

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

**PROCEEDINGS**

AT THE

**2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND**

HELD AT

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME14 1XQ**

ON

**THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2016**  
**DAY ONE**

Before:

**Mr Colin Byrne, The Lead Assistant Commissioner**

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Time Noted: 10.04 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome to Maidstone and welcome to this fifth public hearing of the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituencies in the South East region. My name is Colin Byrne. I am one of the Assistant Commissioners of the Boundary Commission. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in their task of making recommendations for the new constituencies in the South East region. I am responsible for chairing this hearing today and I am also responsible, along with my two fellow Assistant Commissioners, Alan Nesbitt and Stephen Laws, for analysing all the representations received about these initial proposals and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff, led by Roger Winter, sitting next to me. Roger will shortly provide an explanation of those Commission initial proposals. He will tell you how to make written representations and he will deal with any administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to last until 8 pm and tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9 am until 5 pm.

The purpose of this public hearing is to allow members of the public and others to make oral representations about these initial proposals. A number of people have already registered to speak and I shall be calling them shortly at their given time slots. I will invite anybody who has not registered but would like to speak to come up when we have a gap in proceedings.

I would like to stress that the purpose of this public meeting is for people to make oral representations about these initial proposals. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposal; nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine each other about their presentations, but people may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers. They should do so through me, as chair. I will now hand over to Roger, who will provide a brief explanation of the proposals.

MR WINTER: Thank you and good morning. As Colin has mentioned, my name is Roger Winter and I am a member of the Commission staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries. At this hearing, I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly.

As Colin has already stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and to take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support Colin in carrying out this role. Please ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

I would like now to talk about the Commission's initial proposals for new constituency boundaries which were published on 13 September 2016. We use the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, not including the two to be allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation.

This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counter-proposals that include one or more constituencies being split between regions, but it is likely that compelling reasons will need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional-based approach was adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

In considering the composition of each electoral region, we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties. Therefore, we have grouped some local authorities into sub-regions.

The Commission's proposals are for 83 constituencies for the South East, a reduction of one. Our proposals leave 15 of the existing constituencies unchanged. We propose only minor changes to a further 47 constituencies, with two wards or fewer altered from the existing constituencies.

The rules that we work to state that we must allocate two constituencies to the Isle of Wight. Neither of these constituencies is required to have an electorate within the requirements on electoral size set out in our rules.

I will talk about this sub-region first. In Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Kent and Medway, two of the 25 existing constituencies are unaltered and one is reconfigured slightly due to re-warding. A further four are altered only by the transfer of one ward.

Across the rest of the region, in Berkshire, two of the eight existing constituencies are unchanged by just the transfer of a single ward. In Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, one is unchanged. In Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton, three of the 18 existing constituencies are unaltered, whilst a further four are altered only by the transfer of one ward. In Oxfordshire, six are unchanged, whilst one is changed only by the transfer of one ward. In Surrey, five of the existing 11 are unaltered, whilst three of the remaining six are altered only by the transfer of one ward. In West Sussex, one of the existing eight constituencies is unchanged and one is reconfigured slightly due to re-warding. A further five are changed only by the transfer of one ward.

As I said, it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties. We have grouped some county and local authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each of these is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities.

In Brighton and Hove and East Sussex, we have one that contains electors from both. It crosses the boundary on the south coast, combining the east of the city of Brighton and Hove with Newhaven and Seaford. We propose one constituency that contains electors from East Sussex and Kent. It crosses the boundary at The Weald, combining the towns of Crowborough and Tenterden. We propose a further two constituencies that contain electors from Kent and Medway. One crosses the boundary at Higham, combining it with Rochester, and the other at Chatham, combining it with East and West Malling.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries, known as wards or electoral divisions. We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well defined and well understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers, who are responsible for running elections.

It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of such ward splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 5 December, so there is still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing.

There are reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing and they are also available on our website and in a number of places of deposit around the region. You can make written representations to us through our consultation website at [www.bce2018.org.uk](http://www.bce2018.org.uk). I do urge everyone to submit written representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of public hearings and, as you can see, we are taking a video recording from which we will create a verbatim transcript.

The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing, along with all written representations, for a four-week period during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this to occur during the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and the written representations includes certain personal data of those who have made representations. I therefore invite

all those contributing to read the Commission's data protection and privacy policy, a copy of which we have with us and which is also available on our website.

At this stage, I will now hand you back to the chair to begin the public hearing and thank you for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for that. Our first speaker is Mr Peter Allinson. Would you come up to the lectern and just start by saying who you are and where you live, for the record, please. As Roger says, it is all being recorded. Then you have up to ten minutes to make your presentation. If, at the end, people wish to ask you a point of clarification, then I will allow them to do that.

MR ALLINSON: (Higham Parish Council) Good morning, everyone. It is my first time at public speaking. Here goes. My name is Peter Allinson. I live at 50 Walmers Avenue, Higham, Rochester, Kent. I am also the Vice-Chairman of the Higham Parish Council and I am here today to present the parish council's view of the proposed boundary changes.

Higham is a unique and vibrant village of about 1,500 households, with a diverse population of about 4,000 adults and children, its most famous resident being Charles Dickens, who lived at Gad's Hill House from 1856 until his death in 1870. Its northern boundary is the River Thames and its eastern, southern and western boundaries comprise greenbelt, agricultural land, SSSIs and protected lands.

The parish council wishes to register its strong opposition to the proposed boundary changes for two main reasons: the reduction in services and outcomes that the parish council will be able to deliver; and the extra work that the parish council will have to undertake in order to maintain the services and the integrity of the village. The constituency and the local borough boundaries have been in unison for the last 42 years and the natural affinity that exists between Higham and Gravesend has led to the best services from both the MP and the borough, the current MP representing the whole of Gravesham borough.

The Strood and Rochester constituency resides in the Medway Unitary Local Authority, which is a very large urban conglomeration, which has vastly different priorities for its residents. The MP for Strood and Rochester will be biased to the problems facing Strood and Rochester and the unitary authority, leaving Higham to work with Gravesham Borough Council without the effective support of an MP at borough and parliamentary level.

An MP for Strood and Rochester would have to build up a new rapport with Gravesham Borough Council and would have to double their workload while dealing with both Gravesham Borough Council and the much larger Medway Unitary Authority, making them less effective to the detriment of Higham, which is basically stuck as an isolated,

rural village in the middle of the two boroughs. Higham has faced and continues to face a number of issues to do with its well-being, such as the proposed Thames Lower Crossing, the Estuary Airport and Thames Gateway. All of these things would cause the MP of Strood and Rochester a dilemma, as the general Medway Unitary Authority supports most of these projects and Higham does not. How will the Strood and Rochester MP be able to service both communities effectively?

Moving Higham to Strood and Rochester constituency and introducing Ash Hartley, New Ash Green and Hodsoll Street, who have no connection with Gravesham Borough Council at the moment, into the Gravesham constituency will have very little effect on the number of voters in Gravesham constituency and would therefore appear to possibly be a change for cosmetic reasons rather than reasons of who would support and who could provide the best service as an MP for these people.

Voting into divisions on polling day would cause some confusion for a number of voters. I do not think many voters really understand the difference between a parliamentary constituency and the borough council. The other aspect is that Gravesham is still under the Kent County Council, so we have in Gravesham Kent county councillors representing us. Our MP represents Gravesham and Higham and it all sits nicely. We will end up with an MP who is basically working for the unitary authority or working in conjunction with them and not with the KCC and the local borough council.

Higham Parish Council urges the Boundary Commission to reassess the proposal to move Higham to Strood and Rochester constituency, as we foresee this will not help the Government's desire to devolve more responsibility and services to lower levels of local government. It will slow down progress on Higham Parish Council's community projects and seriously hamper their ability to influence major projects and infrastructure that affect the village without the support of a co-ordinated MP and local authority.

Summarising, moving Higham to Strood and Rochester constituency, to which Higham has absolutely no national or local ties or loyalty, will have a profound effect on the ability of Higham Parish Council to deliver and meet the needs of Higham residents effectively. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Does anybody have a question for clarification? No. Thank you very much for coming in and making your presentation. Now I call on Mrs Sue Sparks. Please give us your name and address.

MRS SPARKS: My name is Sue Sparks. My address is 16 Fairview Drive, Higham, ME3 7BG. There are just a few key points that I would like to make, particularly in relation to the strong connections between the village of Higham and the borough of Gravesham and the town of Gravesend itself. There is a natural affinity for Higham residents towards the town. By that, I mean that it is the place where many residents visit to shop and use

banking services etc. the whole of Gravesham sits within the current seat and the proposal splits the borough.

The strategic authority, KCC for Gravesham, operates many services using the 12 district or borough authorities for both administrative purposes and to deliver direct service. That is done on a district basis, for example, for the Highways Department.

The Rochester and Strood seat sits within the Medway Unitary Authority. That is their strategic authority, so all these points will make it more and more difficult for people to understand who is responsible for which services. Which direction do they turn to if they need help? There would be a perception that, because the parliamentary seat has moved to Medway, the local authority becomes Medway, which of course is not actually true.

There is potential for a conflict of interest with some issues perhaps being confusing again with the example of a huge development taking place. Would Medway Unitary Authority support in one way? Would the MP be torn and would the local people lose out? The MP would have a dilemma, I feel, in managing his responses.

