

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

TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Mr Scott Handley JP, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

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THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning and welcome to the second day of the hearing here in Northampton. My name is Scott Handley, I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England and I will be chairing the hearing today. The purpose of the hearing is to allow people to make oral representations on the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission. The hearing will be recorded, both audio and video, and it is important that all speakers give their name and address before starting to speak.

We do have quite a full day so we will start now and if I can call Mr Tony Clarke.

MR CLARKE: (Green Party): Thank you, Mr Chairman. As stated my name is Mr Tony Clarke, my address is 33 Ethel Street, Northampton, NN1 5ES.

Mr Chairman, I address you as a former Member of Parliament for Northampton South between the years of 1997 and 2005, a time when Northampton South constituency had in excess of 90,000 electors. I also hope to bring to the Commission my experiences as 14 years as a local government officer in Northamptonshire and 20 years as an elected member in both Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Borough Council.

Mr Chairman, I believe that the Commission has proposed a set of boundaries which will not meet the electoral needs of Northamptonshire and in particular will create a democratic deficit for the people of Northampton. I mention that the constituency I represented had over 90,000 electors, both urban and rural. It was always a challenge as a Member of Parliament to represent the differing needs of those that live in differing parts of our county and indeed a city – for it is a city – of 220,000 people here in Northampton. It may be that those in the rural parts of the constituency were most active in their seeking parliamentary representation but it was often those in the centre of the town who had the most need and participated less. I therefore, over a series of meetings and presentations, suggested to the Boundary Commission at the time that it was time that Northampton, as one of the larger conurbations in the East Midlands, had parliamentary seats that were coterminous with its boundary. That was achieved in part and, as people know currently, we have two and a bit parliamentary constituencies within Northampton.

The proposals. I was taken aback to find that the Northampton South constituency I represented and indeed where I live, would now take in areas as far apart as Bozeat to the east of Wellingborough. I am not quite sure what you would call this seat, I guess you would call it Northampton South North East Wellingborough or something messy, but whatever it is called it will not represent the people within the area suggested.

Mr Chairman, I have a number of issues with the Boundary Commission's work to date. I do not blame the Boundary Commission for those, I think they have been imposed on

them, but I do worry about the number of missing voters, particularly in respect of Northampton. I believe the number of electors in Northampton to be far higher than that currently stated and I think that will have a deficit on the result should you not take into account Northampton as the fastest growing town in the East Midlands with new population size and new electorates.

Constituency size. I accept that you have to be within your 5% ruling but I do think there is some flexibility that can be afforded across those seats to make sure that you do put proposals forward that have at least two constituencies that are within Northampton's border. Northampton's population in the next couple of years is set to exceed that of Derby meaning that Northampton will be the third largest urban conurbation within the East Midlands. To think of that being a city or a town, whichever you wish to call it, that has no seats coterminous with its boundary is not acceptable in this day and age. I do also believe that, as said, whilst numbers are important it is crucial to have a system that does not split up and graft together different communities. I think of myself as relatively widely travelled, I have been to most continents of the world but I cannot recall ever going to Bozeat and yet this is supposedly going to be in the constituency whose MP would represent me.

I also think, as I mentioned earlier, it creates an unfair representation. One of the main issues with the current law is that its unregistered but eligible voters are not considered when drawing up constituency boundaries. Urban and socially deprived areas, as I mentioned earlier on, are areas where registration is traditionally low. They will be unrepresented unlike the affluent areas of the new constituency where registration will be high and therefore there will be disproportionate representation.

Mr Chairman, I do not wish to hold the committee up but I do ask you to think again. I think in all of the Boundary Commission hearings that I have been involved in I have always felt that the Commission had an almost impossible job to do but did always try to be fair with its proposals. I fear there is a danger that if the proposals go through in their current form that the Commission itself may be dragged into the political sphere because, whether we like it or not, the proposals that have been put forward would seem to be to the elector the biggest act of gerrymandering known within our parliamentary constituencies for some centuries.

I say that, I represented the Labour Party whilst in Parliament, I am no longer a member of the Labour Party, I am a member of the Green Party and I speak here today representing them in Northamptonshire so you could say that I have no real input in terms of whether or not the seat ends up in the hands of the Labour Party or the Conservative Party but I do care for democracy and I think if democracy is to work then people have to have trust within it. I think if people are shown this new boundary, people living in the centre of Northampton in places such as Castle Ward, Semilong and Spencer Ward are told that their representation stretches out to the east of Wellingborough and because of under registration their voices is not going to be heard

as much as those within the leafy rural areas of the shire then they will ask who is responsible for this? Who has gerrymandered these boundaries to ensure that we have permanent Conservative rule rather than proper representation? So I do ask the Commission to seriously look at this again to try to make sure that we have proper representation within the town/city of Northampton and that we have seats coterminous with our boundary. It is possible, it can be done, Northamptonshire can have the requisite number of seats, the changes can be arranged around the edges in terms of overflowing into other counties if necessary but please, please, please do not leave the third largest city conurbation in the East Midlands without seats that are coterminous with the boundary and do not leave electorates with members of Parliament who are unable to represent their own special needs.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I am happy to accept questions that seek clarification. If you could give your name, please.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe. Do you think you could possibly expand on the areas where you see Northampton expanding. You referred to Northampton being the fastest growing town, you obviously mentioned that you do not think very rural areas fit within Northampton. What is your opinion in terms of urban areas on the edge like Grange Park and the new proposal to the west of Duston?

MR CLARKE: Well I obviously would point the Commission towards the work of the local planners in terms of the strategic local plan and the house numbers that are proposed for the edge of Northampton; you have mentioned Grange Park, of course, you could also look at those houses currently going up to the north on the corridor up towards junction 16 of the M1. I believe, and I think most people would agree with me, that before too long we will have unitary local government in Northamptonshire and that there will be a seat – sorry, there will be a council, a local authority, which is for the Borough of Northampton. I think at that time it is quite possible that some of the new developments such as Grange Park, such as those new houses that have popped up around our edges and some of those that are proposed, may be sucked in to a new boundary for the city of Northampton.

I think because of that it gives even more reason that the Boundary Commission at this time give notice to what will happen in Northampton in the coming years rather than the current situation. In fact, it is not the current situation, as we said, the electoral list that has been proposed is already out of date. So I do accept that. I think there are some rural areas such as Moulton and Cooknoe which could be consumed within a new town boundary; that will be for a different Boundary Commission at a different time to propose what wards would make up any new unitary local government in Northampton.

But all said and done, whatever happens you will still have within Northampton an electorate, population, if you took those areas in a population in excess of 220/230,000, an electorate touching probably around the 180/190,000, probably even more, probably touching over the 200,000 mark. So you may ask yourself why on earth would we not, given our electoral quota of between 70,000 and 80,000, have at least two seats that were coterminous with the town's boundary, old or new, and one that was majority urban with some rural to make up the numbers.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I just have further clarification. You mentioned the development at junction 16. Is that in the Harpole area?

MR CLARKE: Well not exclusively. I think it stretches from Swan Valley, which is passed, almost down towards the Hunsburys, it stretches up through Upton, it stretches over to Kislingbury, through Harpole all the way through the back of what was St Crispin's Hospital, New Duston. That is one area. Of course, there are also areas to the north around the top of Kingsthorpe towards the border of Wellingborough and Daventry District Councils there and it is one of the issues that would have to be resolved, because I mentioned when I was Member of Parliament for the old Northampton South that I had to deal with so many different local authorities in terms of trying to represent my constituents. Now that was unfortunate. It happens at times, particularly in large areas that have no central conurbation. We do not need to go back to those days. It is bad enough now for the electorate of Northampton having to put up with a County Council, a Borough Council, but as a constituency Member of Parliament for this new proposed seat having to answer to the County Council – well, not answer, having to correspond and communicate with the County Council, Northampton Borough Council, South Northants Council, Daventry District Council, Wellingborough Council, plus all the parish councils that would also be represented in those areas would be an absolute mess and it would be a mess of the Boundary Commission's own making and that is what I am trying to avoid.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. If I can call Mr David Brede. If you could give your name and address.

MR BREDE: I am David Brede, I live in 3 Blossom Way in Little Billing, Northampton, NN3 9ET.

I think, I say, my view is that I agree with the motion that there should be boundary and county seats for Northampton, clearly with a reduction in the numbers of constituency MPs, that clearly we are going to have to make some sort of accommodation to increase the size. However, my concern is that the borough seat that is proposed has very little in its locations with the parts of Northampton and getting borough status. The borough status of Northampton goes back, sort of, through the years back into the Middle Ages and therefore this building such as the Guildhall, the County Hall, the Northampton Council site and the battle site are all areas which are part and parcel of

this area being a borough in the first instance but actually are not in the borough seat at all. I think, as I say, you have also got to think in terms of the fact that historically the town had one of the earliest universities in England, shortlived in the Middle Ages but, nonetheless, it has got its new university coming forward which is going to be built on the Bedford road and therefore is going to be part and parcel of Northampton growing and going forward, therefore I think the boundary for the borough seat should really reflect the fact this history and this provenance from, say, where the town has come from and how it is going to take itself forward. Therefore, if we thought in terms of sort of, I say, sort of seats such as Castle and Rushmills, if you added those which represents, I say, the inner areas and the historic centre of the town these would add an extra 9,814 voters going forward.

I live in Billing, as I said. This is a historic parish, it was noted in the Domesday Book and it has got a blue plaque to prove it, it has its own parish council, street lights and sets out to retain its present character and therefore it is more like the parishes in the County of Northampton South seat and I think this should be really restored to be in Northampton South so it is more in the area of places which are, sort of, like it. I say, as Mr Clarke has already said, ones that are going to be subject to development and therefore there is going to be lots of similarities. If that area and the next door ward of Riverside which is sort of adjacent to the west and to the south of this borough seat this would add some 9,903 electors going out and therefore a balance if you increase the numbers that are coming in from the central area.

I think there are other issues which ought to be looked at, as I say, particularly ones like in Kings Heath where the previous Boundary Commission it was argued successfully that this should be linked to Kingsthorpe which is in the current Northampton North seat simply because the people in that area, they are not particularly well off and therefore they look to places like going to shop in Asda and places like that where the prices are cheaper and also the library and other district facilities within that area. Essentially that is what I am looking for or would like to see. I think the problem which is going to go forward for the new MPs is that they are going to have an increased electorate, they are going to have more responsibilities, a wider spread and therefore having, sort of, areas that they represent which are more like one another it is going to help to make their job slightly easier to be able to focus on these particular issues.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just to clarify, you are suggesting that Castle Ward comes into the Northampton North?

MR BREDE: Yes, that is right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The other ward you were going to add was---

MR BREDE: I thought Riverside simply because that is – sorry, Rushmills.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Rushmills.

MR BREDE: Which is essentially where the university is being built, so essentially all the university and a lot of the students which tend to reside in the sort of Castle Ward mainly because of the cheaper housing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And removing Billing and Riverside?

MR BREDE: Simply so that the numbers once again add up and match the requirements of the proposed size of constituencies going forward.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So that would be the reason to move those ---

MR BREDE: That is it, as I say, but the reason for taking Billing out is obvious, because it is a historic parish and therefore looks more like, sort of, another parish which is further to the east and south of it, a historic village and people in the area would know Billing as an independent parish with Northampton five miles away.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I see, okay. Yes.

MR FOX: Thank you. Could you explain to me, please ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, can you just give your name.

MR FOX: (Liberal Democrat Party) Sorry, Alan Fox, from the Liberal Democrats. --- if Castle and Rushmills are taken from South into North and Riverside and Billing are added from North into South that would mean that in order to get from the Riverside or the Billing Wards in your proposed Northampton South to the rest of the Northampton wards in Northampton South and stay within the constituency you would end up having to go through Brafield and Hackleton in order to do it.

MR BREDE: Well my issue would be does this make a difference inasmuch that sort of essentially what you are trying to do is get fair representation and therefore the direction of travel which I am trying to sort of point you towards is (a) to get the historic town of Northampton, it seems to be represented by one person and therefore that would be advantageous for the person doing it and also help to maintain the identity of Northampton as a town and a historic town of some significance. I say, essentially the notion that I say you have to go through one ward, one constituency, to reach another bit of the other one I think is somewhat academic inasmuch the average voter does not

actually care about these things much, what they are interested in is good representation which, as I say, is what I am trying to achieve.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: For clarification?

MR FOX: For clarification, yes. The Rule 5 which is in the legislation and is something the Boundary Commission may take into account speaks of special geographical considerations including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of the constituency. Have you taken that into account when making your proposal?

MR BREDE: Well I basically felt that that was sort of a subsidiary issue compared to what was, I say, being proposed. When I first got married I lived in the Saffron Walden constituency and basically that took the shape of a rather misshapen bra where it has a large area in and around Northampton North and Saffron Walden, a large area around Halstead where I happened to live in a very narrow about one mile gap which actually linked the two places together so I think while your idea is nice to do it is not actually essentially and therefore what we have got to focus upon is actually getting good representation for the people who live there, not necessarily geographical shapes that look pleasing, and I think that is basically that is not necessarily the highest in my priorities. What I want is good representation for people in Northampton and Northamptonshire.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. We will move on now to Mr Andrew Bingham, please.

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: (MP for High Peak) Thank you. My name is Andrew Bingham, I am the Member of Parliament for the High Peak, I am here to discuss the High Peak constituency in Derbyshire. My address is 11 Eccles Road, Chapel-En- Le-Frith, High Peak.

