

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

LUTON TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER STREET, LUTON LU1 2AF

ON

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2016

DAY TWO

Before:

Ms Sarah Hamilton, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

**Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0HW
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Time noted 9.15 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Luton on day two of the public hearing. It is quarter past nine and we do not have any speakers booked for the next hour, so I will adjourn until quarter past ten. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 10.15 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to Luton on day two. It is quarter past ten and we do not have any speakers until 11 o'clock, so I will adjourn until 11. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted 11 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to Luton on day two of our public hearing. We are continuing to hear from members of the public this morning regarding the Commission's initial proposals for the Eastern region. I would like to invite Dr Margaret Turner to come up and speak. Could you just start by giving us your name and address, please, for the record and, just to let you know, everything is being recorded today.

DR TURNER: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. My name is Margaret Turner and my address is 3 Waltham Drive in Elstow, Bedfordshire.

I should like to make an alternative proposal to the one which has been drafted by the Boundary Commission and that is to add Kempston Rural instead of Elstow and Stewartby Ward to Bedford and to retain Aspley and Woburn in Mid-Bedfordshire.

First of all, I will talk about what this does to the quota because I realise that that is really important. The addition of Kempston Rural ward would add 4,382 electors to the current constituency to create a constituency which is 74,520 in size. I will be leaving my submission for the facts. The electoral quota provided by the Boundary Commission is 74,769 and each constituency has to be within five per cent, so I have taken this into account in the outcome. The proposed addition of Kempston Rural, that adjustment, would, therefore, need to be balanced, and that is why I have included the retention of Aspley and Woburn in Mid-Bedfordshire.

The proposal would meet the minimal adjustment rather than make any major changes and would create four constituencies which are within the maximum of just 974 electors

of the electoral quota, which is, in fact, a much closer alignment than in the current proposal by the Boundary Commission and it creates four constituencies that are virtually the same size as well. Whereas the statute provides for a variance of five per cent, my proposal would actually result in a variance of no more than 1.3 per cent from the electoral quota set. I have outlined the exact figures, but I will not read those and just leave them, if that is all right.

I will move on then to the justification, because size is not the only consideration or even necessarily the main one for local constituents and local residents such as myself, and I live in Elstow.

The town of Kempston is currently within the Bedford constituency, but the five so-called 'Ends', so Kempston West End, Kempston Church End, just so that you understand that sort of ancient, rural ritual, those parishes are not within Bedford and are presently in Kempston Rural ward, which is in the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency. My proposal suggests that Kempston should be reunited in Bedford. This was historically the case until 1997 when Kempston and Kempston Rural parishes were included in one constituency, that of Mid-Bedfordshire. It is not sensible that Kempston, the town comprising the four wards, and then the five parishes of Kempston Rural, with a total population of only 16,000 in the rural part, should be divided by a constituency boundary.

In addition, the creation of new housing on the outskirts of Kempston, which is existing new housing, not future proposals, since the last review has led to a situation where there is no physical separation between Kempston town and the parishes of Kempston Rural. Until approximately five years ago, there were large open spaces, open fields, which separated the town from the rural parishes, but this is not any longer the case. The development of about 600 houses in Cemetery Road, Ridge Road and Wilkinson Road has extended the boundary and now they abut each other; there are fewer than 200 metres between the two areas. That is a major argument for saying that they should really be within the one constituency.

The existing boundaries have thus created a rather perverse outcome in relation to particularly the Wilkinson Road development. It is small, that particular development, it is around 300 houses, and in the proposals those 300 houses will be split between two different areas. Some of the roads are in Kempston West ward and others in Kempston Rural ward, so this would create a situation where neighbouring properties within one development would be divided between Kempston Town and Kempston Rural, and this anomaly could be corrected in the proposal I have put forward.

Also, in terms of transport links, since the Boundary Commission's last review, the Bedford Western Bypass has been completed and opened and this creates a natural and direct link between the Bedford constituency and Kempston Rural, where there

were small winding rural roads previously, and this road serves the needs of both communities.

