

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE GREAT HALL, THE GUILDHALL, ST GILES SQUARE
NORTHAMPTON, NN1 1DE

ON

MONDAY 31 OCTOBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Mr Scott Handley JP, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

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THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the East Midlands region.

My name is Scott Handley, I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the East Midlands region.

I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow and I am also responsible together with my fellow Assistant Commissioner Mr Ashraf Khan, who is sat at the front, for analysing all of the representations received about the initial proposals for this region and then presenting the recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not the initial proposals should be revised.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff led by Glenn Reed who is sitting beside me and who will shortly provide an explanation on the Commission's initial proposals for the new constituencies in this region. He will tell you how you can make written representations and he will deal with one or two administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10.00 am until 8.00 pm and tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm. I can vary that timetable and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak.

I should point out that under the legislation that governs the Commission's review each public hearing must be held over two days and it cannot extend into a third.

The purpose of the public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for this region. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot. I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. If there is any free time during the day or at the end of the day then I will invite anyone who has not registered but would like to speak to do so.

I must stress that the purpose of the public hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers but they should do that through me as the Chair. I will now hand over to Glenn Reed who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the East Midlands region.

MR REED: Thank you very much, Scott, and good morning, everybody. As Scott has mentioned, my name is Glenn Reed 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 and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly.

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

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for new constituency boundaries which were published on 13 September this year. 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 constituencies 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 the regions, but it is likely that compelling reasons will need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional base approach we 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 authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities; consequently it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries. The Commission's proposals for the East Midlands region are for 44 constituencies, a reduction of two. Our initial proposals leave seven of the existing constituencies unchanged.

In Lincolnshire two of the existing constituencies are unchanged while two constituencies are changed due to changes to local government ward boundaries; more substantial change, however, is required in other parts of the region.

In Derbyshire we propose the city of Derby and the county of Derbyshire be grouped to form a sub-region, we have proposed three constituencies that include wards from both authorities.

In Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire it has been necessary to propose two constituencies that cross county boundaries. We propose one constituency that contains electors from both Leicestershire and Northamptonshire which combines the towns of Daventry and Lutterworth and another that contains electors from both Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire combining the town of Loughborough and the southern parts of Rushcliffe Borough.

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 divisions 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 the 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. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday, 5 December so there is still plenty of time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing and they are available on our website and in a number of places of deposit around the region.

People can make written representations to us through our consultation website at www.bce2018.org.uk and I would urge everyone to submit written representations to us before 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 wish to speak.

The Commission is legally obliged to take a recording 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 will have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during spring next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations will include 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.

Now, before I hand you back to Scott I would just like to say that we have been told there are no planned fire drills while we are here for these two days so if we do hear the alarms it means it is probably the real thing. Please leave the building by the nearest

exit, probably at the back, and the assembly point is in front of the building or at the rear but as we are at the front of the building I suggest we assemble there.

Right, at this stage I will now hand you back to Scott to begin the public hearing. Thank you for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We have quite a number of speakers that are booked for this morning, each of them are notionally ten minute slots and we will make a start now. The first person to speak will be Mr Peter Bone and, as Glenn mentioned, it is important that you give your name and address before you start to speak.

MR PETER BONE: (MP for Wellingborough) Thank you very much, Chairman, and good morning to everyone. My name is Peter Bone, I am the Member of Parliament for Wellingborough and Rushden and my address is the House of Commons in London.

You will note, Scott, that I have introduced myself as a Member of Parliament for Wellingborough and Rushden. That is how everyone in this room and the media would recognise the constituency, it is by all political parties known as Wellingborough and Rushden and one of the submissions I make is the name should be changed to that.

I just would like to clarify one point, sir. We have three MPs speaking now right at the beginning because we have to go back to the House of Commons. Tom Pursglove is going to, if necessary, share my slot so that we can get everyone in, if that is permissible with you.

Just to give you an overview of the situation, I run something called the Listening Campaign. The idea is to communicate with my constituents about important issues, listen to what they have to say and then campaign on their behalf. Many of them have come back with these boundary proposals and said this is the carve-up of the Wellingborough constituency and that is the sort of general view. I will make the point that I do not want to see any of my constituents moved from Wellingborough, I actually personally do not believe in the process that we are going through. I think the decision that Parliament made some time ago was before Parliament realised we would be exiting the European Union and I think there is a good case for re-looking at the situation, equalising seats but keeping the same number of MPs. I just want to put that point on the record.

I have looked at the boundary review in some detail and the thing that strikes me foremost is the displacement of the number of electors. It seems to me the displacement is far more than needs to be the case to keep within your criteria, so whilst I am supporting the Conservative Party counter-proposal there is one small caveat to that. The whole reason to support it is not because it is the Conservative Party's proposal, it is because it displaces in the area that I want to talk about – which is the

North Northamptonshire area, Northamptonshire in particular – 12,500 more people are not displaced because of the proposal. I notice that is one of the fundamental principles that you list in your four principles, I think that is absolutely right and I will talk to those points as I proceed.

I would like to say, sir, that there will be a written submission from North Northamptonshire MPs, a detailed written submission which I think at the moment runs into seven pages which we will let you have shortly. I will also pass on to you the many, many letters and emails I am getting from constituents complaining about the boundary proposals which they have sent to me rather than to the Commission, if that is in order as well.

Turning to the individual bits of my constituency that are being carved up, Wollaston, Grendon and Strixton are one ward called Wollaston but they cover those three villages. Even on the Boundary Commission's own criteria that area could remain in Wellingborough and you would still fulfil all your criteria, so it does seem to me a very strange thing to move a constituency which is part of the Borough of Wellingborough, which has all the connections with Wellingborough, out to another constituency when it is not required to do it. I think that is a very important part and that would, of course, mean 3,000 odd people not displaced.

Wollaston has a particular link with the seat of Wellingborough because most of the children that go to Wollaston secondary school, a big secondary school, in fact come from the Wellingborough area, the link with Irchester – I mean, there is a footpath between the two large villages – there is an overwhelming link between those villages and the town centre of Wellingborough.

Moving on to Bozeat and Easton Maudit, I accept that under your current proposals that would have to move to make up the numbers in another constituency but our counter-proposal deals with that by moving another ward into the constituency affected. Bozeat and Easton Maudit about Wollaston so the same arguments and local connections are there, they have no connection whatsoever with Northampton. They might actually look on occasion more towards Milton Keynes that is just down the road but their absolute focus and view is towards the Wellingborough constituency and it seems to me if other criteria can be met then the local connections are clearly towards Wellingborough, so if you can overcome the hurdle that is created by the other constituency then I think the argument for Bozeat and Easton Maudit staying in Wellingborough is overwhelming.

I move to Finedon next. Now, Finedon is connected very, very closely to Wellingborough. There is something what we used to call East, Wellingborough East, a huge residential development will come up all the way to Finedon so it almost adjoins. The urban extension of Wellingborough will almost reach Finedon so there is again a natural link between Finedon and Wellingborough. The idea that Kettering, which is where it is proposed Finedon would go, is miles and miles away, there are no public

transport links, you would have to go across a major trunk road to get there whereas just down the road you are in Wellingborough, so I think the case for Finedon on local ties is clearly proved but again I accept the problem there comes with the numbers because you have to put numbers into Kettering to get to the threshold. We have a counter-proposal which my colleague will particularly talk about because I think it overcomes very nicely the situation with Kettering and the wards that we are suggesting going into Kettering are much more connected to Kettering than Finedon in any way whatsoever.

Those are all in the Conservative Party counter-proposals and I wholly support that.

Now, you will say to me if you get back Finedon, you get back Bozeat, you get back Wollaston you are going to have far, far too many people in the Wellingborough constituency. Well, the only reason for that is for some bizarre reason we have been given Irthlingborough. Now, Irthlingborough, as far as I am aware, has always been part of the Corby and East Northamptonshire constituency since it came into being but I am going to let Mr Pursglove talk about that because that is in his constituency.

Finally I just want to move to a caveat from the Conservative Party's proposal and that is what I would call North Ward, that is the villages of Isham, Orlingbury, Great Harrowden and Hardwick. I was very interested in your colleague's introduction about split wards and the fact that the Commission has not wanted to split any particular ward. We have a split ward in existence now. I am responsible for these areas, these villages, and Chris Heaton-Harris in Daventry is responsible for the other half of the Harrowden and Sywell ward, so it is not as though is not something we have seen, it happens. I can tell you there is no practical problem with it whatsoever, so I would argue strongly for the retention of these villages in my constituency and I am absolutely happy with the split ward; not because we are creating one but we have already got one.

I still stop on that point about the villages because there is a lady who is going to come and talk to you, I believe, at 10.30, a councillor from the area who I know will speak forcibly on it, she is my wife. Mrs Bone is going to come and talk to you on that.

In conclusion I just want to go back to the most important fundamental point: displacement. I think the Boundary Commission should be looking at the whole of the Northamptonshire area and saying how can we displace the least number of people and keep to what the Boundary Commission is trying to do. That is why I think the proposals put forward by the Conservative Party and which I may have had some input in in fact actually is best for all constituents. I think if you went to ask people across Northamptonshire do they want to remain in their constituency if at all possible they would say yes. That is our 12,500 less people displaced and that is why I would urge you to consider seriously the counter-proposals.

Now with your permission I will ask my colleague Tom Pursglove from Corby to come and speak because he will deal with the bits that I have not dealt with. Is that okay? Is that all right?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, if you have a point for clarification.

MR FOX: (Liberal Democrat Party) Hello, Mr Bone. Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Five years ago you supported the Conservative counter-proposal for Kettering and the Wellingborough constituencies which left Finedon in the Kettering constituency and that was agreed in the revised proposals by the Boundary Commission. What has led you to change your mind about Finedon?

MR PETER BONE: I am glad you brought that up, thank you, it is something I forgot to say. When we looked at these proposals those years ago the original proposal had the north wards transferred into the Kettering constituency, that was your original proposal. We actually campaigned for the same reasons that I have talked about, the links between Isham and Orlingbury, etc, to look towards Wellingborough and the evidence from the local people persuaded the Boundary Commission not to put North Ward into Kettering, to put it back into Wellingborough. I thank my Liberal Democratic friend for reminding me of that point.

The problem we had last time and the reason Finedon had to move was again the problem of numbers. We have to accept we can only do what is within your legislation and, whilst I would have loved Finedon to remain in, on that occasion I could not see any way it could happen, so we are looking at a brand new—but I do thank my friend for remind me that actually we did campaign on North Ward, you took it into account and you decided the links with Wellingborough were so much that you would keep North Ward in.

Thank you very much, sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If I can invite Tom Pursglove to come and speak, please.

MR TOM PURSGLOVE: (MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire) Well, thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I am Tom Pursglove, I am the Member of Parliament for Corby and East Northamptonshire and I will come back to the East Northamptonshire bit a little later on in my remarks but I just want to set the context, really, that I come at this from and that is that this boundary review was agreed to in the last parliament. I have never had a vote on this as the Member of Parliament for Corby and East Northamptonshire, it was agreed before the last general election.

I have to say that I would much prefer for my constituency to remain exactly as it is currently constituted but I recognise that the thresholds that are in place make that impossible and so I have to reluctantly accept that the Conservative proposal is the best way forward and I say that for three reasons: first, that it delivers 12,500 less voters being displaced across North Northamptonshire; second, that it keeps more local government areas fully intact; and, third, that it is much truer to the existing parliamentary constituency boundaries that we see today.

I just want to go back on this displacement point because I am particularly concerned about that and I say that as a former Wellingborough councillor who served for eight years so I know the Borough of Wellingborough very well and I also say that as the MP for Corby and East Northamptonshire because local people do have an affinity to their parliamentary constituency, they do have an affinity to their local member of parliament and it is fair to say in Corby and East Northamptonshire that we have had quite a few of those in the last few years, but it is important that people know where they are, that they know where they can go to when they need our help and for me that link to our constituency is incredibly important in all that we do.

Let me address the particular parts of my constituency that are affected both by the proposal that the Boundary Commission for England has come up with but also the Conservative Party counter-proposal.

First, in relation to Irthlingborough John Pyel and Irthlingborough Waterloo Wards. These are two wards that constitute the town of Irthlingborough which has a long standing attachment to the Corby constituency, the constituency first created in 1983 and there is a real synergy between the various boot and shoe towns and the market towns that make up East Northamptonshire, whether that be Irthlingborough, Raunds, Thrapston, Oundle, they all come together as a package and they work very closely together. Retaining Irthlingborough in the Corby constituency also protects the very sensible A45 and Chowns Mill roundabout boundary that we have as well as the boundary that is provided by the River Nene.

From a constituent's point of view it is important to point out that residents work very closely with the other towns and villages in the southern part of East Northamptonshire of which all are currently in the Corby constituency, as I say. For example, for local policing purposes and the work of the JAG, Irthlingborough is grouped with Stanwick, it is grouped with Raunds, it is linked with Ringstead, it is linked with Denford, the Addingtons and Woodford. They have worked on a number of other joint campaigns and supported a number of other joint campaigns in relation to the Chowns Mill roundabout and the dualling of the A45 of which all of those areas are affected, but perhaps the most fundamental reason to keep Irthlingborough in the Corby constituency is that this displaces over 6,000 fewer electors but also, of course, it unlocks the wider ability to protect the existing constituency boundaries that are currently there and by virtue of that not displace thousands more electors across North Northamptonshire

whilst at the same time keeping the whole of the Irthlingborough County Council division contained within one parliamentary constituency.

As I say, that requires some of the other villages to be removed from the constituency in order to facilitate this and the first of those that is proposed as part of the Conservative counter-proposal is Rural West. Now, this ward contains the villages of Cottingham, it includes East Carlton, Middleton and Rockingham and I have to reluctantly accept that because of the thresholds something has to be lost but I do think that there are some natural synergies between the villages in Rural West ward with the villages in the Welland Ward of Kettering Borough. They are all part of the Welland Valley, they all run along the A427 and a lot of the issues and concerns that there are in the Welland Ward of Kettering Borough are reflected in the Rural West ward and actually the character of those villages is very, very similar.

Then I turn to Stanion and Corby Village Ward. This ward contains the villages of Stanion, Little Stanion and Corby Old Village. Again reluctantly I am having to accept that something has to be lost from my constituency and I would rather be holding on to this ward or whoever follows on from me as the Member of Parliament whatever the result of the general election is but, again, Stanion has much in common with the village of Geddington which is the final village in the Kettering constituency, they are naturally linked by the A43 and Stamford road which means that they are easily connected, Stanion has a Kettering postcode. In relation to the figures, the village of Little Stanion which is rapidly growing, it would make sense to be in a constituency where there is room for it to grow in size which it is doing at a rate of knots at the moment.