I contend that actually the proposals to leave the High Peak untouched as they are at the moment are wrong and I think we should look at they should bring back in the Bradwell, Tideswell and Hathersage and Eyam Wards from Derbyshire Dales back into the High Peak. This will take the High Peak back to how it was pre-2010 and how it has been for nearly 30 years and it reinstates the historic link between them and the rest of the Hope Valley. Tideswell, Bradwell, Hathersage and Eyam are part of the Hope Valley. The Hope Valley is an entity on its own with Castleton, Hope, Bamford, Brough, Edale. They are all in the High Peak. If you go down the Hope Valley half of the valley is in High Peak, half is in Derbyshire Dales, so there are many geographical links.

Tideswell, Bradwell, Hathersage, they all have the same dialling codes as Buxton and the Hope Valley which are in the High Peak, they have the same postcode areas as the

Hope Valley and the High Peak and they are all covered by a lot of organisations that straddle over both these areas such as the mountain rescue. If you look at, say, the mountain rescue that operates around the Hope Valley it is covered using the Buxton and Edale mountain rescue teams and they look after Bradwell, they look after Hathersage and all round there.

In terms of community and transport links Hope Valley College which sits in the High Peak takes pupils from across the Hope Valley, including Hathersage, Hope, Eyam, Bamford, Tideswell, Bradwell, Castleton and Grindleford, so again it is pulling children out of the Derbyshire Dales constituency into the High Peak constituency because there is natural synergy between those parts of the Hope Valley that are presently in the High Peak and those parts that I believe should be.

In terms of local media, Hathersage, Bradwell and Tideswell, again those wards, they are all serviced using local media. The *Buxton Advertiser* services those wards and if you pick the *Buxton Advertiser* up and looked you would not see the difference because it is all very much High Peak focused. High Peak Radio, the local radio station, also serves those wards.

If you look at railway links, the main railway line which is known as the Hope Valley line such is the entity of the Hope Valley, it stops at Edale, Hope, Bamford, Hathersage and Grindleford again and the closest station to Tideswell and Bradwell is actually Hope again in the Hope Valley. The only major road which connects Castleton, Hope and Bamford in the High Peak to Buxton actually goes out of the High Peak constituency through Tideswell and Bradwell, that is the Derbyshire Dales, and then back into the High Peak and it also provides a crucial connection to Eyam and Hathersage.

The Hope Valley, as I said, is well known, it is a recognised geographical entity. You hear the Hope Valley terminology used many times. As I said, the rail line, for instance, and at the moment half of it is the High Peak, half of it is in the Derbyshire Dales. By bringing these three wards back into the High Peak where I believe they belong, and they have been for many years pre-2010, it actually unifies the valley and its communities. I have people come to me as the Member of Parliament who live in Bradwell, they cannot understand why I do not represent them. I have a similar situation with Hathersage because they say, "Well, we are Hope Valley, I thought you were the MP for the Hope Valley." The main bus routes from the High Peak to the High Peak part of the Hope Valley from Buxton also pass through Bradwell and Tideswell, so again out of the constituency, back in. There are other local buses connecting Hathersage, Eyam, Bradwell, Tideswell, Castleton, Hope, Bamford and Buxton.

On leisure, the Hope Valley Football League. Again the Hope Valley has this entity all of its own. It consists of teams throughout the Hope Valley and the High Peak but again it pulls in Bradwell, Grindleford, Hathersage, Tideswell, which are not in the High Peak with teams like Edale and Bamford that are.

So in conclusion I understand that people in here are probably not very fascinated about Derbyshire and the High Peak today but it was the one hearing I could get to, I am afraid.

The wards of Bradwell, Tideswell, Hathersage and Eyam, you ask the people in there where do you live? They will all say to you we live in the High Peak. They are intrinsically, spiritually, in every sense part of the High Peak; they have been for many years and up until 2010 they were. I think bringing them back into the High Peak constituency makes absolute common sense, it fits with the numbers that the Boundary Commission are looking to work with. The High Peak if left on its own we do fit but I think only just, we are right on the bottom end, I think we are about 90 people in. By adding these wards in moves us higher up, well within the parameters you are looking to meet, and I think the people of the High Peak and the community of the High Peak would actually welcome and embrace this and that is not me saying I am a better MP than Patrick McLoughlin but I do think they would welcome me at the High Peak where they think they belong.

I am happy to take any questions ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, just one query ---

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: --- dealing with the Hathersage Ward, there is then a little bit of an issue with Stoney Middleton.

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: Yes, but as I said, Stoney Middleton actually ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Does not go into the ---

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: No, that would be fine because if you look at the links between Stoney Middleton and Eyam they are very close to each other, they back on to each other, and I do not feel I leave the Hope Valley until actually I go through the lights at Calver which is just down. So you go over the Tideswell Moor, past Tideswell, through Stoney Middleton, when you hit the Carver crossroads where if you turn left you would come back into what I think should be the High Peak when you go into Grindleford, once you get past Calver then I believe that is when you spiritually leave what is known as the Hope Valley. You look at the dialling codes, the 01433 which covers the whole of the Hope Valley, some of it is my constituency, some of it is not. Similarly with Tideswell. Tideswell is 01298 the same as Buxton and Chapel-en-le-Frith and quite a large area. So they do feel somewhat cut off from everybody because if you look at the Derbyshire Dales constituency it is a very long constituency and the Bradwell and Hathersage are right at the top end so they are sort of out on a limb, really,

whereas if they were brought back into the High Peak they would be part of a well shaped, well formed constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes. If you could just give your name, please.

MR WILLIAMSON: (Labour Party) George Carl Williamson, the Labour Party. You are suggesting a division of the Derbyshire districts, Derbyshire District Council area. Do you feel that the people who live in these wards that you are transferring into High Peak have got no affinity with the Derbyshire Dales?

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: No, I think they have got an affinity with the High Peak and I take your point about them moving out of Derbyshire Dales district but there are many, many parliamentary seats that are not coterminous and I think if you speak to the people in Bradwell or Hathersage and say, "Where do you live?" they will say, "The Hope Valley in the High Peak." I think they have a natural affinity with the High Peak because they have been part of the High Peak for 30 years up until 2010.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. In other parts of the region Conservatives have been standing up arguing for, for instance, North East Derbyshire as ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is it clarifying the submission that has been made?

MR FOX: Yes, I just really want to give some context to my question.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I just want clarification on the point you are going to put forward.

MR FOX: If there are arguments in the region that there should be seats coterminous with their local authorities and if there are arguments in the region, such as in Wellingborough, that a district should not be unnecessarily divided ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are dealing with High Peak now.

MR FOX: Yes, but I am saying that there are those arguments around the region. Why is it then necessary to change a seat like High Peak which is where the Boundary Commission's proposals are both unchanged from the present constituency and coterminous with the local authority and in doing so unnecessarily divide a local authority, ie Derbyshire Dales?

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: Well I think I dealt with that in my remarks. I am not sure where you are from, sir, but Hathersage, Bradwell, Eyam and Tideswell, they consider themselves first and foremost part of the High Peak. They link with the High Peak both

in terms of community, transport, economy, shopping, leisure, everything makes them feel part of the High Peak. I think the district council that they are part of, to the people in the area I think I would say is almost irrelevant, they feel part of the High Peak. They felt of the High Peak until 2010 and I think they should be brought back there and I think you will find that if you were to go round those towns and ask them you would find wholesale approval of that situation.

MR FOX: Okay, thank you very much.

MR ANDREW BINGHAM: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are running slightly ahead of time but we have some more speakers who have arrived so we will move on and hear from Steven North.

CLLR NORTH: (East Northamptonshire District Council) Thank you, Chairman. Yes, my name is Steven North, I am Leader of East Northamptonshire District Council and my address is 8 Kings Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire. I have been Leader of that Council for just over six years and I have been a councillor in the area for near enough 20 years.

Just to put the area in context, Chairman, certainly after the last speaker and coming back to this area, East Northamptonshire consists of six towns which is Oundle, Thrapston, Raunds, Irthlingborough, Higham Ferrers and Rushden but it also has over 40 villages so it is a mainly rural district area with the main centres concentrated in the old shoe and boot areas of the south. It is covered by two Members of Parliament, Chairman: Peter Bone MP and Tom Pursglove MP. Tom Pursglove covers most of East Northamptonshire area and Peter Bone covers Rushden and Higham, all within the East Northamptonshire District Council. In my view, Mr Chairman, having two MPs works extremely well and certainly have tried to achieve in the best area. We have a number of infrastructure issues certainly around roads and improvements and I think our MPs work very hard independently in trying to achieve what they are trying to do.

I have not come here today, Mr Chairman, with the answers to the solution certainly on the numbers, I appreciate you have got an extremely hard job to try and work out the reduction in MPs and work out, obviously, the constituencies, but my simplest request, although it is not easy for you to agree with that or answer that, but my simplest request is to leave things as much as possible as they are within my area. In my view the people know who their MPs are in our area and I think Rushden and Higham sit naturally in the Wellingborough constituency; I have lived in that area for nearly 20 years.

I also think just the same, that Irthlingborough, which obviously I am aware is looking to being changed, works very well as part of the Corby constituency. In my view obviously

you look at it on the maps it does look like it links near enough to Wellingborough but, not necessarily an argument, Chairman, but in my view you have to look the other side of the A6 as well within the district of East Northamptonshire. Within that, the other side of the A6 if you took that as a boundary with the largest part of the town to the west, on the other side Chowns Mills—I mean Crow Hill on the Addington road is very, very much part of Irthlingborough. Irthlingborough has unfortunately been divided over the years by the A6 but over the other side of the road there is the Nene Valley industrial area which used to hold the Irthlingborough and Rushden Diamonds Football Club and, as I have mentioned already, there is the Crow Hill housing estate and there is obviously a number of houses on that road. So in the future, Chairman, there is plans way into the future but there are plans for housing along the A6 to Finedon which covers the other side to the east of Irthlingborough which will include along the A6 if it ever goes through and what is called the Addington road.

Further to that, Chairman, obviously from a Council point of view Irthlingborough obviously sits and looks to the Great Addington, Little Addington, Denford and Ringstead as the area, so they are interlinked. The A6 does cut through that but they are interlinked from a Council point of view. Chairman, I think they have been in that part of the area since the old days of the Urban District Council, certainly as far as I know, the 1980s although I cannot verify any dates to you today. Also with Irthlingborough there is also the urgent care centre which again is on the other side of the A6 but obviously a lot of people certainly from my district council area look to go for services.

Obviously the County Council has also got Irthlingborough in that division in relation to the areas I have already mentioned, the villages of the Addingtons, Denford and Ringstead and so forth, so that sits as a County Council Division which was altered recently.

Also within East Northamptonshire we have got the River Nene, and the River Nene whichever way you look at it and not to upset anybody, but there is that natural division of that topography for the area which obviously does separate Irthlingborough and then the Rushden Higham on the southern side of that as well as the A45 corridor which obviously goes straight through the middle, I think it is a trans-European link so it is a very obviously important road.

Just moving on briefly to other sides because, as I said, I have been a local resident for a very long time, I also feel that Finedon, Bozeat and Wollaston look to Wellingborough certainly as a council and the local area and I think obviously in relation to their Member of Parliament. I do think parts, certainly Wollaston and Bozeat and part of the Irchester County Council seat as well, so it is also looking about lack of disruption and looking to certainly support – although I have not got the answers, Mr Chairman, in relation to remaining in the Wellingborough constituency I certainly do think that Bozeat and Wollaston look towards Wellingborough, parliamentary-wise and council-wise.

In relation to the constituency names, I just thought I would raise the issue that I certainly will give support as Leader of the Council and as a resident to renaming the constituencies for Corby and East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough and Rushden. Certainly in relation to the Corby and East Northamptonshire it would give greater recognition to East Northamptonshire as an area. As a council, because obviously we are equivalent to a borough council, without a named town as in Wellingborough or Kettering it is much more difficult to get the recognition we think we deserve. It covers a considerable area and, you know, obviously even in the south alone we get in over 70,000 residents and I think there does need to be a bit more identity for the northern part of my district where they are not just necessarily relating to Corby, it is an East Northamptonshire council area and I think that would certainly help given that recognition.

Also, Mr Chairman, I think renaming the Wellingborough constituency Wellingborough and Rushden I would also support. I think one of the reasons for that is that certainly in the last five years Rushden has been accepted as a growth town, certainly with the population of Higham Ferrers as well. Within our area we have a core special strategy which has been adopted twice because it just been revised and with that is a North Northamptonshire area. Rushden has been agreed it is a growth town and is not just obviously a small conurbation and obviously with the Higham population we are talking, you know, getting on over 40,000 people as far as I am aware. I think there is the addition, although being in Northampton it may upset some people today, with Rushden Lakes coming on board there is a major retail park coming to the area and I think it just gives the whole area – Wellingborough and Rushden and Corby and East Northants – greater recognition for the East Northants area and the Rushden area, Chairman.

I think I said in summary I did not come here today with any answer on the numbers or the figures, it was more just a request to keep things as simple as they possibly could. In my view, being a local councillor, people do get confused in relation to constant changes, not necessarily the fault of the Boundary Commission, but we have had obviously single voter registration, we have had County Council changes in boundaries over the recent years and just very simply, Chairman, I think as I said in my opening remarks, if we can just keep things as simple and easy as possible without moving people to different areas would just be my personal preference.

Thank you, that is the end of my submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You mentioned was it a retail or a development Lakes, something Lakes?

MR NORTH: Rushden Lakes, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Rushden Lakes. Where exactly is that?

MR NORTH: That is next to the A45 just separating between the River Nene there and... Yes, round about there on the maps. I can see it on the screen so it is round about where you are in that space, I think. It is between, it is just the other side of the A45 just outside Rushden centre but it separates the River Nene, or the River Nene separates Irthlingborough to that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. The Irthlingborough urgent care centre?

MR NORTH: That is the other side of the A6.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What area does that serve?

