

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE MAIN GUILDHALL, HIGH STREET, KINGSTON UPON THAMES

ON

FRIDAY 28 OCTOBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Mr Howard Simmons, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
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Telephone Number: 0203 585 4721/22

Time noted: 9.12 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the second day of the hearing here at Kingston. I am Howard Simmons, the Lead Assistant Commissioner responsible for chairing this session, and my colleague Tim Bowden is here from the Boundary Commission, who may want to say something about the administrative arrangements.

MR BOWDEN: Thank you very much indeed, Howard, and good morning. We are scheduled to run until 5 pm today. Obviously, Howard can vary that at his discretion. We have quite a number of speakers. I think so far we have about 29 or 30 pre-booked and the first one is due to start in a couple of moments.

Just a few housekeeping rules for the day. We are not expecting any fire alarms. If one does go off, it is out of this door and down the stairs and the meeting point is outside the front of the building; toilets out of the back door, please; ladies to the right, gents down the corridor to the left. Can you keep mobile phones on silent or switched off. If you want to take a call please go out of the back of the room. We ask that during the hearing whilst we are hearing evidence if people can avoid using this entrance and exit, just because it will block the camera and people giving evidence, so if people can use the rear entry and exit whilst we are sitting. During adjournments we will be having this door open and we will be going in and out of there as well, so feel free to do that during adjournments.

Otherwise, as everyone knows, it is a public record and a public hearing and a verbatim transcript will be made. All the events of today are being filmed. I will pass back to Howard who will be chairing the hearing for today. Thank you, Howard.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank, Tim. I will call our first speaker, and it is Mr Martin Whelton. Would you like to come forward, Sir. If you could speak from the podium here and if you could introduce yourself by way of name and address at the beginning.

CLLR WHELTON: Sir, I would just correct your pronunciation; it is Cllr Martin Whelton and I am Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing on Merton Council and I am a councillor for the Pollards Hill ward, and I have served that ward since May 2002. My address is Crossways Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

Thank you, Mr Simmons, for giving me the opportunity to address this hearing here this morning. I know that many people have already attended previous hearings to talk about the situation in terms of Mitcham being divided but also about how the proposals impact upon the London Borough of Merton. I think there has been widespread concern that Merton will be divided into five seats ripping apart communities, breaking community ties and also breaking long-standing links. Indeed, the Mitcham constituency has been in existence since 1918 and the existing Mitcham and Morden constituency has been in

existence since 1974 under pretty much unchanged boundaries. The proposals that the Commission came forward with originally would tear the centre of Mitcham apart. It would break many community links. It would break many links in terms of schools, the voluntary sector but also place Mitcham churches of different denominations in different constituencies and break apart the town centres. It would mean that the town centre is divided in two. It would also split Mitcham Common in half, half of which is shared by my ward, but half of it will be in this proposed Merton and Wimbledon Central constituency.

We know that the Commission have to obviously address their statutory criteria, and I think it is important that we come forward with alternative solutions which best protect community ties within the London Borough of Merton. I believe that a Mitcham and Morden seat can be retained. Clearly we have to undergo some kind of modification to those boundaries, but I will outline how I believe that can be best addressed in terms of Merton borough. In terms of Mitcham and Morden, the wards that I think should be retained in the Mitcham and Morden seat are Cricket Green, Figges Marsh, Lavender Fields, Longthornton, Lower Morden, Pollards Hill, Ravensbury and St Helier. As was outlined in the Labour Party counter-proposal, we would also add further Morden wards to bring together the centre of Morden which has been divided. As a council we find it problematic having Morden in two constituencies so we would propose bringing in Cannon Hill, the Merton Park ward, which incidentally contains the Mitcham and Morden Labour Party office, and the West Barnes ward. There were historic links in terms of the West Barnes, Merton Park and Cannon Hill. They were historically part of the Merton and Morden Urban District Council which existed until 1965 and were also part of the parliamentary constituency that was there as well.

Clearly we would have to, as a constituency, lose wards. I think my scenario would be that the Colliers Wood and Graveney wards go into a revised Tooting constituency containing the Balham, Bedford, Furzedown, Graveney, Nightingale and Tooting wards. I believe that Colliers Wood and Graveney have actual close links with the Tooting area. I think it is regrettable that they are lost from a Mitcham constituency because they have historic links with the Mitcham area, but we do understand that they have to change and believe that that seat would best protect community ties in that area.

In terms of the Commission proposal proposing the Mitcham and Streatham seat, I have to say we have very tenuous links with the Streatham area. Merton shares much more links with Wandsworth in terms of a London Assembly seat. We have relatively little in common. The boundary between Streatham and Mitcham is relatively poor. I think that the Boundary Commission should have a Streatham and West Norwood constituency but should not actually include Mitcham wards.

In terms of the other half of the borough, the Wimbledon area, I think it is important that the Wimbledon constituency is kept together. I was obviously disturbed in terms of the Village ward which contains Wimbledon Tennis, an integral part of Merton borough but also Wimbledon Park, which will be the proposed home of the new AFC Wimbledon

stadium. So that is why I think it is important that Abbey, Dundonald, Trinity, Hillside, Raynes Park, Village and Wimbledon Park are kept as one, as that protects the core area, the core community of Wimbledon, which again has been a long-standing constituency in existence since 1945, and before that, and these wards have historically always been together in that time period.

In terms of Wandsworth, I would take in the Roehampton and Putney Heath wards, the West Hill ward and the West Putney ward. There would be a division of Putney but the whole centre of Putney would be kept together.

In terms of South London, obviously detailed proposals will come forward and they will be submitted to the Commission by the deadline date. We would urge the Commission to carefully look at it in terms of the numbers. I believe that the numbers for the Lambeth, Wandsworth and Merton combined area would give you a quota of 6.94 and should be composed of seven constituencies. Merton should not cross the boundary with Sutton but the Wandsworth boundary should cross with Lambeth. I think it would be best if it were crossed in the north of the area as a whole. Croydon and Sutton has a quota of 4.95. That can again create five seats. That has been a London Assembly area. Bromley can form three seats and Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley combined have 9.09 which would create 9 constituencies. I think it is important that the Commission do recognise borough boundaries, which I am afraid the original proposal certainly paid little regard to, especially in terms of the Streatham and Mitcham seat which actually comprises three boroughs in London. Indeed, I think this was one of the only constituencies, apart from the City of London, where this has actually happened, if I am not mistaken. I think it is important that the Commission look again carefully at the proposal, take in much of the evidence and representations that have been made from the people of Mitcham who do want to keep Mitcham together, but also recognise as well keeping communities together, keeping areas together, is incredibly important. Areas such as Streatham, Tooting, Wimbledon and Mitcham should be kept in one constituency. That is how from a Merton perspective we would also see it divided by three constituencies, with 18 out of the 20 wards in Merton being retained within a predominantly Merton borough constituency, so therefore I ask that the Commission reconsider their proposals. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is most helpful. Are there any matters for clarification?

LORD HAYWARD: Cllr, thank you for your very clear exposition. Just clarification on two points. One you made the comments - and I was not clear whether you were speaking on behalf of Merton Council, Merton Labour Party or ---

CLLR WHELTON: I am speaking obviously in a personal capacity but as the Cabinet Member who has responsibilities for regeneration, environment and transport and as a Pollards Hill councillor as well.

LORD HAYWARD: You are not intending to put a resolution as yet?

CLLR WHELTON: This is not from the Labour Party. This is more a personal viewpoint in terms of the proposals.

LORD HAYWARD: Could you possibly go slowly through the list of the wards that are making up effectively what you refer to as the Mitcham and Wimbledon constituencies so that we can be absolutely clear that we have got them correct. Thank you very much.

CLLR WHELTON: In terms of the existing Mitcham and Morden constituency we would lose the Graveney and Colliers Wood ward to Tooting but gain the West Barnes, Cannon Hill and Merton Park wards into a revised Mitcham and Morden constituency.

LORD HAYWARD: And the Wimbledon seat?

CLLR WHELTON: The Wimbledon seat would lose those three aforementioned wards, Cannon Hill, Merton Park and West Barnes, but gain the Roehampton and Putney Heath ward, West Hill and West Putney.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. That is most helpful. Thank you. I would now call our next speaker, please; Chuka Umunna. Good morning. Would you speak from the podium and introduce yourself by your name and address please.

MR UMUNNA: (MP for Streatham) Good morning. I am Chuka Umunna. I am the Labour Member of Parliament for Streatham. Please excuse me; this is the first time I have appeared in front of a Boundary Commission hearing so I am very much a newbie to this, but a veteran, my predecessor, will be speaking after me and will probably give somewhat more detail than I am going to give this morning. I thought I would just give some general thoughts.

Just to be clear, following on from the last exchange, I am appearing and speaking as the Member of Parliament for the communities that I represent, though it is fair to say that my views are shared broadly by Streatham Labour Party. I think you will also be hearing from Lambeth Council which also, you will see some of the things that I say, I understand, reflected in the comments that they will make, and my predecessor is going to be speaking be after me and I pretty much agree with everything that he says, but that is not unusual.

Just a bit of information on myself. I was elected as the Member of Parliament for Streatham in 2010. Currently, the Streatham constituency is made up of eight wards. The Streatham part, which is roughly 50% of the constituency, is made up of St Leonard's, Streatham Wells, Streatham Hill and Streatham South wards - all Lambeth wards - and

then the north of the constituency is made up of four other wards: Brixton Hill, Tulse Hill, Clapham, Clapham Common and Thornton. Again all four of those wards are in Lambeth. I am a local boy. I believe I am the only Member of Parliament of Streatham since the seat was created in 1918 to have actually gone to school and grown up in the constituency. I have actually lived in four of the wards that make up the Streatham constituency at present. That is just a bit of information. I was obviously re-elected in 2015 and I will not make great play of fact, but I did stay with an increased majority. That is just a bit about me.

The second thing I am bound to say - this is a public hearing and I am on the record – is that obviously, and this is both personal and from the point of view of the Labour Party, we objected to the current process that you are operating under because it does not take account of the fact, if I put it in practical terms, that if somebody walks into my surgery I do not eject them if they are not on the register. A borough such as Lambeth, which has a younger than usual demographic - we are one of the youngest local authority areas by demographic in the country - is also more ethnically diverse than many other local authority areas. Of course, I talk about the ethnic and the age demographics there, which are disproportionately likely to be unregistered. Of course this process does not take account of it. It also does not take account of the additional people who joined the register to take part in the recent EU referendum that we had on 23 June 2016. However, I accept and I know that that is of course not your fault and you are having to operate within the restrictions that have been set for you by the current Government.

With that in mind, these are my thoughts on what you are proposing. Just for the sake of clarity and for the record and for the video camera over there, you are proposing to create a new Streatham and Mitcham constituency. which is the part of your proposals for South West London that are most relevant and most linked, if you like, to the current constituency, which is to be made up of four Streatham wards - and I mean four existing Streatham constituency wards - which also happen to be the four wards of the existing Streatham constituency that are Streatham. That is St Leonard's, Streatham Wells, Streatham South and Streatham Hill, as I referred to earlier. You are also proposing to add to that Norbury from Croydon North, Knight's Hill from Dulwich and West Norwood and three wards from the existing Mitcham and Morden constituency. Given the restrictions of the proposals that you have put forward, these are proposals that I can live with. I accept that given the strictures you are operating under it is quite unlikely that you are going to have many seats which sit wholly within one borough. It would be preferable if you were able to reduce the number of boroughs covered by the new Streatham and Mitcham seat. There were three to be covered, but I understand how you have reached the point you have arrived at. I am particularly grateful that you as a Commission appear to be abiding by the principle that you established following the second round of proposals you put forward when we last did this in the last Parliament and that is the principle that the four Streatham wards, which is essentially Streatham town centre, be kept together in one constituency. I am grateful and the community as a whole in the Streatham part of the constituency which, as I said, is about half of the existing Streatham constituency,

the last time we went through this process was very strongly of the view - and I say this across the parties and different community groups, that the Streatham part of the Streatham constituency as it is now should be kept together in whatever new constituency it enters into. I just want to acknowledge that for the record and praise the Commission for keeping to that and exercising some consistency.

There is some logic in adding the five other wards that you have proposed adding. Norbury feels physically like a continuation of the Streatham Common part of Streatham, so I can understand the reasons you have added that ward in. Knight's Hill - again, if you look at the part of Streatham that that is adjoined to, there is some strong relationship between Knight's Hill and the Streatham wards that it would be attached to. I think where I am perhaps a little bit more circumspect is the addition of the three wards that are currently part of Mitcham and Morden, because I believe the community links and the affinity between the Mitcham part of the new constituency you propose attaching to the Streatham part is fairly limited in some respects. For example, the transport connections are not necessarily that strong. If you were to ask me what would be my preferred formulation - and, as I said, I can live with and I accept what you have proposed given the strictures in your initial proposals here - I think again my advice and my preference would be to keep the Streatham four, as it were, together, but I think it would be better and more logical to put in with those four Streatham wards more of the wards in the south of Lambeth than you have at the moment. One obvious one would be Thornton ward which is currently in the Streatham parliamentary constituency.

My final point here really is to just note that obviously you are far further forward this time round with this first set of proposals than you were when we last went through this process, not least because I think there is more consensus in what has been proposed. I have been clear I could live with the proposals that you have put forward given the restrictions that you are operating within. I note that the Conservative Party have accepted all of the proposals for South West London as well. Equally, in the preferred and perhaps alternative formulation I have proposed, where you do not include so much of the part of the existing Mitcham constituency in the new Streatham and Mitcham seat but, as an alternative, include more of South Lambeth, I note that is fairly consistent with what the Liberal Democrats have put forward in their proposals for our area. So in that sense there is perhaps more agreement at this stage in the process than there was the last time round at this stage in the process. Those are all the comments I wish to make at this point and I am happy to take any questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is very helpful and very clear. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed.

MR UMUNNA: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The next speaker I think is Keith Hill. Come

forward, Sir. If you could start by your name and address, please.

MR HILL: My name is Keith Hill and I have live at 110 Wavertree Road, London SW2 3ST. Mr Simmons, I was Chuka's predecessor as the Labour Member of Parliament for Streatham from 1992 to 2010 and therefore have a long-standing interest in the Streatham constituency. My own observations on the review and the Boundary Commission's initial proposals are broadly in line with those outlined by Chuka. Let me begin by saying that like Chuka I regret the disappearance of the former Streatham constituency to all of whose wards and residents I naturally became very detached. However, I appreciate the demanding requirements under which the Boundary Commission is operating and recognise that, inevitably, many of the ensuing proposals will be challenging for many people, including myself, to adapt to. Nevertheless, and perhaps unexpectedly, I want immediately to join Chuka in expressing my thanks to the Boundary Commission. When I appeared on the last occasion before a Boundary Commission public hearing almost exactly five years ago, on 31 October 2011, it was to protest vehemently at the proposed dismemberment of Streatham. Under the initial proposals published in the autumn of 2011 it was proposed to slice Streatham into three constituencies so that, ludicrously, Streatham High Road would be represented by three different Members of Parliament. Thankfully that scheme was overturned in the revised proposals and Streatham was reunited and Streatham remains united under the present proposals. The four wards of Streatham, Streatham Hill, Streatham Wells, Streatham South and St Leonard's remain together in the Boundary Commission proposals.