Moving on then, Great Denham, which is within the Kempston Rural ward, was originally a newly created parish of 249 houses in the late 1990s. It has grown extensively and that growth continues. It is now approximately 800 homes, and Great Denham abuts the Queen's Park ward of the Bedford constituency and there is no physical separation between where Queen's Park ends and Great Denham begins. The last house in Queen's Park ward is 131 Old Ford End Road and the last house in Great Denham is 294 Greenkeepers Road, and they are neighbours. They are separated by just a bus gate and are at a distance of 20 metres, if that. This is another example of natural ties between Bedford and Kempston and, shortly, there will probably be a new pedestrian bridge, which has all been passed by the local council, directly linking Kempston and Great Denham.

Just going on to educational ties, the proposed addition of Kempston Rural ward would create more natural links between the schools in the constituency and provide an alignment of school catchment areas. For example, Kempston Rural Lower School moved its location within Kempston Rural ward to a new site which is now within the Bedford constituency on Ridge Road in Kempston. It continues to serve the children from Kempston Rural parishes, but it is situated well within the Bedford constituency and serves children from that constituency, so that makes the natural ties and the community associations stronger.

Also in relation to schools, children at Great Denham are within the catchment area for the Robert Bruce Upper School in Kempston and Biddenham Upper School in Bedford, both of which would be in the Bedford constituency in my proposals. The proposal to add Kempston Rural ward would mean that the entire catchment area for children in Great Denham would all then be within one constituency, whereas at present some children from Great Denham live in the constituency and attend the upper school in the other.

I am not going to major on anything in relation to Mid Bedfordshire, other than to say that my proposal is to leave Elstow and Stewartby within Mid Bedfordshire as a balancing proposal. Stewartby is adjacent to Elstow which, in turn, does abut Bedford. However, by road, it takes around ten minutes to drive the 5.4 miles from the boundary of Bedford to Stewartby in contrast, as I say, to 200 metres in the alternative proposal. Stewartby has a 600-pupil academy school, Marston Vale Middle School, which has people attending not only from Stewartby but from Marston Moretaine, Wixams and other areas of Mid Bedfordshire, and on their school site, which I looked at this morning, it does not even register any significant attendance by pupils living in the Bedford constituency at all.

Finally, I appreciate that it is difficult for the Boundary Commission to understand community dynamics and cohesion just by looking at a map or population statistics, but I hope that you will consider the important points I have raised. As the proposal stands, to add Stewartby and thus, in its wake, Elstow, in not splitting the ward, to the Bedford constituency makes no sense to local residents, myself included, when most people in Kempston Rural would actually consider themselves to be Bedford folk, if you ask them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is really helpful, thank you very much, Dr Turner. That is the reason why we are doing public hearings so that we can understand about local community ties. Do we have any questions for Dr Turner? (No response) No, so thanks very much for your time.

After a short adjournment

Time Not Noted

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to Luton on day two of the public hearing. We are continuing to hear from members of the public this morning regarding the Commission's initial proposals. I have next to me Mr Marc Scheimann who is our next speaker. Mr Scheimann, could you start by giving your name and address for the record, please.

MR SCHEIMANN: (Green Party) My name is Marc Scheimann of 39 Stockwood Crescent, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU1 3SS, and I am here representing the Green Party.

We believe that St Albans and Harpenden should stay as one natural constituency and that Letchworth and Hitchin should be combined to take over the constituency that was previously Harpenden and Hitchin because there is a much more natural affinity between St Albans and Harpenden, and Letchworth and Hitchin again have their own reasons.

We believe that Welwyn and Hatfield should stay complete and stick to the boundaries as defined and not stray into Cambridgeshire, but should include Colney Heath.

We believe that Hertsmere and Potters Bar could be included in South St Albans.

Norwich North should include Taverham and Drayton. Norwich South should take and include Old Catton and Costessey.

The Bedford constituency should include Kempston; it is a natural home for Kempston, it belongs there, it has good communication links with Kempston and we believe that the numbers will allow it to do so.