MR NORTH: It mainly serves quite a portion of my district Council area. It certainly covers the Denford, Ringstead, Raunds as the largest town because they are obviously naturally sent to there rather than actually impinging on Kettering General Hospital and obviously Northampton General is too far, we have only got those two hospitals, so the whole point of that centre was to take them away – to obviously give them the more urgent care but to take them away from the pressures of Kettering General Hospital and see them there, so obviously you have got the blood testing and those kind of things.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Rushden and Higham Ferrers it serves?

MR NORTH: Yes. Yes, I go there. There are obviously small clinics in the Rushden area but I go there myself, it is where you are sent for blood tests, etc.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And Wellingborough?

MR NORTH: Wellingborough I do not know. Probably I would say quite a few Wellingborough people sent to Northampton more than anywhere else.

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

MR FOX: Thank you. Alan Fox from the Liberal Democrats. If you keep Irthlingborough within the Corby constituency that does push the Corby constituency back over the quota. What wards would you take out from the Corby constituency in order to make the figures add up?

MR NORTH: Thank you for that. I think, as I said, Mr Chairman, I have not got the answers, I did not come here... I am not a mathematician and I certainly would not want to go down the road of upsetting anybody. I would say there are certain areas outside the – and I do not know the top end outside the district and the top end of Corby necessarily with all the villages – but I would certainly suggest, Mr Chairman, there

would surely be areas to the west of Corby that could sit naturally with Kettering Borough within that constituency. So as I said twice or more in my remarks, I have not got the answers to the actual figures or numbers and I would not want to suggest a particular village and upset them here today but I could say there must be areas to the west of Corby that would naturally go into Kettering for services.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR NORTH: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I could call Mr James Jenney, please.

CLLR JENNEY: (East Northamptonshire District Council) Good morning, Commissioners. My name is James David Jenney, I live at 6 Avenue Road, Rushden, Northants, NN10 0SJ. I am currently the Chairman of the Conservative Party in the Wellingborough constituency and I am an East Northamptonshire District Councillor representing one of the Rushden wards.

The Wellingborough constituency currently covers areas of two councils: the Borough Council of Wellingborough and East Northamptonshire Council. We strongly support the Conservative Party's suggestion to change the name of the constituencies for the following reasons. Firstly, by adding the name "and Rushden" to the Wellingborough name will add a little gravitas to what the councils are trying to do and to understand this we need to go back to the late 1980s/early 1990s where in a period of approximately 15 years Rushden lost 6,000 jobs when the boot and shoe industry was transferred out east. Since then we have been searching the ways to re-energise the town; this is now happening. The £50 million Rushden Lakes complex is under construction with private finance and will open next year. The town has been designated a growth town in the North Northamptonshire Core Special Strategy and now sits alongside Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough as the major place where development is encouraged to take place. We are also working on a sustainable urban expansion of approximately 2,500 dwellings which we expect will come before the East Northamptonshire Planning Management Committee in the late spring of 2017, so basically anything that promotes the name of Rushden is always very welcome.

As an East Northamptonshire councillor I often sympathise with my colleagues that come from the north of the district. The Corby constituency quite clearly has two markedly different areas. In our opinion it would therefore be appropriate to recognise their differences and call the constituency Corby and East Northamptonshire; after all, the electorate fits more heavily towards the rural villages than the industrial town.

Turning to the changes that the Commission wants to make, we oppose the Commission's plan to move Bozeat, Wollaston, Strixton and Grendon into South Northamptonshire. We believe that even on the Commission's own figures that is

unnecessary. There is no synergy between these villages and South Northamptonshire and you heard a previous speaker this morning saying exactly the same thing. Towcester, where South Northamptonshire offices are, is about 40 minutes away by car where the Borough Council of Wellingborough is approximately ten minutes away. The key road is the A509 which runs north/south between Wellingborough and Milton Keynes. One mile south of Bozeat you are in Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire. People in these villages tend to travel to either Wellingborough or to Milton Keynes. Furthermore, there is a large secondary school in Wollaston that serves the whole area right up and into Wellingborough.

We also oppose the movement of Finedon into the Kettering constituency. Finedon has traditionally always looked towards Wellingborough. Development that is currently under way will strengthen this link. Furthermore, the boundaries review increased the County Council Finedon Division to include the large Hemmingwell estate and surrounding areas to Wellingborough within its boundaries. Consequently with the Commission's proposals the County Council would have to deal with at least two MPs. Which brings me to the two Irthlingborough wards. Clearly by keeping the Finedon, Bozeat, Strixton, etc, the numbers for Wellingborough exceed your boundaries. We understand that and therefore our solution to that is to leave Irthlingborough exactly where it is at the moment.

We understand that one of the Commission's criteria is to transfer as few electors as possible. We believe that our proposal will ensure that at least 12,500 less electors will be transferred. It will also mean that the constituency will have two local authority areas to work with rather than the three that is currently proposed. We believe that this will result in better local government and therefore hope that you will re-examine your proposals and amend them in accordance with our counter-proposals.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Can I just ask you to clarify that: that the reason for leaving the Irthlingborough wards where they are is to offset the numbers of the other wards coming in?

CLLR JENNEY: Yes, there are several reasons. Cllr North, I will not reiterate exactly what he said but we agree with all he said, but we accept that if we retain in Wellingborough the villages as we believe we should do then the numbers do not work, something else has to give and the giving, in our view, should be leaving Irthlingborough exactly where it is and then that brings the numbers back down in line.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Yes, go ahead.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Do you think Irthlingborough exactly where it is does create a problem in that constituency, of numbers? How would you propose to solve that?

CLLR JENNEY: Well I have just explained that. We leave it exactly where it is and that solves the issue.

MR FOX: No, it does not because then you have a constituency which is 80,000 odd, which is above the quota.

CLLR JENNEY: No, sorry. The numbers work if the Bozeat, Wollaston, Strixton, Grendon and Finedon are retained by the Borough Council of Wellingborough and stay in Wellingborough, then Irthlingborough remains with Corby and East Northants, the numbers work. We checked them several times, I assure you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So you are saying leaving Corby as proposed but adding back Irthlingborough wards?

CLLR JENNEY: Yes. There are amendments being proposed ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand that.

CLLR JENNEY: --- by my colleague, my co-Chairman, Cllr Helen Howell ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But there are further amendments to the proposed Corby, are there not?

CLLR JENNEY: There are. Cllr Helen Howell when she speaks to you will outline the proposed changes around Corby. Because I am in East Northants and have the interests of East Northants and Wellingborough as Chairman of the Wellingborough Association I am deliberately not getting drawn into the changes that may happen around Corby.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand.

CLLR JENNEY: But, yes, there are some proposed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And that puts the numbers right?

CLLR JENNEY: And that puts the numbers right again.

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

CLLR JENNEY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I can ask Mrs Helen Harrison to speak, please. If you could give your name and address before you start.

CLLR HARRISON: (Conservative Party, East Northants District Council) Thank you. Sir, yes, I am Helen Harrison, I am from 22 Deene Road, Harringworth, Northants. Harringworth is a small village just north of Corby. I am here in various capacities, one as a resident of the Corby constituency, secondly as a district councillor for my ward which is Fineshade which is an East Northants District Ward and, finally, as the Chairman of Corby and East Northants Conservatives.

I want to keep things very, very simple. I want to talk about two things: one is the name of our constituency and the other is numbers of people moving from one constituency to another.

The first thing is the name of our constituency. Locally we have always called it Corby and East Northants for fairly obvious reasons. It is a fairly evenly split constituency between the Borough of Corby which is very distinct and has its own character, and East Northants which is comprised of small towns with their own distinct and proud heritage with lots of little villages which all have their own distinctive character and feel very much part of East Northamptonshire. So Oundle, Thrapston, Raunds and Irthlingborough are all most definitely East Northamptonshire. I think most people would be quite surprised in our constituency to discover that our constituency is called Corby – we all call it Corby and East Northants – and I think that is really important because it can lead to a disenfranchising of people if they do not feel that they are part of or acknowledged as part of that constituency. That is my first simple point.

The second is numbers. Cllr Jenney was just speaking on the way the changes have been proposed by the Boundary Commission and it seems to me it has been done in a fairly complex manner. It is clear that our constituency is too big and we have to lose a part of it. We do not argue with that, we would prefer it not to be the case, we would like Corby and East Northants to stay exactly as it is but that is something that will not fit in with the numbers; so we do not really want to lose anything at all but it seems a little strange to take a bit off Corby and East Northamptonshire, move it into Wellingborough and then move part of Wellingborough into the Kettering constituency. It is a rather long way round to create the right numbers when a simpler solution would be to move part of the Corby constituency therefore not affecting as many electors. In fact, when we look at the Conservative Party's proposals overall I believe we move 12,500 less people from their current constituencies, which seems to me a good aim and something that we should be trying to achieve.

Now, as I have said already, we do not want to lose anything to Kettering or to Wellingborough but I think moving something directly from the Corby constituency into the Kettering constituency makes sense, as I say, because it moves less people. So

our proposal is that the Rural West Ward of Corby moves into Kettering where there are natural synergies with the villages surrounding where they work closely together already and that the Stanion and Corby Old Village Ward moves into Kettering as well. That creates the right numbers and I know that our local MP Tom Pursglove has also talked about splitting that ward in order that Corby Old Village, which quite clearly is part of Corby, can remain. I believe there are historical examples of splitting wards – again, none of this is satisfactory, we would rather do none of these things at all – but Corby Old Village naturally works with Corby, it is where Corby began, but the Stanion villages already have Kettering postcodes, they already look towards Kettering and would work very well there.

I wanted to keep it very simple, I do not want to go into massive technical details, I know that lots of people have already come along and talked about exactly how the villages work, but I think on a numbers game in order to move less people out of their current constituencies that is a really good solution – well, it is an okay solution – and I cannot emphasise strongly enough our constituency should be called Corby and East Northants.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. The Stanion and Corby Village Ward, the Stanion villages do not look to Corby?

CLLR HARRISON: No. They flow directly from Geddington, the roads that supply that area are very continuous with that being part of the Kettering constituency. I believe they used to be part of either the Kettering Borough or the Kettering constituency in the past. As I say, they have Kettering postcodes and I believe they work in a more synergistic way with that town.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If Rural West and Stanion and Corby were moved then it would leave Corby projecting into the Kettering constituency in a fairly unusual kind of boundary.

CLLR HARRISON: Well, I feel that the Corby town itself is the bit that works very much together. The villages surrounding it could go either way, towards Kettering or towards Corby. As I said before, none of it is ideal, it is all very tricky and awkward but, as I say, if you then decide not to touch that bit and you do move Irthlingborough then you start moving people out of Wellingborough and we get mass movement of people to different constituencies. As you know, however much we try to advertise these things to the public and let them know what is happening it is going to be a big shock to an awful lot of people that suddenly they have a new MP and a new constituency and I think that this moves less people.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. So you are really retaining Irthlingborough by removing the two in the North?

CLLR HARRISON: Yes, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Yes. If you could just give your name.

MR WILLIAMSON: George Williamson, the Labour Party. I am just wondering, are you aware of whether Stanion has ever been in a different constituency from Corby at any point in the past?

CLLR HARRISON: I cannot tell you for definite but it is my understanding that it was part of the Kettering something area in the past. It was part of a local government area in which it was ---

MR WILLIAMSON: At a time when all of Corby was in the same constituency?

CLLR HARRISON: Possibly.

MR WILLIAMSON: Do you know how many voters are affected by the removal of just Stanion?

CLLR HARRISON: I have not gone into all the deeper numbers of this, I just know that these numbers work in keeping Corby small enough to come underneath the maximum electors.

MR WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Do you agree with Tom Pursglove MP when he says that Corby village is an integral part of the town of Corby? He particularly noted that this is where the war memorial for the town is sited.

CLLR HARRISON: Yes, I do believe that Corby Old Village is an integral part of Corby. Having grown up in Corby I would have to say that that is the case.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We have no more speakers booked until 10.50. We will adjourn until 10.45.

After a short break

Time Noted: 10.45 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, we will commence the hearing once again and if I can ask Ms Helen Howell to speak, please. If you could give your name and address before you speak, thank you.

CLLR HOWELL: (Conservative Party, East Northamptonshire District Council) My name is Helen Howell and I live at 55 Butts Road in Raunds, East Northamptonshire. Firstly I would like to thank you for allowing me to address the review board this morning. As I said, my name is Cllr Helen Howell, I am a town councillor and Mayor of Raunds as well as a district councillor for Stanwick and Hargrave Ward in East Northamptonshire District Council.

Wearing two hats as I do I get an overall view of my area. Raunds is a small town with about 10,000 residents that will be increasing over the next few years with around 1,500 new houses being developed. Raunds has the facilities and amenities that also serve both Stanwick and Hargrave, including schools, doctors, dentists, libraries and shops. There is a natural link between Raunds and the two villages. I am very pleased to see that the villages are not in the proposals to be moved from the Corby constituency.

I and my constituents fully support remaining in the Corby constituency but would like for the review board to consider renaming the ward to Corby and East Northamptonshire. Whilst I have been out canvassing and talking to my constituents it has become apparent that the southern end of the constituency is not referred to in any way other than Corby constituency. This is not taken lightly by residents, especially those who live the furthest away from Corby. I feel that renaming the constituency makes it more inclusive, after all East Northamptonshire part of the constituency is the largest and holds some wonderfully rural villages that would like some recognition.