That said, I have one very significant caveat in relation to this ward and that is that I believe that Corby Old Village should not be transferred from the Corby constituency to the Kettering constituency because, after all, this is where Corby's story began, it is pivotal to our civic life, it is where our war memorial is and people care very passionately about Corby Old Village being a part of Corby; it is where the town started from, it is the genesis, it is where it grew from, so I think that it makes sense to retain Corby Old Village within the Corby constituency and that can be done based on the figures. I have looked at the figures on the current electoral roll and there is sufficient capacity to leave that in the Corby constituency whilst at the same time not push the Kettering constituency under the figures. Obviously at the same time that has a huge benefit in that it displaces even fewer electors than would be the case were the whole ward to be moved. It is a strangely configured local government ward as it is, the villages of Stanion and Little Stanion are actually very, very different to Corby Old Village and I recognise why the Conservative Party counter-proposal did not suggest this because of the issue around splitting wards but, as my colleague pointed out, we already have a split ward only ten miles away down the road so this is not unprecedented and I think given the civic argument, given the historic argument, there are very, very strong grounds by which Corby Old Village should be retained and, as

you have heard there is no problem at all with two Members of Parliament representing the particular ward as my colleagues from Wellingborough and Daventry will testify to.

I just want to touch on the name of the constituency. Obviously your proposal suggests that it should continue to be called the Corby constituency. I would argue very strongly that you should reconsider this position and rename the constituency Corby and East Northamptonshire. As you will appreciate, it is a very large constituency that is very diverse in its makeup, in your last proposals in the last Parliament you did recommend that the constituency be renamed Corby and East Northamptonshire and I would strongly urge for you to re-adopt that position because there is that diversity. Obviously we have got the towns of East Northamptonshire, we have got the stunning villages of East Northamptonshire and we have got Corby Borough which is very different and very unique in its own right and I think it is only right that the different composition and the makeup of the constituency is properly reflected in the name. I am very pleased to say that I think East Northamptonshire Council will be supporting that position and I know that residents in the area feel very strongly on that particular point, too.

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, it is fair to say that with that one caveat that I have in relation to Corby Old Village I very strongly believe that the Conservative counter-proposal meets all of your rules, it displaces 12,500 less electors plus the 300 odd that would be retained in Corby Old Village if that were to remain *in situ*. Less County Council divisions are split which I think is very important, too; I think the more local government areas we can keep intact and that are represented in one parliamentary constituency the better. I think that three overall in North Northamptonshire would be retained in full in this current proposal that the Conservative Party is advocating and I also say politely that this is much truer to the existing parliamentary boundaries that we currently have in place at the moment. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you one point. Irthlingborough you are recommending that that stays with Corby. It is obviously considerably closer to Higham Ferrers, Wellingborough and those areas but you do not feel there are any ties that associate those two areas?

MR PURSGLOVE: Well, as I alluded to in my remarks, certainly from a number of points of view Irthlingborough works very closely with the other towns and villages that are in the Corby and East Northamptonshire constituency, for example, for local policing purposes. Only a few weeks ago I was at a very successful JAG meeting where we talked about a number of policing priorities where the issues and concerns were shared across them, but I do think it makes sense to protect the boundary that there is in place with the A45, with the Chowns Mill roundabout, with the River Nene and I think where possibly you really, really must try and not displace electors, I think that is incredibly important. There are very strong reasons. Obviously there is that proximity to Wellingborough but the vast majority of East Northamptonshire is represented currently

in the Corby constituency and I think that that should continue to be the case if at all possible.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. We have got to watch the time this morning we have got a lot of speakers, is it something that you need to deal with at the moment?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Firstly, in your opening you said the Conservative counter-proposal splits fewer local authorities. It actually splits more, does it not, because it splits Corby Borough?

MR PURSGLOVE: I think that the Conservative counter-proposal is very clear, in fact, in the documentation. It is the case that fewer local government areas are split by the overall situation. For example, the Borough of Wellingborough is less split under this proposal than it would have been had that gone ahead. There would be two Members of Parliament representing Wellingborough rather than four because if Finedon was to go into Kettering that would be an additional Member of Parliament representing Wellingborough, if Bozeat and Wollaston were to go into the Northampton South constituency that would be a further split, so actually overall this splits boroughs far less.

MR FOX: The second question is about Corby Village. I very much agree with you that Corby Village is the heart of Corby. Would you be still supporting the Conservative county proposal without your proposed ward split?

MR PURSGLOVE: I support the Conservative position with that one caveat and I will fight tooth and nail to keep Corby Old Village in the Corby constituency, I think that is incredibly important.

MR FOX: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you give your name, please, before you speak.

MR WILLIAMSON: (Labour Party) George Carl Williamson, Labour Party, 23 Barrett Lane, Attenborough, NG9 6AD. This is a very straightforward question. Does the removal of the Corby West Ward split any county divisions?

MR PURSGLOVE: That does split a county division but actually when you look at the overall position in relation to County Council divisions fewer County Council divisions across North Northamptonshire will be split. For example, the Irthlingborough County

Council division would not be split under these proposed changes, the Finedon County Council division in the Wellingborough division would not be split and neither would the Irchester County Council division in the Wellingborough constituency be split, so that would mean that overall an extra two divisions would not be split compared to the current proposal.

MR WILLIAMSON: You are proposing that just one ward, then, in the whole constituency be moved out into Kettering?

MR PURSGLOVE: No, sir. What I agree with the Conservative Party proposal on is that the Rural West Ward is moved into the Kettering constituency and the majority of the Stanion and Corby Village Ward is moved into the Kettering constituency with the Corby Old Village being retained in the Corby constituency which would mean that there would be a split. You know, as I say, I go back to the point that I would much rather my constituency be exactly as it is now and whoever is elected as the Member of Parliament at the next general election I believe would be better off having the constituency as it is now but we are where we are in relation to the thresholds.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much, we will move on. If I can ask Michael Ellis to speak, please, and again if you can give your name and address for the record.

MR MICHAEL ELLIS: (MP for Northampton North) Yes. My name is Michael Ellis, I am the Member of Parliament for the Northampton North constituency, House of Commons, London. I have been the MP for Northampton North for six and a half years and three and a half years the candidate before that, so ten years, but what is perhaps as important is that I was born here in Northampton, brought up here, I have lived and worked here my whole life and my parents, for example, still live here now. I know the town and I am in a position of being able to say that I support the Boundary Commission's proposals because knowing the town as I do I think the Boundary Commission's current proposals for Northampton North make sense, they reflect the boundaries as near the Borough Council boundaries as they exist currently, there is as minimal a change to the existing constituency as is feasible with the statutory requirements having to be taken into consideration in terms of increasing the size and I feel that the Boundary Commission's proposals take account of the common sense geography, frankly, of the situation and respect the local ties. With my knowledge of the town as Member of Parliament and as a politician but also as a lifetime resident I do strongly support the current proposals and I want to just expand on that a little.

In terms of the geography the logic of enlarging to the east is clear. Since its formation in 1974 when the Borough of Northampton was split into Northampton North and Northampton South the area to the north and to the east has been in the Northampton North constituency and this, frankly, completes the move taking the boundary to its natural end where the borough boundary is now at the borough boundary, so up until

this point and as we speak today the constituency boundary to the east actually ends on a footpath in the Blackthorn area near Rectory Farm whereas the Boundary Commission's proposals would take in Rectory Farm to the borough boundary and therefore that makes perfect sense. At the moment a finger, if you like, comes up from Northampton South into the Northampton North area, so it is clearly sensible and a reflection of what has gone on for the last 40 years or more that as the town has to expand in terms of its parliamentary boundary it expands to the east rather than to the west. It would be incongruous for it not to do that.

To further that argument I would point to Abington, the Abington Ward. We currently have in the Northampton North constituency a slice of Abington, if you like, a jigsaw piece almost square in shape that protrudes down towards the south, but we do not have Abington Park and we do not have Abington Vale, so it makes perfect sense for the Boundary Commission's proposals to expand in the easterly direction to take on board Abington Park, Abington Vale, in other words Park Ward, the Park division of the town and Weston Favell; that makes obvious sense.

Also Northampton North taking Billing makes sense geographically because the logical southern border would be the A45, if you look now at the boundary of Northampton North where it runs along the Billing road opposite Northampton School for Boys, that would now logically be continued by the Boundary Commission's proposals to sort of follow the Billing road in an easterly direction, so it would take in that jigsaw piece that is currently missing from the constituency.

To the west of the constituency the natural border, if you like, the border that has been in use for decades has effectively been in the upper quadrant, the railway line, which continues to be the case in the proposals put forward by yourselves and I accept that that is very much the logical natural border as well. My understanding is in fact that where the border currently lies has remained unchanged since 1974, since the constituency was created, if one is talking about the area to the west, so the geography makes perfect sense and it would, if you like, subsume that part of the northern part of the town above the A45 and the Riverside area as well very logically.

Now, as far as the local ties are concerned, that is the second limb to my argument, I also very much support the proposal because it respects local ties; not just geography, it is the local ties. The eastern section of the town, the eastern district is being respected by containing the entire area in one whereas previously it has been split between two: Northampton North and Northampton South. For example, the principal shopping centre, the Weston Favell shopping centre, is used by many people all around the area, the eastern district area, and clearly is a centrepiece of that location yet at the moment the Billing Ward is in Northampton South even though it is effectively almost opposite, if you like, that shopping centre. So your proposals, if I may say so, make perfect sense in terms of subsuming the Billing Ward into the Northampton North

constituency as a principal shopping location and one of the earliest shopping locations of its size when it was built 40 years ago.

Also policing, for example, Weston Favell police station is near the shopping centre and that also respects the eastern district in terms of the policing arrangements and other amenities, facilities and transport links make perfect sense in terms of the road infrastructure there. I would also point out what is a relatively new – it is not actually new but a slightly newer – shopping area called Riverside which is within the Riverside Ward that you know about. Clearly that further is used by those on the eastern half of the town, not just by those in the north east but also in the east generally, and this can be reflected by the fact that, for example, many of the shops or restaurants that are on Riverside there are also other branches of those shops in the town centre or on the west of the town so, if you like, retail has accepted, as well as the public amenities, that the natural boundary or border is there. It very much makes sense for those reasons, but it is things also like school catchment areas, as I have said, the shopping links, the transport links, the bus routes that currently exist, but areas covered by community groups. When people in Northampton speak of the town, if they do speak of the town in terms of geography, they refer collectively to the eastern district and the current proposals in my view make perfect sense because up to this point because of the numbers involved and the need to have a certain number, parts of that eastern district have been missed out. Where now it is necessary to expand the size of every constituency in the country and you have to look to where you expand Northampton North, in my submission it makes great logical sense that you expand in the way that you have envisaged to include the southern parts of the north and east of the town that have been missing hitherto.

Those would be my submissions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. There are no queries on that so we will move on to – is that a question? I think we will move on on this on this occasion because time is pushing ahead. If I can call Mrs Jennie Bone to speak, please.

CLLR JENNIE BONE: Good morning, Mr Chairman. Thank you for allowing me to make my submission. My name is Cllr Jennie Bone, Borough Council of Wellingborough, representing the ward of Harrowden and Sywell.

Just to firstly say I am not going to speak as long as the previous three MPs so you will be glad about that. I represent, along with my Council colleague Clive Hallam, who will be speaking shortly as well. In your initial proposals for the new parliamentary boundaries in the East Midlands you acknowledge, quote, that you “do not yet have evidence and intelligence of how our proposals reflect or break local community ties”, unquote. It is my sincere hope that as evidence pours into your office your initial proposal to take the five villages of Hardwick, Little Harrowden, Great Harrowden,

Orlingbury and Isham that I and my colleague Clive currently represent as Wellingborough Borough councillors will remain within the parliamentary constituency of Wellingborough represented by the current MP Mr Peter Bone.

In my opinion it is extremely important to have continuity of contact with the MP when support for local issues is needed. Campaigns such as the Isham by-pass, an issue of great significance to all five villages in my ward, continues to play a major part in Mr Bone's work and his knowledge of and participation in such campaigns make it imperative for the villages to remain unchanged. Mr Bone holds weekly surgeries in his Wellingborough office and they are attended by many constituents from all over the constituency. His office is a mere three or so miles from Hardwick, for instance, and is therefore very accessible to those needing his assistance. Knowledge of local issues and concerns is paramount to a good parliamentary representative and the Wellingborough MP is well informed through his relationship and connections with the borough councillors. It seems rather odd to me that a constituent who has looked to the Wellingborough MP for advice and assistance via his local office should have to contact the Daventry MP some 40 odd miles away should the villages move into that constituency as proposed. I believe it is beneficial for the MP to work closely with the local government authority and as the five villages fall within the Wellingborough Borough it seems logical to continue with the current parliamentary representation.

Many constituents have already contacted us urging us to fight to remain within the current parliamentary constituency. I totally agree with their wishes although this is obviously counter to your proposals and I understand that a major factor in determination is to limit the displacement of voters as much as possible. As of September 2016 the five villages of Harrowden, Orlingbury, Isham and Hardwicks comprise of 1,897 residents. I understand that the review's target of every constituency contains no more than 78,507 electors and no fewer than 71,031 by 2018 and with the growth in the population from planned housing development in the Daventry and Lutterworth constituency until 2018 there should be no shortfall in that constituency. May I therefore recommend that the five villages remain as they are at present.

As you know, Harrowden and Sywell Ward contains seven villages, five within Wellingborough and three, those of Ecton, Mears Ashby and Sywell, with the current Daventry constituency. This split ward works well. You may be aware, I am sure, that the previous boundary review suggested moving the five villages to the Kettering constituency but following local objections the Commission changed its proposals and retained the villages within Wellingborough as we are at present. I certainly hope that your initial proposal will again be altered and that the villages remain unchanged. Taking into account the major urban extension of Wellingborough North the five villages will in fact actually be physically connected with the Isham by-pass being a fundamental part of that extension programme.

The Commission may like to know that the Wellingborough MP – I am sorry, I missed his speech, he has probably already told you this – will be holding four public meetings in November to which the residents of those areas affected by the proposals will be able to voice their concerns and opinions and it is my sincere hope that the Commission will receive as many of their views in writing as well as in person. I trust that, as in the previous review, this local intelligence will be reflected in the Commission's decision to retain the villages of Little Harrowden, Harrowden, Orlingbury, Isham and Hardwick within the Wellingborough constituency. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for those comments. If I can call for Mrs Rose Gibbins to speak, please.

MRS GIBBINS: Good morning, thank you for allowing me to come and make a very short representation this morning. My name is Rose Gibbins, currently residing in the South Northamptonshire constituency although last year I stood as parliamentary candidate in Northampton South ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will need your address.

MRS GIBBINS: I put it on the registration form.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does need to be announced in public.

MRS GIBBINS: Of course. My address is 7 Hazel Close, Hartwell, Northampton, NN7 2LA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS GIBBINS: I am familiar with Northampton South constituency as presently constituted and, although my proposal will be extremely radical, I think it would be much better to join Northampton North and Northampton South together and have one constituency representing Northampton and slowly remove the peripheral areas into the neighbouring constituencies. What we are going to have at the moment with these proposals is an MP who will have to liaise with Northampton Borough Council, with South Northants District Council and Wellingborough Council, each of whom have different working practices. It is also extending into an enormously large geographical area. At the moment Northampton South is a nicely neat community that can be covered and all the issues of the residents addressed properly and well. If you take it out to the boundaries of Wollaston and as far south as neighbouring South Northants areas I feel that that representation will be diminished.