That is a very brief, simple me and not discussing so much Luton, but we will deal with that when it comes. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Scheimann. Does anyone have any questions for Mr Scheimann? There is a question from Dr Turner.

DR TURNER: May I just ask a question for clarification? It is the Kempston Rural part which is not included within Kempston, but Kempston is proposed to be within Bedford, so your proposal is that all of Kempston, including Kempston Rural, which is proposed to be in Mid-Bedfordshire, should be within the Kempston constituency and that is what you meant, is it?

MR SCHEIMANN: That is correct, yes.

DR TURNER: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Scheimann, for your time in coming today. We do not have any other speakers booked for the next hour, so I will adjourn until half past 12. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 12.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to day two of the public hearing in Luton. We do not have any speakers booked in before lunch, so I will adjourn until just before one o'clock just to check and, if there are no speakers, we will adjourn between one and two for lunch. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 1 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to day two in Luton. We will now break for lunch and our next speaker is due at 2.00pm, so we will come back at two. Thank you.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 1.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to day two of the public hearing in Luton. The gentleman who had

booked in for 2.00pm has not yet arrived, but I understand, Mr Walker, you would like to say a few words, so would you like to come up to the front. Could you start off by giving your full name and address, please.

MR WALKER: (Labour Party) My full name is Robert Sidney Walker. I live at 24 Cutcliffe Grove, Bedford, MK40 4DB. I am here on behalf of the Bedford and Kempston Labour Party. I just wanted to make a couple of quick points on earlier submissions before I arrived. I believe that my colleague, Mr Wald, made a submission yesterday afternoon proposing that, rather than Elstow and Stewartby ward being moved to Bedford, Eastcotts ward should be moved.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, he did.

MR WALKER: I would like to point out that this was an entirely personal view and not the view of the Bedford and Kempston Labour Party.

My second point is that I understand that this morning there was a submission suggesting that again, rather than Elstow and Stewartby being moved to Bedford, as the proposed boundary change stands, someone proposed moving Kempston Rural into Elstow and Stewartby.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR WALKER: Again, we would like to argue against that on the grounds that Elstow is on the outskirts of Bedford. Stewartby has close connections with the town, and we think this is a much more natural fit with Bedford than is Kempston Rural which contains some quite outlying areas which have little connection with Bedford per se.

Those are comments on comments that I did not hear, but thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Do we have any questions for clarification? (No response) Thank you very much for speaking. We will adjourn for ten minutes to see if our 2.00pm speaker arrives. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to day two in Luton of the public hearing. We are continuing this afternoon with hearing from members of the public regarding the Commission's initial proposals for changes to the boundaries. We have with us Dr Ben Foley. Dr Foley, if you could just start by giving your full name and address and, just to let you know, we are recording all the proceedings this afternoon.

DR FOLEY: (Green Party) My name is Dr Neil Ben Foley and I live at 70 Spenser Road, Bedford. I am speaking on behalf of the Eastern Green Party and, if we are not short of time, I hope you might indulge me with giving some of the material that we would have given at the first hearing of the Eastern sessions, but our speaker was unable to make it.

The first thing I want to say is that, having worked to put together our response, I have got a very good appreciation of how hard your task was in putting together your proposals. There are places where I disagree with you, but I utterly respect the work that has gone into it and how difficult, at times, it is to balance competing demands.

I am rather worried that, unfortunately, the neutrality of the Commission is getting impaired by being forced by legislation, which was clearly politically motivated, but that is beyond your powers, and I worry for the future of our democracy if we are going to have politically motivated sets of rules for you to work by, but that is where we are, I guess.

In terms of our particular response, I have tried, where possible, to take account of the possibility of there being relative variations between certain constituencies because we know that the December 2015 register was unusually low and there is also population growth in particular areas. Doubtless, there are places where I could have done better. I would also say that there are places where the Commission yourselves might have done slightly better, but such is life, and I do appreciate, as I said, the difficulty of the task.