Whilst understanding the desire to regularise the size of the parliamentary seats, this proposal does not appear to make a significant difference to the Gravesham seat, as it loses some and gains some other. The overall total seems very much the same.

The other two issues I would like to raise are more by way of a question really. With those population figures, has the new housing growth, both the proposed and the actual building that is taking place now, already been factored into the calculation of the population? It seems to me that, if the population increases because of new housing, it is all out of kilter anyway.

Might there also be some changes to local government in the near future, so perhaps the merging of districts and radical change to strategic authorities, KCC and Medway? Whilst I understand that you have to draw a line somewhere and make some decisions, there seem to be some changes in the offing that could make a vast difference to the size of the population and the way in which the authorities are run. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Would anybody wish to ask any question of clarification? No. Thank you very much indeed for your presentation. Mr Christie is next.

MR CHRISTIE: Good morning everyone. My name is Leslie Christie. I live at 3 Fleet Road, Northfleet, Kent. I was county councillor for Kent County Council for approximately 20 years, representing Northfleet. Today, I am here representing the views of Gravesham Constituency Labour Party. My written submission has been headed in that way. I have left copies outside if anybody wants one.

We support fully what are colleagues from Higham have said. Perhaps living in Northfleet, we are at the far end from Higham but we do recognise that Higham is very much part of Gravesham. I would point out of course that, even at the present time, Gravesham is the only coterminous local authority in Kent. The proposed changes alter that and, instead of being coterminous, it would have three different local authorities involved: Sevenoaks, Medway and Gravesham.

Gravesham is only 500 short and the figures that you are forced to use of 2015 are only 500 short of the minimum to continue as a constituency as it is, but of course, if the two million people who registered between 2015 and 2016 are being taken into account, which would include the 2,320 in Gravesham, Gravesham would be over the minimum limit to continue as a constituency on its own.

I recognise that you have to work within the statute, but I feel strongly that numbers alone should not be the criterion. However, having said that, if we are living with that, I think the proposals made by the Boundary Commission are wrong in that the proposal is to bring into Gravesham Hartley and Hodsoll Street.

As has been said, that is no connection with Gravesham and any regular bus service or public transport service. Any service that there is as to travel through Longfield, New Barn and Southfleet in Dartford constituency to get to Gravesend and into Gravesham.

The proposal that we put is to keep Gravesham as it is and, if we have to add a ward from Dartford, add Swanscombe, not Hartley and Hodsoll Street. The difference in numbers between Hartley and Hodsoll Street and Swanscombe is 91, so it makes no significant difference in the numbers. The reason we would argue Swanscombe rather than Hartley and Hodsoll Street - nobody in Gravesham knows where it is - is that Swanscombe is attached to Northfleet. There is a boundary just drawn. Half of Ebbsfleet International Station is in Swanscombe and half of it is in Northfleet. Half of the Paramount £2 billion expansion theme park that is supposed to be happening is in Swanscombe and half of it is in Northfleet. Even the famous Ebbsfleet United Football Club, who everybody has heard of I hope, is less than 50 yards from the Swanscombe boundary. There are probably as many supporters who come from Swanscombe as from Gravesend. If you are talking about social culture, conductivity and industrial connection, for the last 100-odd years, the cement and paper industry was along the River Thames. Some of the plants were in Northfleet. The quarries were in Swanscombe, with the population mix.

In more recent times, when Swanscombe did not have a secondary school, the pupils travelled to Northfleet and Gravesend schools, not to Dartford. Swanscombe is 1.5 miles from the centre of Gravesend, 4.5 miles from the centre of Dartford. If the idea is that we have to have an added ward into Gravesham, the sensible thing with numbers being equal is to move Swanscombe into Gravesham and not Hartley and Hodsoll Street.

I cannot deny the fact that, if you take Hartley and Hodsoll Street out of Dartford, you make Dartford coterminous, but of course coterminosity does not seem to be a high priority, as even with your proposals only one out of the 16 constituencies is coterminous, so it cannot be seen as a high priority. Surely, social contact and belonging together is more important than just that theoretical position?

We hope that you will look again at what your proposition is. We think, if it is a clear choice between Swanscombe and Hartley and Hodsoll Street, the sensible thing is Swanscombe. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody wish to put a question? Just wait for the microphone. You will have to say who you are and where you are from.

MR DHESI: My name is Tamanjeet Dhesi and I am from Gravesend in Kent, which is within the Gravesham constituency. What you have referred to is with regard to the numbers and I fully accept the point that, according to the parameters that have been set, you have to go by numbers. Whilst Gravesham falls short by a small number, you have mentioned Ebbsfleet and there is a huge development that is currently under way of which many of you may be aware, which is the Ebbsfleet Garden City. That Garden City itself straddles both Gravesham and Dartford. Could you please clarify the impact of that? How many houses are there and how will that impact on the coterminosity of either Gravesham or Dartford or whether a new constituency will perhaps have to come into being, given the huge housing that is actually proposed or being built at present?

MR CHRISTIE: If you are asking me, I have written down here "Ebbsfleet Garden City" and I am sorry, I should have mentioned it. It is of course widely known that the plan is for 15,000 additional homes in that area. That will spread across Swanscombe, Northfleet and into Dartford and Gravesham. I am not in a position to implement it but I personally think that there is going to have to be another review of constituencies very shortly if and when that development takes place. If Paramount takes place, the £2 billion theme park, that will very much affect employment facilities and the number of people working and seeking to live there.

If we are living with the numbers we have, sadly, I think it is unrealistic and wrong to do that but, even today, the argument is still strong that Swanscombe and Northfleet should be combined into Gravesham.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody have another point? I am afraid you are going to have to say your name and address again.

MR ALLINSON: Peter Allinson. 50, Walmers Avenue, Higham, ME3 7EH. It is a question more for yourself and the Boundary Commission. Could you briefly explain what the term 'coterminosity' means, please?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Essentially, there are four or five criteria that we are to take into account. One of those is the alignment between the constituency and the local authority boundaries. People shorten that to be 'coterminosity', but it could be coterminosity between any set of borders. That is effectively what people mean when they use that term.

MR CHRISTIE: In Gravesham currently, the MP of the constituency covers exactly the same boundary as the local authority, Gravesham Borough Council, does, so there is no confusion; one MP and one local authority.

MR ALLINSON: Can I ask another question, please? Going from Gravesend to Hodsoll Street or Hartley, as you quite rightly said, you would go through Longfield, which I believe is Dartford constituency. If Hartley and Hodsoll Street are brought in, would they be connected somewhere into the current Gravesend constituency or would they just be a little bubble stuck between Sevenoaks/Dartford? Is there a connection somewhere so that you could get there by staying in the Gravesham constituency?

MR CHRISTIE: I can tell you from local knowledge that there is the Wrotham Road, would you believe, going out towards Wrotham. You can walk about a mile and a half down there and you come to Hodsoll Street. Hartley is connected geographically to Hodsoll Street. If you are travelling from Gravesend, you have to go through New Barn, Southfleet and Longfield, which is right through the middle of the Dartford constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much indeed. There is a question from up the top. Please tell us who you are and where you live.

CLLR THOMPSON: My name is Councillor Steve Thompson, Gravesham Borough Council, and I live in Gravesend. Could I just ask for clarification with regard to what we are calling 'Ebbsfleet Garden City'? Am I correct in thinking that there are at least 500 dwellings already being built and occupied in that area? Have those figures been included in your calculations?

Leslie, could you comment a little bit further on the differences between the communities of Hartley and Hodsoll Street and Swanscombe? Am I correct in thinking that there is a vast demographic difference in socio-economic class and interests?

MR CHRISTIE: Certainly there is. The latest figures I have seen are that you should move to Hodsoll Street and live 12 years longer. There is a significant social and economic difference between the residents in Hartley and Hodsoll Street and in Swanscombe. Swanscombe is on the River Thames, an industrial build, exactly the same as Northfleet. Wherever the line was drawn between these two, it was just an accident; whereas Hartley and Hodsoll Street is much more rural and much more connected to the

Dartford/Sevenoaks rural area than it is to Gravesend. That is my view. I am not an expert, but that is my local knowledge.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The housing numbers in Ebbsfleet?

MR WINTER: Is that question directed to Mr Christie or to us?

MR CHRISTIE: Do you have answers?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The Boundary Commission's proposals are based on the electoral register at December 2015. That is set down in legislation as a consequence of the date of the review so, if you work back from the date of the review, that is the date that we have to take into account. Whoever is registered on that day is included in the number.

MR CHRISTIE: Those in the Springhead quarter, which is in the Ebbsfleet Valley, and eight million square footage of development when it was drawn up about ten years ago, are already in and are registered.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Can we then move on to Mr Craig Mackinlay, who I think has a presentation for us?

MR MACKINLAY: (MP for Thanet) A very brief presentation, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you state who you are and where you are from?

MR MACKINLAY: Thank you very much indeed. Thanks for the opportunity to be able to make a presentation today. It is not going to be death by PowerPoint too much, which we all see far too much of in life. I would like to thank the Commission for the work they have done so far, but I think it can be improved. I am Craig Mackinlay. I am the Member of Parliament for South Thanet. That is my constituency at the moment. It has been broadly unchanged since 1983. There are a couple of very minor changes over the years where Minster was lost and the very top part up here (indicating) the Cliftonvilles, came in. Apart from that, it has been exactly the same since 1983. There is a cohesiveness that comes with that type of stability going back a very, very long time.