Another of my roles on the town council is to be the representative on the JAG committee. This means the Joint Action Group so in a nutshell the towns and villages in the south of the district meet on a regular basis facilitated at East Northamptonshire Council in Thrapston to review local issues. Those in attendance are from Raunds, Stanwick, Hargrave, Woodford, Denford, Ringstead, Thrapston and the Addingtons and also Irthlingborough. Notably Rushden and Higham Ferrers do not form part of the group as they are in the Wellingborough constituency. We discuss policing, speeding, antisocial behaviour, overweight lorries affecting the rural villages and much more. One thing that has been highlighted is that many of the issues that occur in towns and villages have an impact on all of us; usually if there is an antisocial issue in Irthlingborough then it will have an impact in Raunds, Stanwick and Ringstead, etc. The sharing of this local information from our towns and villages with the police and East Northants District Council Communities Team is vital and has shown its success.

I notice from the review of the Corby constituency that you propose to move Irthlingborough from that Corby constituency and I would respectfully request that you reconsider this move. The loss of vital sharing of local information at the level I have

explained with the support from East Northants Council and the police would have a detrimental impact on all our towns and villages. We have a really proactive JAG committee whose importance grows as new developments come to the area and any change in the makeup of this would not be healthy.

So in summary I am pleased you have chosen Stanwick and Hargrave Ward to remain in the Corby constituency and I would like to request that you change the name to the constituency of Corby and East Northamptonshire and, most importantly, that you consider an alternative to removing Irthlingborough from Corby and East Northamptonshire. Not only will this mean that 12,500 fewer people are displaced but it also means that Irthlingborough can continue to be part of an existing joint venture that has so successfully managed to share information and help tackle crime and antisocial behaviour among other shared local issues.

I thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The joint committee that you have that shares information, that is an East Northamptonshire based initiative?

CLLR HOWELL: It is, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would moving Irthlingborough have any effect on that?

CLLR HOWELL: I am not too sure. I do know that Rushden and Higham are not included in the JAG group because they are in the Wellingborough constituency, so this is one of the issues that I have.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you aware if it is the constituency location that defines whether they are in that group or not?

CLLR HOWELL: I am not, no, sorry. Thank you.

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

CLLR HOWELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I can call Mr Malcolm Ward.

CLLR WARD: (Wellingborough Borough Council) Good morning, thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Malcolm Ward and I live at 77 High Street, Finedon. I am here to speak against the proposals as they relate to the existing Wellingborough parliamentary constituency.

Born and bred in Finedon, I have been a parish and borough councillor representing the Finedon Ward for the past 30 years and I must say that in all that time I have not encountered such a united front from my constituents against any particular proposal. The last meeting of our parish council on October 19 voted unanimously to oppose a proposal to move Finedon into the Kettering constituency and all residents have now been notified of a forthcoming public meeting to be held in the Town Hall on 11 November which I feel sure will strongly endorse that view.

Finedon, from a parochial perspective, has always looked to and felt part of Wellingborough since it came under the auspices of the Borough Council in 1928 and the expansion of Wellingborough to its east, known as Stanton Cross, providing over 3,000 new homes will effectively cement this bond even more since it will all but join Finedon to Wellingborough in a physical sense in addition to its historical connections. On a wider aspect the current Wellingborough constituency already falls within the parameter number-wise, so to displace Finedon, along with Bozeat, Wollaston, Harrowden and Sywell, coupled with the previous move in 2008 of Earls Barton into the Daventry constituency seems a sledgehammer to crack a nut. In addition, the proposals as they stand would see the numbers of Members of Parliament representing the Borough Council of Wellingborough constituency rise from two to four which, apart from being very confusing to residents making them feel more disengaged from the electoral process, would provide the potential for disastrous administration at future elections, particularly when two fall on the same day as in 2015. Whilst I appreciate that each small change over such a large area as East Midlands creates a ripple or knock-on effect elsewhere, the Wellingborough constituency does seem to have become an epicentre being more divided up than most which electors will find bizarre given its already satisfactory size.

I believe the current Northamptonshire MPs have proposed an alternative solution which is supposedly more cohesive and less disruptive to the residents and would be to the benefit of most constituents in the county. I do not know the exact proposals but I believe they are well supported and I would ask you to give this counter-proposal in your deliberations.

Thank you very much for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Do you have a point?

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. You say that this is the biggest upheaval in the 30 or so years that you have been ---

CLLR WARD: No, I did not say it was the biggest upheaval, I said it was the proposal of any changes in boundaries or of any other policy that my residents have come to me on; yes.

MR FOX: Right. But five years ago the Boundary Commission proposed exactly the same. While there was a great many representations from the villages of Harrowden and Isham and Orlingbury and Hardwick, there was really very little from Finedon five years ago. What explains that difference?

CLLR WARD: I think then the picture was different on a sort of East Midlands scale and I do not think at that time Finedon felt it could disadvantage other places by falling against that particular proposal, this time it does. And of course I would say also that Finedon, having gained an awful lot of converted factories into flats over the last five to ten years has seen a lot of its residents change and I think we are looking at a different population now.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

CLLR WARD: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I can call Miss Daisy Peck. Can you give your name and address, please.

MISS PECK: Daisy Peck, resident of Flat 5, 101 Roe Road, Abington, Northampton. I am a lifelong resident of Northampton, third generation and as such have lots of family and friends across the town and on top of that I have worked for Northampton North for the Conservative Party as a campaign manager for two years and am now a constituency agent for the Conservative Party in South Northants and Daventry. A huge part of that job is knocking on doors and speaking to local residents so I feel more well grounded than most in the opinions in the communities of the people of Northampton town.

I am speaking today in support, mostly, of the Commission's proposals, particularly in relation to Northampton North. I think what has been suggested is a great improvement in two key areas in particular. The first I want to talk about is the additional wards being brought in in the south east of the constituency, namely Park, Billing, Standens Barn, Rectory Farm. I think those areas have a much stronger link to the North constituency, specifically through the local amenities that they use. If you look at the current boundary it is divided mostly along what we call the Wellingborough road, these plans drop that down to the A45.

Now, that is a much clearer physical boundary but beyond being a physical boundary it is actually a transport boundary that most of the people, the residents, in those areas are confined by, so if you live in Abington – rather Abington Vale, what we call Park Ward, Weston Favell village – you do not go south of the A45 because you cannot; it is very hard to get on the dual carriageway, you have then got to get off somewhere else which is not really where you want to go, it inhibits you transport-wise. So those areas look inwards to town, they look north to Abington and particularly to Weston Favell

shopping centre, for their doctors' surgeries, their dentists, their shopping arrangements, their sports facilities, and that is echoed the same in what we call the eastern district so the Rectory Farm and Standens Barn areas, Billing as well. Those areas are not just connected by the fact that all of their amenities are in the Weston Favell shopping centre area as well but they are also connected by other transport links, namely the bus services are really quite strong in the eastern district and the main transport hub for the buses there is the Weston Favell shopping centre which, beyond the bus station in the town centre, is the second biggest hub for public transport in the town.

There is also a network of back paths in the eastern district which extends into the Talavera Wards that are currently in the Northampton North right into Billing and Rectory Farm in the south which are what we call back paths but are sort of residential overgrown paths that connect the residents. Looking at the demographics there it is an area where people do rely heavily on their public transport and the footpaths to get them around and to their local amenities. There is a really strong network crossing that area that is what brings people into Weston Favell shopping centre for their local amenities.

So I think it is a really wise move to have all of those areas in one constituency served by one MP where their local community hub is also in their constituency.

The second point of the Commission's proposals that I am in favour of is keeping the western border of the Northampton North constituency as it is, separating north and south pretty much down the A509. That again, in my opinion is borne through the transport links. You know, the A509 whilst on a map might look like a small road for Northampton, it is one of our biggest trunk roads and the traffic is absolutely atrocious. If you try coming in from the north of Northampton North constituency, the Obelisk estate, down to what would be the northmost point of the Northampton South constituency, the Castle, it is, what, half a mile, probably less but at rush hour that takes you 20 minutes because traffic is so bad. That prevents people moving freely across those areas. Not many people want to go across the Kingsthorpe junction at any point during the day, let alone at rush hour, and that keeps the two communities either side of it quite separate.

If you live in Trinity you are going to go into Kingsthorpe for your doctors' surgeries, your shopping, your dentists. If you live in Semilong or Castle on the other side you are far more likely to go into the town centre (a) because of the transport links, you are walking distance to the town centre in Semilong and Castle whereas Trinity and Kingsley not really, you would probably get on a bus, but the A509 is quite a big physical barrier that separates the two sides of it and not many people want to cross it. Even though you could argue that somebody living in Spencer it is closer as the crow flies to get into Kingsthorpe, when you take into consideration the traffic it is much, much quicker for them to head out to the west to Sixfields or to drop down south and head to the supermarkets at the edge of Far Cotton.

Similarly, the proposals that I know, counter-proposals being proposed, to move parts of the town centre into Northampton North would actually tear away wards that depend quite heavily on the infrastructure in St James away from the St James hub, so in the same way that I spoke of Weston Favell shopping centre being the hub of the eastern district, St James is a big community hub for Spencer, Castle, Semilong, parts of Dallington and Kings Heath. If you want to send your child to a karate class you send them to St James, if you want to go to a church group you go to St James, if you want to go to Oliver Adams you go to St James. The shops, the local health services and the community groups for those areas are mostly served from St James so to take them into Northampton North, take Castle or Spencer or Semilong into Northampton North, you are actually tearing them away from their main community hub, really, which would remain in the alternative constituency.

They are my two points in support of the Commission's proposals for Northampton North.

There is one further point relating to Northampton South I would like to touch on which is including Grange Park and Hackleton into the Northampton South constituency. I have got a number of friends, quite a lot of my friends come from Grange Park and the reason they do – I live in Abington, I grew up on the Headlands – the reason my friends come from Grange Park is because the young people in Grange Park depend on the services in Northampton town, that is why I have so many links there. If you meet somebody from Grange Park out of town and you ask them where they are from they tell you they are from Northampton. You know, if you meet a resident from the village of Hackleton out of town and ask where they are from, "Oh, I'm from Hackleton, it's a village in Northamptonshire." That is not the same for the people of Grange Park, they identify with the town, they use the town's services. I do not know any of them that would go south apart from odd shopping in Milton Keynes which I think we are all guilty of doing at Christmas; they use the town's services.

Similarly, I mean, Harpole is slightly different. Harpole was – well, is/was – a village. Harpole, fortunately or unfortunately is your own decision, is moving the same way that Duston is. Duston once was a village on the edge of Northampton town, now if you ask a resident of Northampton what Duston is they think it is an estate that is part of Northampton and not a village any more. Harpole, sadly, depending on opinion, is going the same way. It has been engulfed by the town, there is 6,000 new houses being built between the current boundary of Northampton taking it out to Harpole and because of that actually the infrastructure towards Harpole is stronger than it has ever been. The road network and the services going out to that part of town mean that the residents of Harpole identify more and more with the town and they are coming into the town more and more because that development is pushing them that way, so there is a similar case to Grange Park where the residents of Harpole identify more with the town

than any other part of Northamptonshire and would benefit from being kept in that group.

That is all I have to say, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Sorry.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. You have spoken about the A45 and you have spoken about the A509 and about them being boundaries. The way I am looking at the map, and it is probably easier to see it on the Northampton North map, is the A45 is only actually a boundary between the two constituencies for a very short stretch. The A45 is the road that runs sort of from the middle of the bottom of the map up through and then forms a very short boundary but with the southern part of the A45 ---

MISS PECK: Yes.

MR FOX: The southern side of the A45 being in North and the northern part being in South before it then runs through the Riverside Ward and again the A509 I do not really see as being a boundary for very long.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What point are you trying to clarify?

MR FOX: I am just trying to clarify why you think these roads are important.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MISS PECK: On the first point, the A45, whilst the physical boundary is not there the area below it is commercial, there are no residents living there, so the human boundary is the A45. Similarly with the A509. Yes, the boundary more follows the train tracks down the road but again we are looking at the human boundaries not, you know, people do not put boundaries round themselves and it is the infrastructure, it is a trunk route that separates the two communities. The section I think you referred to is sort of already on the left of the A509 in Kingsthorpe village is the anomaly because it is connected to that trunk route whether it is going left, right, across or back on itself, so there is really no way of resolving the poor Kingsthorpe village from the Kingsthorpe traffic situation, they have got to come out of the village into it either way they go. I mean, that sits directly on top of the trunk route.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Do we have a Mr Roger Powell? If you would like to speak now, then, please. Can you give your name and address before you speak.

MR POWELL: My name is Roger Powell, I live at 67 Allen Road, Rushden, Northants.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR POWELL: Ladies and gentlemen, I usually give talks on historical subjects so this is quite a departure for me. I am speaking on behalf of the residents of Irthlingborough.

The two wards of Irthlingborough, John Pyel and Waterloo, constitute the town of Irthlingborough in its entirety. Irthlingborough has been a part of the Corby constituency since its foundation in 1983, more than 33 years ago. For local policing purposes Irthlingborough is grouped with Stanwick, Raunds, Ringstead, Denford, the Addingtons and Woodford, all within the Corby constituency. It is also important to note that these towns and villages also work closely together on planning related matters and have worked on joint campaigns to secure improvements to the Chowns Mill roundabout and the dualling of the A45. It is this stretch of the A45 and the Chowns Mill roundabout which serves as a natural boundary between the two constituencies and retaining Irthlingborough in the Corby constituency protects this logical boundary. The natural boundary of the River Nene also runs through the Wellingborough constituency and the East Northants part of the Corby constituency.