If I can start talking particularly about Bedfordshire, as that is home territory for me, I have a map here, if it is of any help. It was good to see that you have attempted minimal change within the constraints of the law and the underlying boundary changes, and it was particularly good to see that the part of Goldington ward that was previously outside the Bedford constituency, that being the parish ward of Renhold has now been included in the constituency.

However, there are a number of other places around the edge of the town which I would equally suggest ought to have been included in the Bedford constituency, particularly polling district BAC, which is in the Great Barford ward, which currently is in the Bedford constituency and you are proposing to remove it from the Bedford constituency to be with the rest of Great Barford ward. Also, Woodlands Park parish, which just a year or two ago voted in a local referendum to be in Brickhill parish, would end up being in a different constituency from the rest of the parish as it is in Great Barford ward and, thus, would be in the North East Bedfordshire constituency.

In addition, both of those would end up being detached from the rest of the North East Bedfordshire constituency. The local population in both areas consider themselves to

be far more closely connected with Bedford than anywhere else, and the parish councillor for Woodlands Park parish has also said very, very clearly that they want to be in the Bedford constituency.

On that basis, we are advocating split wards, so polling district BAC and Woodlands Park would both be split from the bulk of Great Barford ward, so that would be 511 voters in polling district PAC and 968 in Woodlands Park, with 4,694 voters in Great Barford ward remaining within the North East Bedfordshire constituency.

There is also an issue with the constituency boundary between Kempston West ward and Kempston Rural ward because, where the ward boundary runs at the moment, different parts of the estate of Wilkinson Road become detached from each constituency as long as the two wards are kept in different constituencies from each other. Again, as with polling district BAC, we have a polling district there which is currently within the Bedford constituency and we would advocate that polling district BBM of 317 voters should be split from the rest of the Kempston Rural ward, which would leave 4,065 voters in the Kempston Rural ward, so polling district BBM would too be within the Bedford constituency.

In addition, by including the whole of Elstow and Stewartby ward within your proposed Bedford constituency, you end up with Wootton Broadmead and Stewartby, which are, effectively, detached from the rest of the constituency in that it is impossible to drive from them to the other parts of the constituency without leaving it. We would suggest there that Stewartby parish should be in the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency, which is 993 voters, and the rest of Elstow and Stewartby ward, the Elstow parish of 2,138 voters, should remain within the Bedford constituency, as you have proposed. This would also result in a constituency which is more closely aligned with the edges of the urban area of Bedford and leave a rather more coherent Mid-Bedfordshire constituency as well.

I had a strong sense from looking at your proposals for Bedford and elsewhere within the county that not splitting wards was, at times, put ahead of local community ties and avoiding detached portions of constituencies. I was very much aware, having been through the changes of ward boundaries, that the ward boundaries were themselves created by the Boundary Commission for England with a very strong brief that equality in representation trumped community ties. At times, it is very clear to us on the ground that that has happened and that you are replicating the problems that there were with those boundaries.

In addition, as with Woodlands Park and polling district BAC, there have been developments of new housing since those boundaries were put in place, which means that, doubtless, if the Boundary Commission for England were to try drawing them again, they would not draw them in the places they currently are anyway.

Having been through that with Bedfordshire, I conceded the possibility of splitting various wards elsewhere in the region to see whether that would solve some of the problems that arose elsewhere, but actually I am not proposing any split wards anywhere else.

One major way in which the Green Party response differs from your proposals is that we have heard very strong feelings in south Cambridgeshire against there being a cross-border constituency which includes them with the North East Herts constituency. Looking at your reasoning and possible alternatives, we think that it is possible to respect the Hertfordshire-Cambridgeshire county boundary without increasing the number of towns divided between constituencies, and we think it is also possible to solve some of the other problems in Hertfordshire at the same time.

In addition, at the other end of Cambridgeshire, we do not think that causes problems because Cambridgeshire would, ideally, have 7.4 constituencies and Norfolk 8.6 constituencies, and we can maximise flexibility within both counties by having a constituency with about 30,000 voters in Cambridgeshire and about 45,000 in Norfolk in cross-border constituencies. We would also suggest that where you were proposing the boundary to be separating Littleport from Ely was not appropriate.

