if Jordanstown moves the other way.
Dr Smith	Although that then exacerbates the problem of Knockagh being a ward which is rural with populations on the periphery.
Mr Ford	It does, which means logically then that Knockagh should become more of upper Greenisland and upper Monkstown, with the pure Knockagh area relating more towards the

	Carrickfergus urban wards. Perhaps Knockagh itself would then move up. For example, Burleigh Hill ward, which is the very tight urban Carrickfergus ward, it might expand up to there, so the focus of the current Knockagh ward would move more to the southern end of it.
Dr Smith	Although it would still extend to the district boundary to the north.
Mr Ford	<p>No, I think given that there is a relatively limited population there, Burleigh Hill might take in more of that. There is scope for some adjustment within the Carrickfergus urban wards because of the way they are very tightly drawn. But it is a little bit difficult to see how you make much sense of anything when you start it at that particular point. However, if you see that the Burleigh Hill ward is drawn extremely tightly within that urban area it is relatively small. It would create perhaps a slight anomaly by taking in the upper Woodburn area towards Burleigh Hill but it might be less anomalous than the way it is currently scattered all the way across there.</p> <p>The alternative would be to look at the Greenisland ward as well and see what is possible with the eastern ends of Greenisland and Knockagh to create a western part of Carrickfergus ward with a Greenisland-based ward, which would include Greenisland both above and below the railway line, as well as across towards Monkstown. The railway line is the current boundary between the Greenisland and Knockagh wards.</p>
Dr Smith	Yes, it is in the Provisional Recommendations.
Mr Ford	Yes.
Mr Ford	Because at the moment they divide the Greenisland community somewhat.
Dr Smith	Yes, it is upper Greenisland.
Mr Ford	So, there may be options which would link both parts of Greenisland with the upper part of Monkstown whilst taking the area which is effectively the westward expansion of Carrickfergus, Woodburn and then down towards the Shore Road going in with Knockagh. Again it is one of those areas where we do not have the data to get the numbers added up, but there would seem to be some coherence in that.
Dr Smith	So in terms of the identifiable community boundary it is the upper Greenisland road.
Mr Ford	That is the upper Greenisland road there.
Dr Smith	Would you propose that would be the boundary for Greenisland to the north and west?
Mr Ford	Probably what we would be proposing is immediately to the east of Greenisland and extending up to the Knockagh escarpment. The upper Greenisland Road would separate parts of Greenisland on one side, an even smaller part of Greenisland than is currently separated.
Dr Smith	So you would be going on beyond the Upper Greenisland Road?.

Ford	Yes, you would need to go up to the escarpment of the Knockagh to create that coherence there.
Dr Smith	And you are happy enough with the southern boundary of Greenisland.
Mr Ford	Well, that certainly is the traditional boundary between Greenisland and Jordanstown. It could move slightly if necessary, but it is reasonably logical as it is currently.
Dr Smith	We will look at the various permutations there. Carnmoney on page 89/90 was the next that you had written about.
Mr Ford	Yes, the major problem with Glengormley and Carnmoney is that whilst most of the individual wards are logical and coherent insofar as they can be equalised, they are two glaring anomalies and we have not been able to identify from the data we have how you can easily deal with those. The first is Carnmoney Hill, which is effectively the Fernagh area to the east of it being the great bulk of the population. Fernagh, Rathfern, the eastern part, is clearly the basis of the ward. [DN please clarify] Yet we then have the point that other than housing along the Doagh Road to the north of Rathfern, which relates through it to some extent.
Dr Smith	This is the Doagh Road here?
Mr Ford	Yes. There is then the potential for any further growth around the Ballyduff fringes, around Carnmoney and bits and pieces around Glengormley — there are small bits of population growth around all of those which do not fit. It seems to us that the only way you do that logically is by dividing Carnmoney Hill sectorally so that the northern part relates towards Ballyduff and the western part relates to Carnmoney and Glengormley. Carnmoney Hill is then probably an illogical name for it and the ward should be named something like Fernagh or Rathfern.
Dr Smith	Something like that?
Mr Ford	Yes, I mean not quite that precisely but that broad approach. Again there are townland boundaries to follow over the hill. The problem on the southern side is to some extent again the small population that actually relates to O'Neill; it is the incoherence of the O'Neill ward, which consists of one distinct part of the southern end of Glengormley, the Umfield area with a gap across the cemetery, the industrial estate, the Valley Park to then take in part of Rathcoole Estate. Now I accept on the current boundaries and looking at 60 wards it is very difficult to see how you can avoid that and we do not have any specific detailed counter proposals. The alternative frankly, it seems to me, would result in the creation of a 61st ward within Newtownabbey by starting on the presumption, if we look to the map on page 77, that there is a large but fairly clearly defined gap which runs across Carnmoney Hill and then across the Valley Park