I would like to make one other small point. It does puzzle me the little bump around Grange Park. Grange Park Ward has 1,760 on the electoral roll. I would have thought with it being so close to Northampton South that would have been a ward that could

easily be brought into the Northampton South constituency boundary rather than pushing off to the east to embrace Wollaston.

Thank you so much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Can I call Mr Jonathan Nunn to speak, please. Again if you could give your name and address.

CLLR NUNN: Yes, certainly, thank you very much and thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Jonathan Nunn, the acting leader of Northampton Borough Council. My address is 31 Verdant Vale, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0SQ.

I am glad of the opportunity to speak, it is a difficult job to balance communities with numbers and so on but I would like to say that broadly I am in agreement with the Commission's proposals and welcome them. In my view they do reflect a pretty good representation of how residents see their communities around the town of Northampton such as across the eastern communities of Billing, Rectory Farm and Riverside and so on, also communities such as Duston, Kings Heath, St James and Spencer, I believe they come together well. I very much support the inclusion of the areas to the south of the town such as my own area of Hunsbury and the area I represent in Nene Valley but also those of Upton. I believe that people in those areas very much feel part of Northampton, the Northampton community and will welcome being part of a Northampton South constituency.

I think many residents see a dividing line as the M1 motorway, being the edge of the town, therefore I would like to highlight a couple of areas of relatively recent development and forthcoming growth and development which I believe also see Northampton as their town and these include Grange Park whose residents tend towards using the various facilities around Northampton which may include schools and shopping and so on. Also the growing area out towards junction 16 of the M1 motorway where we see the huge growth at Upton but also going out as far as Harpole where growth is coming; these people, too, I believe see Northampton as their town and their community.

To balance this it is my view that the residents of Hackleton feel a stronger link to South Northamptonshire. Similarly, I believe the residents of Wollaston do not see Northampton as their local community and I tend to feel therefore that their inclusion in Northampton South is not so appropriate. I rather believe they would feel much more linked to Wellingborough and Rushden and so on.

Largely I welcome these proposals. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will move on to Mr Clive Hallam.

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: My name is Clive Hallam and my address is Hanbury Lodge, 104 Orlingbury Road, Isham, NN14 1HW. Thank you for the opportunity to put my points over. I am a resident of Isham, I am an Isham parish councillor, I am also a councillor on the Borough of Wellingborough.

You have heard from Cllr Jennie Bone earlier. The ward Harrowden and Sywell that we represent on Wellingborough is already split and it works extremely well. Jennie and I cover that ward; we do not pick villages each, we cover each other, you know, on committee meetings and try and make sure that there is one of us attending all of the parish meetings and get to know the communities very well and I have to say it works.

The problem we get is that there are seven village communities there, we have three that sit under Daventry from a parliamentary point of view and we do work very closely with those villages. They are covered generally by Wellingborough Borough Council for things like litter and refuse collection and all the other areas and we have had a real problem in some of them with fly tipping as I know a lot of people have had recently. Wellingborough North have done a tremendous job so we work very closely with them.

What we found is that there is very little interaction already at the moment with Daventry. Now, we know our Daventry MP, I have been out canvassing with him at general elections but we have very, very little communication with Daventry generally whereas with Wellingborough we have a great deal of communication from our MP Peter Bone and his office. His office is situated less than three miles from most of those main villages, we get invited to updates and we also, obviously, get very, very good support from within the Borough Council of Wellingborough, get kept up to date on development progress and various other things.

I think the other key point is the villages feel part of Wellingborough. You know, the thought of Isham, for example, which is the furthest on the east, having to go to Daventry where we get almost no interaction anyway. Daventry is 40 miles away, there is no relationship there whatsoever, yet just down the road we have the Harrowdens, Little Harrowden and Great Harrowden and then further down Hardwick, as Jennie mentioned earlier, with the Wellingborough north developments they are going to be physically connected with Wellingborough, so we do connect very, very closely with the Wellingborough Borough and we would prefer it to stay that way.

As I mentioned, we get full support from our Wellingborough MP, from Peter Bone, on development matters, highways involvements, the challenges we are having around the A509 and particularly the Isham by-pass, development challenges that we have had and, you know, the villages are fully engaged with Wellingborough and that is it. On a sort of more casual side or, you know, sort of free time side, you have got the Wellingborough Golf Club situated within these villages. If we go to the theatre we go to the Castle at Wellingborough, if we go to the cricket club we go to Isham Cricket Club.

All these Wellingborough resources are there within this village group and it is an important part of the community.

As Jennie mentioned, if these proposals went ahead we would actually displace about 1,900 residents from the Wellingborough area into Daventry, 40 odd miles away. I do not actually see it working so I am very much against that change.

Those are the key points that I really want to make. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I can just ask you on this, this is obviously an issue, this split has been mentioned by other speakers. The villages to the south: Sywell, Mears Ashby, they do not associate with Wellingborough, are you saying?

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: No. Well, they do in some ways because they are still covered by the Borough for all the day to day things, they have very close ties with Wellingborough Borough Council on day to day matters. We get very little interaction within those villages to Daventry although they are covered by Daventry on a parliamentary basis. I have never met anybody from Daventry in those villages. You know, we do not get invited to any of the social events on a parliamentary basis or get any of the updates from there. Everything that goes on within those villages from a parliamentary point at the moment, all the updates we get are from Wellingborough Council and from Peter Bone's office, we get no interaction with Daventry at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you saying that the split should be maintained or that the whole of that ward should be moved to Wellingborough?

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: Personally I would prefer to move it to Wellingborough but I think realistically... As it is now it works and it works well and I would leave it alone.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. I think you have a question at the front. If you could just give your name again, please.

MR WILLIAMSON: Mr George Carl Williamson, the Labour Party. Just to be absolutely clear, are you suggesting then splitting Harrowden and Sywell in order to maintain the Earls Barton Ward in Daventry? Is that what you are proposing?

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: No. I am recommending at the moment leaving it as it is at this point in time. So the split that we have currently within our Sywell and Harrowden Ward is that Mears Ashby – Sywell, Mears Ashby and Ecton sit within our parliamentary ward and the proposal is to move all of the seven villages into Daventry. What I would suggest is that we leave them exactly where they are. So Ecton, Mears Ashby and Sywell, while I would like them in Wellingborough, I think realistically we would leave

those with Daventry and the other villages of Orlingbury, the Harrowdens, Isham, would stay within Wellingborough. Our ward does not go out to ---

MR WILLIAMSON: But you recognise that would result in the present ward of Harrowden and Sywell being split between Parliamentary constituencies?

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: They are already split, yes. They are already split.

MR WILLIAMSON: Is that because of boundary changes at a local level that has created this?

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: I think previous – I came into this ward 18 months ago and they were split at that point.

MR WILLIAMSON: That is fine, thanks very much.

CLLR CLIVE HALLAM: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. No other questions? No, thank you very much. If I can call Mr Martin Griffiths. If you could give your name and address, please.

CLLR GRIFFITHS: Good morning. I am Martin Griffiths, I am the leader of the Borough Council of Wellingborough. My address is Room 20, Swanspool House, Wellingborough.

At a recent presentation following the submission of the boundary recommendations my Council had a briefing meeting and it was agreed that our Council would have a special council where it would be recommended that our authority officially opposes the boundary changes as detailed. That council meeting is being planned and will go ahead.

In my opinion and the opinion of many of my colleagues, the proposals are flawed and take little or no notice of the huge growth that is taking place both to the east of Wellingborough and to the north of Wellingborough. Now, I have recently moved to the delightful village of Bozeat from Wellingborough – so it is my fault – and I submit that the people of Bozeat in particular have absolutely no links with Northampton South whatsoever. Indeed, if you go a mile and a half down the by-pass that by-passes Bozeat you come to a sign welcoming you to the Borough of Milton Keynes. I submit that the people of Bozeat have closer links with Olney and Milton Keynes than they have with Northampton South.

Now, in Wellingborough we have a very good electoral services team, it is recognised by a number of closer authorities as being one of the best, they have huge experience

and we have a very experienced returning officer and their views are also that the problems that this would bring would be enormous. Now, we have got a far more engagement from the electorate these days with politics and I think everybody here would agree that is a very, very good thing, so why then would we want to take the retrograde step, go back and have four different MPs representing the people that I represent in the Borough Council of Wellingborough? We have meetings coming up in four locations in those villages and I submit, I am very confident that the vast majority of people in those villages will oppose these changes.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just for clarification, you mentioned the village of Bozeat and you said that arguably it has better links with Olney and Milton Keynes. Are you suggesting that it should be in a constituency with Olney and Milton Keynes?

CLLR GRIFFITHS: No, I am just giving a comparison. I realise that the Commission have a difficult job to come up with a proposal, I believe the counter-proposal that has been put through – and I am not going to go into the figures I am sure you will agree that were covered very well by the MPs earlier on – where there is a counter-proposal where all the figures tally and it would actually keep Wollaston and Bozeat within the Wellingborough and Rushden constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any other queries or points on that submission? Thank you very much. If I can call Mr Frank Sudlow. Again, if you could give your name and address before you speak, please.

MR SUDLOW: My name is Frank Sudlow, I am from 3 Aspen Close, Rectory Farm, Northampton, NN3 5HS. I am not an MP or a councillor or anything else like that.

I have lived in the town now since 1980 and raised my family here and I am puzzled by the reasons that the Commission has maintained the split in the town. As we have heard, up until 1974 it was one town and it was very interesting to hear the lady from Hartwell saying very much the same sort of thing. We have heard many of the MPs and others that speak for the holding together: Corby when I walked into the room, holding together Wellingborough most recently, holding all these places together but Northampton seems to be split. Though I heard Michael Ellis speak about the wonders of Northampton North and being nice and all the boundaries, actually when you look at it it is not even a Northampton constituency really, is it? It is the bits of Northampton in the north east, it is the development, the town is actually not even in his constituency, the town is there in the centre where we are now, so it seems to me that the Commission have missed a trick here and able to bring together the town more coherently.

I have lived in Park, in Billing and in Rectory Farm and do feel that those are all very much, you know, together, but they are also very much together with West Hunsbury, with East Hunsbury, with all those areas round, they are all parts of the new development. They link together, as they do at the moment, Northampton South very well and our MP represents that out of town constituency. It is a nice little crescent round the south of the town but it leaves the town pretty much a coherent whole. So I would like to suggest that rather than having the constituency as it is at the north at the moment that you move Castle, Kings Heath, Semilong and Spencer into Northampton North and that you take out Billing, Park, Riverside into Northampton South and possibly also move on to take St James into Northampton North and Rectory Farm into Northampton South and that would then give you a much more coherent town and we would be able to say we have an MP for Northampton. It leaves you with a bit of a problem as to what you call the other constituency because now it becomes sort of out of Northampton or the other bits that did not fit because the numbers did not quite work.

Yes, that is the better picture that you are showing on your screen now which is the picture of Northampton South because you can actually see Northampton North drawn in it and it is much more coherent. It would also answer those questions that folks were raising about Wollaston, Bozeat and all the rest of it. I drink down in Wilby, that is my pub and I often go to Ecton. Those are both pubs off to the east, I do not go into town to drink. I regularly go to the Castle Theatre as well as going to the Royal and Derngate but then Royal and Derngate is for the whole region not just for the town. You know, when I go out to eat in restaurants and the rest I will be going out into Bozeat, into Hartwell, I will be going south, I will not be going into the centre of town. Yes, we are part of the Borough, actually, I feel just as much part of the Borough as maybe the Hunsburys do and the like, so I really encourage you to take this opportunity to bring the town back together as it was before 1974.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. There is a query over here.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. You mentioned the town centre. Which wards in Northampton would you, in your opinion, say constitute the town centre?

MR SUDLOW: Well, I would start with Castle Ward because we started as a Castle and then I would work my way out from there, so I would then put St James in Semilong, I would put Abington and Kings Heath, I would put – I cannot read the names on there, this is the thing being on the outside, I can tell you the outside of the town better than the inside – but then I would go...

MR JARVIS: You mentioned earlier the certain areas of the town centre that you wanted to move into Northampton North...

MR SUDLOW: That is right, yes.

MR JARVIS: ...where you live. All those wards are currently together in a Northampton constituency, Northampton South, so you are happy for the town centre wards to be together?

MR SUDLOW: I would certainly want those four to stay together.

MR JARVIS: Okay. Which are together at the moment in Northampton South.

MR SUDLOW: Which are together at the moment.

MR JARVIS: In the proposed Northampton South.

MR SUDLOW: They are four out of ten that belong to the town, if you like.

MR JARVIS: Which of those of the four?

MR SUDLOW: The four that I mentioned – I can read them now – so I would be going Kings Heath, Spencer, Semilong and Castle, I would be moving those four to join the rest of the town.

MR JARVIS: But they are altogether in the proposed ---

MR SUDLOW: But at the moment they are separated from the rest of the town.

MR JARVIS: Okay, but you accept at the moment they are altogether on that map. Thank you.

MR SUDLOW: They are on that map. Could you flip me to Northampton North again, to the other map. Yes, so Trinity would also be. I mean, it is one of the oldest schools, right. Trinity would also be. Abington certainly, which is where I started off, would certainly be part of the town. Kingsthorpe would obviously be part of the town as well.

MR JARVIS: Thank you.

MR SUDLOW: That is what I am saying, like, this whole centre of the town I would like to see that together as a town.

MR JARVIS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I think the crux of your position is that you want the town to be the core with the wards around it.

MR SUDLOW: The town – yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We appreciate that. Thank you. We are slightly ahead of the booked timeslots but as speakers have arrived if I could move on to Mr Suresh Patel.

CLLR PATEL: Thank you. My name is Cllr Suresh Patel, I am the Borough and County Councillor, also the St James business owner for the last 35 years. Thank you very much for allowing me ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you give your address, please.

CLLR PATEL: Yes. 18 Laneside Hollow, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0SR.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR PATEL: Thank you for allowing me to speak here. Can I just say I first of all agree with Mr Bone and the others about Bozeat and Wollaston, I mean, they have no real connection with Northampton South but the Grange Park does have, there is almost 3,000 residents living there.

If I can just talk about my own Duston connection. Obviously St James is some part which is connected in the Borough and County wards in Duston. I have to speak to a lot of my residents and they do have a lot of connection with the Duston, St James, Spencer, Kings Heath, Ryeland estate as well, they do come and shop in Duston, St James, so I am really pleased to make sure that, you know, highlight there is a good strong community with the Old Duston, Kings Heath, Spencer, St James and also going round, I mean, Castle, Hunsbury into Northampton South, Nene Valley, Upton, so that has all been connected together. I have been speaking to the residents for the last few weeks and they all feel that we should be part of Northampton South so I am here to support that.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Sorry, there is just a query, if I can ask you to come back. If you can give your name again, please.

MR SUDLOW: Yes. My name is Frank Sudlow from Rectory Farm. Can I just ask, would you say also the folks of Duston feel quite close to Kingsthorpe and Abington and the like?