As I said, we believe that better can be done with Hertfordshire, if I can move on to Hertfordshire. On the Boundary Commission's proposals, Carpenders Park is detached from the rest of the Hertsmere constituency, and we would say that it thus needed to be with either the Watford constituency or the South-West Hertfordshire constituency, and we are proposing that its 5,006 voters should be in the Watford constituency.

At the other end of the Watford area, some parts of Leavesden ward and large parts of Abbots Langley, when taken together, are effectively detached from the rest of the St Albans constituency that you propose. What we would suggest is that a better solution would be to treat Leavesden ward and Woodside ward in Watford as a pair to avoid this. You currently have the constituency boundary running between the two of them and we would suggest that you can get far fewer detached parts by having them in the same constituency as each other. We are actually advocating allocating them to the Hertsmere constituency and that then means that it is possible to unify Oxhey in a single constituency, the Watford constituency. Then, to ensure that South-West Hertfordshire remains large enough, we see it as including Ashridge ward.

If I move on now to Chesfield ward, which is in the existing Hitchin and Harpenden constituency and on the outskirts of Stevenage, there are parts there, notably parts of the Great Ashby estate, which are, in reality, part of the town of Stevenage. We say that the 5,004 voters of Chesfield ward should be included within the Stevenage constituency, thus reducing the number of towns split between constituencies.

Heading a little further north again, we would suggest that Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock are, essentially, part of the same built-up area and should, if possible, be treated as being a single built-up area in the same constituency. They are closely adjoining and they have very good communications, including by rail, between them. We believe that it is perfectly achievable to have the three of them in the same constituency.

An implication of that would be the pairing of Bishop's Stortford with Royston rather than Hertford, which also has the advantage of enabling Little Hadham and Much Hadham to be united in a single constituency, and we are talking further south now for the Hadhams.

In addition, by grouping Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock, it enables the two towns of the St Albans district, St Albans and Harpenden, to be united in a single constituency. Given that they are in the same council area, St Albans City Council, there is a strong identification already by the people of Harpenden with St Albans, so we see it as being advantageous, if possible, if they could be in the same constituency.

If we head to between Welwyn and Stevenage, we have the boundary there where you have the Welwyn East and West wards and the Knebworth wards which, between them, create a very convoluted border between constituencies. Again, that leaves territory which is detached, including the Woodlands Park estate and roads off The Brambles as well as a small number of houses on The Brambles in the Welwyn East ward and a larger number on and around Rollwood Road in the Welwyn West ward. We would argue that the three wards really ought to be treated as a group, and we are advocating that they are put within the Welwyn and Hatfield constituency because that seems like the only logical place to put Welwyn East and Welwyn West. To enable the Stevenage constituency to be large enough, it then would need to take in the wards of Walkern, Watton-at-Stone and Hertford Rural North, which is 2,085, 1,880 and 1,769 voters respectively, from the current North East Hertfordshire constituency.

The overall effect of those changes is to produce quite a radical reshaping of the eastern part of Hertfordshire with a Hertford and Hoddesdon constituency and, further south, a Cheshunt and Potters Bar constituency. It is not ideal, as we see it, to have a constituency boundary between the Wormley and Turnford ward and the Broxbourne and Hoddesdon South ward, but, from where we are looking, it is no worse than some of the other proposals. Compromises need to be made somewhere and that was the one which we felt was best overall, given the advantages that we could then accrue elsewhere in the county and also respecting the boundary between Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