Streatham, Mr Simmons, has a strong local identity, as Chuka and I know very well. As he said, Chuka was born and brought up there. I have lived there since 1980. We are grateful that this strong identity has been recognised by the Boundary Commission. I trust that the Boundary Commission will stick to that recognition in any future considerations. Mr Simmons, I want to say a few words about the other aspects of the Boundary Commission initial proposals very shortly, but let me preface those remarks by setting out briefly what I would have liked the Boundary Commission also to do. In my view, the ideal way of expanding the Streatham constituency would be to create a South Lambeth seat stretching from Thornton ward in the west via Streatham Hill ward to Thurlow Park ward in the east and embrace into the south both Gipsy Hill and Knight's Hill wards, as well as the other three Streatham wards.

This would be a highly homogenous constituency, with very similar demographics, good transport links, a nice shape, all within one local authority, Lambeth, and at about 70,000 electors, not far off the desired numbers. On a bipartisan note I observe that the Liberal Democrat Party's counter-proposal for a Streatham and Brixton South borough constituency is very similar to this although, oddly, omitting Knight's Hill and Gypsy Hill wards, which are both integral elements of the south of the borough of Lambeth.

However, Mr Simmons, we are where we are, and I have also to consider the concrete proposals before us in the shape of the Boundary Commission's initial proposals for a

Streatham and Mitcham constituency, which on a further bipartisan note, I observe is supported by the Conservative Party. My own view is that the initial proposals can be supported.

The obvious question mark over these proposals is that the new constituency will cross three borough boundary. Crossing boundaries is a fairly new development in London, although by no means unprecedented. It has always been fairly common for rural constituencies to cross two or more local authority boundaries. It seems likely that an increasing number of urban seats will do so under the present boundary review. Instinctively, one says that this will create complications, but complications for whom? The boroughs will continue to serve their residents and will continue to respond to the representations of the Member of Parliament. Does it create complications for the MP? It does mean two or three sets of addresses to write to, but that is only a marginal problem. A serious objection would be if there were major incompatibilities, contradictions or even oppositions between and within the areas concerned, which it would be difficult for the MP to reconcile in terms of his or her responsibility to represent the interests of every constituent fairly and equally.

However, in these areas there are no such incompatibilities, contradictions or oppositions. If one looks at the demographics of the new wards, Knight's Hill in Lambeth, Norbury in Croydon and Longthornton, Figges Marsh and Pollard's Hill in Mitcham, and compares them with the Streatham wards, what is noticeable is the considerable similarity both in terms of housing and of ethnicity. The basic constituency casework of the London inner suburban Member of Parliament is housing and issues of immigration, asylum and nationality. Under the new proposed constituency these will continue to be the main casework concerns of the MP for Streatham and Mitcham. The inclusion of Knight's Hill ward in the new constituency is very easy. I live in Streatham Hill ward and often walk down to shop in Norwood Road, which is the spine of Knight's Hill ward. The connection with Streatham is as simple as that. The new constituency would be bordered in the north by the South Circular, which is a natural boundary between Streatham and Brixton. The A23 becomes the spine of the new constituency with Streatham High Road becoming London Road in Norbury. South Streatham residents use Norbury station for their commute to work. There is a significant social and economic overlap between Streatham and Norbury. In addition, the similarities in housing and ethnicity contribute to a reasonably close social affinity between the south of Streatham, especially Streatham Vale, and the Figges Marsh, Pollards Hill and, especially, Longthornton wards of Mitcham. If the South Circular constitutes a natural boundary in the north of the constituency, it is arguable that Mitcham Common constitutes a clear and natural boundary in the south of the proposed constituency.

Finally, let it be said that rather unusually in the current set of proposals, the proposed shape of the Streatham and Mitcham borough constituency is actually quite a nice compact rectangle. If needs be, Mr Simmons, I think these proposals could work.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed, most helpful. Any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much.

Robert Atkinson: If you would like to speak from the podium and introduce yourself by way of name and address, please.

MR ATKINSON: Thank you very much. My name is Robert Atkinson. My address is 10 Gunter Grove, London SW10. I am speaking as a long-term resident of Kensington and Chelsea. I have lived in the area for more than 40 years. I have lived in various addresses in Chelsea and Knightsbridge. I now live in West Chelsea. I have been a councillor for North Kensington for more than 25 years. I previously worked in South Kensington for 23 years and for the last eight years I have worked in Westminster North. I am giving you this amount of detail to illustrate that I think I do know the area quite well.

The first point I want to make is that I accept that the new rules of the Boundary Commission are that the central area of London has to go down from five seats to four seats. I also think the Boundary Commission are required to keep the changes to constituencies to the minimum and one of my principal objections to the proposed single Kensington and Chelsea seat is the knock-on effects that it has outwards right across central London. It has a destructive ripple effect, to my mind

I would say the chief advantage of the proposals put forward by the Labour Party is that whilst there are four constituencies for the Central London area, they are self-contained and have no knock-on effect for any other seat. I would also like to say that from my experience Kensington is not a single community and I think parliamentary boundaries should reflect communities. I would look back to the previous seat of Regent's Park and Kensington North which you will be aware was very successful for a substantial period. North Kensington has very little in common with the rest of the royal borough and is in many respects the same as neighbouring Westminster North and Paddington. For example, I would say that the housing tenure is very different. In North Kensington and Westminster North, as I know from my MP's casework, the chief form of housing tenure is social housing and a lot of private rental housing. It certainly has very little in common with the enormously expensive properties of Central Kensington and Chelsea. I would also ask you to look at the health arrangements which work east-west not north-south. The residents of Kensington North look in particular to St Mary's Hospital in Paddington and the local CCG includes part of Westminster North in its area. I would point out the differences between North Kensington and South Kensington; enormous differences in income, profession and race.

There are many more ethnic minorities in North Kensington than there are in Central Kensington and Chelsea and we in North Kensington and Westminster North very much like and support the Carnival whereas the rest of the borough is largely disinterested, and, in many cases, hostile. The joint sponsorship of the Carnival is very indicative of the similarities between North Kensington and Westminster North.

Perhaps the best example of how different the north of Kensington and Chelsea is from the south is to look at the morbidity figures. I think that is what you call it. In Hans Town and Royal Hospital wards in the south, men live on average 15 years longer than they do, in admittedly the same borough, in Golborne or Dalgarno, the area I represent. I would say that shows very much the differences between the two areas. I would also ask you to look at the public transport links, which again work east-west rather than north-south. I would also say - a related but separate point - that Hans Town and Knightsbridge and the Sloane Avenue area have very little in common with the residential areas of Chelsea and Central Kensington. Hans Town and Sloane Avenue, as we know, are glitzy central London shopping and entertainment areas, and I think have a lot more in common with Westminster than they do with residential Kensington and Chelsea.

In summary, I would urge you bring back the former Regent's Park and Kensington North seat which worked well. I would urge that Knightsbridge and Sloane Avenue join their natural area in Westminster South and that would then leave Chelsea and Fulham to continue together in their successful partnership as residential areas. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. That is very helpful and very clear. Any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed. Paul Scully, if you would come forward, Sir.

MR SCULLY: (MP for Sutton and Cheam) The proposal proposed by the Boundary Commission moves two wards into Sutton and Cheam and one away to neighbouring Carshalton and Wallington. I would propose an alternative which I believe is a better geographical fit. Between the two Sutton seats I would simply swap St Helier, Merton and Belmont, so bringing St Helier from the borough of Merton into Carshalton and Wallington and retaining Belmont in Sutton. That leaves Sutton and Cheam with all its existing wards and adds Lower Morden from Merton and Carshalton and Wallington, with all of its wards, and adds St Helier Merton.

If you look at the reasons for this, if you look at St Helier first, the Merton borough side of St Helier - basically I believe the clue is in the name. Uniting the two St Helier wards, the one in Sutton and the one in Merton, brings together the north-west corner of the St Helier estate. St Helier estate as an area is defined by the hospital and the railway station. My counter-proposal brings these important community assets together in a single constituency. The Labour Party proposal suggests that St Helier Merton should go into the proposed Wimbledon and Morden seat and with St Helier Sutton to move to Sutton and Cheam, and Wandle Valley, which contains the eastern part of the St Helier estate, to be kept in Carshalton and Wallington. What that does in my mind is it splits up the St Helier estate into three parliamentary constituencies rather than two as at present adding a little bit of extra confusion and dividing those communities a little further.

Belmont to the south of Sutton and Cheam only has a small proportion where people

might self identify as Belmont residents. The roads to the west of York Road, Holland Avenue and Avenue Road in Belmont ward would consider themselves to be living in Cheam. Those living north of Chiltern Road would think that they lived in Sutton. Only a small notch on the map sitting at the south east-part of the ward might feel a connection to Carshalton Beeches. There are only three small roads here: Fairview, Sunnymede Avenue and Vincent Avenue. Therefore geographically, the clear majority of residents would consider themselves as part of Sutton rather than Carshalton. The transport links in this area run north to south, linking Belmont ward and Sutton town centre rather than east and west going to Carshalton. The borough, local businesses and I have all been campaigning to get funding from the Mayor of London to fund a tram to connect Sutton through to the north again. This is going to run north and south. The biggest residents' association in the borough is the Belmont and South Cheam Residents' Association, who I believe have put in a written submission. They have 2,500 households as members. The reason that this has been successfully expanded in recent years from its origins in South Cheam is because of the shared issues and largely homogenous nature of the housing in that area. That is echoed by the structure of the council's local committees as well which pick up more localised issues. The wards of Sutton South, Belmont and Cheam are all represented by a single committee bringing them closer together.

My proposed alteration keeps both Sutton and Cheam and Carshalton and Wallington within the acceptable margin of electors.

I would like to briefly touch on Carshalton and Wallington as well. I have been a resident in Carshalton for 27 years and have been politically active in that area for 19 years, which gives me a good insight into the communities across Carshalton and Wallington as well. I do not believe it is wise to push Beddington North ward into Croydon, as has been suggested by the Labour Party. The houses in that ward have a CR0 postcode, but that is a matter of considerable concern to residents who have fought for redesignation for a Sutton postcode. They are proud to be on the Sutton side of the boundary. They wanted a redesignation for a number of reasons; because of duplication of street names, missed deliveries, increased insurance costs and a strong desire to remain very separate from Croydon. Again as I say, to me, as the previous speaker mentioned, it is all about keeping communities together and reflecting their desires. There are three roads in Beddington North that are only accessible through Croydon wards: Saffron Close, Rosemary Close and Cinnamon Close. That is a hangover from the construction of the tram in Croydon which bisected a road called Therapia Lane and that cut off those roads from the rest of the borough. If you look at a map, so if you are doing a desk-top exercise and looking at a map, you will see four routes apparently connecting Beddington North to Croydon, but only one of these is actually a public road connecting the two wards in question: Coomber Way. The main London Road at the south of the ward, where the majority of residential dwellings lie, leads into Waddon ward. The third in the middle of an industrial estate you cannot actually get through; it is an Asda car park. The fourth - Beddington Cross - is a no-through road in the heart of the industrial estate, and that industrial estate and the Downs to the north to my mind provide a natural and relatively inaccessible break

between Croydon and Sutton, which would provide a significant barrier should Beddington North and Broad Green be combined into the Croydon North seat. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. That is again helpful. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed. Our next scheduled speaker is Seema Malhotra. Are you ready to come forward? Thank you very much. Welcome and the usual drill: name and address please to begin. Thank you.

MS MALHOTRA: (MP for Feltham and Heston) Seema Malhotra, House of Commons, London. As the Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston since 2001, it is my local area that I wish to speak to today and to also start by saying I grew up in Osterley and in Feltham, attended school in Heston and recognise very much the strength of local bonds and the way people live their lives, work and travel. Other people will be speaking at length about different proposals and the parties' proposals overall, so I do not propose to go in great detail into the Labour Party's representations for Hounslow as a whole, but I do want to speak to those that are specific to me.

The Boundary Commission's initial proposals, as you will know Mr Simmons, will create the new Feltham and Hounslow constituency, which would include six of my current wards and four from Brentford and Isleworth. There would also be a proposed additional Southall and Heston constituency which would retain four wards from the existing Ealing Southall constituency, add four Hounslow borough wards from the current Feltham and Heston constituency and the Ealing borough Walpole ward and the existing Ealing Central and Acton from the Ealing Central and Acton constituency.

I want to speak in support of the relevant aspects of the Labour Party's counter-proposal for North and West London and to contribute three very brief points. The first is that one of the Boundary Commission's stated criteria that it may take into account is retaining maximum continuity with the existing seat. The Labour Party's counter-proposal very much fulfils this criteria and we propose keeping 90% of the electorate moving to the successor constituency, keeping strong existing links. In my view this minimises the dislocation to my constituents and is a considerably higher proportion than under the Commission's proposed Feltham and Hounslow seat where only 60% of the previous constituents would move into the new successor seat.

Secondly, the Labour Party's proposal keeps two organic communities of Feltham and Heston together, where very often parents will live in one part and send their children to school in another and so some continuity around how people are living their lives is actually very helpful as a Member of Parliament representing those constituents. In my view, keeping those two communities together in a similar way to the existing seat minimises that disruption and I believe also adds a greater efficiency of representation. It will preserve the existing seat on those existing boundaries as far as possible and in doing so have a distinct advantage of retaining the constituency name. I do believe that

it is important, where it is possible to achieve, to allow for reassurance and continuity for the local community in a very diverse area, where I have a lot of representation; I have a lot of casework. I think in a time of uncertainty for people, continuity, where it is possible, provides important reassurance in terms of strengthening and keeping that relationship with constituents. I also understand the representations made by the Member of Parliament for Ealing Southall on the benefits of keeping Southall together for similar reasons. Knowing the area and understanding again the dynamics there, I can fully appreciate that argument.

Thirdly, in my view of local community links and dynamics, I believe that keeping Heston with its history and its place in Hounslow life, represented by a Hounslow-facing MP with that strong representation, Hounslow and Heston being where I grew up and went to school, it is much more of a Hounslow-facing area in terms of the way people think, feel and the day-to-day life of constituents and, historically, does have more in common with Hounslow than with Ealing.

My preference also - this is my third and final point - would be to have no cross-borough boundaries. That can be seen as just a way in which you might write a letter in terms of making representations to a different borough, but the life of an MP is much more than that, and the relationships we need to build with our local authorities to understand the strategy and the way in which we play a role as parliamentarians with local boroughs is an important part and a reality of our lives. My view about cross-borough seats is that it is not just about the constituency; it is about how we play our part in the strategy of the area, and being in touch with councillors, with senior management at the council, with officers at the council. Those relationships are important and the reality of the time we have as MPs for our parliamentary life is Monday to Thursday rather dictated by Westminster, is very limited on a Friday, and indeed we work seven days. So the complexity of having to keep relationships with two boroughs and the issues that two boroughs face - budget issues, planning issues, development and strategy issues, trade, public transport, housing, et cetera - is a complexity and I have concerns about our ability to be stretched across that in that way.

My view however is if it were to be a necessity, there are good arguments that the Party has suggested for connecting Feltham with one ward, the closest to my constituency from Hillingdon borough. It would not be my preference in any way, but there are strong economic and employment links with that ward, particularly with 50% of my working age constituents or working population being directly or indirectly dependent on Heathrow for their employment.

Mr Simmons, that concludes the remarks that I wanted to make and the contribution today and I am happy to address any questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is very helpful and very clear. Are there any matters for clarification? No. Will you be submitting a

written proposal?

MS MALHOTRA: I am very happy to.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you would, that would be most helpful. Thank you very much indeed. We have scheduled speakers for the rest of the morning but I am going to adjourn for 20 minutes until the next scheduled speaker time. Thank you very much.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 11.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we can reconvene and our next scheduled speaker is here. It is Jane Ellison. Hello and welcome. Would you like to speak from the podium here? If you could just start by introducing yourself by way of name and address, please.