It is undoubtedly the case that in East Northamptonshire the villages look towards their nearest urban centre. For the villages of Great Addington, Little Addington, Woodford, this is certainly the case in relation to Irthlingborough. This is hardly surprising given that, for example, the urgent care centre based in Irthlingborough services these villages where Wellingborough and indeed many Rushden residents go to the Isebrook Hospital in Wellingborough for medical treatment. Many local East Northamptonshire youngsters also attend Huxlow Science College, one of three secondary schools alongside Prince William School in Oundle and Manor School in Raunds which serve the East Northamptonshire part of the Corby constituency; in other words, children from Corby constituency are educated in Irthlingborough at Huxlow Science College, Wellingborough constituency children are educated at the six secondary schools in that constituency, Sir Christopher Hatton, Weavers Academy and the Wrenn Academy, all of which are in Wellingborough, Wollaston School in Wollaston, Rushden Academy in Rushden and the Ferrers School in Higham Ferrers also. Virtually no school children from the Wellingborough constituency attend Huxlow Science College.

It should also be noted that there is a desire not to see Irthlingborough lost from the Corby constituency. The counter-proposal of the Conservative Party ensures that the whole of the Irthlingborough County Council Division remains entirely within the Corby constituency with one Member of Parliament representing it and not two. The County Division consists of Denford, Irthlingborough, Ringstead, Great Addington, Little Addington, Woodford. This again evidences the strong ties that Irthlingborough has with the other towns and villages within that part of East Northamptonshire all of which are currently in the Corby constituency.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason, however, to retain Irthlingborough in the Corby constituency is that this displaces 6,331 Irthlingborough residents. The revised proposal means that the Wellingborough constituency, Corby and Kettering constituencies have far less disruption and change to their existing boundaries. In addition there are local synergy reasons why it is suggesting the alternative proposal. Corby's present electorate is 73,718. If you add Irthlingborough Waterloo and Irthlingborough John Pyel, subtract Stanion and Corby Old Village and Rural West the revised total is 76,060. All of these revised constituencies are within the Boundary Commission's thresholds which is a minimum of 71,031, a maximum of 78,507.

In Corby it clearly makes sense to include the two Irthlingborough wards given their long standing attachment to the constituency and their similarity to the boot and shoe market towns of Raunds and Thrapston. This also protects the A45 and Chowns Mill roundabout boundary as well as that provided by the River Nene. Furthermore, this also means the whole of the Irthlingborough County Council Division remains entirely within the Corby constituency. Instead this proposal allows the Stanion and Corby Old Village and Rural West Wards to move to the Kettering constituency. These villages naturally flow on between the two constituencies that already exist and in the case of Stanion and Corby Old Village ward the A43 serves as a natural boundary. The village of Stanion also has far more in common with the village of Geddington than the town or Corby in addition to them sharing the same major trunk road and their proximity to the new Geddington by-pass. Stanion also has a Kettering postcode. In the case of Rural West the villages of Welland Ward of Kettering Borough naturally affiliate to those of Rural West by virtue of them all being part of the Welland Valley and are similar in their character and with little affiliation to the town of Corby. The Little Stanion development also continues to grow in size, it therefore makes sense for it to be in a constituency where there is room for the electorate to grow.

Having added the Stanion and Corby Old Village and Rural West Wards to the Kettering constituency it provides the opportunity to return Finedon to the Wellingborough constituency. Finedon looks to Wellingborough, is part of the Borough of Wellingborough and will be connected to the Wellingborough East expansion. These changes mean that no part of the Borough of Wellingborough need to go into Kettering; indeed, the Corby wards mentioned bear far more relationship to Kettering than Finedon. This change also keeps the entire Finedon County Council Division intact and contained within one parliamentary constituency. Northampton South, under this proposal, has Wollaston and Bozeat removed from it. The people of Wollaston Ward and Bozeat Ward certainly do not look towards Northampton but look far more towards Wellingborough. In particular they are closely linked to the village of Irchester both being in the Irchester County Council Division and both being within the Borough of Wellingborough.

In addition, one of the four secondary schools that serves the Wellingborough constituency is in Wollaston. Pupils from all over Wellingborough travel to Wollaston for

their education. Both Irchester, Wollaston and Bozeat link naturally to the A509, a route used by most people in Wellingborough to connect to the M1. This proposal also keeps the whole of the Irchester County Division contained within one parliamentary constituency.

The overriding justification for this proposal is that it causes far less disruption and change to the existing seats and displaces less electors. At the same time all the seats concerned remain within the allowable thresholds but more regard is given to historic links, natural geography, prevalent synergies and existing local government wards and divisions.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I just have a couple of queries on the changes. The emphasis you put on it is maintaining the local links between places looking to the main town.

MR POWELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you just clarify the position with Corby Village. Does that look to Kettering?

MR POWELL: I do not have that information, I am afraid.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The proposal you put forward involves the retention of Irthlingborough in the South.

MR POWELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And the way to deal with the numbers on that is the removal of Corby Village and the two villages associated with it. How is that accounted for in terms of its requirements?

MR POWELL: As I say, I am not able to answer that question.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The second point for clarification: Irthlingborough in the South. Are the schools in Irthlingborough used by any pupils from within the Wellingborough constituency?

MR POWELL: Are they...?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any schools in Irthlingborough that are used by school children who live in the Wellingborough constituency?

MR POWELL: Not to my knowledge, no.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You mentioned the urgent care facility in Irthlingborough.

MR POWELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You said you do not feel that that is used by people from Rushden or Higham Ferrers.

MR POWELL: No, no. There may be a few but not in large numbers; no.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MR POWELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask Mr Khandwala to speak, please.

MR KHANDWALA: Hafiz Khandwala, 148 Thomas Flawn Road, Irthlingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR KHANDWALA: I am going to reiterate much of what has been just said. Irthlingborough is made up of two wards both of whom are wholly in the Corby constituency and have been since the formation of the Corby constituency nearly a third of a century ago. It has great similarity with the neighbouring towns and a close connection with them, not only in trade but also when it comes to things like matters such as policing, education and health. For these reasons and... There is also a natural boundary, the A45, which separates Irthlingborough from the other towns of Higham and Rushden and the areas of Stanwick, Raunds, Ringstead, Denford, the Addingtons and Woodford also work very closely with Irthlingborough in matters of planning.

In terms of education, as has been said, Huxlow Science College looks after the interests of Irthlingborough and the neighbouring towns and there is no academic connection between Wellingborough and Irthlingborough. Likewise in terms of health, the Nene Valley Health Centre that has been recently built caters again for the needs of residents of Irthlingborough and the neighbouring towns and Wellingborough looks after Rushden, Higham and all the others.

I think on a cross party basis the view is that Irthlingborough should remain as a part of Corby. In fact, the former Labour MP tweeted it would be a shame for Corby to lose Irthlingborough Ward in boundary changes, a great pity to have it wrongly but movement history. The Conservative Party also feel very much the same way.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. If I can ask Mrs Carol Allen to speak, please.

MRS CAROL ALLEN: Good morning. My name is Carol Allen and I live at 31 Fernmoor Drive, Irthlingborough.

I would like to say I am simply a constituent, a resident, I have no official position, I cannot give you any statistics or any figures whatsoever but I do feel strongly about these proposals. All my life I think I have had a sense of belonging wherever I have lived and I have lived in several places, I come from the north of England, but I moved to the county 44 years ago with my young family. I lived for the first 31 years in Rushden and I felt very well represented as part of the Wellingborough constituency. Rushden to me was a bustling growing town, it had good amenities and schools which was important to me at the time and I viewed Wellingborough as my nearest big town. 13 years ago I moved over the river, as it were, as I think people in Rushden used to think of it, to Irthlingborough. Although it was only three miles away it had a very different feel to it, it felt more villagey, more rural, and I mean that in a positive sense, and the surrounding area, too.

In the last six years of my working life I worked for the NHS and I worked across the whole of the area: Corby, Rushden, Thrapston, Wellingborough and several of the East Northants small villages so I could see then where Irthlingborough naturally sat, as I believed. When I became aware of the Boundary Commission proposals to remove Irthlingborough from Corby and East Northants and bring it into the Wellingborough constituency my first thought was shock. I felt Irthlingborough would just become an add-on to big Wellingborough and Rushden.

I was also at the same time particularly concerned about the Chowns Mill roundabout and I have learnt since that Corby and East Northants are very keen, they are part of a group, I believe, which is campaigning for dualling of the A45 in the area and changes to the Chowns Mill roundabout which I feel are going to be very much compromised, or the roundabout will be compromised, once the new Rushden retail park opens which I believe will start next year. I did actually write to my MP about this and received a letter back stating that Highways England are not proposing to do anything to the Chowns Mill roundabout until, I think I am right, 2019, which is two and a half years away. It is a very busy roundabout now, it is one that a lot of people are very frightened to use and I do believe that if Irthlingborough moves to the Wellingborough constituency then it will perhaps get forgotten and I think that would be a great pity.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Mr John Allen, if you would like to speak now, please.

MR JOHN ALLEN: Good morning. John Allen, 31 Fernmoor Drive, you might have gathered Carol and I might have some relationship.

I think a lot of what Carol has said is absolutely correct. I know this is being recorded so I feel I do not have to go over old ground. I am going back to what Roger Powell has said, I think Roger put the point very well technically. I come here on a totally different ballpark, if you like, it is heart rather than head. I was born in Rushden would you believe 81 years ago and spent the first 18 years of my life there, left for 50 years, then came back to Rushden and we married and I moved to Irthlingborough, but historically I do understand – and I think it is terribly important not to get lost on numbers. I think Roger has put it very well, the numbers will not matter because they will fall between the 78,000 and the 71,000 whichever way round it is. But Irthlingborough has always been historically a part of the other side of the Nene, or Nene depending upon which side you are north and south which you are which makes, I think, its own point.

Irthlingborough has naturally been to the North, it has always reflected that way and not so very long back I was reading quite recently the bridge over Irthlingborough, the Irthlingborough bridge, was in fact a toll road. I think it was if you were on foot you had to pay tuppence to go from Higham to Irthlingborough, so it has always had a split, it has always been not just the Nene but has always been a difference between. I think coming backwards now we come back on to the Chowns Mill roundabout and one could turn round and say well, perhaps if we put a toll on it perhaps that might be a better idea and go backwards in time, but the Chowns Mill roundabout is more important than that, it currently has two MPs fighting for it: Tom Pursglove and Peter Bone. They are both working, they co-ordinate to work on the Chowns Mill roundabout. As my wife has said it is, I think, wrong that it will take, what, four years for the Chowns Mill roundabout to be worked on. Tom and Peter have worked and tried to get that done. We know that the retail park is going to open in one year's time in 2017, that is another three years of what is probably the most dangerous roundabout in the country.

It is my thought that if we have two MPs fighting for that it is better than one and if Irthlingborough comes into Rushden it will be one but more to the point, going back, the history, the feeling of the place is that Irthlingborough is part of the North part, it is part of East Northamptonshire and Corby and I hope that will be taken into consideration as somebody said earlier, that that is what it will become, Corby and East Northants, and that Irthlingborough will be left where it is in the Corby constituency where it is naturally felt to be. It has never felt that Irthlingborough was ever part in my childhood, Irthlingborough was a part of the Higham and Rushden area, it was not, it was over the river and we are back to Nene and Nene and history and it has always felt to be on the northern side.

Thanks very much.

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

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. Is it not true that the Nene – the Wellingborough constituency at the moment consists of places north and south of the Nene? Wellingborough is to the north, Rushden is to the south, Irchester and Wollaston and Bozeat to the south, so the Boundary Commission's proposals, as everybody else's proposals, includes areas to the north and to the south of the Nene.

MR JOHN ALLEN: Yes, I take your point. I am a great map man, I am a great Ordnance Survey man, in fact I checked it yesterday to exactly where that border was. I am coming at it from a different angle. Yes, Wellingborough is north but Wellingborough has never been part of the Irthlingborough district, it has never been – you know, I go back in history. It has never felt the same, it is different. To be north and north of the Nene at that point; it has never been part of Wellingborough. I went to Wellingborough Grammar School and Irthlingborough was somewhere over there. When I was a kid it was a bit of a joke, you know, if you went out through Higham you would sort of pray before you went over the bridge into Irthlingborough. I hope that helps.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, yes, thank you very much. I will call Cllr Danielle Stone.

CLLR STONE: Thank you. My name is Danielle Stone and I live at 21 Sheriff Road in Abington. I am a County Councillor for Abington and Phippsville and I am the Borough Councillor for Castle Ward, so one constituency in the north and one in the south.

It has long been my hope and dream that I would end up with two constituencies, you know, the ward and the division in the same constituency, to be perfectly honest with you, it would make my life a huge amount easier. I am very familiar with all the very many varied communities in my constituent areas and I know that for the most part they are areas with above average needs, that includes educational needs, housing needs, health issues, all of that kind of stuff, a huge amount of poverty in both areas. A huge array of communities with lots of different cultures and lots of different languages.

Trying to deal with the many varied demands at county and borough level presents real challenges. One always seeks to approach the issues of deprivation in a very joined up manner between the county and the borough, service provision and other agencies. The task is not made easier for the really complex cases when one has to seek the involvement of more than one Member of Parliament; in fact, it is often really, really difficult. It can be time consuming and wasteful and it impedes the quality of service for those very, very needy constituents of mine.

All elected representatives have had to grapple with non-coterminous boundaries around the borough or some five years or so. Many of us have hoped that the boundary review would sort out much of the anomalous arrangements such as the split borough wards around the borough that we have been dealing with. I have to say, with due respect, that what is being proposed will do little to improve the efficiency of the services required to respond to many of my residents' needs.

I do recognise the Boundary Commission's difficulties with this review, I understand the needs of the South constituency to extend outwards beyond the borough boundaries into South Northamptonshire and further. The need for this constituency to be re-designated as a county constituency rather than a borough constituency is understandable, although there is some controversy about that as I am sure you are aware. However, what is much less understandable is when there is still a more urban borough constituency in the north why the town centre is not included with it so we have a huge urban heart in the borough and we need to keep that huge urban heart together. There is a huge difference between the Spring boroughs and the Castle Ward and the Park Ward or the Riverside Ward in terms of social need but when one compares the problems in wards like Semilong with the rural villages in South Northamptonshire those differences become a huge chasm.