If I move on now to Cambridgeshire, one thing that was clear immediately was that the Cambridge constituency needed extra voters compared to its existing boundaries, and it is quite possible to achieve a constituency which is within size by including the whole

ward of Queen Edith's and that then would make the constituency contiguous with the city council area. We did not see it as being necessary or desirable for the Cambridge constituency to include any territory not in the city council area. However, if it must, then we can see that there are small parts of various wards around the edge of the city, for example, Orchard Park parish and the south ward of Impington, where, if they were to be included in the Cambridge constituency, it would mean that the constituency boundary would be more closely aligned with the edge of the Cambridge built-up area. There are, similarly, parts of Teversham ward and Fulbourn ward which could be included on the same basis, but, as I have said, in the end we thought it was probably better for the boundary of Cambridge to be exactly the city boundary at the moment, especially given that we know that there was particularly low registration in Cambridge for the December 2015 register and it can be expected that, by the time the boundaries come into effect, actually the number of eligible voters in the constituency will be considerably higher than the current maximum threshold.

How do we achieve Cambridgeshire without having Cambridge taking on board the Milton ward. To do that we already have an advantage by having the undisturbed border at the south of the county, so a South Cambridgeshire constituency that much more closely replicates the existing constituency is possible. We have actually proposed some slight adjustments to the constituency boundary between South Cambridgeshire and South East Cambridgeshire. We believe that local ties would actually be served better by Cottenham ward being in the South Cambridgeshire constituency and Linton ward moving in the other direction, so Cottenham ward, we would suggest, should be in the South East Cambridgeshire constituency and then right in the south-east of the county Linton ward, we suggest, would be best moving into the South Cambridgeshire constituency, as shown there (indicating).

Elsewhere in the county, Huntingdon constituency needs to lose almost 3,000 voters. Our feeling was that that was best done by moving Fenstanton ward into the South Cambridgeshire constituency and Alconbury and The Stukeleys to North West Cambridgeshire. The advantage of that is that it then allows Little Paxton and Great Paxton to be in the same constituency as each other and it means that the direct line between Huntingdon and St Ives is much more clearly within the constituency than on your proposals.

An implication of that is that North West Cambridgeshire should lose two wards, Earith ward and Ramsey ward, which we would argue it should lose in each case to North East Cambridgeshire. An appropriate size would be achieved there by the Downham Villages and Sutton wards being in a new constituency, that being the cross-border constituency that we are proposing.

To make Peterborough an acceptable size, we concur that the Fletton and Woodston ward is the best available option. I have tried to think and rethink of different ways of doing it and they all seem to come back to the same conclusion.

If I move on to the cross-boundary constituency, as I said, we are looking at a cross-boundary constituency with something like 30,000 voters in Cambridgeshire. Noting the responses to the sixth periodic review, which was not implemented, it was clear that it was best to avoid including Wisbech with Norfolk. We also wanted to, as I said earlier, maintain the links between Littleport and Ely, and doing so allows Little Downham to be in the same constituency as Downham Market, whereas they are separated by a county boundary at the moment. In addition, the transport links between Ely, Littleport and Downham Market, both by road and rail, are absolutely excellent, so we feel that a coherent cross-border constituency can be created in that way.

I believe that colleagues have spoken to our proposal for Norfolk.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

DR FOLEY: So I am not going to take up your time on that, but, hopefully, now that you have heard what we are saying about Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, you have more context to place that in.

I want to briefly mention Suffolk. We particularly felt that the proposed Bury St Edmunds constituency was less coherent than was desirable in that both a straight line between Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket and the road between the two of them are outside the constituency and there are villages which are very clearly between the two and look one way or the other, yet, on your proposals, are in neither constituency. The two wards, in particular, are Rattlesden and Onehouse with a total population of 3,552 voters, and we would propose that they should be moved from your proposed South Suffolk constituency to the Bury St Edmunds constituency. To cope with that, we would propose that Chedburgh ward and Hundon ward should be moved from your proposed West Suffolk to South Suffolk. Chedburgh ward is there (indicating) and Hundon ward is near the county boundary to the south. That means that we need voters to be going from Bury St Edmunds to West Suffolk, and we would propose as part of that that the voters of Pakenham ward and Great Barton ward, which is 1,907 and 1,716 voters respectively, should go from Bury St Edmunds to West Suffolk. We believe that the result overall is a West Suffolk constituency that is much more coherent without having Pakenham ward jutting out deep into it, and a South Suffolk constituency that is much more aligned with south Suffolk rather than including parts which are probably nearer the northern border of Suffolk than the southern border of Suffolk in Onehouse and Rattlesden wards.