MS ELLISON: (MP for Battersea) My name is Jane Ellison. I am the Member of Parliament for Battersea, so my work address is the House of Commons, and I live in the constituency.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to come and speak. I think the first thing I would like to say, although not directly germane to what you are looking at today, is we very rarely get the chance to say as a Member of Parliament that this is a wonderful constituency to represent and I feel truly honoured to represent it. It a vibrant, diverse and really warm community, with rich, poor and everything in between, but people who really care about each other and look after each other. We rarely get the chance to say that as MPs so I am just going to put that on the record. I have represented it since 2010.

I very much support the Boundary Commission's proposal to keep the current Battersea constituency and community together. As a distinct entity, Battersea has existed in one form or another for almost 1,000 years. In fact, the Battersea borough and parish boundaries can be mapped very closely to today's constituency from a long time ago. Battersea was an independent parish from around 1100 to 1855. Subsequently, from 1900 to 1965, Battersea Borough Council was independent and during that time all sorts of things of a quite historic nature happened within the constituency, including the election of the country's first black mayor, John Archer at Battersea Town Hall, now Battersea Arts Centre, in 1913.

There is a very strong community spirit and identity and that is typified by the many civil society organisations that associate very strongly with Battersea. I would say there are a number of community icons that everyone within the existing constituency relates to. Some of them are nationally and internationally famous - Battersea Power Station (not a

day goes by without someone somewhere in the world posting a photograph of it); Battersea Cats and Dogs Home, Battersea Park, Battersea Arts Centre, far more than just a local arts centre, a regional and national arts centre; as I said previously, Battersea's old Town Hall; Clapham Junction railway station (thanks to the Victorians, rather confusingly called Clapham Junction but right into the heart of Battersea and very much seen as such); and Clapham Common, again one of the many fantastic green spaces we have in South West London, perhaps the most famous. All points within the current constituency relate in some way to one of these iconic locations.

Among the civic societies that closely identify, the Battersea Society is the most prominent of my local civic societies, founded in 1970, and, interestingly, they identify as coterminous with the current parliamentary seat. In fact, just recently, a couple of weeks ago, I received a membership survey from them, as they regularly undertake, asking their members what they want the society to do and they say, "Which ward of Battersea do you live in?" and they list the existing seven wards of the constituency as their area of operation.

Coming right up to date, there is the Love Battersea campaign, which is based around reclaiming the SW11 postcode and trying to make sure things do not get called Clapham instead if they are right in the heart of Battersea. That SW11 postcode is also quite important because all of the current wards of Battersea have some of the SW11 postcode in them, and that is extending east. The Royal Mail is proposing that go further east into Queenstown ward. As I say, there are some really iconic both national and international aspects of the current constituency that really give it that sense of togetherness and community.

However, I recognise that the Boundary Commission needs to equalise the electors in the seat and therefore the constituency must take in an additional ward. The Commission has obviously proposed Thornton ward, currently in the Streatham seat, which shares a border with Balham ward at the far south-eastern edge of the constituency. As I think you have heard this morning, Thornton ward, I would say, looks more naturally to the south, to Streatham, so in my view a better fit, both geographically and given existing links, would be to take in Clapham Common ward instead. The majority of Clapham Common itself is split between four wards. Five wards touch it and three of them are in the existing Battersea seat. Taking in Clapham Common ward would add a fourth, leaving a relatively small part of the Common touched on by the remaining ward. There are great shared links of history in which the Common is the key factor. If you go back to the time of the abolitionists, the Clapham Sect, who worshipped out of the church in the middle of Clapham Common, had very strong links with Battersea. They operated for some years out of their unofficial headquarters in Canford Road SW11 in the Northcote ward of the current seat. William Wilberforce actually lived at that location for four years. It now has a plaque. There are many other links between the Clapham Sect and Battersea.

Areas associated with the Common such as policing, community use and maintenance

are very much shared concerns for residents on all sides of the Common. Another reason that bringing Clapham Common into the Battersea seat would make sense. There are shared transport links. A huge number of people from Clapham Common ward use Clapham South tube station. I know from my own activities during the referendum campaign when many people self-identified as coming from that part of the local area, that that is the case. We have the Friends of Clapham Common, another fantastic local amenity society, which has members and officers drawn from all sides of the Common, including from the current Battersea seat, and other wards adjoining the Common. I think there is a really good argument for including that ward in the new seat.

I also want to actively support the Boundary Commission's proposal to keep Fairfield ward as part of the Battersea constituency. There are strong historical precedents for this. As I mentioned, the original Battersea borough and parish boundaries take in significant parts of the current Fairfield ward and the ward, as the Boundary Commission is well aware, comes within just a few hundred yards of Clapham Junction railway station at the junction of Plough Road and St John's Hill. In my experience, most Fairfield ward residents look to Wandsworth town and Clapham Junction. Clapham Junction is the heart of Battersea for transport, amenities and shopping rather than west to Putney. I accept there are some who do not but the majority I think do. Fairfield ward has strong transport, community and economic links to the neighbouring Battersea wards of St Mary's Park, Latchmere and Northcote. All the new developments in Fairfield ward point to the links to Clapham Junction station for new arrivals into the constituency, and the new entrance at Brighton Yard, the most recently opened entrance at Clapham junction - I know again from standing there selling poppies every year that the vast majority of people using that entrance are coming from Fairfield ward. Street fairs like St John's Hill street fair is very much a Battersea event in SW11 and of course Fairfield ward also has in common its riparian nature linking through some of the other wards, as I have just mentioned St Mary's Park for example, right along the river to Queenstown.

In conclusion, I really want to support the Boundary Commission's proposal to retain the current Battersea constituency with an additional ward. I would suggest that the Clapham Common ward would be a more natural choice for this addition rather than Thornton ward and I welcome and support the Boundary Commission's proposal to retain Fairfield ward and Balham ward in the Battersea constituency for all the reasons I have given, the ties of economics, community and history, which are very strong indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is really helpful. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you. Is it possible to receive a written copy of your statement?

MS ELLISON: Yes, I am very happy to. I have a few additional pages.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Perhaps you could email it through.

MS ELLISON: Of course; I am happy to do that. I did not treat you to the story of Canon John Erskine Clarke, who is basically connected to just about every major building and church in the current constituency, so I will add that into my written submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That will be very interesting, yes.

MS ELLISON: He was a great man and he deserves to be recorded in your deliberations.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I was going to thank you for your submission which was not only very informative but also very warm as well in terms of your sense of community and the constituency.

MS ELLISON: I am very privileged to represent the seat.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Iain Simpson. Thank you for being patient. If you would introduce yourself by way of name and address, please.

MR IAIN SIMPSON: My name is Iain Simpson. I am the Chairman of the Wimbledon Park Residents' Association and I live in at 56 Home Park Road, Wimbledon Park. That is SW19, which is an important part of our considerations this morning. Thank you, Chairman, for allowing me to speak and for taking the time to chair this meeting.

Just by way of credentials, I would like say that I have been a resident of Wimbledon Park for 32 years. I have been Chairman of the residents' association for about 12 years. I am a past Chairman of the Wimbledon Society, which is the local civic amenity society, which was established in 1903, and which runs a local history museum which was established in 1916. That is done purely by voluntary effort.

In Wimbledon Park we have a very strong sense of identity and I want to talk about both the Village ward and Wimbledon Park this morning because we are basically joined at the hip. Most people in Wimbledon Park look to the village and the town centre as their natural gravitation point for shopping, entertainment and also travel. In Wimbledon Park we are fortunate to have a tube station on the District line which is one stop from Wimbledon town and which goes through into the City, so we have a lot of commuters going in that direction.

We also have a very famous park - Wimbledon Park - which is a grade II* listed park. It is a Capability Brown-designed park and this year we celebrated the 300th anniversary of Capability Brown. The residents' association in some form or other has been in Wimbledon Park since about 1906 and we have a very strong sense of community. As opposed to a lot of small residents' associations which tend to gather because of planning issues, we engage in a broad spectrum of local activities. We are pleased to have a new community centre and cafe in Wimbledon Park which was entirely due to the efforts of the residents' association over a period of years negotiating with Merton Council, which

was no mean feat.

I think what I would like say in terms of the proposals is we do not like the proposals and consider it a regular carve-up of the area without any sense of identification of the community that exists. We would end up with the London Borough of Merton being represented by five MPs, which seems totally nonsensical.

As I said, Wimbledon Park and Village wards are joined at the hip and we have many interests in common. The Common is one thing which we are very proud of and the proposal to basically alienate Wimbledon from the Common is slightly incredible. It is called Wimbledon and Putney Common.

The current constituency is remarkably cohesive in terms of where residents live and particularly shopping, leisure and transport. Within the constituency are a number of different residential areas and commercial and transport hubs they look to. The current Wimbledon constituency contains the vast majority of the SW19 postcode. It is probably the most famous postcode in the world and the brand of Wimbledon itself is - with apologies to SW11 - well-known throughout the world, and it is a great pleasure to meet people. Whenever I am travelling abroad, if people ask me where I live and I say Wimbledon, they know exactly where that is. Obviously it is very famous for tennis and that is an important part of the brand that we have in Wimbledon Park because we are closely associated with the tennis fortnight and also the Village ward. Residents look towards the town and the village. That is their main emphasis, for shopping and transport in particular and, from our point of view, it is important for us to have an MP who represents our interests, including the town, because of Crossrail 2, which over the next few years is going to be a huge focus of attention. We are very pleased with the work that our current MP is doing on that and to split that up as proposed would be, in our view, extremely damaging.

In terms of alternatives, we recognise the proposals of the Boundary Commission try to even out the constituencies. Our current Wimbledon constituency is some 63,505 electors. The criteria established by the Boundary Commission are not to try and break any local ties by changing the constituency boundaries; to respect geographical considerations in size, shape and accessibility, and also have regard to local government boundaries.

As far as I know, the local government boundaries are not being changed nor are the ward boundaries. It is simply a question of achieving the level of electorate, which is somewhere between I think 71,000 and 78,000 thousand. We would propose that under the current situation we include all the existing wards of Wimbledon constituency and then consider for addition to that several other wards, in particular Lower Morden, Colliers Wood and St Helier. Of those we would think that Lower Morden appears to be the optimum addition, with either Colliers Wood or St Helier being the second choice. If we add those up together that gives us an electorate of about 76,507, which is well within the

range proposed. Other possible additional wards in adjoining boroughs could be considered, such as Roehampton and West Hill, but we have not considered those options any further than that.

We would also like to emphasise that originally when the London Borough of Merton was established, it was basically the interests of Mitcham and Wimbledon that were brought together. We think Mitcham has and should retain its own strong identity and therefore if we accept the proposals for the Wimbledon constituency we would have eight remaining Merton wards, with 57,000 electors and three additional wards to be added to Mitcham.

In conclusion, I would just say that there is a clear sense of community and identity for both Wimbledon and for Mitcham. Combining parts of them in a single entity as currently proposed by the Boundary Commission, and the splitting of wards that are clearly part of Wimbledon or part of Mitcham, fails to recognise the local sense of community. The current proposals for the London Borough of Merton are considered, in our view, to be rather crude and unacceptable and do not meet the Boundary Commission's own criteria. Thank you, Chairman.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Is your organisation likely to submit a written piece of evidence?

MR IAIN SIMPSON: I can do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think that would be most helpful. We have obviously recorded you today and that is very valuable but I think if the Association were to write in as well that would be very good indeed. Thank you very much.

Mr Julian Tanner, would you like to come forward, Sir. Just introduce yourself by name and address, please.

MR TANNER: My name is Julian Tanner. I am the Chair of the Brentford and Isleworth Conservative Association. My home address is 54 Grove Park Gardens W4 and I am very much a very long-term Chiswick resident/Chiswick supporter, and have been in west London for the past 30 years.

I would like to speak today, if I may - and thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr Chairman, to come and present - about my support for the proposed boundary change and for the creation of the Brentford and Chiswick constituency. I think these proposals are strongly based in fairness, in terms of the size of the constituency, but also in the logic of how it unites different communities, which at the moment are to a degree broken up, or preserves communities within the constituency. The boundary changes as proposed are fair because at the moment we have an electorate, I believe, of somewhere around 90,000 plus, and that is about 20,000 more than other seats and that leads both to issues over representation and access to MPs and also for the workload on the MP. That is

something that having worked very closely with our previous MP, Mary Macleod, I am very conscious of just how big her caseload was and that was something that was a difficult factor. Creating more fairness from a democratic point of view and for the value of those votes is also something that we are cognisant of.

It is also more logical as the current constituency as set out as Brentford and Isleworth is a very long and thin constituency that drifts all the way from the east of Chiswick all the way to the west of Hounslow. The proposed constituency would provide a much more logical breakdown with three very distinct west London communities brought together within one constituency. These communities are the Isleworth community, where the wards of Osterley and Spring Grove, Isleworth and Syon are brought together; Brentford, where we would see Brentford and Northfield being brought together for the first time; and then the Chiswick community, which at the moment is split between Ealing and Brentford and Isleworth, and that would become a single combined community with Homefields, Riverside, Turnham Green and Southfield wards all brought together into the one constituency.

It would also, as the proposal stands, have the benefit of seeing the Hounslow wards that are currently part of Brentford and Isleworth but split also into Feltham and Heston brought together into a new constituency of Hounslow and Feltham, and the Hounslow community at the moment, as I say, three of those wards are within Brentford and Isleworth and one within Feltham and Heston. That would be resolved and we would have a community there within one parliamentary constituency. The new Brentford and Chiswick constituency as set out also has very clear geographic boundaries. To the south is the Thames; to the east we have the Chiswick W4 postcode area and the Bedford Park conservation areas. To the west would be the Duke of Northumberland's River and, as I say, that would act as a demarcation point, with Hounslow wards then starting at the other side of that. And to the north we have Osterley Park, which is seen really as part of Isleworth, and nearly all of the residents of Osterley Park live below the park itself.

To start by looking at the Chiswick community, as I say, I have lived in Chiswick for 16 or 17 years. It is a very strong community. It is quite a diverse community in a lot of ways, but it is one where there is no question that people look to the Chiswick High Road as being the centre of our community. There are four wards that make up Chiswick. Three of those currently are in Brentford and Isleworth with my ward Chiswick Riverside, Turnham Green and Homefields, but Southfields has always been for historical reasons part of an Ealing constituency. Reuniting those Chiswick wards together to us makes perfect sense. It is recognised by people in Southfield that they feel very much part of Chiswick, and I will come on to that in a second.

I want to start though with the Turnham Green ward. Turnham Green ward is the absolutely essential epicentre of Chiswick. It is the hub for a lot of what people who live in Chiswick really regard as being the centre of their community. Chiswick High Road is geographically the area we go to shop, for restaurants, et cetera. It is also part of the

centre of the community events, whether it is street stalls or school fetes or fairs, the Green in the centre of Chiswick is very much where these occur. It has also been the centre for a lot of the community facilities, for everything from the libraries, to Chiswick Health Centre, to the police station, Chiswick Town Hall and also Chiswick Park tube. Turnham Green is very much at the absolute heart of Chiswick and we would look at any proposal that would take that out as being something that would be very disunifying to the community of Chiswick and would not represent the Chiswick community well.

Turnham Green also is unified by the fact that everyone there has a W4 postcode, very largely I should say; I think there are a few who do not. There is no question, if you asked anyone who lives in Turnham Green ward where they described they lived, they would answer Chiswick. They would not answer, "I live in Turnham Green". Turnham Green is a part of Chiswick but they live in Chiswick and they identify with Chiswick. That is Turnham Green.