We are only just, at 70,012, underneath the required lower limit of the plus and minus five per cent. The lower limit would be 71,031, so just 1,019 short. The proposal coming forward is to become that, so that to that. In terms of land area, it means a complete change of a loss of about 70 per cent of the land area that everybody has been very familiar with for a very, very long time.

The proposal is that the Commission came up with just a few years ago, which I think everybody was settled with and very happy with, were the inclusion of just one ward, that of Dane Valley, which would have then increased us under the current December 2015 numbers perfectly into the mid-range of numbers at 75,262, which would be perfectly within the upper and lower limits. Everybody was very comfortable with that. It made very good sense. I was somewhat confused when I saw these proposals as to how that has become that, whereas that, just a few years ago, was a very comfortable situation with everybody.

The other important factor as to why I think this is the perfect solution is that there will be population growth. There is already, under the local plan, potential for 15,000 to 16,000 new properties. With a statutory requirement for a review every five years, in just five years' time beyond the 2020 general election, we will be having to look at this again. There will have to be changes and probably a loss of a ward.

Where we are under my preferred proposal of 75,000 would allow for some population growth, but the proposal that the Commission has come forward with of that at 78,130 allows for very little growth whatsoever. In five years, we will be back here, people having been moved from a very long-standing constituency, and then facing change once more.

On the face of it, when I first saw this, it felt like the opening credits a little bit of Dads' Army, where the army is being pushed into northern France. I felt that this became, as you moved through the Kent and Sussex sub-region, the balancing bit at the end of Kent. That will do. That is what is left, but it does not take into account real and long-standing community ties. There is very much a divide that is real between the Margate end and the Ramsgate end. That is a factor of the reorganisation of local government in the 1970s.

There are very conflicting demands of those communities and there is indeed quite the green divide of land between the two. Even though they are in the one Thanet District Council, they are very, very different communities.

It is probably easier to argue why these two wards, which the proposals are to take away into Dover, are entirely wrong for Dover. People in Sandwich go shopping, go to school and do their social and that is because of spinal wards up this part of the coastline. I will agree that Little Stour and Ashstone, this one here, has always been a slightly odd ward. There is a main road, the A257, going across from Sandwich to Canterbury. These people generally go to school in Sandwich and Thanet. They often go shopping in Canterbury and they are in Dover District Council. They have had the benefit of stability since 1983.

Looking a little bit more closely at the community ties, in terms of schools, the catchment for Sandwich is Thanet. It is outside the catchment area for Dover. Discussing with local residents, I was saying, "Where do you go for school, for shopping and for all of those

types of activities?" The predominance of routes for buses is this way by quite some margin compared to going down to Dover. Many people living in Sandwich and LS&A have very little contact with Dover beyond getting their bill from Dover District Council.

A very, very fundamental, new part of this area is Discovery Park which, if we go back to what you propose, is literally on the edge just here (indicating). It was the old Pfizer site and, under your proposals, it comes at the very north end of a new Dover constituency; whereas you will find the predominance of its employees, now 2,500 and rising, is from proper Thanet and from the existing constituency. That very important, new business park really has no connection whatsoever with what would be the new Dover constituency.

In terms of shopping, schools, social activities, the road spinal routes and in terms of people's work patterns and indeed where they go to hospital and doctors, the focus from these people is very much towards the QEQM Hospital in the middle of Thanet up here (indicating) rather than going to Ashford or Dover. For that reason, I think the proposals that you came up with in 2012 were very sensible. It was that one (indicating). In terms of the 1983 stability, which has broadly been that with just a couple of very small amendments, and in terms of being able to be resilient for the future without us being here again in five years' time, that, to me, is the ideal solution. We have the extra number through having just one ward, which is that one there (indicating), Dane Valley. It is minimal change, which I think is very, very important.

I know you have four critical criteria. One of course is local authority. Yes, of course, your proposal is all Thanet District Council, but it is not just Thanet District Council within that constituency. We have the new proposed North Kent Coastal across here (indicating), which still takes in quite a number of Thanet wards. In other proposals in Kent, it does not seem to be the key criterion. We have heard presentations today about Gravesham.

No or little change is another one of your criteria. This represents the no or little change when people have got used to where they have been since 1983. Local ties are important. I hope I have explained them in terms of road routes, schools, health, shopping, social. That is very much a cohesive community.

In terms of geography, which is really arguing against your proposals for Dover, that part (indicating) of the top end of Little Stour and Ashstone going down into Dover is quite some distance. We are talking 20-odd miles across no key road routes. The whole geography of this area is Canterbury to Sandwich and then throughout Thanet. It certainly does not go north to south in one of the ways that is proposed by the Boundary Commission.

I thank you for what has happened so far. I agree entirely with what you came up with in 2012 and I certainly hope that type of stability for the community can be taken forward as we come to a conclusion on this. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Does anybody have a question of clarification? Can I ask you just one question then? In your counter-proposal, what happens to Margate Central?

MR MACKINLAY: Margate Central stays within North Kent Coastal. I believe that this area should be called East Kent Coastal. You have come up with an idea for North Kent Coastal; why not call it East Kent Coastal? I think that properly reflects the relationship with the sea that is due for this constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Rather than in Thanet?

MR MACKINLAY: Rather than Thanet East.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We do not have any speakers booked in until one o'clock. I do apologise; we do. Mr Heale.

CLLR HEALE: Good morning. My name is Martin Heale. I live at Albion Street in Broadstairs. I am Kent county councillor for Ramsgate and I am also chairman of the UKIP South Thanet Association for the proposed Thanet East as it is standing at the moment.

The previous speaker talked a lot about historic connection. I am not going to be as completely entertaining as him with the presentation. Mine is quite brief but I have been told it is quite to the point. I am speaking as chairman of the UK Independence Party Association of South Thanet. As we heard from the previous speaker, there has been a suggestion that the 11,000 electors in Sandwich and Little Stour and Ashstone wards of Dover district have a significant historic attachment to Thanet. They believe that that attachment should continue into the new constituency boundaries for the proposed Thanet East constituency in 2020.

I would argue that the coastal resort towns of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate are all an integral part of Thanet district. Those towns all being on the Isle of Thanet and sharing district council governance have a more historic connection and association than with a mediaeval town and rural villages in a neighbouring district. From Garlinge and Westbrook in the west of the constituency to Ramsgate and Cliffsend in the east, these Thanet wards, as I said previously, all share the same district governance and certainly the same taxation level and the same island-wide community organisations. They are compact with dense population levels and they have nothing whatever in common with the two neighbouring, rural, lightly populated Dover district wards.

I understand why some would want a continuation of the status quo. It would represent political expediency. However, I, my association and many of my constituents take a different view. I look forward to 2020 being the year when the vast majority of Thanet residents will, for the first time in many people's memories, be joined together in one constituency, where one MP would represent them all and I would urge the Commission to continue with its proposals for Thanet East.

As an aside, on the approach to the referendum, to a degree supporting the previous speaker in population increases, Thanet East, if it goes into existence, will go into the next election with an electorate of about 82,500 people. That is my only thought on that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody have a question? As I was saying before that presentation, we do not have another speaker booked in until one o'clock but, if a member of the audience wishes to speak now, they would be more than welcome. Otherwise, we will adjourn until 12 o'clock.

MR ALLINSON: Peter Allinson.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you want to add to your presentation?

MR ALLINSON: If you would allow me, yes, just shortly.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That would be fine. Would you like to go to the lectern and again say who you are, where you live and make your additional points?

MR ALLINSON: Thank you for allowing me to do this. I will try and keep it short, but I just thought of a couple of views, particularly listening to Thanet. I really want to make the point that, although it seems sensible to split the constituencies from where they have been, there is a lot of background to why we think it should stay the same. Higham is on the edge of Gravesham Borough Council. As I said before, it is surrounded by green belt. When I moved there 30 years ago, Strood, which is the nearest town was possibly two miles nearer than Gravesend and yet everyone I spoke to always went to Gravesend. Gravesend is the community for Higham. I thought this was weird. I thought I would save petrol going to Strood but in fact, very soon after moving in, it just becomes natural to go to Gravesend. That is our centre. We are totally different from Strood and Rochester. When they became a unitary authority, the only thing I thought was good is that the council tax was lower than mine.

I was on the parish council many years ago before I took a sabbatical. We fought against this bypass which runs along the border from the A2 up to the Hoo Peninsula. We in Higham particularly fought against it because we did not want development going up to the bypass. That was built about 20 years ago. I have to admit to being a hypocrite because I now use it all the time. However, if you look at the Medway Unitary Authority, they have built houses and they continue to expand right up to that bypass. The mile

from the bypass to the beginning of the urbanisation of Higham or the village itself has been fought hard by Gravesham Borough Council and everybody else to prevent development there. That is a green piece of land that definitely separates us from Strood and Rochester.

I would not want to be the MP for Strood and Rochester if Higham was put into it because we would just be a thorn in their side and they will have a tremendous problem in their loyalty to try to please us, as their MP, and please the unitary authority, which is quite massive. It really is a big unitary authority because it works well. I think there would be a lot of conflict and we would get a disservice for ourselves and for Strood and Rochester.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anybody have any point they wish to make of clarification? No. Thank you very much for those additional remarks. I shall adjourn until 12 o'clock. Should anybody arrive by 12, we will start again. If not, we will adjourn again until one o'clock.