In addition in terms of Suffolk, I want to mention that we feel strongly that Barking and Somersham ward should be in the same constituency as Needham Market. They are not in the same constituency at the moment and they are not either on your proposed boundaries, but they are so closely linked together that that is particularly unfortunate, so we have come up with a variety of ways where they could be united in the same

constituency. We are proposing actually that they should be united in the Bury St Edmunds constituency with Bury St Edmunds, consequently, losing some territory right at the north of the constituency, for example, Rickinghall ward.

If I can move on to Essex, I do not believe you have heard an overall view of Essex from us, and it was Essex where I really came to appreciate the hard work and skill of the Commission, with Essex being, as it is, riddled with estuaries which really ought not to be crossed and with towns in awkward places and of awkward sizes. However, we think that there are some improvements that can be made here to your proposals.

One of the things that immediately jumped out for us was that Warley ward really should be part of Brentwood rather than separated from Brentwood. We understand that the situation is that there needs to be a reduction in the number of constituencies in Essex and, as a result of that, we would suggest that Brentwood needs to lose the ward of Herongate, Ingrave and West Horndon, which can be done much more sensibly as they are villages separated from the built-up area in a way that Warley ward is not. They can reasonably be included in the same constituency as neighbouring Burstead.

Rather than wards from the Brentwood and Ongar constituency, we would argue that it is preferable for Harlow, which needs to take in extra members of the electorate, to take in Stansted Mountfitchet. There, we have exceptionally good road and rail links between Harlow and Stansted Mountfitchet. A further implication in that part of the county is that Lower Nazeing ward should join the Epping Forest constituency to make sure that enough voters are absorbed in the west of the county. To bring the Brentwood and Ongar constituency back up to size and again to enable the reduction in the number of constituencies, we would expand it to take in Dunmow, both Great Dunmow and Little Dunmow. That then, of course, has implications for the Saffron Walden constituency which has lost both Stansted Mountfitchet and Dunmow in the south, so we would expand that into the existing Braintree constituency. Indeed, in the end, our proposal is that it should take in the town of Braintree itself.

If I can move on to Rayleigh, the eastern end of Lodge ward, Rayleigh, is effectively detached from the rest of your proposed Rayleigh and Woodham Ferrers constituency. Because of that, we would advocate that Lodge ward and Rayleigh Central ward should have been treated as a pair, and I will come back to where we feel they ought to end up very soon. Our view was that the city of Chelmsford actually is too large to be a single constituency, and your boundaries, as you have drawn them, for example, mean that Broomfield and the Walton ward, which is part of the Chelmsford built-up area, really should not be separated from Chelmsford. Also, it would be very preferable for the Hanningfields to be unified in a single constituency. In addition, both on current constituencies and your proposals, South Hanningfield, Stock and Margaretting is detached from the rest of the constituency, which is pretty much inevitable with the boundaries more or less as you have them because of the River Wid, and we would say

that it needs to be paired with Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing to avoid such a detached part.

As a result of all of those considerations, we are proposing two Chelmsford constituencies, one containing the city centre and most of the northern part of the council area and the other containing the south of Chelmsford. Considerations elsewhere suggest that it should be Rayleigh that is joining the Chelmsford South constituency, so that is where Rayleigh comes back into consideration again.

In terms of the Witham constituency, we would argue that, in order to remain large enough, it should take in the parts of Great Notley and Black Notley ward that were previously not in the constituency as well as all of Felsted and Stebbing ward and also the territory between Colchester and the Blackwater Estuary, so Mersea Island, for example, up there (indicating).

As a consequence, the Maldon constituency would then take in territory on the north bank of the Blackwater Estuary in Maldon district, which would make a constituency much more clearly focused on Malton than its predecessor.