The communities in Castle Ward with all their community and language problems, or challenges, would be astonished to learn that they were going to have to compete with affluent residents in the villages outside the borough to the south for their Member of Parliament's attention. They do not consider the proposed arrangement fair, in fact they do not understand it one bit; I have talked to people about it.

I strongly believe the Boundary Commission has an opportunity to bring together into one constituency the many and varied communities who could be serviced by one Member of Parliament in the north and the different and more affluent communities to the south and beyond being represented in a different way but in a way that is appropriate to their needs. It is not unimportant to also consider that the civic centre of the town, in the shape of this building we are in, should probably be situated in the one borough constituency; that seems to me to be eminently sensible. For it to belong to the county constituency which links up with the southern settlement makes no sense to me at all.

It is for these reasons that I believe the inclusion of Castle, Semilong, Spencer and Kings Heath with the borough would make more sense. It would provide us with a very strong robust urban heart to the borough. The Billing, Riverside and Park Wards I feel would sit more comfortably with the wards in the county constituency. Bearing in mind that I am the County Councillor for Abington which abuts those wards, I can very safely say the residents in Abington have very, very little contact or anything in common with people in those other wards.

I am not aware of any discussion so far in relation to the Northampton constituencies nomenclature – cannot say that word, sorry – the naming of the constituencies. I know that deliberations on the final construction of the constituencies is still at an early stage so I hope you are not going to find me a bit too presumptuous here but I really do think, you know, that the names we have got at the minute are very misleading, we have got Northampton North, Northampton South, and South Northamptonshire. Wow, it took me a long time to get my head round that. I think this would be an opportunity for us to re-examine that and maybe have Northampton Borough as a constituency. Not Northampton North, Northampton Borough would be a constituency and maybe in the south we could look at calling that Nene Valley constituency.

The North constituency, regardless of the various options being pressed upon you, account for some 62% of the entire electorate of Northampton Borough. It is the large proportion of the total borough electorate within it that is striking. This would be the closest that Northampton has come to having a constituency that really truly represents the town as an entity and I cannot tell you how the people within that geographical area would really, really welcome that. People in that part of town have a really strong social belonging, they have a really strong geographical belonging, they want to have a really strong political belonging.

I wonder whether it is possible – I have already said that – to simply call the north Northamptonshire constituency.

The other point I want to make is that I do think the sensibilities of the needs of the local people need to be really taken into account. I think the way people relate to their area is really, really important. We have issues in this borough as we do all over the country in getting people to engage with politics and to come out to vote. I think a large part of that is that people feel distant from the arrangements that have been made on their behalf. I think it is time that we took a lot more notice of what local residents say about their feelings of where they belong and how they want their services delivered and therefore I would please ask you to take my proposals very seriously.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We will adjourn until 12.10.

After a short break

Time Noted: 12.10 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, we will recommence. If I can ask Mr Malcolm Waters to speak, please. If you could give your name and address before you speak. If you come here, yes, please.

CLLR WATERS: Cllr Malcolm Waters, Mayor of Wellingborough and I live in Irthlingborough on the address of 111 College Street, Irthlingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR WATERS: Good afternoon, to you. I am here this afternoon representing the people of Irthlingborough on their concerns about the boundary changes which may occur in the near future. I find myself slightly in, like, piggy in the middle as being Mayor of Wellingborough and a councillor for Wellingborough for 35 years. Obviously a lot of people know me and a lot of concerns are around the fact that they do not wish again to be connected to Irthlingborough within their boundary.

I have been a councillor long enough to know that 33 years ago Irthlingborough was disconnected from the constituency of Wellingborough and many people at that time seemed to be quite grateful, if that is the right word to use, because they felt then and still do today, there is no connection with Wellingborough to Irthlingborough. Irthlingborough also feels that way on the opposite way, they do not feel there is no connection – Irthlingborough people do not feel there is no connection at all with Wellingborough and do not wish to be a part of that constituency. They wish to remain very closely and loyal, which they have been now for 33 years, within the Corby constituency. The reason for this basically is because it is all the villages that are around Irthlingborough – the Addingtons, Thrapston, Stanwick – where they feel that the identification of them being in Irthlingborough makes them part of that constituency. They do not feel any part of Wellingborough because not even any school children from Wellingborough even come to the Irthlingborough secondary modern school. The Irthlingborough itself gets its pupils from Raunds, and Stanwick, and Thrapston and the surrounding villages area. Not one person from Wellingborough actually goes to that school and they feel quite strongly they want to maintain that situation within Irthlingborough.

Like elsewhere, Irthlingborough is a thriving and expanding town and many people themselves feel very close to each other. You may walk down the high street of Irthlingborough at any time and it will probably take you twice as long as walking down any other road because people will stop and talk and chat to you because they know the importance of the town and they feel part of that town. They do not feel at all indicated with Wellingborough and also Wellingborough people themselves – and I find myself in a slightly difficult situation by being where I am but I can understand what people are saying in Wellingborough, they do not wish to be connected to Irthlingborough because for 33 years there has not been identification at all in Irthlingborough with Wellingborough. Wellingborough has gone the other way, as you

might say, in looking towards its own villages and part of going towards Kettering and Northampton.

It is difficult, I know, because you have a difficult job, gentlemen, in trying to resolve this kind of situation. I know for a fact that your calculations are not so much around people and people's situations but probably more around numbers and I appreciate the difficulty you have with that problem but, nevertheless, I am here on behalf of the Irthlingborough people and I speak also for the Wellingborough people that they find it quite incredible to believe that in your calculations you want to put Irthlingborough back into Wellingborough. People these days are finding life quite difficult, really, are they not because they feel their identification not only of their town and villages are going but also in some instance they feel also their country's identification is going. We all know, for example, these days that when you walk down any high street within the country, I do know, is that you probably hear five or six different languages which was not around a few years ago.

So people are concerned and so they have asked me, and I can assure you gentlemen that every person that has spoken to me about this I have told them that you are here today and you were here yesterday, that they are more than welcome to come along and give their own case, but they feel quite strongly because of the situation that I find myself in of being the Mayor of Wellingborough, a county councillor for Northamptonshire and the Borough Council for Wellingborough, they feel that it is probably my voice will be probably better heard than theirs. I hope it can be, I hope that you can re-look at Irthlingborough again and keep it in the Corby constituency and not in the Wellingborough.

I thank you for your time. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Just before you leave, you have mentioned Wellingborough a lot, I just want to be clear are you speaking also of Rushden and Higham Ferrers in that or do you see those differently?

CLLR WATERS: I am just talking about what the people – nobody from Rushden has come to me at all or spoken to me about this subject. Many people have spoken to me within Wellingborough and many people have spoken to me on the phone and sent me texts in Irthlingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right.

CLLR WATERS: Irthlingborough seems to be, if I may say that, the key issue of people's concerns.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have explained how they feel with regard to Wellingborough but how do you think people in Irthlingborough feel with regard to Rushden and Higham Ferrers?

CLLR WATERS: That I really cannot answer because I have not gone down that road to find out but I should imagine there is always connection, you know what I mean. We have had Irthlingborough Diamonds Football Team, for instance, so there has been a connection in the past of the two towns combining.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So in your mind the separation is between Irthlingborough and the Wellingborough town rather than Irthlingborough and, say, Rushden and Higham Ferrers, they may be more links, would you say?

CLLR WATERS: Yes, yes. Certainly Irthlingborough is probably more linked with places like Rushden and Higham than they are with—there is no possible link at all with Wellingborough but there certainly is a link between those villages. If you go beyond Rushden and Higham Ferrers then you are hitting the Addingtons establishment and you are hitting Thrapston and the other villages and that is where they feel their heart and soul belongs to.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I see. People of Wellingborough, would you say they feel a strong link themselves to Rushden and Higham Ferrers?

CLLR WATERS: No, no. Wellingborough feel a much stronger link to places like Earls Barton, Wollaston, Bozeat, that part of the world rather than the other part of the world of Higham Ferrers or Rushden.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. So from your experience of living in one you might say that Irthlingborough, Higham Ferrers, Rushden would see themselves more together? Is that reasonable?

CLLR WATERS: There would be a link, yes; a better link than Irthlingborough and Wellingborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I see.

CLLR WATERS: That is what I am trying to get over.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Are there any other points?

CLLR WATERS: Not very well, I suppose.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, you have, that is very useful, thank you. Thank you very much.

CLLR WATERS: Because I have said so much and there are so many details I have actually written down what I was going to say but I diverted from it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine.

CLLR WATERS: Can I leave that with you ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Certainly.

CLLR WATERS: --- as evidence and I can tell the people. People have seen that and they know that is the information you are going to have.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is great, thank you very much.

CLLR WATERS: Are you happy with that?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

CLLR WATERS: Much obliged to you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. The next speaker is booked at 12.30, we will stay in the room and if they arrive early then we will hear from them.

After a short time

Time Noted: 12.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have no speakers now booked until 1.30 so we will adjourn until 1.30.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 1.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, we will start the hearing again and if I can ask Mr Alan Bottwood to speak, if you like to come up here and if you give your name and address before you start to speak.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Thank you. Hi, I am Cllr Alan Bottwood, I am councillor for Upton Parish and also current Cabinet Member for the environment for Northampton Borough Council. I live at 32 Southfield Road, Duston, Northampton, NN5 6HN.

All I would really like to say is that I currently support the Conservative alternative proposal because living in Upton where I do it is probably the largest growing area of Northampton and the proposal shows two large rural areas, the current proposal, being attached to the borough whereas on the Upton side where we have got approximately a total of 7,000 houses coming over the next few years one of those large estates is actually outside the borough, it is in Harpole. Now, my concern is quite simply that when you do something like that they are going to get all the precept, South Northants will get all the benefits, but the residents will all use Upton and Duston for their facilities, ie schooling, shops, road, etc, like that. So I think the alternative Conservative proposal was that Harpole and Kislingbury come into the Borough of Northampton rather than I think it was Hackleton and another large area on the south east side. That is really my main concern.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you reflecting the – you have mentioned about precepts and things, that is not related to the constituency boundaries, though, is it?

CLLR BOTTWOOD: It could be, yes, because at the moment, as I say, Harpole Parish is outside the Borough and yet there is 1,700 houses going to be built actually in the parish of Harpole, it is right on the boundary of Upton. At the moment the parish of Harpole and South Northants Council are insisting that there is a green belt buffer between the new houses and their village. Now, that makes sense to everyone, does it not?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This proposal does not affect the local authority issues.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: I thought it was moving... The alternative was... There are two areas... (inaudible - off microphone) ...attached to the borough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Attached to the constituency for the general election purposes.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: What I am saying, those two should go the other side on to the left on the map, that is my concerns.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right. But that does not affect the local authority status in any way.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Only in the point of view of the rural area. You know, at the moment we are an urban area of the borough and if you include Hackleton and... (inaudible – off microphone) ...it makes it much more rural.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. All we are dealing with here is the constituency boundary...

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: ...so I take on board your point but of course that does not have any impact at all on which local authority serve these areas.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you very much. Yes, sorry, we just have a query if you could just hold on a moment.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. Just two points of clarification which, sort of, may help. Could you sort of describe the area where these 1,700 houses are going. Will they actually physically adjoin Duston and therefore become, effectively, although in a separate local authority area, in terms of where they would look for services, etc, are they physically joining the Duston boundary?

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Certainly, Brian. What we are faced with at the moment is they are building eventually the Sandy Lane relief road. Now, Harpole technically is partly to the right of that road and mainly to the left and those houses are going to bridge that road and they will be actually attached to the Upton and Duston boundaries where there is new housing, as we already know, on the other side of the road. So, in effect, it will be just an extension of Upton and Duston and allied away from Harpole even though it is in the Harpole parish and that is the concern, that is the big concern.

MR JARVIS: Just one small point, it does not necessarily relate to parliamentary boundaries which are based on local authority boundaries but different. You did speak about, sort of, the changing nature of Northampton and several speakers referred to it expanding. In terms of future plans, in terms of what you were saying, are you saying that because those developments are being built it is likely that the borough will try to negotiate the South Northampton terms of an alteration of the borough boundary to reflect that expanding borough? Is that the point you were trying to make?

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Yes, most certainly, because, as I said, you know, with the houses that are extending Upton out and then you have got just on the other side of the boundary Harpole/Kislingbury which I believe there are areas there that in the future will have to be used for housing. I mean, we already know there is Upton Lodge, there is Upton Park estate and also Norwood Farm which is the one that is actually Harpole.

What I am saying there is we are extending, if you like, the urbanisation of Northampton that way and we do not really want to go rural the other way, it makes more sense to go and stick with the urban areas. Okay?

MR JARVIS: Yes.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. You spoke about the urbanisation of the parish of Harpole but the alternative proposal that you are supporting includes taking the whole of the Harpole and Grange Ward into the Northampton South constituency. How would you describe villages like Gayton and Milton Malsor which are part of that ward? Are they part of the built up extension of Northampton?

CLLR BOTTWOOD: Well, I think what we have got to do is look forward as to where Northampton is going to expand and at the moment there is no plans there to move this way but I can well see in the future there will be, but it is definitely moving the other way to the west of Northampton in terms of where the urbanisation is taking place at the moment. I can see that, you know, eventually whichever way we look at it, I mean, it has been earmarked that, you know, does Northampton move toward Ecton Brook or out from Ecton Brook towards Wellingborough? Where else do we expand as a borough as we continue to grow?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. The next speaker is booked until 2.20 so we will adjourn until 2.20.