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Blanshard? Take your place at the lectern and say who you are and your address for the record, because everything is being recorded. Then you have ten minutes and, if people have points of clarification, they can ask you questions at the end, through me.

MR BLANSHARD: (Liberal Democrat Party) My name is Ken Blanshard. My address is Mill Cottage, Mill Lane, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN25 4EL. I am attending and speaking as a Liberal Democrat member. I am making representations on their behalf regarding Kent.

We will of course be putting in our formal written comments on Kent and, in due course, we will be responding to any comments that other parties have made in this first stage of the exercise. However, I knew you would be here and had put a lot of work into it and I knew some other party members would be here, so I thought I would make the effort to turn up and say a few words at this stage. I think a sense of duty must be very strong.

Within the constraints you have which remain the 2011 rules, you have done a pretty fair job for Kent. There is a caveat, which I will get to later. In particular, it is the plus and minus five per cent deviation rule which is the sticking point. I will cover that later. We think you have done about as good a job as is possible for Kent in aiming to match the actual individual county constituencies with the communities. The idea is that they are representing and defining logical, sensible communities. I am impressed, because I did this job with this exercise in detail for 2011, that you have managed in the east Kent coast area, Thanet and the north Kent coast to draw lines on maps that much better represent

what was going on in those communities than has been the case in the past. It is an achievement, given the difficulties. We think that you have done a good job. We are not intending to propose lots and lots of changes. There might be a very small tweak to the odd constituency.

The major problem of course and difficulty with lack of community coherence is the High Weald proposal. As with last time, The Weald was proposed. In that exercise, the Lib Dems managed to show that Kent could stand alone and you could define boundaries very well, which much better matched both communities and the administrative areas that have the burden of running the elections. We received a "highly commended" from you. Thank you for that, but it fell down because you required the same exercise to be proven to work for Sussex and that could not be done. You are in the same difficulty now.

The Political and Constitutional Reform Committee looked at that last round and they did recommend that the constraints be relaxed to 10 per cent back in March 2015. That recommendation was ignored, so you have had to do it the hard way.

The difficulty with High Weald is that geographically it is very large, undesirably large. The major conurbations are Crowborough and Tenterden. Both of them are lovely places. I know them both well, but there is no administrative centre in them. They are large distances. Come polling day, when people want emergency, proxy votes and stuff, where are they going to have to go to get them? It is composed of parts of four separate districts, without including an administrative centre in any one of them.

It is sub-optimal and, if it goes ahead like that, there will be difficulties for electors on polling day and all the rest of it. I do recognise and other people have recognised the difficulty of the constraints, so that is where you are. We are not saying you should not have done it, but we regret that it is necessary.

With that caveat, I have to reiterate that our position is you have done a pretty good job in Kent. There is no requirement for major shuffling of things around. No doubt you will get changes proposed. We will look very strongly at those changes to see if they loosen the communities that you have managed to pull together. I think that is all I have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any questions? No. Thank you very much for coming in. As you say, it is good to have representations on the day.

MR BLANSHARD: Positive comments need to be made as well as negative.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: They are much appreciated.

MR BLANSHARD: It is necessary for balance. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. I do not think we have anybody until one o'clock, so we will adjourn until after the interest rate announcement, until one o'clock.

After a short break

Time Noted: 1.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please say who you are and where you are from. Then you have ten minutes. It is because it is all recorded for record purposes.

MR STEWART: (MP for Milton Keynes South) Good afternoon. My name is Iain Stewart. I am the Member of Parliament for Milton Keynes South. I have been since May 2010 and, before that, I contested the 2001 and 2005 general elections in the old Milton Keynes South West constituency. I have lived in the Tattonhoe ward of Milton Keynes for over a decade and served as a parish councillor on Shenley Brook End and Tattonhoe Parish Council for six years from 2005 to 2011. I am grateful for this opportunity to contribute to the consultation and I shall summarise today the points that I shall expand on in a written submission as well.

Today I speak in support of your provisional recommendations as they affect Milton Keynes and the neighbouring existing Buckingham constituency. Given the parameters that you have set and have to work to, I believe that your proposals represent the most logical distribution of wards within Milton Keynes and between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale councils.

For the record, I would like to mention that, for future reviews, I do believe that you should explore for particularly the Milton Keynes area the option of splitting local government wards, given that they are of large size, and also of crossing regional boundaries, as I believe that these would facilitate the creation of constituencies in my area that better respect local ties and the wider economic area. For example, Milton Keynes is increasingly paired with both Northamptonshire, which is in the East Midlands, and Bedfordshire in the east of England in bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Health Care Review. However, I accept that for this review my comments today are based on the assumption that you will not cross regional boundaries or divide local wards, unless under exceptional circumstances.

I also accept that the population of Milton Keynes is now too large for just two constituencies wholly within the council area, but it is not yet large enough for three, although I would note that the rate of population growth is likely to arrive at that conclusion in a future review.

In an ideal world, there would not be a cross-authority constituency, but it is also important to apply the principle of equal electorates so that all parts of the country are fairly

represented in Parliament. My current electorate is amongst the highest ten in the country and approximately double the electorate of other constituencies elsewhere in the UK.

Whichever wards of Milton Keynes are included in a cross-border constituency, there will be an understandable sense amongst local residents that they are somehow being moved out of Milton Keynes, when the reality is that Milton Keynes as a whole is gaining its rightful, additional parliamentary representation, given its population growth. I would however urge you to emphasise this point in your communications and advertising with local people.

One small measure that I believe would help in this regard is to include a reference to Milton Keynes in the name of the cross-border constituency. I am open to what that might be, but I do note the suggestion that was made at an earlier hearing by Councillor Kevin Wilson of Milton Keynes Council that the cross-authority constituency could be called Buckingham and Milton Keynes West. I believe that a name such as that would be helpful.

I agree with your recommendations that the two wards from Milton Keynes which should form part of the cross-authority constituency should be Wolverton and Stony Stratford. I would cite the following reasons to support this: there is a precedent for those constituencies to be paired with Buckingham. The fourth periodic review split the pre-1983 Buckingham constituency, which at that point included the whole of Milton Keynes, into two seats, Buckingham and Milton Keynes. Not all of Milton Keynes was included in the Milton Keynes seat. Stony Stratford and Wolverton remained in Buckingham. That arrangement continued until the interim boundary review before the 1992 election, which further divided Milton Keynes into two seats, North East and South West, with Stony Stratford and Wolverton forming part of the South West constituency. As I noted earlier, I contested that seat in two general elections.

Stony Stratford and Wolverton are established historic towns in their own right with strong links to each other and they predate the new city of Milton Keynes. Therefore, I would argue that it is more logical to pair them with similarly long established towns and villages in North Buckinghamshire than some of the more modern and recently established new town developments of the western flank of Milton Keynes. Furthermore, in the aborted 2013 review, there was cross-party consensus that Wolverton and Stony Stratford share common characteristics and should be linked.

The historic and Civic Society links between Stony Stratford and Wolverton include for example the Wolverton and Stony Stratford Rotary club that serves both towns, a secondary school, the Radcliffe, which draws the majority of its pupils from both towns and also, as a historic example of the historical links, there was the old Wolverton to Stony Stratford tramway which opened in 1887.

There are also strong and logical transport links from Stony Stratford and Wolverton to the rest of Buckingham constituency via the A5 and A422. Stony Stratford and Wolverton

lie on either side of the A5, which is a key road artery through Milton Keynes. This links to the A422, which is one of the main East/West roads linking Milton Keynes to Buckingham and beyond. For example, the important Stagecoach X5 bus route, which goes between Oxford and Cambridge and calls at Milton Keynes, uses this route. There are public transport links between Wolverton and Buckingham, such as the number 83 bus. In addition, there are strong bus links between Wolverton and Stony Stratford. I would therefore argue that there are strong and compelling reasons why Stony Stratford and Wolverton should be linked together for the purposes of this review and that those are the two wards that should move to join the rest of Buckingham.

I do note that a counter-proposal was made at a previous session from Councillor Kevin Wilson of the Milton Keynes Labour Party. Rather than to include Wolverton with Stony Stratford, it should be the Tattenhoe ward. As both the local MP and a resident of Tattenhoe, I would strongly suggest that this would not be a desirable proposal. The vast majority of the Tattenhoe ward consists of modern housing. Indeed, significant numbers of new homes are currently under construction in several locations in the Ward - for example at Oxley Park and Tattenhoe Park. The people who are now arguing for Tattenhoe to be paired with Buckingham argued strongly in the 2013 review that it was preferable for the older developments of Milton Keynes to be paired, as they shared a greater sense of North Buckinghamshire than the newer housing areas.

I would also contend that there are very poor, indeed, non-existent, public transport links between Tattenhoe and Buckingham. In addition, moving both Stony Stratford and Tattenhoe wards would involve breaking up local ties on the western flank of Milton Keynes and breach the Milton Keynes/Aylesbury boundary on two occasions rather than one under your provisional recommendations. Pairing Tattenhoe ward with Buckingham would break the defined catchment areas for two secondary schools in this part of Milton Keynes. The defined area for the Haseley Academy includes Oxley Park, Kingsmead and Tattenhoe Park, which are in the Tattenhoe ward, together with Grange Farm, Medbourne and Oakhill, which are in the Loughton and Shenley ward. For Shenley Brook End School, Tattenhoe and Westcroft in the Tattenhoe ward join with Ferriston, Emerson Valley and Shenley Brook End in the Shenley Brook End ward.