CLLR PATEL: I mean, obviously the Spencer Ward, the Kings Heath, St James, Duston are a lot more closer than Kingsthorpe and Trinity but that is right on the other side.

MR SUDLOW: Okay. They do not shop in each other's quarters or you would not go from Duston across the Mill Lane to shop in Kingsthorpe?

CLLR PATEL: I mean, everyone goes round the whole of Northampton ---

MR SUDLOW: They do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you use the microphone, please.

CLLR PATEL: They all travel all over Northampton but, I mean, Duston, we have got Limehurst Square, the main road, St James. I mean, there is quite good shopping areas now, so...

MR SUDLOW: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The next speaker we have is Mr Michael Clarke. You are scheduled for 12.10 so we are fairly ahead but if you are willing to speak at the moment we can continue. If I can call Mr Michael Clarke.

CLLR CLARKE: Thank you, sir. My name is Michael Clarke. My address is 21 Bedford Road, Denton, Northampton, NN7 1DR. I have lived in Denton for 32 years, I run a business, my own business from my home in Denton for the past 25 years and I have been the county councillor for the Hackleton and Grange Park Division since 2009.

The reasons I wish to address you today are fourfold: one area of your proposals I entirely endorse and three I wish to question and try to improve. The first one is your proposal regarding what I regard as the natural logical reunification of the eastern districts in the Northampton North constituency. These are neighbours of mine, the Billing Ward, and at the river end and canal, so I know them quite well and the separation and the sort of carbuncle effect of the current geography to me makes no sense at all. I think if you look at the map that you have drawn it has logic on its sides, it brings all those groups – different wards like Rectory Farm, Ecton, Billing – all together where they belong with a common interest and a common geography.

That cannot be said, sir, for your proposals for our neighbours in Grendon, Easton Maudit, Strixton, Bozeat and Wollaston. Knowing these people well, they do not look naturally towards Northampton for their services or for shopping, or for their schooling. The residents of these communities look essentially northwards, eastwards, in the direction of Wellingborough. The majority of these people who do not shop on the internet – that is questionable these days – but if they do shop at all they go to

supermarkets like Tesco's and Sainsbury's which are more readily available to them in Wellingborough. Many of the residents locally send their children to Wrenn school in Wellingborough and I know that because I used to run a youth club and many of the children at the youth club attended Wrenn school as they do Wollaston school so there is a natural affinity of those areas to Wellingborough and it seems to me to make little sense to take these parishes out of the local district and the Wellingborough constituency and place them in Northampton South. Northampton is a distant town for them and few would express, I think, any close relationship or affinity with Northampton and the proposal to put them in Northampton South.

The other two areas I wanted to speak to you about: the centre of my division. Hackleton consists of three local government divisions, there is the Brafield and Yardley Ward which sends two councillors to Towcester; there is the Hackleton Piddington which sends one; and there is the Salcey Hartwell Ward which sends one. All of them send their local councillors to Towcester and since 2010 there has grown a strong relationship between the rural area which essentially makes up most of the Hackleton Division with one exception I will come on to. There is a close relationship between those villages through their memberships of NCALT and the way they look southwards now towards Towcester for many of their services, particularly things like planning and particularly things like refuse collection which the District Council proposes. It would seem to make little sense to alter their status and put them, as it were, as the junior partner in an enlarged and expanded urban seat of Northampton South. They were there many years ago, that always was questionable because there was a fear that the urban interest would tend to predominate in most of the decisions which were taken and the MP understandably spent most of his time dealing with the 80% of his constituents who lived in Northampton Borough.

It makes far more sense to retain the *status quo* and that is to ensure that the people who I represent in the Hackleton Division, the rural Hackleton Division, the nine parishes, remain in the South Northamptonshire constituency. They are rural, most of the South Northamptonshire constituency, with the exception of the market towns of Towcester and Brackley, are essentially rural. They have a lot of common problems and the issues which they bring to the table are brought to the table by many of the neighbours. There is a fear that if they were removed that influence would be diluted and they would be halfway house between looking to Northampton for their MP and national representation and still looking to Towcester for local representation.

The last point I wanted to make is the status of Grange Park. Grange Park was added to my division four years ago with the reduction in the number of county councillors from 73 to 56 and the size of the county division increased from 7,000 to 10,000, it represented 3,000 electors in Grange Park. Comparing the rest of the division with Grange Park is like comparing chalk with cheese. The interests, background, of people there, the working patterns of Grange Park are entirely different from the residents of the rural areas. Most of the residents of Grange Park, I put it to you, have an interest in

basically travel; the Grange Park Division is very close to junction 15 of the M1, many commute to London and many commute up and down the M1.

The problems of Grange Park which are raised on my agenda at parish council meetings which I attend are essentially urban ones of speeding, of the state of the roads, footpaths, and that nature, they are not the usual problems which are raised in the other nine parishes in the division, but more to the point the residents of Grange Park are urban or suburban, whichever word you wish to use, they are certainly not rural. They look far more to Northampton to provide their services, particularly things like shopping, places of employment, many of them would work on the Brackmills estate nearby which finds itself in Northampton Borough. So there is, sir, a common bond, I would say, between a lot of the residents – not all of them by any means – but most of the residents in Grange Park, most of the 3,000 residents looking to Northampton to provide services and they would find far more in common being supported by an MP who was representing Duston and the other parts of Northampton South as currently proposed than remaining in South Northamptonshire where they are at something of an exception.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The communications between Hackleton and Northampton look better on the face of it than they do between Hackleton and Towcester. You do not feel that that is the direction the ties go?

CLLR CLARKE: I do not think so, sir. I think, if I have to tell the truth, a lot of people in Hackleton prefer to shop now in Milton Keynes because of the retail offer; that is regrettable but that is the case. Many will find a quick way to Towcester in terms of the councillors and other people going to Towcester for planning matters which is cross country and with the present disruption in Northampton surrounding the development of the university and other matters affecting the road network there is very little incentive indeed for them to go into Northampton at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any other queries on that? There is one at the back. If you could give your name before you speak, please.

MRS GIBBINS: Mrs Rose Gibbins. I would like to seek a point of clarification.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MRS GIBBINS: Councillor Patel mentioned 3,000 in Grange Park, as did Councillor Clarke, but my belief is there are 1,760 electors not 3,000 electors as Councillor Clarke also stated. Is there any way of clarifying that?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I believe there are 3,000 but perhaps you will give us the accurate figure of electors in Grange Park, Grange Park Division of South Northants.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 3,036.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: 3,036.

MRS GIBBINS: Thank you so much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your submission. We will now take a break in proceedings until 11.50.

After a short break

Time noted: 11.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, we will make a start again. If I could ask for Mr Andrew Kilbride. Is he in the room? No. Do we have Mrs Ruth Morrison? If you would like to speak now, please. If you could give your name and address before you speak.

MRS MORRISON: Thank you. My name is Ruth Morrison and my address is The First Floor, 3 Green Road, Broughton Astley, Leicestershire.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS MORRISON: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am here to speak on behalf of Alberto Costa MP, the MP for South Leicestershire and Alberto apologises he cannot be here in person but he has an important meeting in the House which prevents him from attending. I am also here as an officer of South Leicestershire Conservative Association.

We consider the Boundary Commission initial proposals for South Leicestershire to be very sensible and whilst we are extremely sorry to be losing the ward of Misterton and the four wards of Lutterworth to Daventry constituency we fully understand and accept the need for this. The Commission's proposal for South Leicestershire leaves the current constituency largely intact, it does not break community ties and maintains a well shaped constituency.

We agree with the Commission's proposal which reunites into one seat the wards of Ellis, Fairstone, Forest and Muxloe, Blaby district wards previously lost when Charnwood constituency was created. We agree that the proposal for Winstanley,

Millfield, Ravenhurst and Fosse Wards moving into Leicester West constituency rejoins a currently split Braunstone Town.

With your permission I would like to refer to a proposal that has been put forward. We consider that the Labour Party proposal for South Leicestershire would divide communities and break local ties. Their proposed constituency for South Leicestershire would be an extremely odd and distorted shape. It would divide Blaby district wards across three constituencies and, as previously stated, whilst not overjoyed we accept the need that some parts of South Leicestershire must go into Daventry constituency but the Labour Party proposal makes this unacceptable. The Commission works hard to prevent orphan wards. Under the Labour proposal the four wards of the village of Broughton Astley would become effectively an orphan village and be totally isolated from Harborough, the district Council controlling it and responsible for all local amenities. Services such as refuse collections would need to travel across Daventry constituency to reach Broughton Astley. This would break all community ties and as a resident of Broughton Astley I do not want my village to be orphaned and just for the record we are a village not a town as their proposal says.

The Boundary Commission proposal reunites the wards of Blaby district. The Labour Party proposal to move Croft Hill, Normanton and Stanton and Flamville into Bosworth makes no sense. It also takes Bosworth very near to the upper limits of the permissible range at 77,850 and Blaby towards the lower end of the range at 72,245. This has no advantage to either constituency and again breaks community ties unnecessarily.

Turning very briefly to the Lib-Dem proposal with regards to South Leicestershire, we note that they broadly accept the Boundary Commission proposals for South Leicestershire save for suggesting the name revert to Blaby. We disagree with this and totally accept the Boundary Commission's proposal to retain the name of South Leicestershire thereby causing less confusion to the electorate who, with respect to them, mostly do not understand the reasons for changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Boundary Commission proposals for South Leicestershire.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any queries anyone wants to raise? Okay, thank you very much. Do we have Mr Kilbride? If you would like to speak now, please. If you would just give your name and address before you start, please.

CLLR KILBRIDE: Yes, sir. Andrew Kilbride, 17 Lime Avenue, Abington, Northampton, NN3 2HA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR KILBRIDE: Currently I am the councillor for Great Billing, Ecton Brook, Little Billing and Bellinge.

I fully support the Boundary Commission, I support their findings to move the wards from Northampton South into the North, which will come under Michael Ellis who is there presently. Many of the residents in the wards go over and use the facilities of Weston Favell shopping centre, many residents there use the doctors, use the keep fit facilities, so it is natural, with only being within a few minutes of Weston Favell centre to go into the North. Many residents also send their children to Weston Favell school. For me it is natural to go over to the North and I fully support the Boundary Commission's findings.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We have another speaker booked at 12.30. If that person arrives sooner we would hear from them, so we will adjourn until 12.20.

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As we said we would start again at 12.20, the next speaker is not booked until 12.30, I do not think she is here at the moment so we will just stand down but we will carry on as soon as she arrives.

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. We will reconvene now and we will hear from Catherine Fritz, please. If you would like to come forward and if you could give your name and address before you speak.

MS FRITZ: Hi. I am Catherine Fritz, I live at 53 Wescott Way here in Northampton. I have lived in Northampton now for just over four years and looking at the boundary review I know I was surprised initially that Northampton was divided into North and South and had two MPs, together they sort of represented Northampton, but looking at the revised, the proposed, boundaries it seems as though the identity of Northampton would be very much lost because each will have a very large countryside area associated with it, so although that might seem sensible geographically in terms of socially it seems to me it would make more sense to have an area that was Northampton which had an MP and had the town's identity and the town's interest at

heart because it is a thriving place and could definitely benefit from having that identity in Parliament, otherwise I feel that the town might not be represented well at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thank you very much for your submission. We have no more speakers programmed before lunch so we will adjourn now until 2.30.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, we reopen the hearing now. Before we start I should just reiterate that it is a requirement of the hearing that all matters are recorded on film and also that everybody provides their name and full address before speaking. We will hear first of all from Dr Andy Mercer.

DR ANDY MERCER: First of all, thank you for letting me come here to speak. I am Dr Andy Mercer, I am a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, I have a Doctorate in Mathematical Statistics and Operational Research. During my doctoral research I studied the operation of ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you give us your address, please.

DR ANDY MERCER: My address is 9 Kensington Close, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 6RR. I will start again. I am Dr Andy Mercer, I am a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, I have a Doctorate in Mathematical Statistics and Operational Research. During my doctoral research I studied the operation of mental health services. I am also a chartered engineer and a European engineer. I am also a chartered IT professional and a member of the British Computer Society. I am also a chartered statistician with over 40 years' experience. I have done consultancy work for the UK government, for local government, for UK and foreign companies and continue to do so. I also write articles and opinion pieces for the local press.

In my interactions with local people about public services one of the major issues that emerges regularly is confusion. Many users of public services find it hard to understand the different governance models for different services: they query their MPs about planning matters; they chase their councillors about health issues; they complain to their GPs about social care provision, etc. In each of these cases they are chasing someone who does not control the issue they have raised. There is a major debate to be had about how to remove some of this complexity, eg unifying the health service and social care systems. However, one thing that should not happen is a further degree of confusion; that is, I fear, what is going to happen, what is in prospect.

At the moment in the Borough of Wellingborough we have just one MP for the vast majority of the Borough who has a walk-in surgery in the town centre; the previous MP did likewise. For most residents the route to complain about public services is straightforward: they phone or write to their MP, he then either deals with the matter or forwards it to the relevant councillor. Under the proposed boundary revision for Wellingborough the Borough of Wellingborough will be represented by four different MPs. It is likely that one or more of them will change every five years, meaning that most residents will probably never learn who their MP is. Complaining about any failure of public services will therefore become much more complicated. I can almost envisage a clearing house having to be set up to direct residents to the appropriate MP.

Stability is a much ignored attribute of any system. It is unfashionable to laud consistency, it is far more common to boast about newness whether it brings benefits or not. At present in the Wellingborough constituency we have stability: most of the residents know which constituency they live in; they know how to complain if they have a bad experience from a public service; they may even know their MP's name. It is a community with a profound sense of place. This all goes to make it easy for the more vulnerable individuals to solve their problems and to live in comfort and security. Reorganising and splitting up the constituency would be certain to lead to some of these weaker members of society to a worse outcome in life; thus I ask you to minimise any alterations to the boundary of the Wellingborough constituency as it will inevitably lead to a reduced quality of service to its residents.

There is a wonderful American saying: if it ain't broke don't fix it.

Thank you for listening to me and if you have any questions I am happy to answer them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: One query.

DR ANDY MERCER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have seen the proposed changes in the boundary for Wellingborough.

DR ANDY MERCER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you have anything specific over any of the wards that have been proposed to change?

DR ANDY MERCER: I feel very strongly that the wards to the south of Wellingborough which look towards Wellingborough should stay with Wellingborough. I feel very strongly that Finedon which has very strong connections with Wellingborough should stay with Wellingborough. The wards that are further out it is more of a question, it is a more finely divided issue because if you go towards Northampton a sufficient distance

then people will start to look towards Northampton as well as towards Wellingborough, but north and south of Wellingborough it seems very clear to me that those wards look to Wellingborough as their natural gravitational centre point.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And Irthlingborough?