After a short break

Time Noted: 2.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, we will reopen the hearing now and the first person we will hear from is Cllr Haque. If you would like to come forward, please, and if you could give your name and address before you speak, please.

CLLR HAQUE: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Mr Assistant Commissioner. My name is Anamul Haque, I am a local councillor. I live at number 8 Orthop Street, Northampton. I have the privilege to be a Labour councillor in the Castle Ward, as I said before, on Northampton Borough Council.

The ward I represent has many varied and diverse communities within it, one of the only two three member ward in the borough and Castle is one of them. The ward contains some quite deprived areas and much of the work of the borough councillor goes into trying to develop systems and council services that can best respond to the areas of greater need. Of course, the problems of deprivation are not confined to just the Castle Ward, they extend to North Ward, East Ward and West Ward, tackling the problem of

poverty linked to poor environment issues such as litter, substandard housing, can be applied to Abington, Trinity, Semilong and St James Ward. The town centre and to the north would gain from their inclusion of the borough ward. They are the core of the town and borough constituency, it is a seat which they should be a part of.

Thank you, everyone and Commissioner for listening. I know you have a very difficult choice to make but I know that your focus in this will be with what is best for the greatest number of people in Northampton Borough.

Thank you once again.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. There is a just a query from a gentleman...

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. You mentioned Castle's links to various wards, you mentioned it had links to St James Ward. Do you want to just expand and explain what those links are between Castle and St James Ward, please.

CLLR HAQUE: I think I have missed a page on here. Yes, I have heard previous speakers saying to include St James into North, you know, I would not mind having St James but St James itself they have the same issues as we face in Castle Ward so leaving St James where it belongs I think is an ideal scenario. I have got a statement here, I have missed out a few lines but I could hand that out to you to have a look. I stand by what I have said in my statement, yes.

MR JARVIS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We will move on and I will call Miss Anna King. If you could give your name and address, please.

CLLR KING: Hi, I am Anna King, I live at 56 St Albans Road, Northampton. I am councillor for Phippsville, also Cabinet for Community Engagement for Northampton Borough Council so my views on this are quite clear: I completely support the new boundaries proposed for Northampton North from my personal perspective and from a community perspective.

The links between Abington, Phippsville and Park are very much joined and they should work together more. All the services in that area are very much shared, for example, schools, doctors' surgeries, church groups, services for older people, provision such as live at home, shops and pubs. The boundaries between them are very, very small proximity and I believe that they should work much better together. Also we have central--two of those three wards together our award winning Green Flag park which is Abington Park.

I also propose to agree with the changes for Rectory Farm, Billing, Ecton Brook to come together, it would cause a lot better community cohesion. Sometimes at the moment people in Ecton Brook feel slightly misplaced because their community centre actually falls in the Belling area so by joining together I think it will much improve things for the people of Northampton Borough Council.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. There is a question.

MR WILLIAMSON: George Cole Williamson, the Labour Party. Just a quick one, really. Would you like to comment on the view that the park, Abington Park, given that it extends well beyond the Phippsville boundary, acts as quite a barrier between the communities in Phippsville and Park?

CLLR KING: No, not at all. I do not see there are any boundaries at all, no. The central park being there actually brings people together and as I said, the service provisions that are dotted around that area work in favour of people working more collaboratively together.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Is Dr Ritchie here? If we can call you to speak, then, please.

DR RITCHIE: Thank you for the opportunity.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can you give your name and address.

DR RITCHIE: Sorry. Ken Ritchie. My address is 37 Kilsby Road, Barby, Rugby, CV23 8TU.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

DR RITCHIE: I have a written submission copies of which I will leave with you. If it is helpful I can give you a copy right now while I am speaking. Does that help? Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

DR RITCHIE: I am speaking as the Secretary of Daventry constituency Labour Party. The points we make, however, are really applicable, you know, to all political parties in the Daventry area.

If I deal firstly with what is section 1.3 in my written submission, you know, we recognise that you may be faced with situations in which you have got to draw boundaries where

constituencies straddle county boundaries. We accept that from time to time that will be needed but in proposing to create a Daventry and Lutterworth constituency it is not something that we like. It is not just the county boundary but we feel that there is very little connection between Daventry and Lutterworth. If you want to use public transport going from one to the other you need to go through Rugby which is in Warwickshire. People who are in Lutterworth will generally look towards Rugby or toward Leicester, in Daventry people look towards Northampton.

We argue at the end of the submission that the idea of local geographic factors have also got to be local political factors. Constituencies tend to be the units in which political parties organise, they are the places where people who have got an active interest in the communities get together to debate. We just feel that if we put together a constituency that is Daventry and Lutterworth we will be bringing together people who have got very little common concerns, little common ground, for having the sorts of debate that good local democracy actually requires. We feel that politically this is not going to help to alleviate the problems of people feeling disconnected from politics.

However, the submission that we make is primarily about the borders – not the cross border bit but the border to the south of Daventry and the position of Earls Barton and two wards which are in the far east of the existing Daventry constituency. Weedon and Woodford Wards which are to the south of Daventry the proposal is that they be transferred to South Northamptonshire but they include villages that are I describe them as satellites of Daventry. They are actually closer to the centre of Daventry than some parts of Daventry town itself, they are totally linked to Daventry. Moulton, for example, is part of the Daventry East County Division. There are people who, yes, they use stores in Daventry, they shop in Daventry, many of them work in Daventry, if they are travelling anywhere they are going to travel through Daventry and from our point of view as a political party there are lots of debates that take place around about the future of Daventry as a fast growing town. These people can be involved, whatever party they are in, in these debates while they are in a Daventry constituency. If they end up as an add-on to a constituency that is going to be based primarily around Towcester and Brackley then it is much more difficult for them to be part of the debate around about the town, the development of the town of which they are effectively a part.

Now, we know that while I can say that there are certainly four villages that fall into that category there are other parts, particularly of Woodford, that are much further afield. There is a strong case for Woodford and Weedon remaining part of Daventry. Woodford, the communication is really by the road that runs from Banbury to Daventry which is a good bus service but if you thought that it was totally impossible to have Woodford and Weedon so within Daventry then we would argue that exceptional circumstances are there for drawing a boundary just south of Daventry that would split both of these wards. We know that it is beyond your remit to change the ward boundaries but Woodford and Weedon are both three member wards. We would hope that through time the local government boundary commission will be in a position to

change that into three two member wards. You could easily take a Daventry South ward that would include the villages that I refer to in our submission.

The other change that we feel needs to be made concerns Earls Barton and there is the Harrowden and Sywell Ward which is largely the rural area just round about Earls Barton. These areas were put into Daventry at the last boundary review but geographically they simply do not belong there. You know, between Earls Barton and Daventry there is the whole of Northampton. Earls Barton is 20 something miles from Daventry, it is only four miles from Wellingborough and indeed it is part of Wellingborough District for local government purposes. We find that there are lots of people, probably a majority, who live in Earls Barton who have never been in Daventry and they have got no reason whatsoever for going to Daventry. We just feel that this review ought to be an opportunity for changing these wards back into Wellingborough. It would offer people there much more opportunity for being part of political debates and bringing around about, you know, the future of Wellingborough, the town that they naturally are going to use. We feel that is something and the opportunity is here now for making that change once again.

Of course, we recognise that if you were to make these changes it upsets the total numbers in the constituencies. We could leave that to you to find out a way around that difficulty but we do make a proposal. Adding Earls Barton and Harrowden and Sywell on to Wellingborough makes Wellingborough too big. That can be sorted by taking out Irchester which is the southernmost ward within Wellingborough and adding that on to Northampton South. It would still – that is if Daventry retains Weedon and Woodford – leave South Northamptonshire too small so what we propose as an option would be to transfer three wards from Northampton South. These three wards are Hackleton, Bozeat and Wollaston.

Now, Wollaston needs to be transferred but if you look at the map it will be quite difficult to take out one of these wards or two of them and leaving a sensible looking boundary. They are all wards that are very similar in character, wards of rural villages. If that were to be done, as we did not see a way of actually taking out just one or two of these wards, we would suggest putting back into Northampton South Grange Park. Now, Grange Park is different from the others in that it is much more of a new residential ward, effectively a detached suburb of Northampton. It would have more in common with Northampton South than with South Northamptonshire but that is just something, a proposal, as to a way in which it might be done. I say beyond our general concern about a constituency that straddles a county boundary but brings together two towns that have got very, very little in common, our concerns are making sure that we retain the areas just to the south and certainly east of Daventry that have got such a strong attachment to the town and that we do something more sensible about Earls Barton and Harrowden and Sywell.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You mentioned Irchester Ward.

DR RITCHIE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you proposing that is removed from Wellingborough or not?

DR RITCHIE: Well, removed from Wellingborough into South Northamptonshire because if Earls Barton were added to Wellingborough and Harrowden and Sywell it would take the Wellingborough electorate over the upper limit.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is that a positive change, though? I mean, if you look at Irchester and Earls Barton they are both villages fairly close to Wellingborough. Does one have merit over the other, in your view, as being a part of that constituency?

DR RITCHIE: I will not be able to answer that but I feel it is something else needs to do to Earls Barton, and Earls Barton it would be more difficult to attach Earls Barton to one of Northampton North or Northampton South because you have got Harrowden and Sywell in the way which is predominantly rural.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Then the South wards you mentioned was Wollaston, Bozeat and Hackleton.

DR RITCHIE: And Hackleton, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: What about Yardley? Brafield and Yardley, which is between those.

DR RITCHIE: I would need to pull out my map to tell you why I went for these three. I suspect looking at the three that actually replace Wollaston with... I perhaps have sort of chosen the wrong ones to transfer but you can see the idea is that at the moment Northampton South has got, you know, areas that are very, very rural, that do not have much in common with the parts of Northampton town that are there and it seems sensible that they have got much more linkage without Northamptonshire. You would need to look on the fourth page of our submission. I have put a sort of sheet of just how we see these changes would ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So you see South Northamptonshire coming round the bottom of Northampton up as far as Wellingborough?

DR RITCHIE: Well, Irchester. Yes. South Northamptonshire?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

DR RITCHIE: Well, it is this question about where you actually find the numbers to make South Northamptonshire up to the size that it needs to be.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And these proposed changes are to allow the movement of Earls Barton?

DR RITCHIE: That is correct, yes. Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Name, sorry.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. You are referring to a document which it would be helpful, I do not know if you have got more copies ---

DR RITCHIE: Yes.

MR FOX: --- if we could have copies of as well so that when you refer to a paragraph we can see what you are talking about. But if I can just say since the key issues you are trying to resolve are the Woodford and the Weedon Wards in the Daventry District and the Earls Barton and the Harrowden and Sywell Wards in the Wellingborough District, have you seen the Liberal Democrats' alternative proposal for Northamptonshire that deals with both of these problems, keeps the Daventry District whole and also keeps the South Northamptonshire District whole and does so by adding the Earls Barton and Harrowden and Sywell Wards to a Northampton North and the numbers all do add up?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, that is a different proposal that we have so I am sure we can take account of that.

MR FOX: I am just asking if the...

DR RITCHIE: No.

MR FOX: I can let you have a copy of that.

DR RITCHIE: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have copies of ---

DR RITCHIE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, that is great. Thank you very much for speaking. Do we have Timothy Hadland? No.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He cannot come, he will not be attending.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In that case, we will move on to Mr David Gair. If you could give your name and address, please.

MR GAIR: Right, okay. My name is David Gair, I am from Lutterworth and I am Secretary of the South Leicestershire Labour Party.

The first thing I would say, we realise that you are bound by an Act of Parliament to carry out this but we would like you to carry a message back to say that we protest the loss of democracy here with the reduction in the number of MPs against an increasing population whilst you are expanding the House of Lords.

However, coming to the point of this meeting, Lutterworth is at the very southern end of the current South Leicestershire constituency and the proposal is that we go in with the new Daventry and Lutterworth constituency. We have no social, economic, political or transport links with Daventry. Most people in Lutterworth could not place Daventry on the map, have no idea where it is and indeed this will introduce an eleventh MP into the sphere of the Police and Crime Commissioner; he asked me to mention that.

The people of Lutterworth associate with Leicester, Market Harborough, Hinckley and Rugby on a fairly regular basis. Very, very few and none to my knowledge associate with Daventry, it would just be a very difficult thing for us to go in with the Daventry District. Now we realise you have a difficult task and we realise that something like this is bound to happen occasionally and it is quite difficult for us to suggest an alternative set of boundaries because the Daventry constituency covers such a vast area and its margins join on to so many other constituencies, but we would suggest you look closely at the area around Rugby which is much more closely tied in with Daventry in all the areas that I mentioned earlier because we will find ourselves completely cast adrift from everything else that we associate with. Being part of that parliamentary constituency would be our only link with that, everything else would evolve around Leicester, Hinckley and Market Harborough.

Okay, that is all I have to say, really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.,

MR GAIR: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is due at 3.20, we will adjourn until 3.15.

After a short break

Time Noted: 3.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon again. We have a speaker booked at 3.20 but you are here currently so if I can ask Mr Mullaney to speak. If you can give your name and address before you speak, please.

CLLR MULLANEY: (Liberal Democrats, Hinckley and Bosworth District Council) Good afternoon. It is Michael Mullaney of 9 Cheshire Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 0AH. I am currently county councillor for Hinckley which is part of the proposed and existing Bosworth constituency.