Pairing Tattenhoe rather than Wolverton would also increase the number of parish and town councils that would be split between parliamentary constituencies. The Tattenhoe ward comprises part of Shenley Brook End and Tattenhoe Parish and parts of the Shenley Church End Parish. In addition, if it is given that the proposed Milton Keynes Bletchley seat is a successor to the Milton Keynes South constituency, pairing Tattenhoe rather than Wolverton would also involve an additional 7373 electors being moved from their current place to a new constituency.

The final argument I would make on this point is, from my experience as an MP for six years, there is lively and current debate about future housing development to the west and south of Milton Keynes. Current developments which have already been agreed and

are under construction are in the Stony Stratford ward, the Fairfield and Whitehouse developments. The further possible housing is located between Whaddon, which is in Aylesbury Vale, and Tattenhoe ward. That is highly contentious and I would argue that an MP who represented both areas potentially could be in a very difficult position where one part of the constituency in Aylesbury Vale objected to the plans, but the Milton Keynes side did not.

Assuming that Stony Stratford and Wolverton are the two wards to be paired with Aylesbury Vale and you are not prepared to split wards, then the proposed two seats that lie wholly within Milton Keynes Council area are, I believe, the only ones that arithmetically meet the electorate requirements and therefore I support them.

My only other comment is to do with the names of the proposed constituencies. I have already mentioned my support for including a Milton Keynes reference in the name of the proposed cross-authority constituency. For the proposed constituency which contains the majority of my existing Milton Keynes South seat, I would like to propose an alternative to the suggested 'Milton Keynes Bletchley' name. When I read out that proposed name, I find it slightly clumsy. As a more elegant alternative, I would like to suggest 'Bletchley Park'. Bletchley Park, which is the home of the World War Two codebreakers, is a much-cherished local landmark and it also has a strong national and international reputation. It is a feature of Milton Keynes which commands widespread acclaim and affection and one with which I would suggest most residents of the proposed constituency could readily identify.

I would oppose the alternatively suggested name of Milton Keynes Central that was proposed at an earlier hearing, given that the area known as Central Milton Keynes, the ward called Central Milton Keynes and the railway station with the name 'Milton Keynes Central' would not be included in that constituency. I would suggest that that would be both inaccurate and confusing.

Thank you for your attention and I would be happy to answer any questions of clarification that you may wish to ask.

**THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER:** First of all, any questions from the audience? No. I have one reflection maybe more than a question. As you referred to Councillor Wilson, I think my recollection is that he used the argument that Tattenhoe and Stony Stratford were similar in nature. As you have mentioned, there is a lot of new housing going in there. He used the argument that the people there would be less attached to Milton Keynes. I do not comment on the strength of that argument but I just reflect that that is what he said; whereas Wolverton was a much older established ward which had a history to it in terms of railway works and so forth. I just wondered whether you had any reflections on those arguments.

MR STEWART: The first point I would make is that the vast majority of the Stony Stratford Ward is a traditional, old, historic town that predates Milton Keynes by many centuries. It and Wolverton grew together. I would also suggest you referred back to some of the evidence that was received in the aborted 2013 review, which showed very strong links between those two towns. The other argument was that, because they are more established communities, they better identify with the older villages and towns of North Buckinghamshire. There is more of a sense of shared identity and history there than some of the newer developments.

It is true that there is new housing development in the Stony Stratford ward. I referenced the Whitehouse and Fairfields developments. The difference between that and the proposed development to the west of Tattenhoe is that the Stony Stratford area developments are already agreed and are under construction at the moment. The new development to the west of Tattenhoe is only proposed and it is very contentious. It could place an MP who represented both areas in a bit of a difficult situation. One part of his or her constituency would be in favour and the other part may be opposed.

I would contend strongly that the logical pairing is Wolverton and Stony Stratford and that those are the two that should move to join the cross-border constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much.

MR WINTER: Roger Winter of the Boundary Commission. Can I just confirm something? On your alternative name for our proposed 'Milton Keynes Bletchley', are you intending that that be 'Milton Keynes Bletchley Park' or just 'Bletchley Park'?

MR STEWART: Just 'Bletchley Park'. I just think it reads more elegantly. Bletchley Park is a nationally and internationally known feature of Milton Keynes. I think it could be a stand-alone name.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. I do not think we have another speaker until 2.30. Am I right?

MR WINTER: That is correct.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn until 2.30.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.30pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Perhaps you would like to go and stand by the lectern and just say, for the record, who you are and where you represent. Then you

have ten minutes and members of the audience may ask you questions at the end or I might ask a few questions.

MRS GRANT: (MP for Maidstone and The Weald) Thank you very much, Mr Byrne. My name is Helen Grant and I am the Member of Parliament for the seat of Maidstone and The Weald. Just to begin with, as the MP, I would very much like to welcome you, Mr Byrne, and you, Mr Winter, to this wonderful county town and to my seat of Maidstone and The Weald.

I open this submission in strong support of the Boundary Commission's initial proposals for the new seat of Maidstone. They provide a balanced mix of urban and rural wards, all within the Maidstone Borough Council local authority boundary and all with historic ties to the general community of Maidstone. I also support the Conservative proposals to include North Downs and Leeds wards in the new Maidstone seat. They too have historical links to the Maidstone constituency, only having been moved at a time when Faversham and mid Kent was created in 1997. Work, shopping, education and social links are strongly with the Maidstone urbanisation. The main transport links, both road and rail, are also with Maidstone.

This proposal is also something that was unanimously agreed and proposed by the existing Members of Parliament for Tonbridge, Faversham and mid Kent, as well as myself. North Downs and Leeds have no existing ties with Tonbridge or the Low Wealdon area to the south of Maidstone. At 74,888, this configuration falls well within the numerical limits for the new electorate. It also reflects precisely the same new Maidstone seat proposals agreed by the Boundary Commission in the final 2013 review.

I understand it has been suggested that Barming ward should be excluded from the new Maidstone seat and I do not support this proposal. Barming is a very natural part of the Maidstone seat. It shares many links with the adjacent wards of Heath and Fant. It is a thriving community with a parish council, the church, schools, shops, village activities, all catered for and supported by the populations of Barming, Heath and Fant wards. It makes absolutely no sense to split them. Barming is closely connected to Maidstone by road and rail links. It also has a natural boundary of the River Medway, which divides it from the proposed Tonbridge and The Weald constituency. For these reasons, the case for retaining Barming within the new Maidstone seat was argued and accepted by the Boundary Commission, again in 2013.

It has also been suggested that Detling and Thurnham should be excluded from the new Maidstone seat and again I cannot support this proposal. Like the other neighbouring, rural wards to the north-east of the borough, including Boxley, Bearsted, North Downs, Leeds and Downswood and Ottam, Detling and Thurnham have historical links with the Maidstone constituency, again only having been moved at a time when Faversham and Mid-Kent was created in 1997. Work, shopping, education and social links and the main rail and road transport links are all strongly with the Maidstone urbanisation. Removing

Detling and Thurnham from the Maidstone seat would not be logical or suitable on a community level too. The area known as Weaving Street in the south of the ward lies inextricably linked to the wards of Bearsted to the east and Boxley to the west in an area of unbroken urbanisation in the north-east of Maidstone. It makes no sense to orphan this small area from its neighbours.

The annual Kent County Show held on the County Showground in Detling also has many administrative, transport and business links with Maidstone town. It has very little connection with Tonbridge.

Finally, I am aware of a proposal to include the ward of Parkwood in the new Maidstone seat. This ward has not been part of the Maidstone constituency for almost 20 years and I agree with the Boundary Commission's proposal that it should remain outside. If they Commission accept the above-mentioned proposals, to include North Downs and Leeds wards in the Maidstone seat, this would increase the electorate to 74,888. The further inclusion of Parkwood would take the total up to 78,927, which exceeds the upper limit of 78,507.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for listening to me so intently and carefully this afternoon. I do not have any further points to make.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Does anybody have a question? No. Thank you very much indeed for coming along. Our next speaker is Mr Michael Steed.

MR STEED: Thank you very much. My name is Mike Steed. My postal address is Chaise House, 19, Fordwich Road, Sturry, CT2 0BW. I have quite some experience of Boundary Commission matters. I have no real experience of this pointer so, if I go wrong on the pointer, please forgive me. My technology was learned way back in the '60s before these modern devices were around.

My personal background is one of having been born in Thanet with parents coming from the Northern part of the Dover district. I now live and have lived for many years in the Canterbury district and I have close family connections with the nearer part of the Swale district, the Faversham area. I have a professional interest, having been a political scientist at the University of Manchester and, particularly in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, studied and published work on the role of the Boundary Commission and the history of boundary drawing. In the last 20 years, I have been less active but I still obviously retain an interest and partly came along today to speak so that I could see what was happening. This is an extraordinarily quiet hearing compared to the ones five years ago in Hollingbourne that I attended, let alone the Boundary Commission inquiries that I took part in.