Turning to Southfield, Southfield is a ward which, as I say, sees itself as very much being part of Chiswick but has been lopped off because of historical reasons. People who live in Southfield use the District line and the Piccadilly line that is coming through Turnham Green or through Chiswick Park. They use the restaurants, the shops of Chiswick High Road and, as I say, they identify themselves as being Chiswickians, and want to be part of that community and would be very grateful to be included in the one combined constituency.

Just a few points on that, when *ChiswickW4.com*, which is our local digital online newspaper, refers to Chiswick, it refers to the four wards of Chiswick, which are Chiswick Homefields, Chiswick Riverside, Turnham Green and Southfield. So they already identify Southfield as being clearly a part of Chiswick and they do not differentiate between Southfield as a ward and any of the other Chiswick wards. Southfield ward events are also advertised in the local Chiswick press, for example, the *Chiswick Herald*, so again we are seeing that they see themselves as being part of this one community. We think that reuniting all of the Chiswick ward together will make a much stronger, more identifiable community and would help the social cohesion. The new proposals also bring together the conservation area of Bedford Park. I am not sure if you are familiar with this part of London, but Bedford Park is a really special conservation area from an architectural point of view but also from a cultural and community point of view. These proposals would bring together Bedford Park as one. There is a very strong residents' association, the Bedford Park Society, which combines residents across Southfield and Turnham Green, and it makes absolute sense that Bedford Park is reunited as part of a new constituency.

As I mentioned previously, Turnham Green tube station is at the very centre of everything. It is at the crossroads of Chiswick Homefields, Turnham Green and Southfield wards, and even where I am in Chiswick Riverside a lot of people use that tube service and then catch a bus from there. So this is at the very, very centre of the community and it should

just be noted how important that is. Across the road from Turnham Green tube station are the fields where many of the major cultural events that are held in Chiswick occur. This includes the Bedford Park Festival and the Chiswick Book Festival, which are outstanding local community events.

We see a lot of logic in Chiswick being reunited: bringing Southfield in and keeping Turnham Green, Chiswick Riverside and Chiswick Homefields united in one Chiswick.

Looking further west in the constituency, we have Osterley. Osterley is a ward that is really seen as being part of an Isleworth identity. Our belief is that Osterley, Isleworth and Syon wards really need to stay together as they constitute an area of London that is really identified as Isleworth. Osterley Park is a natural northern boundary dividing line and, as I mentioned earlier, the vast majority of Osterley residents, I think 99% of the residents of Osterley Park live south of the park, so the park is a very good northern boundary line for the constituency. People in the Osterley ward think they live and work in Isleworth. Again their ward may be Osterley but Isleworth is the area that they identify with and we believe it is important to keep that together.

Just as a little example of that, the largest employer in Isleworth is Sky. On their website they describe their head office as being a Osterley head office but the address is Grant Way, Isleworth. So even though they are technically based in Osterley ward, they identify as being part of Isleworth, and I think it is a very important issue.

We also believe that these proposals strengthen the Brentford link with Northfield. Bringing Northfield in is a logical extension of Brentford. Part of that Brentford ward currently goes north of the A4. There is an artificial cut-off halfway up Boston Manor Road and having that community integrated together would make an awful lot of sense.

There are some good examples of the integration that exists between the Brentford ward and the Northfield ward. The Brentford Festival, which is an annual community festival, takes place at the Blondin Park on Boston Manor Road within what is technically Northfield, so having that reunited is important. Apparently the Brentford Festival is a fair that has been going on continuously every September since 1900, although the current organisers state it is in its eleventh year, so we are not quite sure how long it has really gone on for, but there is a deep history of that area of London.

That deals with the proposed changes as Brentford and Isleworth would become Brentford and Chiswick. I just want to say a final word on the wards that will no longer be part of Brentford and Isleworth, which are the three Hounslow wards that we have been very proud to have as part of Brentford and Isleworth, but we are cognisant of the fact that Hounslow as an area is comprised of four wards, three of which are currently with us and one of which is with Feltham and Heston. Combining those four wards together makes sense given the cultural identity of Hounslow around Hounslow Central itself and Hounslow as a location. We think that makes perfect sense and I believe my counterpart

at Feltham and Heston will also be speaking at one of these meetings in support of these boundary changes as Liz Mammatt, who is the chairwoman there, shares the belief that these are sensible proposals going forward.

Just to conclude, I would like to support these proposals formally for the formation of Brentford and Chiswick as set out, based on the fact that it creates three important community hubs in Chiswick, Brentford and Isleworth. It creates a much stronger Chiswick hub by including Southfield ward, combining the Bedford Park conservation area in Chiswick as one. It retains the Osterley heritage as part of Isleworth and the constituency has strong community, cultural and geographic boundaries, as I have set out, and I think it makes a lot of logical sense as well as being a very fair way for the boundaries to be re-drawn. Thank you very much indeed for your time this morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification? No. Could I just ask, Liz Mammatt gave evidence at the Westminster hearing so we have heard from her, which is good. Earlier a previous witness made reference to the name of the constituency, where there seemed to be some disquiet about the fact that the area of Isleworth was no longer referred to. Do you have a view on this?

MR TANNER: The historical name for the constituency was actually Brentford and Chiswick, so we would be returning back to the name as was. I am not sure how many years ago, but at one point it was Brentford and Chiswick. I am not too bothered about the name. I think the cultural and community issues are far more important, but if it did become Chiswick and Isleworth or Brentford and Isleworth, it is not too much of an issue.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Can I ask Lib Peck to come forward, please? Thank you very much. Welcome and if you would like to introduce yourself by name and address.

MS PECK: Good morning everybody. I am slightly struggling with a sore throat so I hope you will be able to hear me. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am the Leader of Lambeth Council and it is in that capacity I am talking. I have been a councillor in Lambeth since 2001 and I have represented the area I have lived in for over 20 years, which is in the Thornton ward, and I do need to make that clear because some of the comments I am going to make are specifically about Thornton. I really will not take up very much of your time. I just wanted to highlight a few key points and will be following up with a detailed submission from the Council.

Broadly, I think there are real positives in some of the proposals put forward. I know you heard from colleagues Chuka Umunna and Keith Hill earlier this morning, talking about the importance of the integrity of Streatham, which I too welcome, and I think a mid-Lambeth constituency, if I can call it that, also has some potential.

I just wanted to highlight the points I was less happy with to draw your attention to those

in advance of our submission. The first is that as a local authority at the moment we have three Members of Parliament representing us, two whose constituencies are firmly within the boundaries of Lambeth, and one which shares Southwark and Lambeth. Under this proposal we would then have six Members of Parliament, all of whom working with the local authority. That seems slightly out of kilter with one of your four criteria which is to try and align local authority boundaries as closely as possible with new constituencies. I also think that will make it much more difficult for people to know who their MP is given that in terms of land mass Lambeth is quite a small area. That would be my first point; that going from three to six does seem to be undermining somewhat the integrity of the local authority.

The second is to highlight two specific wards, both of which I think the term is “orphan” wards. The first is Bishop’s, which is in the north. It is the South Bank. It is the home of lots of the cultural jewels of London including the London Eye. We do of course have very good links with Southwark which shares some of that South Bank, and at the moment the proposal is to move that ward into Bermondsey and Southwark. At the moment it is in Vauxhall. I have concerns and I am representing the Council on this proposal. As I said, we already have very good links across the South Bank, through the South Bank Employers’ Group, through the South Bank Forum, but I think the weighting of that relationship will be quite lop-sided if that particular ward just goes into a constituency predominantly or exclusively made up of existing wards from Southwark.

It also ignores, I think, a very important relationship both in terms of community links but also in terms of transport links between the ward immediately below it to its south, which is Prince’s ward. There is a lot of shared culture there, a lot of community connections between the people in both Prince’s and Bishop’s and I think therefore that would perhaps be an adverse step for us. At the very least I would hope that you may look at more of a combination between Prince’s and Bishop’s, so that Bishop’s was not just an orphan going into that new constituency.

The second ward I wanted to mention is my own ward of Thornton. Again, it is the only ward going into the new proposed seat of Battersea. I think the shape of Battersea is a rather odd one, if you do not mind me saying. It is very long and thin and it kind of loops around, so we are right at this bottom bit here behind me. Again, I do not think that is particularly visible or easy for constituents necessarily to access. But more my point is that the makeup of Thornton ward is such that it has right at the tip here, across the South Circular, the Clapham Park estate, which is one of the biggest regeneration programmes going on in London at the moment and that very clearly is shared between Thornton and Streatham Hill and Brixton Hill, again bringing us into the Lambeth connection, and, secondly, that the more western side of the Thornton ward, as it moves towards Balham, shares a common link with the residents of Streatham Hill. I think in both ways there are stronger community connections that already exist either with Streatham Hill, which is in the new Streatham constituency, or indeed with some of the Brixton wards, which are in the new proposed Lambeth constituency. I am quite concerned that Thornton, which has

very little identification with the other wards that are proposed for the Battersea ward, will feel very detached from it and will be severing very strong community links with Streatham Hill and strong community links indeed with some of Brixton. For my own part I think the proposal to put Thornton in with Streatham, which would be my preferred option, or indeed in the new constituency, would be far preferable than it being an orphan ward in Battersea.

The final point I want to make is the name of this new constituency, in terms of the centre of Lambeth, which is Stockwell and Clapham North - if that does proceed I think that is very out of kilter with the area it represents because Coldharbour ward is the heart of Brixton. Brixton Hill is, as named, part of Brixton and to not have Brixton in the title would be slightly odd. I know you have other issues to contend with in terms of how the constituency is configured, but just at this stage a plea for its name as well which I think needs to be more representative of the area it would be serving. Those were my four key points. I have nothing else to add.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is great. That is very clear, thank you. And you say that the Council will be submitting a full submission?

MS PECK: We will be submitting a more detailed submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is great, thank you. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Is Mrs Susan Liang here? If you would like to come forward and speak from the podium and introduce yourself by way of name and address to begin.

MS LIANG: My name is Susan Liang. I live at 15 Rosedene Avenue, Morden, SM4 5RA. Good morning, everybody, and thank you for letting me speak to you. I am very nervous so please excuse me.

I understand that the Boundary Commissioners have a very difficult task ahead, but I would like to try and explain how these proposed changes will negatively impact the community that I love, which is in Mitcham and Morden.

My name is Susan Liang. I am 58 years old. I am disabled and I have cancer. I live in St Helier ward in Morden. I am here to express my opposition to the Boundary Commission plans to abolish the constituency of Mitcham and Morden and split it up between four constituencies: Wimbledon, Tooting, Streatham and Sutton and Cheam. St Helier ward, where I live, and Lower Morden ward would be part of Sutton and Cheam.

My husband and I have lived in Morden since we married in 1979. I worked as a nurse in the renal unit at St Helier Hospital for 25 years until ill health forced me to retire in 2005. Our community is a strong one and a very diverse one, with excellent relationships between the different ethnic groups. I have been a member of the parish church, St

Lawrence, for 28 years where I teach a Bible study class and I am on the district church council. The parish of Morden is a historic one and has existed for over 500 years. Under these new proposals St Lawrence Church and the parish would be in Sutton and Cheam.

Since we moved here, the area has changed. We now have a large mosque in the area and a peaceful Ahmadi community. We live in a small cul-de-sac next to the mosque opposite Morden Park and within walking distance of Morden Civic Centre, where our current local MP holds weekly surgery for residents. We have good relationships with all of our neighbours. I was at the mosque last week for a meal in the evening. We all get on very well. It is a very culturally mixed area with great relationships and we shop locally. Morden Park and our new leisure centre which is shortly to be built would be in Sutton and Cheam constituency. This does not make sense to me. It is Morden Park. It is not Sutton and Cheam Park. I find these plans very confusing. We will pay our council tax to Merton, which will continue to provide our local services, but we will be represented in Parliament by the MP for Sutton and Cheam, an area with which we have very little in common. I cannot imagine that this MP will have much time or interest to devote to a small, marginalised segment of Morden. He or she would also have to deal with two completely separate councils. Our area is quite a deprived one and has a large proportion of elderly and/or poor residents and our current local MP is easily accessible. She holds weekly surgeries in the Civic Centre which can last for many hours. I understand that the current MP for Sutton and Cheam does not do this, which is understandable as he represents a much more affluent area, and his surgeries are limited to one hour at a time. So we will pay our council tax to Merton but we will vote for an MP for Sutton and Cheam. Our GP surgery, which is in Ravensbury ward, Mitcham, will be part of the Wimbledon constituency, so if we have any problems with that we would have to go to yet another MP.

I am completely opposed to the proposed fragmentation and obliteration of Mitcham and Morden as a community. We are a very strong community with groups like Friends in St Helier and Friends in Lower Morden for our elderly residents. We also have a large Gurkha community living amongst us in our ex-service personnel housing in the Haig Homes, which is the biggest such housing provision in the country. We have a large number of ex-service men with all the problems that they may face.

These plans are also outdated as they were based upon voter figures taken in December 2015. Since that date, the number of voters on the electoral roll in Mitcham and Morden has increased significantly due to people wanting to vote in the EU referendum. Many previously disaffected voters have now registered so that they could vote in that referendum. Since Brexit we will make significant savings by getting rid of all our MEPs. These proposals will take away our representation at a crucial time when Britain's relationship with both the EU and the rest of the world is being renegotiated. It will be extremely confusing to have four different MPs representing Mitcham and Morden. This cannot be in our best interests. If there were a crisis the leader of the Council would have to contact four MPs to attend a Gold meeting at the Council, and this could prove very

difficult, if not impossible.

I am also very concerned that these proposals appear to breach three out of four of your own considerations, which are: respecting local authority boundaries, respecting existing constituencies, taking into account local community ties. Could this be classed as a failure of due process? I do understand that you have a really difficult task ahead, but please think again. Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You put that very clearly. Are there any matters for clarification? Thank you very much indeed. I am sure you know but, if you do not, many other colleagues from the area have also made similar points.

MS LIANG: I do know, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have heard ---

MS LIANG: Thank you for your time and I appreciate you listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: --- What we are going to do about it I am not sure.

Mrs Vera Wells. Welcome and if you would like to speak from there and introduce yourself by way of name and address, please.

MRS WELLS: My name is Vera Wells and I live at 240 St Helier Avenue, Morden in Surrey. I am opposing the new boundaries which will just fragment and take away the area as I know it. I have lived in Morden for 59 years. I came from London originally during the bombing. Perhaps I should say I am 88 years old so that makes that clear. I went to school in the area, not actually in Morden but in Carshalton, which is part of the whole estate where I live. Then I came back to London after I had married and moved into the Morden area where I have lived for 59 years. I know that because my eldest was born here. I have raised my family in Morden. I sent my children to the local schools. I have worked as a Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives in the area, served as a chair on a governing body for 20 years and was a magistrate for the area, so I feel I know it quite well.

When I first came here - the estate was actually built in the 1930s, I think - so when I came back as a married woman in the 1950s/1960s people had all moved in together so there was no cohesion there. Over the time I have lived there I have seen it grow into a really nice estate. We do not have very much trouble there considering the size of the estate. I think it is the least crime ridden one in the London area. As a chair on a governing body, I have welcomed in all the diverse people from abroad who have come here seeking asylum, et cetera. The area has its diversity but everybody has gelled together, including my own children who went to school with all different nationalities, and

I think that is what makes us quite a united area.