My main issue is to say that I would support those counter-proposals that would keep the Bosworth constituency just containing wards of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. At the moment the Boundary Commission's proposal is to move a series of wards from North West Leicestershire into the Bosworth constituency whereas it would be better if North West Leicestershire was allowed to remain coterminous between the parliamentary constituency and the Borough Council. Instead of moving those North West Leicestershire wards into Hinckley and Bosworth constituency what you could do is keep them in a coterminous North West Leicestershire constituency and instead of moving out both the Ratby, Bagworth, Thornton Wards and the Markfield Wards you could maintain the Ratby, Bagworth, Thornton Ward in the new adjusted Bosworth constituency, that would then put it within the necessary number of electors. So to keep your current proposed Bosworth but to remove the North West Leicestershire Wards to allow North West Leicestershire to be coterminous with the District Council and to put Ratby, Bagworth, Thornton back into Bosworth in order then for the numbers to up within the necessary range.

I would also therefore say that we could improve the Loughborough seat by having an addition of Shepshed and the Wolds and then you could improve the Charnwood/Loughborough boundary by not dividing the villages of Mountsorrel and Sileby. Then as a result of those changes within the North West Leicestershire, Bosworth and Charnwood constituencies and Loughborough constituencies you could allow Bosworth to stay as it is minus Markfield so that it remains a Bosworth constituency just with Hinckley and Bosworth Wards within it and you could have a North West Leicestershire constituency that was coterminous with the North West Leicestershire District Council so then you would not be splitting the North West Leicestershire constituency or the North West Leicestershire Council either.

So I would support that change to the plans as it would reduce the number of councils that were being split across parliamentary constituencies. I do understand there is a counter-proposal that has been put forward to move three wards from Blaby District into Bosworth, I understand that was proposed I believe by the Labour Party. Again I would not agree with that because that would again be splitting the Bosworth constituency

across the Hinckley and Bosworth boundaries whereas to maintain the natural community of the Bosworth constituency the general feeling is we should, as far as possible, only have Hinckley and Bosworth Wards within it. The alternative proposals which have been put forward by Mr Fox for the Lib-Dems do ensure that we can maintain a Bosworth constituency that just contains Hinckley and Bosworth Wards and a North West Leicestershire constituency which just contains coterminous boundaries, the same boundaries as North West Leicestershire and if we can put those amendments through to your proposals I believe that would ensure that the Leicestershire changes minimise the amounts of cross-cutting across Borough and District Councils and would create much more natural and generally accepted to the public constituencies.

Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The ones that you are suggesting are retained are the northern strip?

CLLR MULLANEY: Roughly Bagworth, Thornton, yes. You could include Ratby, Bagworth, Thornton in with your proposed Bosworth and remove the North West Leicestershire Wards and that would keep it within quota.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: When you say North West Leicestershire do you mean ---

CLLR MULLANEY: Yes, they are currently in the North West constituency and in the North West District Council so by keeping those in the North West constituency that would make the North West constituency and the North West Leicestershire Council area coterminous so there would not be any split there and you could ensure that Bosworth would only involve Bosworth wards if you moved back in Ratby, Bagworth, Thornton which would bring it within the quota you need to be within.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Markfield would stay where it proposed?

CLLR MULLANEY: Markfield would stay where it is and then you would still be able to keep it within the necessary range.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good, okay.

CLLR MULLANEY; Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Mr Jarvis, you are the next booked speaker at 4.40. Do you want to speak now or do you want to...? Okay. We have heard your address but you might want to give it again.

MR JARVIS: Brian Jarvis, 74 Fifth Avenue, Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire. I am going to speak in relation to the Northampton North and the Northampton South constituencies and I am doing this from the perspective of a former resident of Northampton when I served as the Conservative Party agent for the Northampton South constituency.

In terms of Northampton North the Boundary Commission's proposal is very sensible for the following reasons. Firstly, the proposed seat will unite the area known locally as the Eastern District in the same constituency, namely the wards of Talavera, Rectory Farm, Brookside, Riverside which includes the Standens Barn area, and Billing which includes the Ecton Brook area.

It is worth reflecting that during the last review the Commission recognised the strong ties that Ecton Brook has to other areas in the Eastern District. AC287 of the last review stated Lumbertubs, Thorplands and Ecton Brook operate effectively as an area partnership. As Ecton Brook now forms part of the Billing Ward the transfer of this ward into Northampton North again recognises this established strong community link.

Thirdly, the Commission's Northampton North also places the whole of the divided Abington Ward into Northampton North. This ward has strong ties to the Park Ward. Both wards include Abington Park itself and the Abington Vale area is located within the Park Ward which has strong community ties to the rest of Abington.

Fourthly, the Commission's Northampton North also has a logical boundary at its western end using the railway line between Kings Heath and Kingsthorpe Wards and largely main arterial roads elsewhere.

Turning to the Northampton South constituency I broadly welcome the Commission's proposals but believe the constituency can be improved with a few minor amendments. Firstly I believe that the shape and cohesiveness of the Northampton South seat can be improved by removing the two Wellingborough wards back into the Wellingborough constituency reducing from three to two the number of local authorities which make up the seat. The transfer of these two wards would not affect the Commission's proposed Wellingborough constituency being within the electoral quota.

Secondly, replacing the two very rural wards of Hackleton and Brafield and Yardley with two urban and suburban wards of Harpole and Grange and Grange Park. Grange Park is basically an urban continuation of Northampton divided from the rest of South Northamptonshire district by the M1 as we have already heard. The Harpole and Grange Ward consists largely of suburban commuter villages into Northampton but more importantly, as we have heard, the area forms part of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. This strategy is seeing the building of some 6,000 houses off junction 16 including some 1,700 in the Harpole area and these areas will adjoin the border with Duston and become part of a continuous community with Duston and they

will look to the facilities within Duston in terms of doctors, shops, etc. Furthermore, the return of the Northampton Borough wards which currently lie in the South Northamptonshire constituency obviously make logical sense.

The town centre, which we have heard much about at these hearings, largely is located in the Castle Ward. I am sure when the Commissioners pay their visit to Northampton they will see very clearly that the town centre is largely within the Castle Ward. But we have also heard that Castle Ward shares similar demographic and local links with many other wards, namely Semilong, St James, Spencer, Delapre and Briar Hill, Kings Heath and parts of Rushmills around the hospital. Evidence provided at this hearing suggests that there is strong agreement that these links exist and I believe that the Commission's proposed Northampton South prevents these links from being broken. There was some debate earlier about the importance of having these areas within a borough constituency. It seems to me, if this is the main argument, it would be better and less disruptive if the Commission's proposed Northampton South constituency was allocated as a borough constituency rather than a county constituency instead of embarking on unnecessary and radical change. Indeed, when I was the agent for Northampton South the electorate of that constituency was well over 90,000 and consisted of many more rural areas of South Northamptonshire district even more so than proposed by the Commission's latest set of proposals and back then it was still a borough constituency.

It is also worth noting the proposals that others have suggested would divide some of these communities. I think we have heard plenty of evidence that they are all linked but the only proposal on offer that links all these areas in one constituency is that offered by the Commission and, as I said, that can be improved further with the amendments I have just outlined.

It is also worth noting that some of the other proposals produce some interesting boundaries, unsatisfactory boundaries in my view, between St James and Spencer Ward. The Avenue area south of the Harlestone Road in Spencer Ward I think would produce an even more unsatisfactory border than that of the Kingsthorpe Hollow divide between Semilong and Trinity Wards which a number of other speakers have referred to.

So all in all I think the Commission's proposals for Northampton North are sensible and robust and I am sure that will be confirmed when the Commissioners visit the constituency. I think that in order to accommodate some of the views expressed in terms of keeping communities together and having a more cohesive urban and suburban Northampton South constituency the proposals that I have outlined result in a much neater boundary and bring into the Northampton South constituency areas that have a natural link with it; indeed, because of the expanding housing developments a much more natural link with it than the predominantly rural areas where there are no proposed housing developments as suggested under the Commission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just check the Northampton South. Wollaston and Bozeat you are suggesting go to Wellingborough?

MR JARVIS: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Then Brafield and Yardley and Hackleton?

MR JARVIS: Return to South Northamptonshire and they are replaced ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: They are replaced with Grange Park and Harpole.

MR JARVIS: That is correct, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Yes.

MR FOX: Alan Fox, Liberal Democrats. You spoke about the new dwellings being built as a result of the planned developments to the west of Northampton. Those are actually all to the north of the M1 motorway but you are proposing moving the whole of the Harpole and Grange Ward into the Northampton South constituency, a large portion of which is made up of villages to the south of the M1, villages like Milton Malsor, Gayton, Rothersthorpe.

MR JARVIS: Rothersthorpe, yes. All those villages I would describe as commuting villages to Northampton. The reason that ward makes sense is because of the very substantial proposed development that would border the Northampton boundary at Duston as I outlined but I do not think that the villages in the rest of the ward would be incongruous within the constituency; indeed, they were part of the constituency when I was agent, they were part of the former Northampton South constituency up until the last review.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We will adjourn now until 4.15.

After a short break

Time Noted: 4.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon once again, we will open the hearing. We have a speaker who has recently booked in, Mr David Hewitt. Is that yourself? If you would like to come up and speak now. If you could give your name and address before you speak, please.

MR HEWITT: David Hewitt, 77 The Drive, Kingsley, Northampton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, could you just repeat that.

MR HEWITT: David Hewitt, 77 The Drive, Kingsley, Northampton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is great, thank you. Go ahead.

MR HEWITT: I will start off with a statement I have always been brought up with about democracy has a price and these proposals, which I have looked at in a bit of detail – bearing in mind I am not getting at you, gentlemen, this is the task you have been given by the government, you have got the dirty end of the stick as far as I see it. The proposals are based on inaccurate population figures therefore the proposals must be questionable right from the start and I am talking particularly about Northampton at the moment. Northampton is growing fast, the amount of houses is going up, we are having a population explosion. The County Council is required, if we look at the numbers for children, to build a new primary school every six weeks. That demonstrates how much the population is exploding and one size does not fit all.

The 75,000 what I believe arbitrary figures smacks of gerrymandering solely to reduce the number of MPs which is what our dear departed Prime Minister I seem to remember said. Well, if he is that bothered about the cost of politics start culling the other place, the House of Lords, instead of packing it with his pals. We need more MPs, in my view, not less because of an ever growing population so if we must save money have a look at the other end of the Palace of Westminster.

These proposals cannot be seen as democratic. I am talking now about Northampton South constituency. What they have in common with Wollaston or Bozeat they might as well be on the other side of the moon. They have nothing in common but this obsession with 75,000, give or take, I understand means that you have got to come up with some boundaries that encompass that. It seems to me it is just a numbers game. The only common factor with Bozeat and Wollaston and Northampton South is we all live in Northamptonshire, we are all citizens of Northamptonshire. I do hope that the consultation process can result in revised proposals that enhance democracy rather than reduce it.

For Daventry constituency to be partly with Lutterworth is beyond me. Obviously the Commission is not aware of the ancient rivalries between Northamptonshire and Leicestershire; if you are trying to provoke a civil war that may well be what you are going to end up with. All because we have to lose two MPs in the East Midlands according to the proposals. I think it is a nonsense and I do hope that the consultation will listen to the ordinary people that are saying we want more representation, not less. We need more MPs but the price of democracy is also eternal vigilance. I do not trust any of them and that is why I want them all on a short leash but to make them all fit

75,000 is a joke, quite frankly, and I hope it goes back and is revised and my taxes are spent in a bit better fashion than these hamfisted proposals that are there.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for speaking. We have one more speaker booked to speak at 4.50 so on that basis we will adjourn until 4.45.

After a short break

Time Noted: 4.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon again. We will hear from Cllr Smith, if you would like to come forward and speak. If you could give your name and address before you start, please.

CLLR SMITH: (Labour Party, Northampton Borough Council) Mr Assistant Commissioner, my name is Zoe Smith and I live at 107 Derby Road, Abington, Northampton. I also have the privilege of being the Labour Borough councillor for Abington Ward. Abington Ward is adjacent to the very middle, of town centre in Northampton and the roads, its building styles, its people move seamlessly in and out of the Castle Ward which makes up the town centre.

Abington has a well developed sense of community with a number of active community groups operating. There are faith groups which organise over the Castle, Abington, Semilong and St James boundaries which themselves have extensive family connections within them. The boundary with Castle Ward is exceedingly porous as it runs up and down the many residential back streets of the town. It has been quite confusing over a long period of time for local residents to work out who their elected representatives are. An example is at the bottom of my street is the tiny section which is in Northampton South which confuses a number of the residents. A difficult situation has prevailed with the residents of the Castle Ward and the residents of the Abington Ward being served by two different Members of Parliament for some 42 years. I do believe that this arrangement has been and continues to be a problem for residents and elected representatives alike. I am hoping, Mr Assistant Commissioner, that you will look closely at this to see if it can be remedied.

Having one Member of Parliament to respond to the diverse individual yet common needs of residents in Abington, Trinity, Semilong and Castle Wards would certainly be a help. Having the wards of Spencer and Kings Heath included would complete the picture and would create a proper borough constituency with the whole urban core of the borough residents being placed within it. In an ideal world the St James Ward would be included in this arrangement but, given the restrictions that have been placed

on the Boundary Commission, this is not possible. However, the restriction and impracticality of moving the St James Ward does not nullify the need for the other town centre wards being included within the Borough ward. This is what has been missing from the town centre for over 40 years.

I know that in deliberating on all this you have a very difficult task but I am sure that you will place the needs of local residents first in any decision you make.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Can I just ask, would you put Castle Ward as the top priority?

CLLR SMITH: I think that it is very important. Castle Ward has the main link but I think that the links between Castle Ward and Abington Ward and the surrounding areas which make up the Borough is a really important aspect of this.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Thank you very much. We have no more booked speakers but we will keep the hearing open until five o'clock and we will wait in the room in case anybody does attend.

After a short break

Time Noted: 5.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have no more booked speakers today and no more attenders so on that basis we will formally close the hearing.

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