	<p>between the Glengormley-Carnmoney area and the Rathcoole-Whiteabbey area. There is more of a link-up between Ballyduff and Monkstown, though even there, there is a bit more of a gap than at the southern end of it. The only potential there would be a revision starting with the presumption that the southern end of that rural split is where you start creating wards. That might mean that you would be back to the point that we have made around Jordanstown and Knockagh, that there would be potentially an additional ward created there.</p> <p>If that is not done, then it seems to me that there would be a basic incoherence, especially as that is inevitably going to result in a completely incoherent DEA. If O'Neill exists in its current form in that, either a very small piece of Glengormley will be with Rathcoole, or a very small piece of Rathcoole will be with Glengormley, or there will be highly anomalous DEA covering both which has not fitted the pattern of social development or of electoral boundaries for the last generation. So I am afraid that is something on which we do not have specific suggestions, but we believe that it needs to be looked at.</p>
Dr Smith	The Secretary has just passed me a note saying that any arguments for moving from a 60-ward model in line with legislation other than addressing anomalies with the O'Neill ward —
Mr Ford	No, that is the key problem we see, but we do think that it is within the criteria for changing from 60. And to reiterate the point we made at the beginning it does seem to us that there was not the time for the Commissioner to consider options around this, the fault of which does not lie with the Commissioner. I believe he made the best of the job he could but it does mean that there are problems in trying to explore the various options when we do not have the detailed data which would enable us to look at that.
Dr Smith	And part of the difficulty is that coherence is not one of the criteria that we are permitted to use.
Mr Ford	The size, population and physical diversity of the district does depend of course on whether we are merely talking about the numbers and I would have thought there was the option for the Commissioner to look again at the question as to whether an increase of one or two would make a difference. The use of the word "population" in legislation leaves a multitude of questions open. It is whether it relates to the social factors of the population or merely a head count. We are taking the view that the social factors are of some significance.
Dr Smith	Yes, I have a great deal of sympathy with that view but my reading of the regulations is that while the Commissioner has to have regard to those things which are in themselves not thoroughly specific, he must ensure that districts have substantially the same number of local electors in each. So it seems to me that the principle of electoral equality as far as the regulations are concerned has priority over the

	principle of having regard to size, population and physical diversity, and the Commissioner has had to work within that statutory framework.
Mr Ford	Given that we are effectively looking about the potential for amendments to — if it is knocked on both ways from O’Neill — the 15 urban wards of Newtownabbey, I think sufficient latitude can be found within the 10% rule which would mean that the creation of an additional ward could be accommodated within those terms. I regret that with the lack of detailed data we had and the lack of time that we had, I have not got any worked up proposals on that, but I do think it might require consideration
Dr Smith	Within the timescale that is available to me, I will do my best to look at various scenarios which would accommodate the points that you made. Is there anything you wanted to say, Mandy, about access to information?
Ms Morrison	Just picking up on your point, Mr Ford, obviously we are going to be in a position of publishing further recommendations, so what level of detail would you require in future?
Mr Ford	The difficulty is that the last time when we went through this exercise we were in effect reconfiguring wards largely on the pattern in which they existed. Therefore it was relatively easy to look at the existing pattern to see where populations had changed and work at them again. The difficulty is this is a completely new task. Quite rightly, the Commissioner has published recommendations in accordance with his legislative requirement but the maps simply give the electorate as a whole ward and therefore it makes it very difficult, short of literally getting the electoral register and counting streets and townlands. There is no way that we have the capacity to do that and frankly we do not have the time to do that. That data is available I accept from the Ordnance Survey, the Electoral Office and to you, but not to us, which is why we found it difficult to work up as much detail as we would have hoped to.
Dr Smith	Well, on the points that you have made we will certainly look at the possible scenarios which would accommodate those using the material available to us.
Mr Ford	That basically concludes my substantive proposals.
Dr Smith	Thank you very much. As you know, I will now be preparing a report for the Commissioner within four weeks and that will take account of all the submissions both oral and written that I have had. I am satisfied that there is nobody else in the room who wishes to speak unless there is anything else you want to say yourself.
Mr Ford	No, just thank you again and your staff for accommodating me this morning.
Dr Smith	Thank you. In that case I will conclude this hearing and just say thank you to Mandy and the staff, the recording engineer and the Templeton Hotel for looking after us so

well. I will report by 9th. March and my report will be published at the same time as the Commissioner's Revised Recommendations if he decides to make any, or else with his Final Report. A copy will be sent to every participant. It will be for the Commissioner to decide whether to accept my recommendations and if he does decide to publish Revised Recommendations, written representations will be invited again. He will submit his report to the Department of the Environment by 31st. May and it will then be laid before the Assembly, assuming that it is then sitting, for approval.

I declare this hearing closed.