My first ever Boundary Commission inquiry was to be called as a witness by the Dover Conservatives back in 1965, by a very young lawyer called Michael Howard. The last round was to present the Liberal Democrat case at an inquiry in Ashford into the whole of Kent, so I do know the whole of Kent, but I am focusing mainly on my own patch.

I am a member of a political party but I am speaking solely as an individual. My recent campaigning experience has largely been confined to the European Union referendum, where I was working with people from four different parties, knowing that this round of changes was imminent and expecting something like what has been proposed, though not exactly. I had a number of conversations and therefore I am reflecting the views of others, but the way I put it is entirely my own.

If I may start over in the Maidstone area, referring back to the last speaker, I did some interviewing in the 1990s along with a journalist from Faversham, when the present link between Faversham and Mid-Kent was established. It is not a happy link. I know a number of people in Maidstone are confused to live in the town of Maidstone and find themselves not in the constituency called Maidstone. Maidstone is a town with a clear identity and I welcome the fact that an essentially Maidstone town constituency is now being proposed. I do not know the detailed boundary around Maidstone well enough to make any comments on what was said by the current MP, but I do believe the Parkwood ward is more urban than some of the other wards being considered and therefore has a better case to be included, although I have no specific proposals.

Moving northwards, the Sittingbourne and Sheppey constituency is happily unchanged. At the Ashford inquiry, there was a lot of debate about whether Teynham should be in it or not. I think Teynham won the case to be included and that is being maintained. There is a tiny area in the East Downs ward which is round Newnham on that map, where I know that at the last review in 2011 there was some suggestion that that would be better attached to Sittingbourne and Sheppey than going into Canterbury. I only know the area mainly as an area of superb country walks and great pubs. I do not know what the local feelings are. I think it is probably a toss-up, but there clearly might be the case there for a tiny change.

Moving to Faversham, which I do know well, my present partner of 16 years' standing was born and brought up in Faversham. My sister has been chair of the largest village parish council in the area, Boughton-Under-Blean, so I have many direct and indirect connections there. Faversham is not happily married to a chunk of Maidstone. It was reasonably naturally linked to Sittingbourne in the previous pre-1997, I think it was, arrangement because there are good east/west communications but, in terms of the east-west communications, they point more to Canterbury for schools, work, commercial, shopping, culture and theatre outings. People in Faversham and the villagers in between do come to Canterbury far more often than they go to Sittingbourne, so I think the Commission here is proposing what is essentially a happy marriage. Although I am a Canterbury person and play a role in Canterbury organisations, I think the double-

barrelled name is merited by the character and history of Faversham, so I am in full support of the Canterbury and Faversham link into a single constituency.

Moving into the Canterbury district, the Commission is proposing a simple division of the two coastal towns and the historic city with its surrounding villages on the other hand. That I think is an excellent way of dividing the district, significantly better than the one proposed in the last review or in the previous provisional proposals or the current arrangement. I have a quibble at the end just here (indicating), which I will come to in a moment, but, on the general principle, Whitstable and Herne Bay make a nice pair. They are very different towns, although they are neighbours. Their histories are extremely different. Whitstable is essentially a maritime town. I know it well. My grandmother retired to live there. She had two sisters living there, admittedly more the Tankerton side than the Seasalter side, but I had many days as a boy wandering round. It is very much a town unto itself with a very clear green gap between Faversham and the Seasalter flats, the Blean Forest to the south and, although it is a small gap, the gap between Herne Bay and Whitstable is preserved as a green gap. Whitstable is a community town. I emphasise that because I hear that, for mathematical reasons, a proposal has been made to take the Seasalter ward out of Whitstable and put it into the Canterbury and Faversham constituency. That looks a sensible shape on the map, but the people in the Seasalter ward live close to the centre of Whitstable. It stretches further south. This bit is more rural there (indicating), but the vast majority live in the town of Whitstable and it would be a mistake therefore to divide that town.

Moving along to the boundary just here (indicating), I want to make a small quibble, if I may, which is a point of general principle. The villages of Hurston and Westbeer are being switched from the current North Thanet to Canterbury and Faversham. The villages of Broad Oak, Sturry and Fordwich remain in Canterbury. The village – the only one marked on the map, Hove – Maple, Chislitt and Upstreet are in the Canterbury district, are part of the rural members' panel for the Canterbury district, are very much old Bridge Blean rural district villages, not part of Herne Bay urban area, but are being proposed for the new North Kent Coastal constituency. That is because the Commission feels bound to follow ward boundaries. Ward boundaries are unstable and keep changing. Those villages were, until recently, in the same ward as Westbeer and Hurston, which are coming into Canterbury. Parish boundaries are much more stable, reflect identities much better and, if the Commission were willing to look at an exception, this is one case where following parish boundaries and using the urban boundary of the old Herne Bay urban district would make a better detailed boundary, with only a few hundred voters involved.

Looking down at the North Kent constituency which stretches right along the north Kent coast, personally, I like the North Kent Coastal name. It is one I suggested many years ago for something not dissimilar, but I have to say that, in trying it out on people, it does not ring well with people I have tried it out on. It has been condemned in the local paper as probably the dullest name the Commission has come up with. I have had an imaginative suggestion of the Kent Oyster Coast, but that rather links it to Whitstable

rather than Herne Bay and Birchington. The only other one I can come up with, and it has been suggested to me, is a rather long name, but it has the merit of exact accuracy. It would be to call the constituency 'Whitstable Herne Bay and West Thanet' in that order, reading left to right, rather than alphabetically. That would ensure that the three distinct parts of the constituency were each duly recognised.

Moving into Thanet itself, the boundary as proposed I think is as good as you can get between urban Thanet to the east and the villages and the smaller, urbanised communities of Westgate-on-Sea, which is here (indicating), and Birchington. I believe there is a proposal to take Garlinge and/or Westbrook into the North Kent Coastal or, as I called it, the 'Whitstable, etc', constituency. I would strongly oppose that. I happened to help a friend in a by-election in Westgate-on-Sea five years ago. As a result of that, I was armed twisted into standing as a candidate for the Kent County Council in the Margate West division, which comprises Westgate-on-Sea there (indicating), Garlinge and Westbrook. I have knocked on a lot of doors there recently. Garlinge is what we used to call a council estate, built by Margate Corporation. It is essentially linked to Margate. Westbrook is even more intrinsically Margate in character. As you come out of Margate Station, if you look to the left, you think you are in central Margate. All the buildings are essentially historic 19th century. You are in fact in Westgate ward. Only if you look to the right, towards the sands, are you in Margate Central ward. The line between Westbrook ward and Margate Central ward is right in the heart of Margate. I think it would be a mistake to move Westbrook into a North Kent Coast or otherwise named constituency. It is much better to keep it in Thanet East.

On the name of 'Thanet East', it presupposes a Thanet West, which does not exist. If North Kent Coastal was renamed, it might make it easier. Thanet Towns has been suggested to me and I think that is an improvement on Thanet East. It effectively is the constituency comprising the three towns of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs.

Last time round, a similar constituency name was proposed of Margate and Ramsgate and that would be my preference. I know that if I lived in Broadstairs I might not take that view. I went to school in Ramsgate, but I do think Margate and Ramsgate would identify the constituency more readily to the rest of Kent and nationally and would identify it locally, since everybody in Broadstairs knows that it lies between Margate and Ramsgate and must therefore be in a constituency called 'Margate and Ramsgate'.

Moving on then, if I may, to the Dover district, which is that chunk down there (indicating), which is in Dover district but proposed to be in the Canterbury and Faversham constituency, this is the one area where I do disagree with what the Commission is proposing. I would like to go into some detail, if I may, to explain why.

There are four wards involved. The first of them is that north-west corner of the Dover district, rather misleadingly called the Little Stour and Ashstone ward. I say "rather misleadingly" because there is a Little Stour ward just next door to it in the Canterbury

district and that has caused confusion. It would be better called the Wingham and Ash ward, because those are the two big villages in it. I know that area extremely well. My father's parents were married in Wingham Church. My parents retired to live in the Canterbury Little Stour ward but used the facilities of Wingham and Ash for things like their surgery in the Little Stour ward. That says a lot for the way in which the A257 running between Canterbury and Sandwich links the three villages of Littlebourne, just inside Canterbury, Wingham and then Ash. That Wingham and Ash ward or officially little Stour and Ashstone ward is much closer in every sense to Canterbury than it is to Dover, except for local government purposes. Taking, if I may, the illustration of buses, most people in rural areas these days have their own cars but where a company chooses to run buses tells you a lot about the movement.

If you are in Wingham, you are 19 minutes by bus, with three buses an hour, from Canterbury. If you are in Ash, the times vary a bit according to route. You are 30 minutes from Canterbury and again there are three buses an hour. I handed the Assistant Commissioner a copy so he can study it. The numbers 13 and 14 buses do go on to Deal. They do not link to Dover. I do not think anybody in Wingham or Ash would think of going by bus to Dover unless they were absolutely forced to. They have to change somewhere and it takes well over an hour. For purposes of local transport, Wingham and Ash are much more connected to Canterbury.

When I first started using that bus route, it ran every half hour. Then, about ten years ago, Stagecoach found it profitable to switch it to every 20 minutes right through the day and so it now runs.

The Sandwich ward I know well. I was baptised in Sandwich. In my youth, it was a busy little farmers' market town, very self-sufficient for its size. Now it is more a town for retired people, people who love its old history and its buildings. It has genuine links northwards to Ramsgate, westwards to Canterbury and very little, except for local government, southwards to Dover. Here is Sandwich, there is Ramsgate, here is Sandwich and there is Canterbury (indicating). Dover is further away, although linked by rail, so it is only really for local government purposes that it goes naturally with Dover.