DR ANDY MERCER: Irthlingborough is not quite so obvious because in Irthlingborough people tend to go in different directions, they have got other alternatives. They can go east, they can go north, they can go south, they can go west, there are towns all round them so there is no clear attraction in a particular direction but when you are south of Wellingborough the road system takes you north or a long way south towards Bedford, there is no obvious connection to the east or the west. For instance, if you want to go from Wollaston to Rushden they are only a few miles apart but it is about a 15/20 minute journey because the roads are very narrow country lanes, there are no strategic roads that link in that direction. The strategic road network effectively determines the points to which you connect and it is very strong in a north/south direction across Wellingborough, it is nowhere near as strong for the villages below it east/west or north of it east/west.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I understand that, that is helpful but I am still not quite clear why Irthlingborough does not fit into that model.

DR ANDY MERCER: Because Irthlingborough already has connections in other directions. The strongest connection that Irthlingborough has got is on the A45 which goes east as well as west and it is also on the A6 which goes north and south, so Irthlingborough does not have the same strength of pull towards Wellingborough that those others do because Irthlingborough is already on a transport nexus.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, that is very good, thank you. Are there any other queries? No. Thank you very much for your submission.

DR ANDY MERCER: I will give you these copies as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We will move forward now to Mrs Gill Mercer, please.

MRS GILL MERCER: (Conservative Party) Once again, thank you very much for letting me come here to speak. My name is Mrs Gill Mercer, I am the same address: 9 Kensington Close, Rushden, Northants, NN10 6RR.

As I say, my name is Gill Mercer and I work as the constituency secretary for the Wellingborough Conservative Association. As such, I quite often get messages and emails which are meant for the MP. At the moment most of these can be directed to our one MP, the only exceptions are areas under Wellingborough Borough Council not in

our constituency which are Earls Barton and a few villages in Harrowden and Sywell Ward, that is Mears Ashby, Ecton and Sywell.

If the proposed changes go ahead I would have to interface with four different MPs; this would be very unwieldy and make life very difficult. What is more, I help to arrange leaflets for all elections. At the moment with the exception of the areas I have just mentioned, we report stories from the local candidates and the MP in one document. If the proposals were to go ahead we would have to produce a leaflet for Bozeat, Wollaston, Grendon, Strixton and East Maudit in conjunction with an MP for Northampton, another leaflet for Finedon with an MP for Kettering, another for Daventry with the areas already in Daventry plus the villages of Little Harrowden, Great Harrowden, Hardwick, Orlingbury and Isham and the rest with our MP for Wellingborough. This would be a logistical nightmare for us and would also greatly increase our costs.

It is very difficult already to do this for Earls Barton, Ecton, Mears Ashby and Sywell; if the proposals all go ahead this will make it a whole lot worse. Wollaston, Bozeat, Grendon, Strixton and East Maudit are very much connected to Wellingborough, they have no connection at all to Northampton. One resident wrote to me last week and said Wollaston and Wellingborough are joined at the hip. I think that is a general consensus. It makes no sense for them to be under a Northampton seat. There is a similar situation with Finedon.

The situation with the northern villages is more complicated as I believe you do not wish to split borough wards. However, Harrowden and Sywell is already split so why can it not stay as it is. I will explain that you seem to be content to split County Council divisions into different constituencies so why not borough ones? All of the changes listed by me make no sense, the towns and villages should, if possible, stay with the constituency they are already in.

When it comes to local fund raising the situation will be very difficult if Wollaston, Bozeat, etc, are moved. Locally they are in a branch called Wellingborough Rural South and they are linked to Irchester. If the proposals go ahead and they were to raise funds how would they apportion them? The main reason for fund raising is to support the local MP; however, the branch would need to support two MPs. How would they split the funds bearing in mind some would be for local elections?

Talking of local elections, the County Division of Irchester comprises Irchester as well as the wards which you propose to split off to go to Northampton. This shows that they belong together. Again production of literature for County Council elections would have to be split as they will refer to two different MPs and, frankly, much different issues. Northampton is a huge urban conurbation and these areas are very rural. When it comes to Finedon it is joined with much of the centre of Wellingborough for County Council purposes, it is linked to the wards of Victoria, Isebrook and Rixon. These are all

central Wellingborough wards. Finedon has no economic or social connection whatsoever to Kettering. Your proposal would mean that this county division was also split between two constituencies.

I am also Deputy Chairman, Fundraising, for the Association. I organise a constituency-wide raffle, I also organise dinners and other fund raising events. As we cover broadly only one constituency the funds all go into one account to support our Wellingborough MP and the local council candidates at Borough and County Council elections. How should I be expected to apportion these funds if a huge swathe of the area is not just under one constituency but three other constituencies? This would make the work of the office and my job almost impossible.

The people in these towns are not happy to move to other constituencies as they are used to dealing with one MP at the moment. If they have an issue they have raised with their MP many would have to start their enquiry again with another MP. Surely it would be better if a solution could be found to move far fewer people to a different constituency. I ask you, therefore, to reconsider these changes which affect Wellingborough and keep the boundaries as near as possible to the current ones.

In addition, our Association is called the Wellingborough and Rushden Conservative Association. Our email address was for some while wrca@ yet the constituency name does not reflect this. I live in Rushden and I feel it would be better if Rushden appeared in the constituency name, ie for it to be called Wellingborough and Rushden constituency, not just Wellingborough. I would be grateful if you could also take this on board.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any queries? Yes.

MR FOX: Thank you, Mr Assistant Commissioner. Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Mrs Mercer, you have described in detail the difficulties that you would face as a worker for the Conservative Party in this but the Rule 5 which the Boundary Commission has to take into account talks about special geographical considerations, it talks about local government boundaries, it talks about the boundaries of existing constituencies and it talks about local ties, it does not talk about the difficulties that may be faced by political organisations.

MRS GILL MERCER: Yes, but, with respect, the local ties are explained by some of the points I have made, like the local ties of having a Wellingborough Rural South branch, that is a local tie. They work together, they are one and the same organisation, they are not four different areas, they are one area, so it is just an indication of how the people feel. In fact, someone else might say about where they go to shop or other things but I

feel that these types of considerations should be taken into account. So, yes, it is perhaps not particularly relevant which political party but I am sure the same would apply to other political parties as well because if you have got a split of the constituency being outside Wellingborough, say Northampton, but the Borough – and, as you said, it is local government boundaries is very much involved with this – the Borough they look to Wellingborough and in fact people have been totally confused and coming up to me and say, “Will I have Wellingborough collect my rubbish in future? I just don’t know where I am. I am used to going to Wellingborough to sort out any problems.” So that split of having Wellingborough as your borough and Northampton, let’s say, or Kettering in the case of Finedon, or Daventry in the case of some of the villages as your constituency is very much an important part.

Yes, I see it, obviously, from the political point of view but that is just an indication of when you have got the split if you are producing literature for the Borough elections, ie for the Borough categories, yes, it is a problem because the people just do not understand. They do not understand why they are in Wellingborough for one thing and Kettering for another and I think certainly Finedon is very much part of Wellingborough. As I said, the County Council division is right up to the centre of Wellingborough, there is no connection at all with Kettering. When you come to Wollaston and Bozeat they are very much connected to Wellingborough and their borough, they are not connected to Northampton at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask, coming back to the point we heard before about Irthlingborough again, because the point you are making seems to be related to local ties and that is very important. I am just struggling to appreciate in detail how Irthlingborough does not fit into a similar position. What is its position with regard to the County Council status?

MRS GILL MERCER: Well, first of all, it is not in our constituency so I do not deal with it directly but it is in with a division that has Little Addington, Ringstead, Denford, I think, which they are all villages in the east Northamptonshire constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But it is closer to Wellingborough than Finedon is, for example?

MRS GILL MERCER: It is close. Yes, it is closer to Wellingborough but it does not really have any connection to Wellingborough. People do not look to Wellingborough in the same sense that Finedon does because Finedon is part of their borough as well whereas Irthlingborough, because it has been in East Northants – and in fact I am an East Northants councillor so I hear about issues from there – it looks very much to the East Northants side and, as I was saying, connection-wise you have got an easy connection out to the Chowns Mill roundabout and to the rest of East Northants.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I just want to get – we have heard a lot of representations about this particular area so it is quite important to get an understanding. Irthlingborough does not look towards Wellingborough and you think partly that is because it is in East Northamptonshire?

MRS GILL MERCER: Absolutely, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What is the position with Rushden?

MRS GILL MERCER: Well, Rushden is part of the Wellingborough constituency ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But is it not part of East Northamptonshire?

MRS GILL MERCER: And it is part of East Northamptonshire. You have not got any proposals to change that so that is why I did not mention it but it does not seem to be such a problem. Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers have always been in East Northamptonshire and they have always been in the Wellingborough constituency, so although they are a little bit sort of separate because they have a different council it is something that we have always accommodated. Obviously we have the same MP although we have a different borough so that is why that does not really cause a problem.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The only basis really for a comment at this point would be to clarify something that is going on in the current – yes. Would you give your name again, please.

DR ANDY MERCER: Yes. Dr Andy Mercer, 9 Kensington Close, Rushden, Northamptonshire. Rushden and Wellingborough are very closely linked by the strong dual carriageway, the A45, but they are, if anything, coalescing because a huge new sustainable urban extension called Stanton Cross is being built between them and to the north of Rushden a huge new retail/leisure etc complex, Rushden Lakes, is being built and the whole thing will produce effectively almost one large urban structure from the west of Wellingborough suburbs right through to the south of Rushden suburbs. There will still be a small green corridor between them but it is getting squeezed whereas there does not appear to be the same issue elsewhere. That is the only clarification I would make.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MRS GILL MERCER: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is great, thank you very much. We will move forward now and hear from Ms Jane Birch. Thank you. Again if you could start with your name and address, please.

CLLR BIRCH: Good afternoon, thank you. My name is Jane Birch, I am a Borough councillor, my address is 17 Edgemont Road, Northampton, NN3 3DF.

Mr Assistant Commissioner, my name is Jane Birch and I am the Labour councillor for the Trinity Ward in Northampton Borough. Semilong and Trinity Wards lie next door to each other. I have lived in Semilong Ward, my children grew up there, and I started Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre in Semilong some 20 years ago. I was Chair of Governors of St Paul's Lower School in Semilong and I remain a trustee of the two community centres in Semilong. I have taught in Trinity School now Malcolm Arnold Academy so I am very familiar with both wards, Trinity and Semilong, and the wider area. I am now also a resident in the Park Ward in Northampton which allows me to have an insight of electoral arrangements and community activities in both the North and the South constituencies.

The Trinity Ward is a ward, according to the figures used by the Boundary Commission for this review, of 2,484 electors. It is mainly located north of the park in the Kingsley area known as the racecourse. As a ward it is diverse and has the St George's Avenue campus of Northampton University contained within it; this hosts many foreign students. There is also a large academy situated on Trinity Avenue which will eventually take over 2,000 pupils. Northampton International Academy is being developed on Barrack Road in Semilong. There will eventually be 4,500 pupils in the area between Semilong and Trinity. There is an international college on St George's Avenue and along with university accommodation for students is a major consideration.

The students have particular issues to deal with while resident in Northampton. These are issues which are regularly raised with public representatives of all political hues. One of the biggest issues around HMOs and the effect these houses of multiple occupation have on the character of the local neighbourhood and the loss of family homes. This is a huge problem in both Semilong and Trinity and surrounding wards of Castle and Abington, very much a part of the town centre. The student population extends from properties in the Trinity Ward into the Semilong Ward in the west and into the Abington Ward in the south and extensively into the Castle Ward which make up the bulk of the town centre. Common issues include rubbish, parking, antisocial behaviour, the loss of family homes to HMOs and the loss of a sense of community which has given these areas such a strong identity in the past being mainly made up of terraced houses originally built for the workers in the boot and shoe industries. There are many and varied issues and similar problems which these wards share given a similar demographic makeup. This has been recognised by residents, stakeholders and the ward councillors.

The area around the racecourse, including Trinity and Semilong, is the basis for a neighbourhood plan. This recognises the common issues and proposes a long term plan to develop and regenerate the area in consultation with the local community. This will sit within the Northampton Local Plan 2016 Part 2. The Boundary Commission proposals as they affect Semilong and Trinity would result in Balfour Road, Arthur Road and Monarch Road, now in Semilong, having a different MP to all the other roads which surround them to the north, south and east; indeed, Freehold Street to the south would confusingly be placed in Northampton North. To divide these two wards will result in Balfour Road, currently split on both sides between Semilong and Trinity Wards, being now represented by two different Members of Parliament.

I have studied the Boundary Commission's initial proposals and am somewhat disappointed that thus far at least this perspective has not been considered. The Semilong Ward and the Trinity Ward, at the point adjacent to it, have severe issues of deprivation which are consistent throughout the area and need constant attention from its public representatives. Semilong Ward has been disadvantaged further by the fact that it has been divided between the two constituencies for some five years now. A better arrangement now would be to unite these two wards, and indeed the town centre, in one constituency being represented by one Member of Parliament.

As a resident of Park Ward I recognise that this ward has quite different issues to deal with than most of the wards currently placed in Northampton North. There are some issues in the recent past around car speeding on certain roads and other issues which concern the Residents' Association, such as burglary of residential homes. It happily does not share the issues of antisocial behaviour and litter which are endemic in other communities in the North constituency.

I recognise that the Boundary Commission has a difficult task in determining which wards need to be added to Northampton North and clearly there is a choice to be made between Park, Riverside and Billing to the east, of Abington, Castle, Semilong, Spencer and Kings Heath to the west of Abington. I would submit that looking at this issue from the residents' point of view that the town centre residents' needs would be best served in a borough constituency alongside other wards such as Abington and Trinity which have a virtually seamless connection to the town centre.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you proposing, then, Semilong, Trinity, Castle and Abington stay together?

CLLR BIRCH: I do. The issues there are so similar that it would be ridiculous to move them away from each other. Planning issues, planning issues around the HMOs, issues around student accommodation, parking, litter, refuse collection, all have very, very

similar qualities. The housing is very similar. It is an area of terraced houses, narrow streets, Victorian terraces built during the time of the greater sort of production of boots and shoes in Northampton. An issue in Abington is replicated in Semilong, the same as in Trinity, the same as in Castle, and to actually split the resources to deal with these I think would be a waste of public money, a waste of time, there would be work duplicated where it could actually be held in one central resource.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: They are currently split, are they not?

CLLR BIRCH: They are currently split.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And you think that has hampered...

CLLR BIRCH: I do, yes; yes, indeed.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I ask a question: if Semilong and Castle Wards were incorporated into the rest of Northampton it would then fall outside of the statutory numbers so something else would have to move out. Have you any consideration of what other ward that might be?

CLLR BIRCH: Oh. I mean, I have not actually looked into the particular requirements of other wards, but certainly living in Park which is in the proposed Northampton North Borough the situation the residents find themselves in Park is totally different. It was part of Northampton Development Corporation development, it is part of a new development on the edge of town. I think the areas that are more recent developments within the town belong together. The traditional part of Northampton town centre is a unit, it has a really strong identity, residents identify with it, they have often lived there for generations and they have a very, very strong sense of place.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. I do not know, Cllr Birch, if you have had a chance to see the Liberal Democrat proposals for Northampton North and South.

CLLR BIRCH: I have not, no.