Looking at the proposals, it is going to wipe the whole area out, and I think that would be a tragedy, for we are mostly ordinary working-class people. We have a lovely community there. We have an MP who strives to pull the community together. For me it would mean I would be under the auspices of Sutton; they are shunting me into Sutton where I know nobody. All my friends and family are in there, and this is true of all of us because none of us moved very far. One of my best friends lives a street away. She would be under Wimbledon. I am under Sutton. And I believe that other areas are going as far away as Streatham. It is absolutely fragmenting the whole area. Morden has been built up over these years and it is, as I say, quite a nice area. We have parks which will no longer belong to us because they will be divided up to everywhere. The churches - I do not think there is any of them left in the area now. It seems that this exercise will decimate the whole area. Whilst I would like to speak more as a politician, I am not a politician; I am speaking for the families on this estate and for everybody else on this estate whose lives it is going to decimate. Thank you for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. It is really important that local residents come forward and share their views just as you have done today, so thank you for that; it is very valuable. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much.

MS WELLS: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Next is Mr Trevor Taylor. Welcome and if you could just introduce yourself please by name and address.

MR TAYLOR: Good morning. My name is Trevor Taylor and my address is 69 Blanchland Road, Morden, SM4 5NE. Thank you for letting me speak this morning. I am also speaking to express my concern and opposition to the Boundary Commission's plans to abolish my constituency of Mitcham and Morden.

Just to give you a little background to my own situation, I have lived on the St Helier estate since 1982 when my wife and I were married. Over the years I have become involved in many local activities and organisations. I am an active member of my local Anglican church. I am also involved in numerous activities, ranging from French classes at the local college to membership of a model railway club that meets at Mitcham. Whilst I recognise that you have a very difficult task to perform, I feel that the breaking up of Mitcham and Morden would be devastating and, with respect, would be in breach of one of the Commission's own guidelines that existing ties of community should be taken into account.

An area that has had one MP serving a united community would have four MPs. Historically, Mitcham has been a recognised area since the 13th century, and Morden

since the 16th century, each with its own parish churches. As my colleagues have already mentioned, Mitcham and Morden is a diverse community but we are a very united community. We have, as has already been mentioned, the Ahmadian mosque within our constituency. Also it is worth mentioning that we have a high proportion of Haig Homes for ex-service men and service women within the community, and my colleague has already mentioned the Ghurkha community. We also have a high proportion of Tamils and Poles. You name it. As I mentioned, we have diversity but we also feel united. An important point is that our present MP holds weekly surgeries to which all can come along.

Turning to my own situation, my own estate, my ward, St Helier ward, together with Lower Morden ward would be shunted into Sutton and Cheam constituency, and in fact the estate as a whole would be split between two parliamentary constituencies, with no single voice to represent its residents. I have concerns that Sutton, as has already been mentioned, is quite different in character from Mitcham and Morden. Although Mitcham and Morden is a very friendly place in which to live, we have a high proportion of social housing, we have many elderly residents - we run luncheon clubs for them - and we have many poor residents. Sutton, I think, is quite different in character. It has a large proportion of wealthy residents and a large proportion of flat dwellers. I feel that there is a paradox here because if, as is planned, my ward of St Helier is incorporated into Sutton, I would pay my council tax to Merton, my councillors would still be Merton councillors, but my MP would be in Sutton, and I do wonder how much time the MP for Sutton and Cheam would have to devote to our concerns within the St Helier area and in fact how much he would be really concerned about us as an outpost of his empire.

I also mentioned that I am an active member of my local Anglican church. I also serve on the Morden parochial church council and Merton deanery synod. As I have already remarked, Morden parish has existed for 500 years and along with Mitcham parish still forms the constituency boundary. The current plans would tear the parish apart with a parish church in one constituency and the town centre in another.

I ought to mention that at deanery level we have close contact with our present local MP, and in fact just to quote one example, we have a social responsibility minister, the Reverend Wakefield, who sadly has just died, and he was not only the chair of the local Wimbledon Chamber of Commerce but he had a close working relationship with our present MP. This contact within the deanery would be lost if the person appointed had to liaise with four separate MPs, as would be the case under the current proposals.

Thank you very much for letting me speak this morning. I sincerely hope that you will review the plans for the disintegration of the Mitcham and Morden constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Mrs Marie Bateman.

MRS BATEMAN: Good morning.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Name and address first, thank you.

MRS BATEMAN: My name is Mrs Marie Bateman. I live at 3 Missenden* Gardens Morden SM4 6HW. Thank you for letting me speak. I really am against the Boundary Commission because I was born in Battersea and I got pushed out of there, let's be fair, because money speaks louder than words and I have come to Morden and found a real community. I had to leave because music was played all night and that is why I moved to Morden. Everybody's life was made a misery. They managed to do what Hitler's blitz and bombings did not do in my childhood when I still lived there. Battersea then was a good community but when I moved to Morden I was quite surprised at such a warm community and, as different nationalities came in, we became friends. We do live together quite well. I should say by the way I am 81 years of age.

This is a community where everyone actually takes care of each other. If someone needs help, another neighbour is there to help. I feel now that we are having the heart of the community wiped apart again. There is no point in saying things do not matter; they do. Where you draw the line matters. Communities over time become organised on borough wards and constituency boundaries. We are consulted on things and give our views. It is how we get our funding and our representation. We have had many successes and made many friendships because in Mitcham and Morden we know our MP and because it is one area and it has always been the same. Friends my age who were born in the area have always had one MP. How can you go from one to five MPs? Most of my friends who I now go to clubs with and know through organisations like Neighbourhood Policing are all going into Sutton, but I will be going into Wimbledon. They only live across the road from me. Over time I will lose touch with them. You only missed out on putting our Town Hall into Sutton by one street. It makes no sense that I live in Morden and have to go through a Sutton constituency to get to Morden High Street, where I shop. It makes no sense at all. It has to make sense to people or they will not take part. We see how much anger is out there today because people do not feel listened to and this will make it worse.

The reason I came here today is to ask you one question and that is: why is it always the poor communities where this happens? It is always us that gets split up and have less representation. To be represented you have got to know who your representative is and they have got to have local ties. Your plans do away with all this. Wealthier communities will always know how to get hold of their representative; they have influence. You have got a very powerful pen in your hand. It is a pen that is going to decide our future, as representation and democracy matters. I ask you to use your pen to keep Mitcham and Morden united. Thank you for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Any matters

for clarification? No. Then thank you very much indeed. We have a scheduled speaker but she is not present yet so we will have a ten-minute recess.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 12.17 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, ladies and gentlemen we can reconvene. Our next speaker is here and it is the Rt Honourable Justice (*sic*) Greening MP and Minister of State for Education. Justine Greening. What did I say? Justice Greening? That is a tribute to you really. Please come forward and if you could introduce yourself by way of name and address.

MS JUSTINE GREENING: (MP for Putney) I am Justine Greening, Member of Parliament for Putney, and my address is the House of Commons, although I am also a resident in my constituency too. That is where my home is.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the recent proposals of the Boundary Commission. I am here to speak not only as a Member of Parliament for the Putney constituency and on behalf of my local community but, as I said, also as a resident who lives there.

I want to respond to the Boundary Commission proposals themselves before then suggesting what I think is a reasonable alternative to that. The Boundary Commission suggested that Wimbledon Park and Wimbledon Village wards join the Putney constituency to make a larger Wimbledon and Putney parliamentary constituency. That constituency is proposed to be called Wimbledon Common and Putney. Given that it is three-quarters of the existing Putney constituency, I believe it would be more representative of the relative size and wards to call it "Putney and Wimbledon Common".

First, the addition of Wimbledon Park ward is a very sensible one and reflects the previous Boundary Commission proposals in 2013. Wimbledon Park ward is a natural community continuation of the Southfields area already in the Putney constituency. In fact the current grid system of both Wimbledon Park and Southfields consists of Edwardian terraced houses that were built partly by the Quakers all at the same time as one grid of houses. Demonstrating that, the streets continuing south on the current so-called Southfields grid that run into Wimbledon Park originally had the same name as the Southfields streets, so Trentham Street, Clonmore Street all extended into what would later become Merton borough and Wimbledon Park. It was only when the boroughs were put in place that the names were deliberately changed to then give an appearance of a different ward, but they were built as one community, and, in practice, it is one community.

Residents of Wimbledon Park often walk up to Southfields to visit the nearby shops and restaurants and many people in Wimbledon Park - regularly in fact - contact my office

assuming that they are part of my constituency already because they are part of the same community. They discuss various local campaigns such as protecting the shops they use in Southfields, where I am campaigning, or indeed planning applications on Wimbledon Park on which I have leafleted the Southfields ward part of the community, but people in Wimbledon Park, because of word of mouth and the natural links between people living nearby, heard about these campaigns and got in touch with me.

I think the reality is that people do not view themselves as a separate constituency and community simply because they live across the street from one another and are in a different ward. They view themselves as one community. Indeed, I regularly follow up concerns raised by constituents about areas that directly concern Wimbledon Park, including Wimbledon Park itself, which has been the subject of a consultation recently, and of course Wimbledon Park Primary School which has many of my Southfields families' children going there. The District Line of course serves the community, stretching from East Putney down through Southfields and then Wimbledon Park station, which gives us a natural transport link connecting up this new proposed constituency.

Finally, the famous landscape gardener Capability Brown designed Wimbledon Park as one area for use by the whole community around it and the park very much extends from Southfields village down towards the Wimbledon Park tube station and ties these two small local hubs together, and that is what it was designed to do. The park would provide a much more natural boundary to the constituency than currently exists, especially, I should say, for the residents of Revelstoke Road where people living on the even side of that road are in my constituency but people living on the odd side of the road are in a totally different one and in Wimbledon Park ward.

In relation to the Boundary Commission proposals to bring Wimbledon village into the current Putney constituency I have had a lot of constituents contact me who want me to represent their support for the proposal, not least the Putney Society which supports the overall Boundary Commission proposal and will be putting in its own submission, but it is Putney's largest amenity society and resident group.

I think it is fair to say that for my local community in the Putney constituency, we love Putney and Wimbledon Commons and it is really at the heart of life for many of us. It is a place where people move to to be able to use. It is a place that people run on; they take their dogs and walk them there. We all go to the Windmill cafe and have a cup of tea or coffee. I go running there myself. This space very much is driven from the Commons Conservation Act from 1871 for Wimbledon and Putney Commons. The commons themselves are financially supported by an annual levy on households located within three-quarters of a mile of the commons' border.

Putney constituency currently represents four out of five of the wards of people who are levy-payers to fund the upkeep of Putney and Wimbledon Commons, and indeed those four wards stretch quite some way - West Hill and Roehampton of course, but also West

Putney and Thamesfield constituents who pay in part for the Lower Putney Common element of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons' conservators remit. It is fair to say that although all of these people work and are pretty busy and they will not have the chance to come and represent themselves at the hearing today, they have at least asked me to reflect the fact that for us these commons are an integral part of our life and they pull us together and it is why we love living in this community so much. I think for them there is a lot of sense in finally bringing in a parliamentary constituency that matches the constituency, if you like, that is already funding and managing and supporting the Wimbledon and Putney Commons.

That said, I also think that it is not the only option available to the Boundary Commission and there is also a strong argument that can be made to add Earlsfield to the existing Putney constituency. Earlsfield is residentially continuous with Putney and indeed the Boundary Commission acknowledged that in its last revised proposals. Many Southfields' residents use Earlsfield station for fast links into central London and indeed Southfields currently extends to include roads immediately south of King George's Park and it ends at the River Wandle to the east but this does cut some of my roads into two different parliamentary constituencies, for example Penwith Road and Kimber Road. It is fair to say that many Southfields residents also use the shops and restaurants on Garrett Lane in Earlsfield ward, so I think there is a strong option, and a preferred option to extend the Putney constituency and, rather than to include Wimbledon village, to instead include Earlsfield ward. I think based on these initial proposals of the Boundary Commission it is my view that a sensible approach would be to add both Wimbledon Park wards, as I have set out, but also then Earlsfield to the Putney constituency, and for the constituency to then maintain its name as Putney.

I understand that earlier today a Mitcham councillor suggested taking the three existing Putney constituency wards of West Hill, West Putney and Roehampton and Putney Heath and putting them into a Wimbledon-related constituency. That really would literally cut a very urban, densely residential community into two.

Just to illustrate that, it would mean that outside of the Putney constituency that remained would be Putney Arts Theatre, which would be on the wrong side road, Putney Methodist Church on Gwendolen Avenue, again on the wrong side of the road. It would split up the ancient 1889 parish of Putney. It would see Putney sorting office in a Wimbledon constituency. It would see Putney Polish Church in the Wimbledon constituency. It would see our principal Catholic church of St Simon's in Putney in a Wimbledon constituency and it would see Putney Tennis Club in the Wimbledon constituency too. Putney post office would be in Wimbledon constituency and the original Putney cemetery would suddenly be in the Wimbledon constituency. I think that does give a very clear indication of just how much the wards of West Putney, Roehampton and West Hill are a principal part of the heart of the Putney constituency.

I note that as part of this process obviously both the Liberal Democrat and Labour Parties,

and indeed other people, will lay down alternative proposals, I have set out my initial comments in relation to the Boundary Commission proposals, but I reserve the right to make further comments on alternative proposals as they emerge, and to introduce any new suggestions in response to that in a written submission that I intend to make. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is most helpful. Can I just check if there are any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed, and apologies for getting the name wrong but I think Justine Justice Greening is pretty good really.

Mr Gerard Strahan - again if you could just introduce yourself by way of name and address.

MR STRAHAN: Good morning. I am Gerard Strahan. I am a resident of Putney. I am also Chairman of Putney Conservatives. I am very involved in the local community. I am chair of governors of a primary school. I am very involved with Wandsworth Prison in trying to prevent reoffending and focused on the re-settlement of prisoners generally.

May I first of all congratulate the representatives of the Boundary Commission as an independent and impartial public body for publishing the initial proposals on 13 September, which has started a procedure of ensuring for the first time in decades that re-drawn parliamentary seats will be of the same size. Clearly there is a long way to go until the final proposals will be submitted to Parliament for approval in the autumn of 2018, but may I thank you, the Commission, for all the hard work that is involved in this two-year long process which by 5 December will mark the end of the first consultation period on the initial proposals.

It is my pleasure to make a submission today concerning the parliamentary seat of Putney. Under the Boundary Commission's initial proposals, a parliamentary seat of Putney consisting of six wards - West Putney, East Putney, Thamesfield, Southfields, West Hill, Roehampton and Putney Heath - would be expanded and take in Wimbledon Village and Wimbledon Park wards, giving a revised constituency size of approximately 77,000 and renamed Wimbledon Common and Putney. My submission is that the Boundary Commission proposals for the re-drawn and expanded seat of Putney should have the following revised configurations. First, the Wimbledon Village ward should be part of the proposed new seat of Merton and Wimbledon Central, as Wimbledon High Street is a focal point for Wimbledon and is synonymous with the world's most famous postcode, ie SW19.

Secondly, that Wimbledon Park ward is included with the Boundary Commission's initial renamed Wimbledon Common and Putney parliamentary seat. One of the major amenities, as indeed our MP Justine Greening has referred to, is Wimbledon Park, which is composed of 27 hectares of urban park and is enjoyed by local residents. It is of course

situated directly south to Southfields ward. Wimbledon Park tube station is on the District Line, which includes from north to south, if you look at the District Line tube map, in the re-drawn constituency, the three tube stations of East Putney, Southfields and Wimbledon Park, which neatly conform to one of the Boundary Commission's representation criteria of accessibility.

Thirdly, that Earlsfield ward is included in the new constituency from Tooting. Earlsfield is residentially continuous with the existing Putney constituency ward of Southfields and much of both wards' housing is composed of similar residential Victorian design and character. It is interesting to note - and indeed Justine Greening referred to this - that the Boundary Commission acknowledged this in the last revised proposals in 2013.