Sandwich could logically stay with Thanet, with which it is currently linked, or I think recognising slightly more real ties coming in with Canterbury, moving it into Dover makes administrative sense for local government purposes but not otherwise.

Moving to the other two wards that are proposed to be moved, the Aylesham ward is just north of Snowdown. The people in Aylesham used to work in Snowdown Colliery, but Snowdown is not a place in any real sense. Aylesham is a substantial place. It is essentially a mining new town. It is mid-way between Canterbury and Dover and, in terms of rail, equally going in both directions. There are better, more frequent buses to Canterbury than to Dover, I find. That is research, not my personal knowledge.

The ward beyond it, Eythorne and Shepherdswell, which covers quite a large area, includes some groups of houses built for miners. It includes the Snowdown Colliery. That is a mixed rural and historically mining ward. Mining has long since gone, but the social problems and the character of the area are affected by that. That I do know. The family graveyard is in Nonington in that ward. That is geographically definitely closer to Dover than it is to Canterbury. From Shepherdswell, there are not buses because there is an excellent train service. It takes 20 minutes from Shepherdswell to Canterbury and ten minutes to Dover. From Eythorne, where there are buses, there is only one bus an hour. It takes 27 minutes to Dover and 47 minutes to Canterbury. The Eythorne and Shepherdswell ward is geographically much closer to Dover. Although the Commission points out the A2 provides good communications, there is not public transport. Nor is there the same habit of looking to Canterbury in those villages. They are closer historically and realistically to Dover.

The alternative I suggest is either that Aylesham does come into Canterbury along with Little Stour and Adisham and Sandwich goes into Dover – that would make neater geographical lines – or both the two northerly wards, Sandwich and Little Stour and Ashstone, come into Canterbury and both the other wards, Aylesham and Eythorne and Shepherdswell, stay in Dover. Between those two options, both of them are better than the Commission's because they move fewer people around. The Commission's proposal moves nearly 20,000 electors in four wards. The first of my options would move only about just under 15,000 in three wards. Simply moving the two northern wards only would reduce that number moved to 11,000, leaving the Dover constituency unchanged and would therefore reduce the extent of disturbance necessarily caused by the new boundary rules.

Secondly, on clusters, there is a logical cluster along the A257. In terms of local issues, I have worked with local councillors on things like road safety on this route. The Little Stour ward of Canterbury, the Little Stour ward of Dover and the Sandwich ward have a lot in common. There is a lot to be said for keeping those two northern wards together. Although the case for Sandwich coming to Canterbury on its own may not be overwhelming, the combined case for those two wards together coming into Canterbury is stronger.

Further, the coalfield wards go beyond the two I have mentioned. Tilmanstone and Betteshanger were the other two collieries and a lot of what is locally called 'West Deal', the ward of Mill Hill and other village wards around that in Eastry, are also affected by the mining industry. I think there is a lot to be said for keeping that cluster of four or five wards, marked by the coal mining industry of the past with consequent problems but also, I suspect, a lot of social contacts between them, together in the same constituency in which they are now.

Finally, although the line on the map from the first option of moving Aylesham into Canterbury and Little Stour and not Sandwich produces a better line on the map, there

really is nothing in common between Wingham and Aylesham. If you look on the bus map, there is simply no bus at all along what is labelled 'Adisham Road', the B2046. It is a perfectly good road, but there is no collective transport on that route, reflecting the fact that I think hardly anybody normally goes up and down that road for work, schools or other similar purposes.

Finally, on the Dover constituency, I would suggest we go back to the name Dover and Deal. Dover is the name of a town. It is also the name of a local government district. The Dover constituency is a lot bigger than a town but, whatever boundary is decided upon, it is a lot smaller than the district. It is a confusing name.

In 1974, when Dover district was formed, it was exactly coincident with Dover constituency. That made sense as a single name. When the northern part was taken out, I think it was in 1983, it was temporarily renamed 'Dover and Deal'. Then it was renamed back to 'Dover' at some later stage. I do not know why. I know that the local usage is still often 'Dover and Deal'. The Liberal Democrats call themselves the 'East Kent Coast Liberal Democrats', but the Labour Party calls itself the 'Dover and Deal Labour Party'. Deal is slightly larger than Dover, so I do suggest that the Commission considers that name.

Ending on names, I would like to make one little point over in mid-Kent. I have no views on the Tonbridge and Weald constituency boundary. but to call it 'Tonbridge and The Weald' implies that The Weald is in Tonbridge. The Weald is a very large area stretching across most of Sussex, Surrey and Kent. The accurate name would be 'Tonbridge and a tiny little bit of The Weald'. I therefore suggest that, rather than pick up 'The Weald' as the name, you pick up the old 'Mid-Kent' name and 'Tonbridge and Mid-Kent' might be a better name for that constituency.

Summarising, having I think changed my mind about the 'North Kent Coastal' name because of reactions I have had, I would suggest that the names around the coastal constituencies go 'Sittingbourne and Sheppey', as proposed, 'Whitstable, Herne Bay and West Thanet', as suggested, 'Margate and Ramsgate', 'Dover and Deal' and finally the unchanged 'Folkestone and Hythe'. That gives a very clear and accurate delineation of those coastal constituencies in east Kent. Thank you for listening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that very comprehensive tour of eastern Kent. Would anybody like to ask any points of clarification? No. Thank you very much for coming and making that presentation. I believe 3.40 is the next booked in slot, so we will adjourn until 3.40.

After a short break

Time Noted: 3.40pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have to speak from the lectern because everything is being videoed and recorded for the public record. Start by saying who you are and where you live and then you have ten minutes to make whatever points. At the end, we may ask you for clarification of some points or not.

MR VERRALL: My name is Jon Verrall. I live in Culpepper Close in Hollingbourne, which currently comes under the Faversham and Mid-Kent parliamentary constituency. I wanted to come along today because I have seen the proposals. Currently, where I live, I think it is clearly wrong that Hollingbourne comes under Faversham. I do not see any point in that at all because they are two completely different towns and two completely different areas as well. In my time there, I have not understood why we do not come under some form of a Maidstone MP.

However, seeing this latest proposal, it puts us somewhere between Swale Council, Medway Council and Tonbridge Council, with probably the longest boundary I have ever seen. How any one person could ever be expected to (a) cover that and (b) do it efficiently and competently with so many different, diverse villages, hamlets and towns, I do not know.

I used to live off Blue Bell Hill in Burham, which came under Tonbridge and Malling Council, and I know from experience how little emphasis Tonbridge has on these areas out here. Again, those areas, I believe, should be under Maidstone Borough Council, probably up to the top of Blue Bell Hill.

My fear now is, looking at that huge constituency, yet again these rural areas will just be forgotten as the big market town of Tonbridge swallows up the MP's day to day work. I think it is absolutely ludicrous. That is pretty much it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you have an alternative suggestion as to where Hollingbourne should sit?

MR VERRALL: For me, looking at that whole constituency, if you start right at the top of the 249, there are parts which are clearly more natural to Medway and Swale, as I said. Certainly, coming down as you come through, for me, it is logical that Hollingbourne and those surrounding areas should be tagged to the Maidstone MP or one of the closer ones.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Does anybody have any points for clarification? No. Thank you very much. You have until 5 December to write in as well if you choose, but obviously we will have noted the points that you have made. Our next speaker is not until 6.30. We will adjourn until five o'clock and then, if nobody has arrived at five o'clock, we will adjourn until 6.30.

After a short break

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Even though it is a little early, would you like to give your presentation?

MR ELPHICKE: (MP for Dover) I would be delighted to.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you start by saying who you are, where you live and then you have ten minutes. The vast audience may ask you questions at the end.

MR ELPHICKE: My name is Charlie Elphicke. I am the Member of Parliament for the Dover constituency. My residential address is in St Margaret's Bay and my work address is the House of Commons in Westminster, London. I am here today to make observations on the Boundary Commissioner's proposals and to support the counter-proposal for East Kent which has been put forward by the Conservative Party.

The first remark I would make is that the Boundary Commissioner's original proposal is, on the face of it, highly logical. It makes the Dover district as contiguous as possible, while sending the wards of Aylesham and Eythorne and Shepherdswell, which are too great on a numerical basis, out to the Canterbury and Faversham proposed constituency. Logic is not everything and communities matter too. We cannot just conduct ourselves on the basis of what logically works with numbers. We also have to have heart. That is why, in looking at the actual proposals, the counter-proposal is a better fit for work and communities associate and where the heart lies.

Taking the first item, Aylesham, as I said last time we had these hearings, should go to the Canterbury and Faversham constituency. That is because the people of Aylesham associate with Womenswold, which is in the Canterbury constituency, but also with Canterbury. They look increasingly to Canterbury rather than to Dover through work links, through shopping links and community links because Aylesham is geographically much more now associated with the Canterbury constituency. From a logic and a heart point of view, that is absolutely right and makes complete sense.