MR FOX: Our proposals include putting Semilong into Northampton North and putting Park and Abington into Northampton South. This would deal with much of the problem you talk about around the Kingsthorpe Road area and the unsatisfactory boundary there. Would you like to comment on that?

CLLR BIRCH: Well, my ward is Trinity and I see Trinity being allied very strongly with Semilong, Castle, that area and we have a neighbourhood plan in progress that actually addresses some of these links. The racecourse is an area that has boundaries for Castle, Semilong, Trinity and then a few streets back it goes to Kingsley and Abington but the perimeter of the racecourse is Trinity, Semilong and Castle. The racecourse is a huge open area, a wonderful green space but it also has its problems: street drinking, litter, some antisocial behaviour, there is drugs, there is the usual sort of inner urban concerns on a large open green space but it is also a centre for recreation, for sport, for family picnics, for fun days, for firework displays and it forms a centre for those wards. I do feel that Trinity, Semilong, Castle have that perimeter round the racecourse and have that cohesion and identity and it is because of that green open space that is utilised by many people who do not have gardens, you know, they live in small houses, they do not have a lot of outside space. There are a lot of children in that area. 4,500 children go to schools in that area, we need to have some sort of central point from which, you know, we can have a neighbourhood plan that makes sense into the future.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR BIRCH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, there was another point.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. We had speakers this morning who spoke about what constituted the town centre. You mentioned similar wards that were mentioned this morning.

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: There were other wards, however, mentioned that you have not mentioned and I would be interested in terms of your view in terms of where you saw St James which was another ward that was mentioned as sort of having links with the town centre.

CLLR BIRCH: I have to say for this particular consultation my main concern is the border between north and south which cuts through Trinity, cuts through Semilong. I think the wider borough issues are perhaps for another discussion for people that know more about those areas. I mean, I am the ward councillor for Trinity, I know and I care about the residents of Trinity, I also know and care about the residents of Semilong and I know the problems that have arisen of having an MP for one side of the road and an MP for another, you know, this is nonsense, it splits the ward and people do not know who to go to, quite frankly.

MR JARVIS: Okay.

CLLR BIRCH: And I think that border, Trinity, Abington, along that border is really what I am particularly concerned about today.

MR JARVIS: Okay, thank you for that. So it is mainly your concern about the border...

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: ...rather than a general sort of issue of the town centre, it is a wider issue.

CLLR BIRCH: That is part of the bigger picture. I cannot speak for them today. You know, this is my patch that I know about and this is the area that I am particularly concerned with.

MR JARVIS: Okay, thank you very much for that. If I may, just one more question. You mentioned that you are a resident of Park Ward.

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: Do you see links with Park Ward and Abington which were also mentioned this morning in terms of all the communities both in Park Ward and Abington Ward surrounding the park and Abington Vale being in Park Ward itself?

CLLR BIRCH: Yes, it is again a very different feel. The different parts – Abington is a ward of two very, very different parts. You have the park – you have Abington Park, rather, just to make it clear, Abington Park area leading on to Park Ward. Yes, I can see that there is, you know, similarities there and parts of Abington then tie-in very closely with the town centre; the terraced houses, the narrow roads, Victorian streets, the problems with houses of multiple occupation, rubbish, parking, which you do not get in the leafier parts of Abington around the park and certainly in the Park Ward.

MR JARVIS: Okay. So you are saying Abington as a ward is a ward of two halves?

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: Part being sort of terraced housing closer into the centre.

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: And other parts of Park relating to the Park Ward.

CLLR BIRCH: Yes.

MR JARVIS: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your submission.

CLLR BIRCH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are slightly ahead of time but we will move on now to Mrs Dorothy Maxwell. If you could start with your name and address.

CLLR MAXWELL: My name is Dorothy Maxwell and I am a councillor on East Northants Council. I live at 99 Higham Road, Rushden, Northants, NN10 6DS. I only knew about this meeting, I have to say, on Saturday so hence it is a little bit... I have not actually typed it out.

I spoke to the residents in Finedon on Saturday and the strength of feeling about the move to Kettering constituency was a resounding no. They feel that Peter Bone, their MP, has looked after them for a number of years and also Wellingborough Council. The question has to be asked: why does this need to happen? The residents were clearly upset by the idea of the boundary changes and feel that they have nothing to do with Kettering and that the rates are higher in Kettering than Wellingborough Council. They feel that they should be actually consulted about these boundary changes which so far has not been well publicised.

Finedon, which dates back to the Magna Carta, 15 June 1215, clearly is an area of, I would say probably a small area, but clearly from the residents' point of view connected to Wellingborough. They have over the years been very much connected by the tin industry and shoe industry. The residents now feel that the schools that the children use in this area are in the Wellingborough area which would be looking at Irthlingborough then coming into Wellingborough as well.

I would like to now mention about Wollaston which is another area which is looking to be moved into another boundary and I have considerable links to Wollaston as both my grandchildren go from Rushden to Wollaston school and a lot of children from Wellingborough also commute to Wollaston school from Wellingborough.

The neighbourhood plan in Wellingborough which clearly does actually link into Wollaston and equally Bozeat, East Maudit and Grendon are all villages which have strong links to Wellingborough and surrounding areas and with the Rushden Lakes they clearly feel connection to Rushden and that the employment will clearly help them. All the transport to the schools in these areas are all linked from Wellingborough and the children from Rushden who go into the other areas, into Wollaston and the Bozeat children who go into Wollaston, the whole transport system is based from Wellingborough and East Northants.

When looking at Great Harrowden, Hardwick and Isham and Little Harrowden and Orlingbury, equally they have a long connection to Wellingborough and surrounding

areas. The schools are equally connected to each other and by doing the neighbourhood plan which each area that I have mentioned are all going to be linked to what happens within Rushden, Wellingborough and East Northants and clearly I think these boundary changes which you are envisaging in the future do not need to happen in this area because they are well served and I think that employment will clearly be a real factor in helping them all move forward.

I cannot really see why this has to happen and I support that you leave things alone and just keep them as they are because at the moment they are served equally well together and the children who are growing up in this area will be able to move on and know that they will be able to go to the schools of their choice.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just on schools, you mentioned the children from Finedon.

CLLR MAXWELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Where do they go to school?

CLLR MAXWELL: Well, they go to Irthlingborough or they go into Wellingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This issue has come up with a couple of speakers, it is one I am trying to understand. Irthlingborough is excluded from this constituency and one of the arguments you have made, I think understandably, are the ties with schools, but children from Finedon go to Irthlingborough.

CLLR MAXWELL: Yes, they do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But that is not in this constituency.

CLLR MAXWELL: That is right. Oh, no, Irthlingborough is in East Northants, that is right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

CLLR MAXWELL: Oh, I see, sorry, what you are trying to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am just thinking of the local ties in the case in terms of people going from Orlingbury down to Wollaston and I understand that.

CLLR MAXWELL: Yes, I think because East Northants it is a bit strange in a way for people to really understand because you have got the villages which are linked to East Northants and then like, for instance, Rushden is linked to East Northants but in fact Peter Bone is our MP which is Wellingborough. So you have got Irthlingborough which

is linked to Tom Pursglove MP under East Northants but then Finedon is linked to Wellingborough so that... You might have roads, you have certain roads, so one side of the road may be in one constituency and the other side of the road is another constituency but all the children are linked by going to the schools in other areas outside their catchment area, you might say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand.

CLLR MAXWELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR MAXWELL: Okay, thank you. Can I write something in and then send it to you?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Of course.

CLLR MAXWELL: Shall I send it to this email down there?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. We have no speakers booked for a little while now so we will adjourn until four o'clock.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone) ...I will need to register...

MR REED: If you wish so, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: He will need to register, will he?

MR REED: Yes. If you could register with our member of staff and then come back in we will hear you straight away then, sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, certainly. Before you start to speak if you could just give your name and full address, please.

CLLR BRIAN MARKHAM: Right. It is Cllr Brian Markham and the address is 49 Bushland Road, Northampton, NN3 2NS.

I realise this is the Boundary Commission making the inquiry but I think it needs pointing out at every opportunity that the problem we have in Northampton and Northamptonshire is we are a growth area but these proposals are based on electoral figures for, I think, December 2015. I am a member of the Borough Council Planning Committee elected to the Council in June and every month we get applications for housing in Northampton and on the perimeter of Northampton and all these houses, many of them, will be built and occupied before the election in 2020, so the premise of all the proposals here you can add tens of thousands of people certainly before the end

of the local plan or the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy which is only 15 years away, that there will be tens of thousands of extra people in Northampton and Northamptonshire and all of our constituencies will be then too large.

When you review local government boundaries they look at future growth predictions and figures and house completions and on this, as I understand it, no account of future planned growth was taken into account. Now, if I was in Monmouthshire or parts of Scotland that would not affect us very much but I do think in Northamptonshire it is going to have a great effect because ten years down the road our constituencies will be much larger than the suggested whatever it is, 70,000 odd constituents, we will be larger and will there be another review?

Thank you.

MR REED: Yes, sir. Under Statute now these reviews take place every five years so there will be a boundary review of constituency boundaries every five years.

CLLR BRIAN MARKHAM: Still my point will be that this one surely, the boundaries, these ones will come in for the 2020 general election by which time I am just saying will they be reviewed five years after the 2020 election.

MR REED: That is right, yes. The timetable the Commission works to is set down by Parliament so you are quite right, these constituencies that are eventually proposed will come in 2020, we will be starting the next review probably – well, five years from now so well ahead of 2021.

CLLR BRIAN MARKHAM: I would say I realise it, but it is not very often that those reviews – this all can change. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. There is nobody else waiting to speak, we will adjourn until four o'clock.

After a short break

Time Noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. We will reconvene and we will hear in a moment from Cllr Julie Brookfield. I should just say for the record that the proceedings are being filmed and the audio is being recorded and if any speakers could give their name and full address before starting. Would you like to come and make your presentation.

CLLR BROOKFIELD: (Corby Borough Council Labour Group) Thank you, Mr Assistant Commissioner. My name is Julie Brookfield and I live at 16 Wentworth Drive, Oundle,

East Northamptonshire. I have the privilege of representing Corby West Division on Northamptonshire County Council and I am here this afternoon also to represent Corby Borough Council Labour Group.

I have followed with some interest the proposal put forward by the Boundary Commission in relation to the Corby parliamentary constituency. I note that it is being proposed to transfer the two district wards of John Pyel and Waterloo in Irthlingborough into the Wellingborough constituency which of course already contains much of East Northamptonshire District. The electorate number in the Corby constituency is such that Northamptonshire District would be wholly contained within one – I beg your pardon. The electorate number in the Corby constituency is such that clearly some electors need to be moved into another constituency. In an ideal world East Northamptonshire District would be wholly contained within one parliamentary seat. However, the parameters of Northamptonshire in the north of the county make this very difficult.

In terms of coming up with the least disruptive option to move the electorate the Boundary Commission's proposals are the best that I have seen; moving two wards to another constituency that include them within much of the rest of the same district is a reasonable option to adopt. I have been made aware, however, that an option has been placed in front of the Boundary Commission to instead move the Corby Rural West Ward from Corby constituency into Kettering constituency. This creates an orphan ward within the Kettering constituency, divides a county division and undermines the integrity of the Corby Borough boundary. I suspect that this proposal will not be well received by the local residents when they learn of it.

However, I have today additionally learned of another proposal to move part of a borough ward from the Corby constituency into Kettering. I am surprised at this. I cannot see the rationale for dividing the Stanion and Corby village in this way. It is an integral part of the borough and the proposal is just so unnecessary. It would help that your good self, Mr Assistant Commissioner, would recognise that this represents an inordinate amount of community disruption when placed against the relatively minor changes already being proposed in relation to the Irthlingborough Ward's transfer and this I believe would create the only split borough ward in the whole of the East Midlands region.

I would just like to say a little bit more about Corby village as a ward within the Corby Borough. It is located well within the boundaries of the borough and is dissected by the A427 which is one of the main roads through the town. It is clearly part of Corby's urban area, it is located close to the centre of the town and adjacent to the steel works which is a powerful symbol of Corby's identity. As the name suggests, the community in this ward clearly identify themselves with the town of Corby.

Thank you, that is my initial submission and I also have a written list of points for you which you will have at the end of this hearing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just on the comment you made with regard to the Rural West Ward, there are a couple of villages in there, Cottingham and Middleton.

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Yes, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You would think that they would have clear ties with Corby?

CLLR BROOKFIELD: They are very much a part of Corby in that they are part of the geographical part of Corby to the west. Now, Corby is the fastest growing borough outside of London and most of the expansion of Corby is going to be to the west, there is already planned development in urban west. Now this would completely isolate – if Rural West were to move into Kettering there would be a bulge to the west of the A6003 which is Corby West, which would be the urban west development.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. You may not be able to comment or clarify on this but at the south end of the constituency, Irthlingborough...

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: ...you are suggesting that you can see the sense in that moving into Wellingborough?

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you give me any information on where Irthlingborough looks at the moment. Do they look towards Corby or do they look towards Wellingborough?

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Both as a community and industrially they have very close ties to East Northamptonshire, the shoe industry is something that has characterised that part of our constituency. Their close neighbours, Rushden, that is the largest town in East Northamptonshire and there are very, very clear ties between both Irthlingborough Town Council and Rushden Town Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Are there any queries?

MR FOX: Cllr Brookfield, you have spoken about – sorry, Alan Fox from the Liberal Democrats.

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Hello.

MR FOX: Hello. You have spoken about the plan that was raised this morning by the Corby MP to divide Corby village from Stanion but are you aware that on Thursday when the Conservative Party made its proposals for the whole region at the Derby hearing the proposal was to include the whole of the Stanion and Corby Village Ward as well as the Rural West Ward in the Kettering constituency? Would you like to comment on what you think that would mean for your town?

CLLR BROOKFIELD: I would not like to comment on the motives for the Conservatives changing their proposition or their proposal to the Boundary Commission on that but what I would say is that either suggestion impacts on the integrity of the borough boundary and so we would oppose it.

MR FOX: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for your presentation.

CLLR BROOKFIELD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have no speakers booked until five o'clock so we will adjourn until five o'clock.

After a short break

Time Noted: 5.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon once again. We will move on to the next booked appointments and the first person we are going to deal with is Mr Dinesen. If I can just remind everybody that you do need to give your name and full address before you start to speak and the proceedings are filmed.

MR DINESEN: My name is Ebbe Dinesen, I live in Hardwick Village, 33 Hardwick Village, Wellingborough, NN9 5AL.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR DINESEN: I am here because I am the Chairman of Hardwick Parish Meeting. My task here today is to persuade the Commission that Hardwick Village must be part of the parliamentary constituency of Wellingborough whose MP is Peter Bone.

Hardwick Village is placed north east of Northampton and comprises a few farms as well as approximately 30 households. It is a very picturesque village with status as a conservation village. Hardwick has always been part of the Wellingborough

constituency and rightly so as our village is half a mile from Wellingborough. However, the draft proposal for new boundaries from the Boundary Commission moves Hardwick together with four neighbouring villages from Wellingborough constituency to Daventry Lutterworth.