Today many commuters within the Southfields ward walk to Earlsfield station in order to take the mainline service in a 12-minute commuting dash to Waterloo Station and indeed central London. They also make use of shops, restaurants and bars along Garrett Lane in Earlsfield. The River Wandle crosses both wards and is now subject to a clean-up operation led by Wandsworth Council. It is also worth noting that alongside many parts of London, the population of Earlsfield has increased. By way of example, the 2001 census recorded that the population of Earlsfield was 12,903 and in the 2011 census it had increased to 15,448.

Fifthly, both Earlsfield and Wimbledon Park wards would transfer well into the expanded seat of Putney in that they form a logical shape to the geographical boundaries of the re-drawn seat. Indeed referring to the submission of the Merton councillor this morning, and Justine Greening referred to that, just to further emphasise, the idea of adding West Putney, West Hill and indeed Roehampton wards into a revised seat of Wimbledon would be wholly inappropriate for the reasons that Justine has said, and indeed it would completely split a very cohesive community in Putney itself.

Finally, I want to submit that the Boundary Commission's proposed name of "Wimbledon Common and Putney" for the expanded seat is not consistent with the majority of the existing Putney seat and therefore the Boundary Commission's proposed name should not be used. Instead the name of Putney should feature first as the primary name of the future re-drawn and newly named parliamentary seat because Putney is the main centre for much of the commercial, social, sporting and shopping activities, as well as transport which serves constituents within the present seat and any future seat.

Secondly, Putney has strong historical features such as being the birth place of Thomas Cromwell, Edward Gibbon and many other significantly famous persons such as Captain Lawrence Oates, the Antarctic scientific explorer, who uttered his famous last words at that sad and really iconic time of, "I'm going outside and may be some time". It is also the location of the 1647 Putney debates at St Mary's Church. Putney is known across the world as being the site of one of the most significant centres for rowing, and features the annual boat race, and has been the starting point since 1945. Besides its existing

and strong transport links via the Tube and mainline station, it is now a key boarding and disembarking point for the rapidly expanding Thames Clippers river commuter services.

It is therefore vital that the name of the revised and proposed new seat should first and foremost relate to Putney.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the next stages of the Boundary Commission's programme, among other individuals and interested bodies, I reserve the right to come back with further comments and recommendations in the light of submissions by the Labour Party, the Liberal Democratic party and other parties. Thank you very much for your time today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, that is most helpful. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed.

We have a scheduled speaker but they are not currently present, so I will adjourn for ten minutes just to see if they arrive.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 12.47 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will reconvene. Our next speaker is present. Caroline Cooper-Marbiah. Would you like to come forward and speak from the podium here? If you can just introduce yourself by way of name and address, please.

MRS COOPER-MARBIAH: My name is Caroline Cooper-Marbiah and my address is 60 Crusoe Road in Mitcham. I am one of the councillors in Colliers Wood ward. My representation obviously is regarding Mitcham and Morden constituency and the London Borough of Merton. I am here to express my opposition to the Boundary Commission's plans to abolish the constituency of Mitcham and Morden. I have lived in Crusoe Road, which is in Colliers Wood ward Mitcham, with my two daughters, for nearly 20 years. We have a strong sense of community relationship in Mitcham. That became very apparent as soon as we moved here. This led me to form the Crusoe Road Plus Residents' Association, which is promoting stronger ties between neighbours, some of whom have lived here for nearly 50 years.

Mitcham is a wonderful part of London that has a rich and distinguished history that goes back centuries. It also has a great mix of community that works well together. Your proposal for the boundary change will split our community up into five small bits and place each bit into a larger, wealthier constituency. This would put us in the bottom of the pile making us at risk of being poorly represented in Parliament. Currently we are strongly represented by an MP who deeply cares and is passionate about Mitcham and Morden. She understands and works very well with the different communities. I urge you not to ignore this. Do not destroy our community.

I would just stop there for a while and say that as a councillor, if I have casework for example that requires an MP, I am very confident that when I send that resident to the MP they will be listened to. In fact they do not need to make an appointment; they can just go and see her and they will be listened to and helped.

Colliers Wood is a part of the historic church parish in Mitcham and has been so for centuries and many residents of Colliers Wood ward attend this church. Your plan to carve Colliers Wood off is to disregard these historic links and the social and cultural ties that residents of Colliers Wood have with Mitcham. I am grateful for this opportunity to make my views heard and trust you will reconsider your plans and ensure that Mitcham remains a single community. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Is the Council making a formal submission to us?

MS COOPER-MARBIAH: I would think so, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification? No. Thank you very much indeed.

We will now have our lunch recess until 2 o'clock. Thank you all.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.09 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we will reconvene and we have two speakers now, Jeremy Leach and Peta Steel. I do not know who is going to come first or are you going to come together? That is fine. Come here to the podium. If you introduce yourselves by name and address before you give your presentation.

MR LEACH: Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to speak. My name is Jeremy Leach. I live at 28 Sutherland Square which is in London SE17 3EQ. I am from the Walworth Society and this is my colleague Peta Steel

MS STEEL: I live at 80 Carter Street SE17 3EW. I am also a member of the Walworth Society and I am Chair of the Friends of Pasley Park.

MR LEACH: Our understanding is that the boundary proposals intend to, in our view, divide Walworth, and for Newington ward, which is what we would suggest is the western part of Walworth, to become part of another constituency. What we would like to do is just make the case for the Walworth wards to be seen as a whole and to be taken to

continue as a whole and what we would like to do now is very briefly outline why we believe that to be the case.

As I said, I am the Chair and Peta is a committee member of the Walworth Society, which is an amenity society, but with a slightly broader remit than most amenity societies. It was formed in 2012 and we have currently just over 650 members in the Walworth area. We were formed - and I am just reading from the constitution now - to cover the area of benefit within the northern roundabout at the Elephant and Castle, the New Kent Road, Old Kent Road, Albany Road (so all the area to the north of Burgess Park) John Ruskin Street, Camberwell New Road and Kennington Park Road. Broadly, with the exception of a strange boundary that East Walworth ward has, that forms the current three boundaries (before they were themselves reconfigured) of Newington ward, East Walworth ward and Faraday ward. So we have been very much developed as a voice for those three wards, ie Walworth as a place together. Again taken from the constitution we were formed, "to stimulate public interest and pride in the area of benefit (the area I have just described); to celebrate, promote and be representative of the diverse communities of the Walworth area". Thus our society was very much seen as a way of celebrating and representing - although we do not claim to be representative - and being a voice for people who live in that area.

Just to go back really, the prompt for why we formed is there is enormous change going on in the Walworth area. I do not know how well you know just south of London, but the whole of northern Southwark does feel sometimes like you are living in a regeneration area. The area where we are, which is just to the south of the Elephant and Castle, is that on steroids really. There is the former Heygate estate, which is now Elephant Park being developed by Lend Lease. Soon to come forward is the Delancey development of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre and the London College of Communications site. Those are massive changes in the area. Large new developments of residential housing including the Aylesbury estate, which is slightly to the south-east of the Walworth area.

I think what was happening was that there was no voice. People think of the Elephant and Castle and they think of Camberwell and this odd little place called Walworth between the two really, and that is what we tried to become a voice for. I think what had happened is there was a sense of loss of identity of the Walworth area as these other places hove into view and become more focused. I think there is also the concern about the loss of retail strength. The Walworth Road has always been one of Southwark's great - slightly grotty but rather wonderful - high streets in the borough and there was that sense of it in decline and the famous East Street market, which you might have heard of, again tarnished and slightly fading really. Then I think there was the whole issue of the severance of the Walworth Road because when we formed we tried to do some walkabouts and what we realised was people in East Walworth did not know any parts of West Walworth on occasion and vice versa, but when people went into those areas they realised that there was this whole entity called Walworth as a place.

That was the context. We felt there needed to be a voice for Walworth. Over the last four years what we have tried to do is bring those elements together, both through projects about the built environment, so lots of redevelopment going on, but what we have really tried to do in our projects is try and stitch the Walworth Road together so that the communities of east and west can come together and meet each other, but also to do lots of built environment. We have a conservation area for the whole of the Walworth Road now to give that a sense of character and to be able to compete against what happens at the Elephant and Castle, because that will be very dominant. We are trying to build something a bit like Whitechapel Road or somewhere like that, and build on the heritage and character of the Walworth Road. It is also a cultural celebration of communities. We did start off as very much bricks and mortar, but we have learned there are fantastic rich communities in our area and we work with them now to be a voice.

What we are worried about is all that work - not all that work obviously - but the potential to create more of a voice and identity for Walworth is under threat with the idea of Newington ward being split from East Walworth and Faraday wards and having a voice that ties in more with Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge as it is also called. We would like to make a really strong plea for Newington ward to be considered with the other two wards and keep Walworth whole.

I would like to quickly say one more thing, if I may. Ever since the Localism Act of 2011 came into force we have worked with lots of other groups - we are just a member organisation of this - towards a Walworth Neighbourhood Plan. This summer that has been designated within those boundary areas. You can see here that Newington ward on the west is an important part of the area combined with parts of East Walworth and parts of Faraday. That is the designated area. The area that the Walworth side covers is slightly largely but for various planning policy reasons not the whole of East Walworth ward and Faraday ward are included. That is just one of those things. That is fine. I think what we are trying to say is to add to the work that we are doing is that the neighbourhood plan is very much conceived about being Walworth as a complete entity and what we are trying to do is very much see those three wards and those three areas as part of a whole with Walworth Road running through the middle of it. That is the case we would like to make, if that is okay. Peta?

MS STEEL: I moved into the area in 1988 and you had no feeling of community to that extent. What has been very apparent over the last few years, I suppose about eight years or so now, has been a gradual merging of a village almost in a way. One of the reasons why I mentioned Pasley Park is because it is a small park in Newington or West Walworth, as it is always known as well. It is a hub surrounded by various estates and what has been very useful is getting to know those people on the estates, who have actually got to know each other, partly through use of the park, partly because some of the things that we have been doing there. They have also for the first time possibly discovered friends on the other side of Walworth Road who they did not know lived on the other side of

Walworth Road and have known for many years. So it has been a very useful meeting point.

The people of Walworth are very proud of being Walworth. I am saying Walworth and I am underlining Walworth. It is East Walworth, West Walworth: Walworth basically. Part of the reason is Jeremy has done so much towards it. People go towards Elephant and Castle. They go to Borough. What they tend not to do is to go to Camberwell or to Vauxhall Bridge. They see themselves very much as Southwark. They see themselves to a certain extent as Bermondsey and Southwark because that is the constituency. What is quite interesting - and I was talking to somebody who lives on one of the estates, who said to me, "This is the fifth constituency in one ward that I have been in", and that is since the 1960s. You do build up that community and it has been rather passed around and we are very settled. I think to take us away from certainly East Walworth, so just literally to walk about 200 yards from where Jeremy lives, you are going to be in a different constituency. Also, the Walworth Road is going to be in a different constituency. To a certain extent you are breaking up the community by doing that. What we would ask - and I totally endorse what Jeremy has said - is that we are building a community against an awful lots of things and it has worked. It is working really well. There are a lot of youth projects going on on both sides of the road. People do feel themselves as Walworth and members of the Walworth Society come from, as we were saying, all those three areas, and they have met and they have merged. I think that is terribly important given what is going on nowadays. To keep a community going, I know we are talking about figures, but sometimes figures need possibly to also reflect what people are and what people's aspirations might be.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is very helpful. Are there any matters for clarification? Can I ask just two quick things? Did you say the Neighbourhood Plan has been formally designated now?

MR LEACH: Yes, but that is all. That is the stage we are at really. It has just received designation of the boundaries and the associated forum.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Have you had much contact with or help from your current MP in relation to all of this?

MR LEACH: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If so, it would be helpful to say whether that has been helpful or negative or whatever.

MS STEEL: It has been. He was very much a part of setting up the Walworth Society. He was actually a councillor for Newington, which is the other thing, so he has always had that relationship with us. He was a very good councillor and he has become an MP who has spent a lot of time still with us. Certainly the Walworth Society and ourselves,

he has always given a support.

MR LEACH: I cannot say any more. I would just say we have a heritage walk tomorrow on the Old Kent Road to the Elephant and Neil is coming along, so he is a really active MP.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is tremendous. Thank you very much indeed. David Jones. I think you know what to do.

MR JONES: My name is David Jones and I am the Conservative Party constituency agent for the parliamentary seat of Richmond Park. I have held this position for nearly three and a half years. I live within the constituency, residing within Eaton Drive, on the southern edge of Richmond Park in North Kingston and also work within the constituency near Sheen on the northern side of Richmond Park. Because the Richmond Park parliamentary constituency incorporates elements of both Kingston and Richmond boroughs it also means I have close links and a good understanding of these borough areas and the parliamentary seats of Kingston and Surbiton and Twickenham that lie within them. As it happens, I live in one of the boroughs and work in the other.

I will however limit my evidence today to just the parliamentary seat of Richmond Park and will state at the outset that both myself and the local Conservative Party are in support of the Boundary Commission initial proposals, which is to leave the current boundaries unchanged.

We are in favour of this position because the existing seat boundaries already fulfil the quota expectations of the Boundary Commission and therefore there is no need to disrupt this established constituency unnecessarily. Furthermore, the two neighbouring parliamentary constituencies of Twickenham and Kingston and Surbiton also meet the Boundary Commission quota requirements and so to alter these boundaries would also cause disruption where it is not required.

Given the close neighbouring proximity of three established parliamentary constituencies, all of which fall within quota, it would seem counterintuitive to alter any of their boundaries at all, and better to maintain the status quo. Were the boundaries to be altered we would simply be trading lines on a map without any real beneficial consequence to residents.

I also believe that the geographical laydown of the existing Richmond Park constituency creates a compelling argument as to why it should be maintained as it is.

To the north and the west, the constituency is bounded by the River Thames. This is a natural barrier to freedom of movement and there are limited road and rail crossings over it. If the constituency were to be extended over the river it would introduce a source of friction when moving about the constituency. Furthermore, the river not only acts as a physical barrier but also a psychological one and residents on the far bank of the river

see themselves as part of a different and separate community with different centres of gravity. A similar argument could also be made for the A3 road which is a busy dual carriageway that bounds the eastern edge of the constituency. Crossings east to west are limited and would restrict ease of movement to any elements of the constituency that were extended to the east of the A3. Couple this with the similar restrictions imposed by the mainline Chessington to Waterloo railway line that forms the southern border of the existing constituency, and you rapidly conclude that the existing constituency boundaries are already the best fit for the natural and man-made lines of communication that surround it.

At the moment, the national nature reserve of Richmond Park lies broadly central within the constituency. This is a shared resource that acts as a natural focal point for the constituency and provides a binding connection between those who live in the north of the constituency and those who live in the south. So whilst those in Kingston borough might naturally tend towards Kingston town centre for their shopping and leisure needs and those in Richmond borough might err towards Richmond town centre for theirs, the park acts as a natural counterbalance for that and draws the community together.

Having said that there are two distinct town centres wholly or partly within the constituency, ie Richmond and Kingston town centres, I think it is also fair to say that they complement each other extremely well and provide a mutually exclusive experience to residents from across the constituency. Kingston town centre offers more of a big name, big space retail experience, whereas Richmond offers more of a boutique high street feel. The transport links are such that residents are easily able to travel throughout the constituency and make use of both centres easily. although the constituency currently encompasses two local authorities, this is probably the best fit for the area and there is no other way of skinning this particular cat, given the Commission's current operating assumptions. Whilst working with two local authorities was just about manageable for both the former MP and constituency office, any more than this would be a strain and a burden. Furthermore, Richmond and Kingston Councils are natural bedfellows with a shared history, a track record of co-operation and shared services and a similar outlook and perspective. The two boroughs certainly look to each other more than they do any other borough in the area and the parliamentary constituency of Richmond Park provides a binding link between the two. It currently works for us so we do not believe that there is any need to change it.