Then we look at the ward of Eythorne and Shepherdswell, which the Commissioners say should go to the Canterbury and Faversham constituency. My submission is that that is not the right thing to do, because the heart of Eythorne and Shepherdswell sits with Dover and the town of Dover and has for many years, first because they associate so strongly with the nearby villages of Whitfield to the south, Liddon and Temple Ewell, which is just across the A2 and they feel very strongly that it forms a network of villages that associate and look to Dover, to the sea. Many people work in Dover in the maritime industries. That is why I would submit that Eythorne and Shepherdswell should remain within the Dover constituency rather than go off to Canterbury and Faversham.

Then one looks at the whole situation with Sandwich. One could say the two wards which the Commissioners have said should come into the new Dover constituency, namely Little

Stour and Ashstone and Sandwich, should come back into the Dover constituency having been there before the revisions in the 1980s. There is a force of great logic, but then when we go to the heart we look at how Sandwich has been with Ramsgate and the Thanet South, now East, constituency for such a long time, there is a much stronger link that has grown up over many years between Sandwich and the Thanet community, notwithstanding that Sandwich is of course in the Dover district. From a parliamentary point of view, the people of Sandwich have been represented by a Member of Parliament for Thanet South for many years and that is a link which is strong between the towns of Ramsgate and Broadstairs. They are linked by rail, the A256 and of course have been in the constituency for many years and would be severed by the Commission's proposals.

On the other hand, Little Stour and Ashstone has much more heartfelt links to the Dover constituency, particularly to Eastry and to Deal. It is therefore logical that, if Sandwich goes off to Thanet East to re-associate and continue that association with Ramsgate, then Little Stour and Ashstone associates more with Deal in any event and more with Eastry in any event; but also it makes the numbers work. At the end of the day, you cannot get away from the variance. That is why, while the Boundary Commissioner's initial proposals are very logical, from a heart point of view, one would support the counter-proposals that has been advanced by the Conservative Party.

One issue which comes up every time, and I need to make a strong submission on this, is the name of the constituency. It is always called the 'Dover' constituency and, yes, it is true that Dover is, after London and Edinburgh, probably the most recognised name of any settlement in the United Kingdom anywhere around the world. Nevertheless, the people of Deal are not slow to point out that the population of the wider Deal conurbation is greater than that of Dover these days. They are very vexed that, for so many years, it is called the 'Dover' constituency and does not mention them. That is why I would submit once again that it should be 'Dover and Deal'.

If the Commissioners are minded to maintain their initial proposal, then it should be the Dover, Deal and Sandwich constituency because Sandwich of course is an ancient cinque port and feels very strongly its own identity as a town and an historic town at that. That is why, with the counter-proposal, we should be called the Dover and Deal constituency and, if the Commissioners uphold their original position, it should be called the Dover Deal and Sandwich constituency.

You might say, "What is in a name?" I can tell you: an awful lot of correspondence and an awful lot of vexed constituents and, I hate to say it, but some trolling on social media as well. It is very important that I make this forceful point that we should call it the 'Dover and Deal' constituency because the people of Deal really feel extremely passionately on this matter. I think that brings my evidence and prepared remarks to an end.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I ask our one member of the audience whether he has any questions. No. I recognise the importance of the

name and of course will consider that very carefully. We did hear from someone local to East Kent earlier on today and he made some similar points to yours about the links between communities. He made a counter-proposal which was that Sandwich and Little Stour and Ashstone, because they were linked and had strong links, should both go to the Canterbury constituency and that Aylesham and Eythorne and Shepherdswell should both go to the Dover constituency. I was just wondering whether you had any reaction to that.

MR ELPHICKE: I did look at that and I did consider that as a potential option. I thought it was not the right thing to do for a number of reasons. The first reason is that my preference would have been to move the Dover constituency to the west to link up the Downs communities in North Downs east of the Shepway and the folks in the Hythe constituency; but the numbers did not work this time. We are constrained by the numbers. If one looks at the numbers and says, "Let us just move Sandwich and Little Stour and Ashstone after the Canterbury constituency" then basically you put the Thanet East constituency heavily under quota and you put the Canterbury and Faversham constituency heavily over quota, even if you then shuffle out Aylesham and Eythorne and Shepherdswell back into the Dover constituency. From a numbers point of view, it does not work. I have looked at this in detail.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think there is probably a consequent knock-on up at the top, western end of Thanet. There is a ward on there I cannot remember the name of. In his submission, which I have not noted all of down but we have recorded, there was probably a way of balancing the numbers on the North Kent constituency.

MR ELPHICKE: You are then creating a very long constituency. This place right over here (indicating) is so far into west Kent I am not sure where exactly it is and what it is called. It is west of Faversham, so you would end up with this place (indicating) west of Faversham, going all the way to the coast. Sandwich and Faversham have never had anything to do with each other. Sandwich has never been anywhere near a Canterbury formation constituency. Nor has Little Stour and Ashstone. If you were not going to put them into Thanet, which is where they have been for a very long time and where they have very strong ties, then it is utterly logical that they go to Dover, because that is where they used to be. That is where the Dover district is.

If one looks at association, I would say that the place Sandwich firstly associates with currently would be the Thanet constituencies, because that is where it has been. After them, it is inevitably going to be with the Dover constituency because of the link with Deal, Dover, the whole maritime industry and history, the cinque ports history. You would never ever put it anywhere near Canterbury, so it would be entirely illogical, unlike Aylesham which frankly these days looks much more to Canterbury and has much stronger community ties to Canterbury, which is what drove my remarks to say it is right to put Aylesham with Canterbury, because that is where the links now are and how things have

moved and because of the proximity, literally just up the A2. New developments are being constructed in Aylesham. All the people there say, "I work in Canterbury", so that is the link going on, whereas with Eythorne and Shepherdswell the link is with Dover.

Number one, Eythorne and Shepherdswell should be with Dover in any event. Number two, Aylesham associates with Canterbury. Sandwich associates most with Thanet but, after that, would associate with Dover and Deal. None of them would have ever been anywhere in the Canterbury constituency and none of them associates with the Canterbury constituency except at some points in the extreme west of Little Stour and Ashstone, but not in practical terms and never ever in administrative terms.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much for that. Thank you very much for coming in and giving us your presentation.

MR ELPHICKE: Thank you for having me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will adjourn again until 7.20.

After a short break

Time Noted: 7.20pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We do not have a huge audience here tonight, but nevertheless it will be important for us to hear what you have to say. The way we do it is you have ten minutes to speak for up to ten minutes. Everything is recorded on this video camera so that a transcript can be made. Then, everybody later on in the process has an opportunity to comment on everybody else's input. When you are ready, come up to the lectern, say who you are and where you are from and then launch into whatever you want to say. Possibly at the end, we may have some points of clarification to ask you if we think there are things that we do not quite understand.

There is Julian at the back, who has been here all day. Apart from that, we are possibly expecting one more speaker at 7.40, so you may not be on your own. If you want a map, we can put maps up if that helps you.

MISS RANSOM: Yes, that might help.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am assuming you are going to talk about Ramsgate and North Kent.

MISS RANSOM: Yes. I am based in Monkton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you like us to put the wards up there? Would that help?

MISS RANSOM: Yes, that might help.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just remind us where Monkton is.

MISS RANSOM: It is in the Thanet Villages ward. I really have more of a question or query.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry to interrupt you. Would you just say who you are and where you are from for the record, please.

MISS RANSOM: My name is Natasha Ransom. I am from Monkton in Thanet. Looking at the proposal, it seems theoretically quite a good idea, but I was concerned that there are a lot of changes happening with our local plan. I wondered whether this was taken into account with the boundary changes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is your local plan as in planning and all of that?

MISS RANSOM: Yes. We have a proposal at Manston, which is in the North Kent Coastal ward, for 2,500 houses. If they are taken up, it will probably be from outside the area. There are another 1,000 in Birchington, a proposal under our local plan, which again would be a movement of people. I do not know how you calculate population.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Shall I explain? Everything is set down in rules approved by Parliament. We in the Boundary Commission are working to those rules. In terms of your question about how we determine the number of people who are going to be counted, it is worked out on the basis of people who have registered to vote in December 2015. That is how we calculated how many people are in each proposed constituency. When it comes to, for instance, the proposed development at Manston, we will not take that into account in calculating those December 2015 population figures because presumably no houses have yet been built at Manston. It may be some time but, by the time the local plan is adopted and then a planning application comes in for Manston and they start building, it could be made before or five years away, assuming it all gets approval. If those people have moved in, it will be either for the next boundary proposals which will be in five years' time or----

MISS RANSOM: They are every five years?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We go through this process every five years. We have only started doing this, I should say. This is a change in the system. This is the first time we hope to go through this process completely. There was an attempt five years ago to go through this process but, for various reasons, Parliament decided to call a halt to the process. Now we are back doing it again and we hope to get to the end which will

be in 2018. Then we would start again to go through the five year cycle, at which point, if Manston has been constructed, then those people would be taken out.

MISS RANSOM: I had more of a query than an actual feedback.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine. Similarly for Birchington, depending on exactly when that is built. It will be incorporated.

MISS RANSOM: There are a lot of changes happening in the south-east at the moment but again, as you say, if it is in five years, that is not too long.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It will be picked up. In order to do this process right across the south-east all at one time, you have to choose a date when everything stops almost. Then you roll on five years and start again using a different set of numbers.

MISS RANSOM: Other than that, I think it is quite a good idea, so positive feedback.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is what we like to hear. Thanks very much for coming in.

The hearing was adjourned until Friday 4 November 2016

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