If I head a bit further south now to Rochford and Southend East, clearly, currently it is rather small and needs to take in wards from Southend West. We actually propose that the wards it should take in are Chalkwell and Leigh wards.

If we look a little further along the Thames Estuary to Castle Point, that constituency also is currently too small and we would argue that Pitsea is far more aligned with Basildon than Castle Point and should be in the same constituency as neighbouring parts of Basildon, so, rather than have Castle Point take in Pitsea, we would argue that it should instead take in West Leigh from Southend-on-Sea and that Southend West, to make up for the wards lost, should gain Rochford ward, the Hawkwell wards and Hockley Central ward, so it moves a little to the north of its existing territory.

If I move on to Basildon and Billericay, the existing constituency is also too small and we would argue that it would be preferable if as much as Basildon as possible could be in a single constituency when you take Basildon as including Pitsea. To achieve that, we would say that Billericay should join Thurrock East rather than the substantial part of Basildon, and we would actually suggest something like 'Billericay and Stanford-le-Hope' would be a better name for a constituency on those sorts of borders. Generally, we have not bothered ourselves too much about names. If the boundaries are right, then a name is generally obvious.

If I can move on to Wickford, our assessment was that Runwell in Rettenden and Runwell ward is, essentially, part of Wickford and there is no real advantage in having a constituency boundary between the ward which is labelled as 'Wickford North ward' and Rettenden and Runwell ward. Given that there needs to be a constituency boundary

somewhere around there, we would suggest that Wickford Park and Wickford Castledon wards should be with the rest of Basildon district and the Basildon constituency, but the wards to the north of that line would be in the Chelmsford South and Rayleigh constituency. I think this also results in the constituency boundary being the railway line, if I remember correctly, which at least is a psychologically relevant boundary line.

Looking further to the east, and particularly the boundary between Harwich and Clacton and the North East Essex constituency that you propose, we very strongly feel that Jaywick, the Golf Green ward, should not be in the North East Essex constituency. It is right on the coast to the south of Clacton (indicating). By being in the North East Essex constituency, it is in a constituency where it is, effectively, detached from the rest of the constituency.

We are also concerned that your proposed North East Essex constituency, in forming a doughnut, creates problems with identity. We have been aware, for example, of the guidance of the Boundary Commission for England on how to propose a pattern of wards where they strongly urge against the creation of doughnut wards. We think that the same logic applies with a doughnut constituency, so we were looking to see whether it is something it might be possible to avoid. We believe that it is possible to avoid that and also to recognise the significant natural barrier of the Colne Estuary, so we would propose a constituency that incorporates Clacton and Wivenhoe, another constituency that includes Harwich and then the north of the county as far as Halstead, which is pretty much in the middle of the north of the county and in Braintree, as you have it.

Those are my comments about those particular counties, and thanks very much for the opportunity to put them to you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Dr Foley. Do we have any questions for clarification?

MR WALKER: It is Robert Walker again. Could I ask one quick question? Are there any implications for local government boundaries from your proposed changes, particularly where you are proposing to break up wards or move ward boundaries?

DR FOLEY: Obviously, the two processes are logically separate processes, but at the same time I would imagine that, if the Boundary Commission for England were sensible when it reviews the ward boundaries for Bedfordshire, then they would be looking at similar issues with respect to the boundaries of wards in and around Bedford where, quite clearly, they are out of date in places. They doubtless would take on board the same sorts of considerations that I have been taking on board where the current ward boundaries do not fit the reality of where people live and in which directions they are able to travel, never mind might desire to travel.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. As we do not have any other speakers for now, Dr Foley, thank you for your time and we will adjourn until four o'clock. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

Time noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is now four o'clock on day two in Luton. As we have no other speakers booked, I will now close for the day and thank everyone for their input. Thank you.

The hearing concluded

F

DR FOLEY, 8, 13, 16

S

MR SCHEIMANN, 5, 6

T

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 17
DR TURNER, 2, 6

W

MR WALKER, 7, 16