Finally, we would also support any change in name that better reflects the constituency we serve and Richmond and North Kingston would seem an appropriate suggestion as an alternative name. This is a name already in common vernacular with both the press and local political parties and better identifies the key population centres that lie within the constituency. In summary, we wholly support the initial proposals for Richmond Park and believe there is no compelling reason for them to be altered.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is very clear

and you have provided me with a written statement which is most helpful. Any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Councillor Richard Livingstone. If you could speak from the podium and introduce yourself by name and address, please.

CLLR LIVINGSTONE: Thank you. I am Cllr Richard Livingstone from the London Borough of Southwark. My address is 70 Goodwin Close, Bermondsey SE16 3TL. I am speaking as a local councillor for Livesey ward which under the proposals is going in the Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge constituency. For me the big concern is the division of the current Camberwell and Peckham constituency into two parts. I think the proposals put forward by the Labour Party to keep a single constituency which unites Peckham in a single seat would be a better solution. I have been a councillor for the Livesey ward in the London Borough of Southwark since May 2006. It is a community I know very well. It is a ward that straddles the Old Kent Road taking in parts of Peckham, Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. It stretches from Queen's Road at the very heart of Peckham to the Silverlock estate in Rotherhithe. The majority of the ward's residents though would consider themselves as living in Peckham.

There are some difficulties with the current boundaries of Livesey ward which was created in 2002. These largely have been resolved through the recent review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England earlier this year, but of course those boundaries will not come into effect until 2018 and the Boundary Commission for the constituency process is looking at the current ward boundaries. Some of those difficulties that we have around the current ward boundaries have emerged as part of this process. In particular, we have two very difficult boundaries in the ward, one in the north-east of the ward with Rotherhithe ward. That is the existing constituency boundary between Camberwell and Peckham and Bermondsey and Old Southwark. That boundary is being kept in the proposals, and indeed will be kept in the Labour Party's proposals. The new difficulty that is created is using the boundary between Nunhead ward and Livesey ward, which is a very poorly defined boundary. In the last parliamentary review there was a discussion, in fact there was a lobby from people in the north part of my ward that they should remain part of the Bermondsey and Old Southwark seat. However, it was felt, and I think the Boundary Commission came to the right conclusion, that because the majority of the ward saw themselves as being part of Peckham that it made sense that, if we were not going to divide wards, that the ward ought to be part of a Peckham-based constituency. It now feels very difficult to have a proposal where a constituency that is called "Peckham" in the form of Peckham and Lewisham West would not include Livesey ward and that, indeed, Livesey ward should now be included in a ward with Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge in its name, neither of which community any of our residents would feel any close affinity to. Indeed, I doubt most of my residents have ever been to Vauxhall Bridge. There probably is some communication with Camberwell in the very south of my ward along the A202, but if you look at the pattern of the ward you will see that Livesey ward is very much at the eastern end and feels like an

outcrop which only has a boundary with Peckham ward within the new constituency as proposed. So you can see it there (indicating) Livesey ward is the far eastern ward in that setup. There is a single boundary there with Peckham ward and then you basically have to go throughout the entirety of Peckham to get to any of the other wards. It feels very much on the edge of the constituency in the way that it is set out.

As I said in my opening comments, Livesey ward along Queen's Road, is very much at the heart of Peckham. Peckham Police Station is just across the road along Meeting House Lane and indeed is within Peckham ward which is at the heart of the ward and it shares Queen's Road station which again would be in the Peckham and Lewisham West constituency with Nunhead ward.

The real difficulties come a little bit further up along the boundary with Nunhead ward where because of this ill-defined ward boundary which is being put right in the future ward boundary changes, we have a ward boundary which runs between neighbouring properties, and therefore if that is replicated in the constituency boundary it would feel as if it is making a very awkward divide to the local community. For example, along Asylum Road, the ward boundary between Livesey ward and Nunhead ward runs between number 79 Asylum Road, which is the vicarage, and some new buildings which it shares a party wall with at 81 Asylum Road. It feels very strange to me to have a constituency boundary which is running through the party wall of a terrace, which is what would effectively be happening here. That situation has arisen because the building at 81 was built subsequent to the 2002 boundary changes, but it would feel a very odd setup to have. Similarly a bit further to the east along Clifton Crescent we have what appears to be a normal suburban street which is divided and numbers 1 to 50 Clifton Crescent are in Nunhead ward and numbers 51 to 54 are in Livesey ward.

To illustrate this I produced a couple of pictures from Google Earth to illustrate these points. This is the view along Clifton Crescent that you can see here (indicating). This long terrace here is number 1 to 50 and 51 to 54 are these houses here and, as you will see by my dividing lines, actually if you look at the other side of Clifton Crescent you are again in what is proposed as Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge. You have Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge, Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge and Camberwell and Peckham and Lewisham West squigged in the middle. Similarly, when I was talking about that party wall issue, along Asylum Road you will see here on the left-hand side the vicarage on Asylum Road at number 79 and then you will see the newer buildings at number 81 and 83 Asylum Road which would be in the Peckham and Lewisham West constituency. To me these seem like very difficult boundaries to have as constituency boundaries.

As I said in my opening comments, I think the majority of people in my ward would see themselves as being part of Peckham. I think our neighbours in Peckham ward as well would obviously see themselves as being part of Peckham. For both of those wards to be not in the constituency which bears the name Peckham in the form of Peckham and Lewisham West but instead be in a Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge seat would feel very

anomalous to everybody living in my ward and I think pretty much everybody living in Peckham ward as well.

Those are my comments. I am happy to leave those pictures with you, a copy of my statement and some illustrations on a map which show those difficulties around the boundary as well for you to look at. There clearly are some significant concerns here which I hope the Boundary Commission will consider.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very helpful and I welcome the evidence you are going to give me. Thank you. Are there any matters for clarification? Could I just ask, in terms of your argument about retaining the wards together, what are the consequential implications? Have you had a look at that?

CLLR LIVINGSTONE: I think those are set out in the Labour Party's proposals which have come forward. They would keep what are the four Peckham town centre wards of The Lane, Peckham, Livesey and Nunhead all together in a single constituency. The numbers have been worked out so I know the numbers work out, but they do create a cohesive whole in the centre of Peckham in the way that the current proposals would divide.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine. Thank you very much. Cllr Mark Williams? Again if you can introduce yourself please by name and address.

CLLR WILLIAMS: Mark Williams, councillor in Brunswick Park ward, which is in Camberwell. My address is 4 Brabourn Grove SE15 2BS, and that is in Nunhead. Before making comments on behalf of myself, I am just going to read out a statement from Harriet Harman, who is the current Member of Parliament for Camberwell and Peckham, and I can leave a copy of this behind. Harriet's response is as follows:

"I firmly believe that the initial proposals set out by the Boundary Commission do not respect the very strong community of Peckham by splitting it in two, and, further, the initial proposals do not respect the very close community ties between Camberwell and Peckham, which are very closely interlinked.

My submission to the Boundary Commission is to maintain the current constituency boundary of Camberwell and Peckham with the exception of moving Faraday ward, which is in Walworth, into the neighbouring seat of Bermondsey and Old Southwark. The communities of Camberwell and Peckham are closely linked and the two areas form the central core of the London Borough of Southwark. The populations of the two areas are similar and there are similar levels of development and predominant housing tenures and types across both areas.

Having represented the area since 1982, it is clear to me that these communities are interlocked in a way that the proposals put forward in draft by the Boundary Commission

do not recognise. The current draft proposals would cut Peckham in two, with half moving over with Camberwell to join Vauxhall. These communities are not closely connected and do not naturally sit with each other. Splitting off Peckham Rye, the Lane and Nunhead to join with Lewisham does not respect the totality of Peckham as a place and as a historic community. The Peckham area covers the wards of Peckham Rye, the Lane and Nunhead, plus Peckham and Livesey, which make up the northern area of Peckham. Putting these two wards with a new Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge constituency would break up the Peckham community and split them right down the middle of Peckham High Street and Queen's Road, both of which are essential to their respective communities.

A more logical approach would be to have the large Burgess Park as the boundary, with Faraday ward moving to join the Bermondsey and Old Southwark seat, which would see two of the wards which cover Walworth joined together, the other being East Walworth ward which borders Faraday ward on two sides.

If accepted by the Boundary Commission, the proposal I have set out would respect the local authority boundary, be closer to the existing constituency boundary and would respect the existing relationship between the existing communities of Camberwell and Peckham and would see the new Camberwell and Peckham constituency being within 5% of the electoral quota at 73,493 electors."

That is the end of Harriet's statement and I will leave a copy of that behind.

Speaking as myself, I have been a councillor in Brunswick Park ward since March 2011. I used to live in the area and have now subsequently moved over to Nunhead. In my ward work and in my work as a local councillor, the two communities of Camberwell and Peckham are very closely linked and do naturally look at each other, with very good connections between the two. Indeed, in my own ward some of the addresses and postcodes are Peckham and when you ask people where the Camberwell boundary ends and the Peckham boundary begins, depending on who you ask, you get a different answer, and yet the two areas are very closely linked indeed.

Moving the south parts of Peckham, as Cllr Livingstone has set out, in with the Lewisham seat does not respect the current community of Peckham, and splitting Peckham, which is a very large community and a very large area, in two in that way would be wholly inappropriate and would not respect those very close community ties. That is the end of my submission. I can leave a copy of Harriet's with you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is very helpful and if you would submit a written submission. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed. We have some more speakers coming but not everyone has arrived so I will adjourn for ten minutes.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 2.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will reconvene and our next speaker is here and that is Mr James Berry, MP for Kingston. If you would like to come to the podium, Sir, and if you would introduce yourself by way of your name and House of Commons address.

MR BERRY: (MP for Kingston and Surbiton) My name is James Berry. I am the Member of Parliament for Kingston and Surbiton and my address is the House of Commons, London SW1A.

I was elected as Member of Parliament for Kingston and Surbiton in May 2015 and I am a Surbiton resident. I am making these submissions in both of those capacities.

I support the Boundary Commission's proposals for Kingston and Surbiton constituency boundaries to remain unchanged in this boundary review. I also understand that the two largest Opposition parties in Kingston and Surbiton - Labour and the Liberal Democrats - together with my own local Conservative Association either support or do not oppose this proposal.

The Kingston and Surbiton constituency was established in 1995 and currently consists of 12 wards of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. The constituency has remained intact ever since, save for the addition of a single ward, Beverley, in the 2010 review. The constituency is wholly contained within a single borough and the existing boundaries, which are identifiable and established, are supported by local residents. The constituency includes the commercial and civic centre of the current and former borough of Kingston along with the entirety of the former borough of Surbiton and the commercial centre of the former borough of Malden and Coombe. From 1885 to 1950 all three former boroughs formed a single constituency. Malden and Coombe was detached to Wimbledon constituency between 1950 and 1955 but became part of the Kingston constituency in that year. Surbiton was a single constituency between 1955 and 1997.

In 1997 the Kingston constituency was split with the two Kingston wards and three Malden and Coombe wards joining Richmond Park constituency, while the remaining two Kingston and three Malden and Coombe wards joined the Surbiton constituency to form Kingston and Surbiton.

The current Kingston and Surbiton constituency has therefore been interlinked for 131 years, save for the addition of one ward, and has had the same boundaries for over 20 years since the 1995 review.

As one of the top 10% of constituencies by size in terms of number of electors, Kingston and Surbiton is well within the size designated by the Boundary Commission. I should

say at this point that I am strongly supportive of the proposals to reduce the number of constituencies from 650 to 600 reducing the cost of politics. As the MP for one of the most populous constituencies, who holds advice surgeries every week and attends dozens of local events, I can say that the job of representing a constituency of this size is eminently doable.

Much of the constituency is on a metropolitan boundary with Surrey. Save for the northern boundary with Richmond Park constituency, the remainder of the boundary is the borough boundary. This is a logical boundary which is understood and supported by local residents. Local residents have a strong sense of identity with, and a pride in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames - the first royal borough - and that is promoted by the current boundaries.

As the Member of Parliament for a busy constituency - I have completed over 6,000 pieces of casework to date - I welcome having relationships with just one borough council, one police district, one clinical commissioning group as well as other public, private and voluntary organisations that operate on borough boundaries. I note that my colleague Zak Goldsmith, former MP, has asked for his constituency to be renamed Richmond Park and North Kingston. The Commission might also consider renaming Kingston and Surbiton constituency to simply Kingston. The name Kingston and Surbiton resulted from a combination of those two constituencies in the 1997 general election. Kingston is the name of the borough and covers all its constituent parts whereas the current name leaves out Chessington, Hook, Tolworth, Malden Manor, New Malden and Old Malden. These omissions are often commented on by constituents who are not from Kingston or Surbiton. Removing any geographical specificity beyond the borough name would offer a fair solution. This is even more compelling a case if the Boundary Commission is not minded to make the change proposed by Mr Goldsmith.

In conclusion, there is every reason for the Boundary Commission's determination that Kingston and Surbiton's boundaries should remain intact to be carried and, as far as I am aware, there is no opposition to that proposal.

Before I ask if the panel has any questions, I would like to correct a suggestion made by a speaker from St Helier ward, Merton who suggested that my constituency neighbour, Paul Scully, does not hold regular surgeries. I have been in touch with Mr Scully and I can confirm that this is categorically not true. In fact, Mr Scully holds a surgery every fortnight as well as regular pop-up surgeries in places like supermarkets and other local establishments, and has a fully staffed office that constituents can and do drop into throughout the week. Moreover, I know that as an MP that the bulk of an MP's work does not arise from constituency surgeries but more from emails, phone calls and letters, and I know that Mr Scully has responded to over 6,000 since being elected. It is important that the record is corrected in this respect.

If there is any other way I can assist the panel I will be happy to do so, otherwise I have

a summary of the oral submission I just made.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is excellent, thank you. It is very welcome to have the written submission. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed, and thank you for correcting the earlier misunderstanding.

The next speaker is timed for 3.20 so I suggest we adjourn until 3.15.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 3.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, if we reconvene, and I think we have our first speaker with us and that is Cllr Tony Arbour, so welcome. Would like to speak from the lectern? The microphone is on and if you just introduce yourself by way of name and address, please, that would be most helpful.

CLLR ARBOUR: My name is Tony Arbour. I am the London Assembly member for the constituency of South West. I have been the member since the year 2000. I have also represented the ward of Hampton Wick in the Twickenham constituency since 1971 and before that I represented Ham and Petersham between 1968 and 1971. In addition, I represented the Surbiton constituency as a member of the old Greater London Council.

I am here principally speak in support of the Commission's recommendations. I am particularly pleased to see that the boundaries of the five constituencies which are part of my super-constituency of South West are unchanged. Twickenham, Richmond Park and North Kingston and Kingston and Surbiton have operated, certainly from my observation, perfectly effectively. Residents clearly identify with those areas and they are comfortable with them. I am also conscious that any juggling that there might be with any of the constituencies may well have a knock-on effect which would badly disrupt the continuity that there has been.

So far as the other two constituencies which I currently represent, which are Feltham and Heston and Brentford and Isleworth, by and large, I support the proposals. I have looked at the numbers and, manifestly, you do have to do something about the constituencies in Hounslow borough and it seems to me that what you are doing is entirely appropriate. I particularly like the new geographical names that you are providing for Hounslow borough. I have no doubt that Feltham sees itself as part of Hounslow. Chiswick certainly sees itself as an individual area and, from my observation and from what people have said to me, they have been sorry that the word Chiswick has been lost from the old historic name of the constituency. I am overall content with those proposals.