The Borough of Wellingborough is expanding both in respect of housing as well as industrial enterprises, not least warehousing due to the town's central place in the middle of England and close proximity to various distribution hubs along the M1, A14 and A45. The expansion of Wellingborough is mainly happening towards the north west of the town, ie in the direction of our village. The various projects have kept us very busy as we do not want our village to be absorbed by these developments. The latest project is an approved warehouse park comprising 200,000 square metres of warehousing for planned operations 24/7 within half a mile of our village. Houses in the village will be able to hear the beeps when forklift trucks and lorries are reversing. We have fought off a huge solar farm on our doorstep but within a few years 1,000 houses will be built in our direction as part of the Wellingborough north development which has received planning permission.

In the discussions with the local planning officers concerning these and a number of other developments it has unfortunately been necessary to call on help and advice from our local MP Peter Bone. Mr Bone's office is less than three miles from our village bang in the middle of Wellingborough. He knows all the plans, the players in Wellingborough Borough including the councillors, the leader of the Council and the chief executive who he meets on a regular basis.

There is no doubt that our village will suffer in respect of communication and closeness to Wellingborough if we in the future will need to speak to an MP who is based miles from our village – well, actually, the distance from our village to Daventry is almost 50 miles. Furthermore, our ward is part of Wellingborough Borough and we have elected the councillors who represent us at Wellingborough Borough Council. We are basically totally married to Wellingborough and it would be a huge setback in our efforts to deal with local developments if we have to deal with an MP who is not elected in the constituency where the relevant developments and projects are taking place.

The move will represent a huge weakening and dilution of local democracy. The present government and the previous coalition government promotes and pursues localism, ie meaning that local people should have a say and be able to influence local developments. To separate our village and the other four villages from Wellingborough parliamentary constituency is a move in the precise opposite direction and localism. So what is the point of doing so? Planning of constituency boundaries cannot be done as a desktop exercise. There is something Kafkaesque about this review leaving me perplexed and confused. You cannot just move around people without contemplating the impact on communities, democracy, localism and communication.

So how are the numbers stacking up? I have noted that every constituency should contain no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507, that the figures included in the review are from 2015 and that the review's target is September 2018. It is therefore important to take into consideration the development in number of electors from 2015 to 2018. With this objective in mind I have read and digested a number of reports from Daventry District Council. According to Daventry District Council strategic housing plan adopted in February 2014 and Daventry Council's housing land availability report published in April 2016 an average of 550 houses per year will be built in the three years from 2015 to 2018. All houses have received approved planning application so these figures are real.

Using a factor of 2.36 persons per household and applying a 19% reduction for under 15 years old these houses will add approximately 3,300 persons to the population in Daventry District Council and I have not included growth in the population from housing developments in other parts of the proposed Daventry Lutterworth constituency. The total number of electors in the five villages Hardwick, Orlingbury, Little and Great Harrowden and Isham are 1,897 in September 2016. This means that due to growth in the years 2015 to 2018 there will be no shortfall in Daventry Lutterworth if the five Wellingborough villages are taken out of the planned Daventry Lutterworth constituency.

The Boundary Commission's report mentions that present local government boundaries have been taken into account drawing up the proposal. It may be that the fact that our local government ward, Harrowden and Sywell, is split between two parliamentary constituencies, Wellingborough and Daventry, may have led to the inclusion of our village into the Daventry parliamentary constituency in the recent proposal, I do not know. However, even though Harrowden and Sywell local government wards were merged recently before the last local election there are still two local borough councillors representing the merged ward so that cannot be the reason for taking Harrowden including the other small villages into Daventry parliamentary constituency. I am sure that had local administration in Wellingborough known that the merger of the two local government wards would be a harbinger for losing the five villages to Daventry parliamentary constituency they would never have made that decision.

There is no substance and logic in using the merged local government ward as an excuse to draw the Harrowden Ward with its five villages out of Wellingborough having in mind that these villages will have everything to do with Wellingborough and nothing to do with Daventry.

Let me finally reiterate: to move Hardwick and the other four small villages from Wellingborough constituency to Daventry Lutterworth represents a significant weakening and dilution of local democracy, localism and communication. It is ill advised and nothing speaks in favour of doing so. Our village objects to this move and it should be rejected.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any queries? No. Thank you very much for your presentation. We will move forward, then, and ask for Mr John Foulkes to make his presentation and if I can ask you to give your name and full address before you speak, please.

MR FOULKES: Good afternoon. My name is John Foulkes, my address is 23 Waterpump Court, Northampton, NN3 8US.

I was prompted to come down here and speak this afternoon largely on the basis of the proposals that have been put forward regarding the boundary for Northampton South where I used to be resident. Plans for Northampton South which would sweep widely to the east and take in the area to the south of Wellingborough would destroy any notion of Northampton constituencies that would approximate either to the current boundary of the Borough of Northampton or anything which would approximate to the conurbation of Northampton and I think it is within that broad definition that we share services, both public services and commercial services, whether they are provided by the Borough Council, the County Council, the Area Health Authority or indeed commercial services and those provided by the voluntary sector. Critically we are talking about education, health and housing which people that live in the same town share, the service users; some members of the community are obviously involved in a critical role in relation to those organisations and in the decision making of those organisations, so those are some of the bonds that bind us as a community. It seems to me that the boundaries that are being proposed in a sense seek – well, not seek, perhaps, if only pragmatically but the outcome would be to fracture that to some extent.

We are also bound by the commercial services that we use and I know that there have been some campaigns and concerns around the development of the town centre as a commercial entity and what that might mean for employment. Another consideration is the ethnic diversity that we share as a town and it is not clear to me that that which people are accustomed to and accept and value, that that is an ethnic diversity that is shared by parts of the proposed area of Northampton South.

I think probably the concerns that I have are reflected most particularly in terms of the impact on the town centre itself where there is in many cases a tighter and even more coherent sense of community and in terms of, I suppose, a practical proposal I understand that both Castle Ward which is a town centre ward and Semilong which is marginally outside the very centre of the town that they should be integrated into Northampton North because they share a demographic similarity. If there is to be some paring away of Northampton wards it ought to be wards that are more peripheral, perhaps like Riverside and Park Ward.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next booked speaker is at 5.30 but we could carry on now with Mrs Mary Markham. Are you happy to speak now?

CLLR MARY MARKHAM: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you could give your name and full address before you start to speak, please.

CLLR MARY MARKHAM: Cllr Mary Markham. My address is 4 Whitfield Way, Kingsthorpe, Northampton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR MARY MARKHAM: (Conservative Party, Northampton Borough Council) I have come along today to say that I support the Boundary Commission proposals for Northampton North mainly because my ward is Park Ward which is one of the wards which is affected and it is currently part of Northampton South. The new proposals would now mean it would be part of Northampton North. This makes much more sense as Abington Vale and Abington currently are split one in the north and one in the south. They both share many community events and the wonderful Abington park and at a residents' AGM I discussed openly with them the proposed changes and they would welcome the opportunity of becoming much more inclusive and much more of a joint community. Likewise, in the eastern district area for those to become inclusive and the changes proposed on the eastern side would provide much more community engagement as they already share many facilities together.

That concludes what I wanted to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Our next booked speaker is at 5.40 so we will effectively adjourn until then. That said, we will be in the area and if anybody arrives ahead of that and wishes to speak sooner we will reconvene.

After a short break

Time Noted: 5.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon once again. We will hear now from Mr Phil Larratt and if I could ask you to give your name and full address before you speak, please.

CLLR LARRATT: Certainly, yes. My name is Phil Larratt, I am a Borough and County Councillor and I live at 22 Highfield Road, Northampton, NN1 4SR.

Can I first of all say that I have come along mainly to support the proposals that the Boundary Commission have put forward. Come next May I will have been a member of the Borough Council for 30 out of the last 34 years and I will have been a member of the County Council for eight years. From 1983 to 1995 I represented what was then called St George Ward that was an area that now is incorporated in Phippsville, Kingsley and Trinity, including the racecourse. I have to say that that area very much associated with Abington and Kingsthorpe and I think it is right that that area remains in Northampton North. As a representative of the Borough Council since 1999 of East Hunsbury and for the last eight years as County Councillor for Nene Valley can I say how pleased I am that those areas are coming back into Northampton South and out of the rural constituency of South Northamptonshire. I think they belong in the urban area where they can be best looked after by an urban MP.

So broadly I want to support the changes you propose, I think they offer the least possible change and I think the least possible change is always the best; I do not believe in change for change's sake.

I think to the west of the Northampton North boundary there are established boundaries that have been there since the constituency was first split in 1974 and I am pleased to see that they are being retained. I welcome the fact that certain wards on the east of the town, Billing, Ecton Brook in particular and Riverside are being brought into Northampton South because the eastern district of Northampton is a community of its own focused on Weston Favell and the area around there and I think that by bringing them into Northampton South offers greater community cohesion and that is to be welcomed. There are problems, I would not say it is an easy area, there are issues within that area and I think that rather than have two MPs dealing with them it would be far more appropriate for one to deal with them. They have got many schools up there that are very community focused and people from that area are very – to say self sufficient is probably the wrong word but they have got all the facilities within that area and they are focused and are really a significant community within Northampton.

Kings Heath in Northampton South I think is appropriate. Kings Heath, I remember the days not so long back when there were headlines in the paper of local youths staging battles across the river and railway track, gangs of youths from Kingsthorpe and Kings Heath fighting each other, so I do not think there is much community cohesion there, but Kings Heath does look to Duston, particularly the Rye Hill area of Kings Heath where pupils attend many of the schools, particularly the primary schools in Duston, there are no primary schools on Rye Hill and there is that much greater link. Also Kings Heath people look to Duston secondary school as opposed to anywhere else, so I do welcome Kings Heath in Northampton South, I do welcome the eastern district in Northampton South for the reasons I have stated.

As I say, I particularly welcome East Hunsbury and Nene Valley coming back into Northampton South. I think it is difficult for an MP with such a vast area to cover to be able to concentrate to any great extent, particularly with an electorate of over 80,000, to concentrate on the urban issues that a small percentage overall a constituency contains.

I would perhaps just have two or three minor criticisms and I think that the proposal that includes for Northampton South as it is where you have got it covering three local authority areas at district borough level I think three is perhaps too many. It is difficult for somebody to establish and maintain good working relationships with three – or it would be four in this case with the County Council as well – so I do think perhaps, you know, we should only be looking to MPs to have to work with a maximum of two councils at district and borough levels so that is a concern. How you address that I have no idea but I do find that concerning.

Representing Nene Valley and East Hunsbury I was very surprised that Grange Park has been left in South Northamptonshire. Grange Park is a significant urban extension of Northampton very close to the areas I represent and we do have some very good community links, good community working between the two areas and in actual fact when I had my electoral register sent to me I think it was four years ago before the County Council elections there was at least half a dozen electors from Grange Park who had somehow got on to the Northampton South register in Nene Valley, so there is confusion. I mean, people living on Grange Park who I know do see themselves as part of Northampton and I think again for reasons of community cohesion that is an issue and if that can be addressed I think that would be important.

So, sir, I basically, as I say, overall support the recommendations that you have come up with and commend you for them apart from the three slight matters that I have referred to and that is basically all I have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We have a query.

MR JARVIS: Just a couple of points of clarification, if I may.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just give your name again.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. You mentioned that you are supporting the Commission's proposals for Northampton North and sort of clarify that. You said about links with the eastern district...

CLLR LARRATT: Yes.

MR JARVIS: ...and the Commission are putting those in Northampton North so ---

CLLR LARRATT: Yes. I think it is important that the eastern district being as one community and for the sake of community cohesion it would be great if they were all together.

MR JARVIS: A second point of clarification. You mentioned the railway line, you think that that is a natural boundary on the western side.

CLLR LARRATT: Most definitely. I totally agree with that because, as I say, there is Kings Heath, it looks very much to Duston for shopping and everything else. I mean, we must not forget that the Cock Hotel junction which is a major route to get from Kings Heath through to Kingsthorpe is horrendous, it is probably the most congested junction in Northampton and people do, as best they can, try to avoid it so I think, you know, it is not attractive for people from Kings Heath area and that area to look towards the Kingsthorpe area, hence they look towards the Duston area.

MR JARVIS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We will hear now from Cllr Mike Hallam. Would you give your name and address, please.

CLLR MIKE HALLAM: Good afternoon, Mr Commissioner. My name is Mike Hallam and I live at 17 Spinney Hill Road in Parklands in Northampton. I am a Northamptonian born and bred having grown up in the town and lived here my whole life. I have represented the Parklands Ward on Northampton Borough Council since 2011 and the Division of Parklands and Boothville on the County Council since 2009.

Having lived in what is currently the Northampton North parliamentary constituency my whole life I think there is a natural community that Northampton North represents and I feel that the Commission's proposals have actually found this so I endorse the Commission's proposals today. Northampton North is based around many of the modern suburbs and development of Northampton which happened in the 1960s and 1970s such as Parklands, Lakeview, Eastfield and many of the new town developments in the area that we now know as Northampton East.

Now, Northampton East is an area of deprivation and it has many challenges and it is an area I come into contact with often because my current role on the Council is as cabinet member for community safety. Now, given that the area of Northampton East has many social and economic challenges, it makes sense for the reasons of community cohesion to locate them in one constituency with one MP as the Commission has recommended whereas at the moment I believe they are actually split across two.

Now, the Commission has recommended that areas such as Billing, Riverside, Abington Vale and Weston Favell village both of which are currently within Park Ward, that they

be located within one constituency. For me that is the bit of Northampton East that is currently missing from Northampton North because all of those areas form a part of Northampton East mainly because they use their local hub which is situated in and around the area of the Weston Favell shopping centre. I am sure others have mentioned it, but there is a large shopping complex, a leisure centre, cinema, medical services, schools and two churches, Emanuel Church and Sacred Heart Catholic Church, both of which serve those communities like Riverside, Abington Vale and Weston Favell village. These areas use that hub in the same way as many other people in Northampton North, myself included. I was in Weston Favell shopping centre only on Saturday with the Royal British Legion helping out with the poppy appeal and my daughter uses many of the facilities at Lings Forum Leisure Centre.

From a community safety perspective Northampton East is actually served, all of it is currently served from Weston Favell police station, so that is all the areas that I mentioned previously. It is a large and significant presence within the local community so I think again for that reason it is really important that we keep them together. There has been an awful lot of work and investment that has gone into making improvements within Northampton East and many of these projects have had a focus on community safety so community cohesion is really important. A lot of the projects – I would encourage you to look it up because there is such a success story – have come from the Growing Together project and many of those have had an impact on the whole of Northampton East and they have been really successful.

I think an important point that I want to make is that many of the areas where Northampton expanded to in the 1960s and 1970s are towards the north of the town. These days when we talk about Northampton's expansion we look towards the south of the town and areas like Upton but in the 1960s and 1970s it was very much the area that I am a part of and that I live. I think those areas look towards the north and the east of the town and Weston Favell as a bit of a hub whereas the town centre I think looks more southern focused.