The only caveat I have in relation to your proposals is that the new Richmond constituency

you are proposing as Richmond Park, currently the constituency of Richmond Park and North Kingston, gives an opportunity for those people in the wards of North Kingston which go up to make that constituency to have an identity and to link in with Richmond.

One of the difficulties with calling a constituency somewhere which is not entirely geographical such as "Richmond Park" is that there is an uncertainty, not just among those people who will be those constituents but people from elsewhere who are not precisely sure where those places are. For example, if you live in Putney you may well think you live in Richmond Park whereas if you live in Roehampton you may well think that you live in Richmond Park. I think that linking North Kingston with the nomenclature of Richmond is the appropriate thing to do. In brief, I am very happy.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I am delighted you are happy. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed. Mr David Simpson, if you would like to come forward, that would be tremendous, and again if you would like to speak from the lectern and give your name and address, please, by way of introduction.

MR DAVID SIMPSON: Good afternoon. My name is David Simpson. I am appearing as a private individual although I happen to be a councillor in the London Borough of Merton sitting for the Hillside ward. I am very grateful for the opportunity to just to say a few words this afternoon.

I find the Boundary Commission's current proposals for the Wimbledon constituency to be extremely disappointing. You set out four fundamental criteria: size and shape and accessibility. The proposed Merton and Wimbledon Central seat clearly fails on shape because Cricket Green and Ravensbury wards stick out oddly from the side of the new constituency. It also fails on accessibility as it is impossible to quickly and sensibly get from, say, Cricket Green across to the west, to the West Barnes and Motspur Park area.

The second point is the existing local government boundaries. Under the current proposals, Merton has two Members of Parliament that call upon its time. Under your proposals that would increase to five. It is a tremendous increase in terms of workload for officers of the local authority, and I am sure you have heard that argument before today. The third point is the boundaries of the existing constituency. The seats created from the current Wimbledon constituency take little account of previous boundaries. The fourth point is local ties. The current Boundary Commission proposals have ripped Wimbledon apart and, equally, have ripped Mitcham apart, in particular it destroys community interest and cohesion by removing Village and Wimbledon Park and adding them to a new Wimbledon Common and Putney constituency.

By the Boundary Commission's own criteria, the new Central Wimbledon and Merton seat fails significantly. Moreover the seat that you wish to call Merton and Wimbledon Central is bizarre. Why Wimbledon Central? Whilst it indicates the presence of the town centre,

which is made up of Dundonald, Trinity, Hillside and Abbey wards, it fails to take account of Raynes Park, Motspur Park, New Malden or indeed the newly added parts of the current Mitcham and Morden constituency - Colliers Wood and Cricket Green - which are a key part (Cricket Green in particular) of Mitcham town centre.

I do not quite understand the proposed name of the successor Wimbledon constituency either. It is called Merton but the borough's title is merely historic convenience to link disparate centres of Wimbledon and Mitcham together into one administrative unit, created back in the 1960s for local government purposes. Locally there is widespread concern and upset at the proposal to do away with a single Wimbledon seat which, frankly, has existed in various forms since 1885. Wimbledon is a key local centre and transport hub for South West London, with a vibrant town centre and a unique suburban village known throughout the world. The current constituency is remarkably cohesive in terms of where residents live, where they go shopping and for leisure and public transport.

I want to concentrate for a moment on the biggest local issue, which is going to be Crossrail 2. This affects Wimbledon Park in the north of the existing constituency and indeed Wimbledon village. In Wimbledon Park they plan to construct a Crossrail 2 depot. Abbey, Trinity, Hillside and Dundonald, the town centre wards, will face the effects of the construction around the station in Wimbledon and Raynes Park will have a new station constructed too. Furthermore, while there will be no Crossrail 2 construction in the village, most village commuters travel from Wimbledon station in the town centre and so they are directly affected. All these issues, frankly, are inter-linked.

To discuss, if we may, Wimbledon village specifically, residents here do not look north to the Putney constituency at all and there are very few interests of shared concern. Indeed most residents in Village ward are physically separated from residents in the current Putney constituency by Wimbledon Common, Putney Common and the A3. Residents do not believe that Wimbledon stops on the top of Wimbledon Hill Road at The Ridgeway, which is the border of my own ward, and the town centre is a natural continuum from the village going south. The current proposals would lead to a completely arbitrary breakup between the top and bottom of Wimbledon Hill Road which, frankly, I believe is a nonsense.

Whilst I can accept the previous Boundary Commission proposals in 2013 put Wimbledon Park into the Putney constituency, this is equally incongruous. I have noted in their attempt to justify a Wimbledon Common and Putney seat and ripping Wimbledon village out of Wimbledon, the Boundary Commission cite putting the whole of Wimbledon and Putney Commons into one seat as a good reason to bring Wimbledon village into Putney. Firstly, there are two commons not one as the Boundary Commission assume. The official name is "Wimbledon and Putney Commons". They are governed by conservators elected by Putney and Wimbledon residents. The Commons are enjoyed by residents across the whole of the current Putney and Wimbledon constituencies. The Commons are in fact a barrier between residential zones and not a uniting factor, making the current

proposals, frankly, perverse. Therefore, the justification from the Boundary Commission shows a total lack of local knowledge and community interest, in my view. Furthermore, in order to unite Wimbledon and Putney Commons, the Commission have now split Mitcham Common. The logic is perverse. Wimbledon village residents who live within a quarter of a mile of the Common pay a precept to the London Borough Merton, not to Wandsworth Council, as do Putney residents close to Putney Common. Again, that linkage back to Merton, in my view, is very substantial.

The current Wimbledon constituency contains the vast majority of the SW19 postcode. This postcode, without exaggeration, is worldwide known. The brand of Wimbledon itself and SW19 are synonymous. Many landmarks across the Wimbledon area contribute to this: the All England Lawn Tennis Club; Wimbledon Theatre (the largest Victorian theatre outside of central London); Wimbledon Park; Wimbledon village; the town centre; the hockey club; the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club and the soon to be AFC Wimbledon's in its return to Plough Lane. Wimbledon's community is best served when united in a single parliamentary constituency with a single MP who can champion the brand and the community. There I will rest my case. Thank very much indeed for listening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That is helpful. Are there any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Our next speaker is scheduled for 4.00 but we will break until ten to four in case we have more people walking in.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 3.52 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, if we reconvene and our speaker is here, Dr Tania Mathias. If you speak from the lectern, the microphone is on and if you could just introduce yourself by way of name and address.

DR MATHIAS: (MP for Twickenham) Thank you. Chair, my name is Dr Tania Mathias, MP for Twickenham. I wish to support the Boundary Commission with the proposals of no change to the boundaries of Twickenham constituency. I believe there are natural boundaries that makes this a sensible decision. There are also very clear local government boundaries that make this a very sensible decision. There are also community groups that are within these boundaries and that also makes it a natural constituency from my point of view.

We have the natural boundary of the River Thames along two sides of the constituency, which is historic, and also we have the local government using this as a boundary. Where we do not have a river boundary this also matches the natural community. We already have business communities and neighbourhood groups. Many of our neighbourhood

care groups have grown up without government interference. They are now used by local government but they started as natural community groups, and these also match the boundaries that are currently the Twickenham constituency boundary.

Also for me, importantly, the areas around the local government wards of Heathfield and Whitton have a very strong community feel that they are Twickenham focused and this bears in mind that there is a long-running campaign (not successful I think for logistical reasons rather than anything else) of communities there wishing to change their postcode to TK. It is not within the Boundary Commission's power, but I think people would naturally wish to have the same postcode and that reflects, as I say, natural borders, community borders, business borders, neighbourhood groups (whether it is policing or care groups) and I see no reason, from my perspective, to change those boundaries. That is all I have to say right now.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. That is most helpful. Are there any matters of clarification, just in case there are? Are you going to ask a trick question? No. Thank you very much indeed. We have another speaker but he has yet to arrive. She is not due until 4.20 so we will adjourn until 4.20.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 4.08 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we will reconvene again. Our next speaker is Mr Daniel Holden. If you would like to come forward and speak from the lectern. The microphone is already on; if you would introduce yourself by name and address, please.

MR HOLDEN: Hello. My name is Daniel Holden. I am a constituent of the Wimbledon constituency and I live at Flat 4, Parkview Court, 11 George Square in Wimbledon London, which is in Merton Park ward off Wimbledon. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am a constituent in the said Wimbledon parliamentary constituency and I wish to oppose the current proposals for the new Wimbledon and Merton seat. The Boundary Commission's proposal seeks to remove a large part of Wimbledon and thus split the area into two. In doing so I think the Commission has not met its four criteria that it has laid out on its own website.

First, it says on the website about size, shape and accessibility. I have had a look at the new maps and the proposals for the Merton Central Wimbledon seat. The council wards of Cricket Green and Ravensbury do not tend to fit in with the shape of the constituency and it sticks out oddly to the side. It is not a good fit.

Accessibility - one of the plans is to make sure the seats are accessible and easy and a harmonious community. I happen to be a school governor in Mitcham town centre at a

school there so I often need to travel between Mitcham and Wimbledon and accessibility of those two places is very difficult. It is a most frustrating experience at times to try to either get there by car or by public transport. The connections between here are not very good at all and it will make it very difficult for one MP to represent the whole area.

Existing council boundaries is something else listed on the website. I understand that the Commission wants to try to keep to council boundaries. From what I have seen of the proposals, Merton Council would have five MPs to deal with. This seems like too many when there are only two at the moment. From a resident's viewpoint I would prefer just one MP from Wimbledon to interact with the council as one strong voice, to better understand the dealings of the council and the residents and to have a good relationship between the residents and the council. Thirdly, the boundaries of the existing seat, the new proposals do not seem to fit any old recognised boundaries for Wimbledon or any previous boundaries of any Wimbledon constituency that has been around for a long time.

Fourthly, local ties: these proposals would mean Wimbledon being ripped apart and also, for that matter, Mitcham. It does not seem to meet any of the community-based concepts that the Commission is looking at. The idea of moving Wimbledon village away is not acceptable. Wimbledon village is part of Wimbledon and the Commission should do their very best to try and keep all of Wimbledon intact. For that matter Mitcham should be kept intact. That area is split four ways. It is its own distinct community and I have also heard that residents there are upset by being split four ways.

The proposals do not work for anybody in Merton at all and the Commission should go back and have another look at the options. I have not had time to analyse the numbers myself, but I will do in due course and put that in a written submission at a later date.

Wimbledon itself as a community should be kept intact, as I have mentioned already, because it has a great community. It has a good culture, history and heritage. Everybody looks to Wimbledon as the main, primary town in the area. Everybody goes there for their shopping, transport, entertainment and for civic and charity events. Also other things like the Wimbledon village fair, which is a big annual charity event. Things like Wimbledon Theatre are very popular. We have our own symphony orchestra. We have our own choirs and art groups. We have a whole range of things like that which will be broken apart by this arbitrary separation of Wimbledon into two.

Also after speaking with friends who live along The Ridgeway and places like that, which is a road which forms the proposed boundary, they cannot understand why it is going to be arbitrarily split because they consider themselves as part of Wimbledon. The idea of one side of the road which is Wimbledon having one MP and the other side of the road which is still Wimbledon having a different MP sounds quite foolish, and many residents would prefer it if we could keep the whole of Wimbledon intact.

Wimbledon itself has a great brand. I was recently away abroad on holiday and when I

told them I was from Wimbledon they recognised that and they kept saying, "That's great. You've got the tennis there". That is just one of our many features that makes the brand of Wimbledon. We also have Wimbledon Park, which is one of our premier parks that is used by everybody across all of Wimbledon. Of course we have the tennis fortnight and the Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis Club. These are just two of the many good features. We have Wimbledon Common which is visited by everybody across the whole of Wimbledon. I go there quite a lot along with lots of people from all across the area. In terms of transport everybody I know goes through Wimbledon. It has a great transport hub: buses, trains, a tram. Everything goes towards Wimbledon. It does not cut across to Mitcham. It tends to all go towards one focal point which is Wimbledon town centre.

In terms of a resident's viewpoint, we would very much like to keep Wimbledon together. We have other features as well which make our identity unique. We have our own international music festival. We have our own book festival. All these are shared venues across all of Wimbledon and it would be quite terrible to split Wimbledon up into different bits. Basically it is all about brand, culture, identity, heritage and keeping the community together. Wimbledon is a unique place. The SW19 postcode in particular is probably the most famous in the world and it is something we should try to keep.

In terms of Mitcham, as I said, I go there reasonably often. Mitcham would be better served by not having bits of it lumped into Wimbledon. Mitcham has its own unique identity. It has Mitcham Common, which will be split by your proposals, so by creating Wimbledon Common into one, you will be wrecking Mitcham Common, which does not seem very sensible. Mitcham needs to be kept separate and wards, if at all possible, kept in one single Mitcham seat.

I do not have full outlines yet of what I would recommend, but I will put those in a submission later. I think that is most of the points I wanted to raise; that it has key transport links, key community links, culture and heritage. The residents all think of themselves as Wimbledon. We all value having one MP who can represent us on all the big matters either with the council or nationally with Government, one of which is Crossrail 2. We would prefer to have one MP who can represent us and deal with that on our behalf. Having two or three would be not very helpful for us. We would not know where to send our communications. We would not know who to deal with. It just fragments everything and then Wimbledon would be ruined and we would not want that.

In summary, please keep Wimbledon intact by ideally keeping Wimbledon village in Wimbledon and Wimbledon Park, if at all possible, because that has huge ties to Wimbledon, and possibly look at removing the Mitcham seats into more of a centralised Mitcham one. I think that should just about get there, but I will put detailed ones with numbers in an email at a later date. That is all I have to say for the time being. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. That is helpful and I look forward

to receiving your written submission. Any matters for clarification? No. In which case, thank you very much indeed.

That is the last of our scheduled speakers for today. It is quarter past four, so we could adjourn or close the meeting basically. Are you content to close the meeting or would you like to sit here until 5 pm? Shall we put it to a vote? We will call this second day of the hearing closed. Thank you for your attendance. I think it has been a very constructive and useful two days and some of you I will see on Monday. All the best. Goodbye. Have a good weekend.

Time noted: 4.16 pm

The hearing adjourned

	A	
CLLR ARBOUR		51
MR ATKINSON		10
	B	
MRS BATEMAN		31
MR JAMES BERRY MP		48
MR BOWDEN		2
	C	
MRS COOPER-MARBIAH		38, 39
	D	
MR DAVID SIMPSON		52
IAIN SIMPSON		18, 20
	E	
MS JANE ELLISON MP		15, 18
	G	
MS JUSTINE GREENING MP		32
	H	
MR HILL		8
MR HOLDEN		55
	J	
MR JONES		42
	L	
MR LEACH		39, 42
MS LIANG		27, 28
CLLR LIVINGSTONE		44, 47
LORD HAYWARD		4, 5
	M	
MS SEEMA MALHOTRA MP		13, 15
DR MATHIAS		54
	P	
MS PECK		25, 26

S

MR PAUL SCULLY MP	11
MS STEEL	39, 41, 42
MR STRAHAN	35

T

MR TANNER	21, 24
MR TAYLOR	30
THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER	2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57

U

MR CHUKA UMUNNA MP	5, 8
--------------------	------

W

MRS WELLS	29
CLLR WHELTON	2, 4, 5
CLLR WILLIAMS	47