I think the town centre is already united in one constituency in Northampton South and I am very much in favour of the proposal that keeps it that way. In my mind the town centre consists of a number of wards: Semilong which includes our Roman Catholic cathedral which is the site of the diocese for the whole of Northampton and into the south east, it includes the house of the Bishop of Northampton as well, the Roman Catholic bishop. The town centre is also clearly made up within Castle Ward, so Castle Ward includes the town's main shopping centre, the shopping precincts, and also the town's railway station which is sited on the site of the historic Northampton castle after which obviously Castle Ward is so named.

Now, these wards have intrinsic links towards the south of the town such as Spencer and St James. We heard from Cllr Larratt about the railway line but it is not just the railway line, the Weedon Road is a major thoroughfare in terms of roads and also

actually pedestrians. Victoria Park is a major—I often refer to it as a park that is a thoroughfare park. People walk through that park to get to the town centre and to get to the railway station. I actually think that the best proof of these links and pedestrian links from the town centre to wards like St James and Spencer is actually on a match day, so if you come to town on a match day you will see a stream of Northampton Saints fans walking from the town centre from the pubs and restaurants where they have been for their pre-match refreshments walking down to the ground in St James going past Spencer from the town centre down and they would not be able to do that if it was not intrinsically linked by those pedestrian links.

Another important part of considering the makeup of the town centre is the hospital which any Northamptonian will tell you is found in the centre of town so I was pleased to see that under the Commission's proposals it remains in one constituency that includes the town centre. I understand from an alternative proposal that that would actually break the hospital away, apart, so the hospital would not be in the same ward as the town centre wards under an alternative proposal that has been made and I do not think that makes logical sense. The hospital is as part of the town centre as the train station or the shopping precincts.

I understand that earlier speakers have also suggested that Trinity and Abington Ward have links to the town centre but I actually disagree with it, so I think those wards predominantly they are residential and have much stronger ties towards the north of the town. They look to local shopping areas like Weston Favell or Kingsthorpe or Kingsley and they are also intrinsically linked by two of our biggest parks, namely the racecourse within Trinity Ward and Abington park, our premier park after which the Abington area actually takes its name and obviously there is a lot of history there as well.

So, Mr Commissioner, I have actually looked through the Commission's proposals in detail. I think the Commission has got it right this time. The correct communities are in the correct areas for the two seats that would make up Northampton North and I would hope that the proposals are adopted moving forwards.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you, you talked about Trinity and Abington. Semilong Ward.

CLLR MIKE HALLAM: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You feel that looks more to the town centre than it would do to the north?

CLLR MIKE HALLAM: Yes, I think so. Yes, because it has got its own—there are only a very few shops within the centre of Semilong, there is a Co-op and a couple of others

and I do not think that people in Semilong go to Kingsley to do their shopping which is where I think people from Trinity would go to do their shopping where there is a parade of shops or go towards Kingsthorpe. I think the people in Semilong would go to the town centre to do their shopping.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any queries?

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Do you not think that people in Semilong and of course people in Trinity will use the Asda on Kingsthorpe Road which is the boundary between the two wards?

CLLR MIKE HALLAM: Yes. I do not think that Asda is particularly well used at all. If you look at that Asda on Kingsthorpe Road it is not a major Asda, it is not of the square footages that other stores are like, for example, at Weston Favell. I do not think people in Semilong would go to that Asda, it is relatively small, I think it is called Home and Garden or something like this, it is not a straightforward national – it has got a funny name, I cannot remember it quite. I think they are more likely to shop at Sainsbury's in the town centre when they do their weekly shopping.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, that is useful, that clarifies your view on where Semilong should lie. Thank you.

CLLR MIKE HALLAM: Right, thanks.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have a speaker booked at six o'clock and a second one at 6.20 neither of whom have attended but we will just wait for the moment and see if they arrive.

After a short break

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will hear now from Ms Anjona Roy, if you would like to come forward. If you could give your name and full address before you start to speak, please.

MS ROY: My name is Anjona Roy, I live at 108 Church Way, Weston Favell, Northampton, NN3 3BQ.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS ROY: Thank you for all the hard work you have done, particularly over quite a big area, it is obviously a very complex task and I would not want to belittle any of the effort that has gone into the proposals. Having said that, just to say I am born and brought up in Northampton so I have a long history here and, you know, I live in Northampton, work

in Northampton, my kids go to school here. I live in the current Park Ward and, you know, there have been a lot of changes in terms of boundaries over the last few years in terms of both division and borough boundaries and I think it has been quite confusing for a lot of people in terms of where they actually are, particularly some of the area around where I live has been put into the Northampton North constituency and I think this is... Well, I do not feel good about that.

I think generally it is more helpful to have a compact Northampton constituency, which Northampton North appears to be, that includes the Northampton town centre. It seems a bit at odds to have something that is seemingly an urban and suburban constituency with bits that are quite green and leafy and to put the urban constituent bits in with the South Northants constituency I think Northampton constituency is a bit at odds. I also think that there are particular issues relating to the growth of the town specifically in relation to the intended plans relating to the university and the fact that the university – there is already one hall of residence within the Northampton town centre and the fact that there will be more students living in the urban centre of Northampton, I think the fact that you will be having a period of time where the university will be across two constituencies with your plans is something that might particularly disenfranchise younger people in terms of trying to get their views across to their elected representative. I think particularly the areas around the east of the town, so the Billing, the Park Wards, would be more in tune in the South Northants area being more suburban and having much more in common. For instance, I live in an area known as Weston Favell village which has a lot more in common with some of the village areas in the South Northants constituency than it does in respect of the urban areas in the current Northampton North constituency which you have placed Park in.

As I said, I think it would be more cohesive to have the urban areas in with something that was a cohesive Northampton constituency and the Northampton North constituency makes an attempt to be a Northampton constituency whereas the Northampton South constituency is much more Northampton South and the surrounding areas and to have Northampton town centre within that just does not seem correct. I think there is not very much in common that people in Spring boroughs would have as to people in, say, for instance, Hackleton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We have a query here for clarification. If you come back I think the gentleman wants to address yourself.

MS ROY: Sorry.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstone, Nottinghamshire. You mentioned the town centre which a number of speakers have mentioned and just for clarification which parts of the town centre have the Commission divided by their proposals?

MS ROY: Oh, right, okay, let's have a look. So the town centre wards... Well, the primary town centre is Castle Ward, the historic Castle Ward, and that is the absolute town centre. However, there are arguments to say that urban areas like St James would consider being an urban area close to that, similarly Delapre and Briar Hill, similarly Spencer and Kings Heath, so these are very much urban town centre kind of urban areas which have a lot more in common with the rest of Northampton as opposed to the leafy suburbs of East Hunsbury, Hackleton, Brafield on the Green and Yardley Hastings.

MR JARVIS: But the town centre in terms of how you have described it is, under the Commission's proposals, all together.

MS ROY: Castle Ward is outside the Northampton – Castle Ward is actually outside of the rest of the urban areas so, for instance, if you look at things like the Abington Division, if you look at things like the urban areas in terms of the growth of the eastern district that happened over the mid-1970s, so things that relate to Brookside, Lumbertubs, those kind of areas, they have a lot more in common with the Castle Ward area than, for instance, the Castle Ward area would have with Hackleton and Brafield.

MR JARVIS: Okay, thank you for that clarification.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand; it is the mix of the rural and the urban in the south. Thank you very much.

MS ROY: Am I free to go?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are, yes. Thanks for your presentation. We will adjourn until 6.30.

After a short break

Time Noted: 6.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will commence the hearing again and if I could ask Mr James Hill to come forward. If you could give your name and full address before you speak, please.

CLLR HILL: (Conservative Party, Northampton Borough Council) Thank you very much. I am James Hill and my address is 252 Acre Lane, Northampton, NN2 8DY.

Thank you for having me here this evening. I am James Hill, I am the Borough Councillor for Rectory Farm and under the proposals Rectory Farm would move from the south to the north, I believe. I am generally in favour of these proposals. I think in terms of the geographical location of Rectory Farm it does probably seem to make

sense; obviously if you look at the map you will see that we are actually sort of on the north border of Northampton anyway so we go with much of the boundary as well as look at the north. So in terms of where we actually stay within Northampton I think from that point of view it makes sense as well. Obviously other eastern areas of Northampton such as Goldings and Talavera Wards they are also part of Northampton North and it has always been a bit of an oddity that we have sort of been kind of perched on the edge of these wards and yet we are in the south, so I think in terms of that it also makes sense as well.

Obviously Weston Favell shopping centre is probably one of the main hubs of places where my residents will go to shop and also to socialise and for community aspects and that sort of thing. Again that is part of Northampton North so in terms of, you know, my work and stuff like that it would again make sense that we go into that ward. Rectory Farm you may also remember was actually a part of Northampton North before the last boundary changes so we do have a historical connection, you know, to the North constituency so I think a lot of people would welcome that change again.

The growth obviously of Northampton, Northampton is a very big growing town and we are seeing a lot of developments especially along the north just outside the ward boundaries. There is a proposal for a new ring road and that will make Rectory Farm even more sort of connected to the North; as you may see, we have got quite a few number of main roads running through us and will quite a pivotal kind of connection point to the rest of Northampton so again we will see a lot of those north developments affecting our ward maybe more than, you know, south developments will so again I think it is another reason why we should be there.

Finally, having discussed with my Residents' Association, we have got quite an active Residents' Association called Rectory Farm Residents' Association, they are generally happy to accept these as well, they think it would make sense. They almost expected that it would be something that would happen anyway before the report even came out, just because I think most people, you know, feel that we have always been part of the North Northampton anyway, so in summing-up that is pretty much my thing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your submission. We have one more booked speaker at seven o'clock so provisionally we will adjourn until seven. If anyone does turn up before that then we will come back.

After a short break

Time Noted: 7.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask Mr Weatherill to come forward and speak. If you could give us your name and address before you start to speak. If you could just do it to the microphone then it is on the record. Thank you.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Andrew Weatherill, 7 Bell Hill, Finedon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR WEATHERILL: (Finedon Parish Council) Okay, good evening. As I just said, I am Andrew Weatherill and I would like to address the hearing on the proposal to move Finedon into the Kettering constituency. My position is I strongly believe that Finedon should remain part of the Wellingborough constituency.

I personally have been a resident of Finedon for the last 20 years and prior to that I lived in the eastern part of Wellingborough for my entire childhood and the remainder of my adult life apart from short periods of time in Birmingham and London for university and early parts of my work career. I therefore consider that I know both Wellingborough and Finedon well. I sit on Finedon Parish Council where all councillors are independent so I receive opinions from the residents. I am also a candidate for the Division of Finedon at next year's County Council elections.

The main reasons for my view are the following: historic and local government links, geography and future developments. In terms of historic links Finedon has been linked in Council terms with Wellingborough since 1935. The residents feel they are part of Wellingborough. The largest landlord in Finedon is social housing provider Wellingborough Homes which was formed following a stock transfer from Wellingborough Council. The Finedon and Wellingborough schools are linked in the Wellingborough District, play each other at district sport and have done for a very long period, since I was a boy.

Finedon is reported as being situated to the nearby communities of Wellingborough, Burton Latimer and Great Harrowden in Wikipedia, no mention is made of Kettering. The County Council Division of Finedon is about 3,200 electors in Finedon and over 6,000 in Wellingborough. To remove Finedon would split this County Council Division so it would be represented by two separate MPs.

In terms of geography Finedon parish boundary extends to the River Ives. This is currently a few hundred yards from the nearest houses in Wellingborough. This will change with the development of Wellingborough East with the building of what I understand is going to be a few thousand homes. I am informed that an estimated one third of these will be in part of the current Finedon parish boundary. It would not make sense to split Finedon away now and then subsequently split an extension of Wellingborough into the Kettering constituency. It may seem a small point but the closely linked geography in my opinion is demonstrated by the fact that there is a Wellingborough Road in Finedon, a Finedon Road in Wellingborough; there is no Kettering Road in either Finedon or Wellingborough or indeed a Finedon or Wellingborough Road in Kettering.

I believe that a relatively small event held recently at Finedon Cricket Club demonstrates the real life links of the people of Finedon to Wellingborough. Finedon ran, for a number of decades, a social rugby side for people of Finedon and the Finedon area. A reunion of former players of this side was held last month at the cricket club and was attended by 50 or 60 former players. Every single one of these players played rugby for either Wellingborough Old Grammarians, Wellingborough Rugby Football Club or the now finished Old Wellingburians Rugby Football Club. Men from Kettering: no link at all.

So how does this compare to Finedon's links with Kettering? In my opinion there are no historical local government links. Geographically there are two towns between Finedon and Kettering: Burton Latimer and Barton Seagrave. I think most importantly there are very strong people's view on this, there is very strong feeling in the community about the issue and I have had representations in support of the proposed change. I have had no representation in support of the proposed change only opposition. I believe these views should be taken on board and Finedon should remain within the Wellingborough constituency.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. As you know the Finedon area so well, it is a point a number of speakers brought up before. Obviously adjacent to that is Irthlingborough.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Which is not within this constituency.

CLLR WEATHERILL: No, it is in East Northants, or Corby and East Northants.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, although from an outside point of view it looks like that is very closely associated with Wellingborough.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Irthlingborough is more closely associated with towns like Raunds, Stanwick and it looks to the east and it has never really looked to the west to Wellingborough, Finedon has always looked to Wellingborough, so they are very distinct and separate communities, Irthlingborough and Finedon. You are right when you look at them on the map that they are close and you might think that they react in a similar way locally. They do not, they are very different and distinct communities. They consider themselves more of an East Northamptonshire town and we certainly consider ourselves part Wellingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. Just a point for clarification.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Perhaps you can help me with understanding the geography of Finedon. It seems to me it is on a crossroads and you have got the A6 going through Finedon and down to Irthlingborough.

CLLR WEATHERILL: That is right.

MR FOX: And you have got another road which I cannot work out.

CLLR WEATHERILL: The 509.

MR FOX: The 509 which goes from Wellingborough and up to the north east.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Joins the A14, yes.

MR FOX: It therefore looks on the map as though Finedon has got good communications in all four of those directions, including north west to Kettering.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Yes it does have a road to Kettering, that is a fairly recent road that used to go through Burton Latimer and through Barton Seagrave. Burton is now by-passed but you go through Barton Seagrave go get through to Kettering.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

CLLR WEATHERILL: The by-pass, Burton by-pass, correct.

MR FOX: But the road in Finedon is a well established road.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Yes, previously it went through the centre of Burton and then by-passed a number of years ago; correct.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But you are saying notwithstanding the road arrangement the people in Finedon look to Wellingborough?

CLLR WEATHERILL: It is five or six miles away from Kettering but it is not how the people feel about it; they feel that they are part of Wellingborough, they do not feel they are part of Kettering. They have no affinity, no history, no linkage with Kettering in my experience and everybody who I speak to.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much for attending.

CLLR WEATHERILL: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have no more speakers booked so we are going to adjourn until 7.15 and if we have not had any further attenders at that point then we will close the hearing for today.

After a short time

Time Noted: 7.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have had no further attenders so on that basis we will close the hearing for this evening and we will reconvene a nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Thank you for attending.

The hearing adjourned until 9.00 am on Tuesday 1 November 2016

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