

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL, PINSTONE STREET, SHEFFIELD S1 2HH

ON

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Mr John Feavour, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW
Telephone Number: 0203 585 4721/22

Time noted: 9 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning everybody. Welcome to day two of the Sheffield hearings in relation to the Boundary Commission for England's public hearings for its initial proposals. Mr Clark, good morning to you. I am not singling you out, but everybody else was here yesterday so they know what I am going to say. We have got a list of people who have booked in to speak to us and I am going to work my way through that list. I will reiterate what I did say yesterday, which is that where there are gaps in my bookings I will adjourn. Where that gap is longer than an hour, I will not adjourn for longer than an hour because I am conscious if somebody walks in I do not want them to wait longer than that period of time to come and speak.

You are booked in at 9 o'clock this morning. My next booking is at 9.30. I have one at 10, 10.20, and thereafter we are into the afternoon. So I will be adjourning quite a lot during the day. You are on first this morning and in a moment I will ask you to come forward. I will say the same to you as I have said to everybody else: all the proceedings are being recorded and we get a verbatim transcript of what everybody has said.

My name is John Feavours. I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England and, together with Collette Rawnsley, my fellow Commissioner who is sitting just behind you to your left, it is our responsibility to consider all of the representations made at the hearings, at Leeds last week, Sheffield and Northallerton this week, and Hull next week, together with all the written submissions that come into the Boundary Commission to decide whether to make representations to the Commission as to whether the initial proposals need to be amended in any way and, if so, how. So, because we are being recorded, when everybody comes forward to the lectern, I ask them to give their name and their address and then tell us what we need to hear. So in your time, when you are ready. Thank you.

MR CLARK: Yes, good morning. My name is Peter Clark. I am the Elections and Land Charges Manager for Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council. I am here in a professional capacity today; I am authorised to deliver a response on behalf the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR CLARK: In our response I believe that Barnsley Council does not support these proposals as they have been drafted. We feel that the Barnsley area has been disproportionately disadvantaged by the methodology used to conduct the review. Our objections are around three principles that we believe have not been equitably applied. We are not going to deliver a counter-proposal at this stage, but we do want to make representations about principles that we believe have been misapplied in our case.

Firstly, our objections are around the dilution of parliamentary representation. In the guide to the review, the Boundary Commission states: Whilst the BC proposes to identify constituencies by reference to local authority external boundaries as far as practicable, it is nevertheless often necessary to cross these boundaries in order to form constituencies that apply to the statutory electorate range". We do not feel that this proposal has been equitably applied in relation to South Yorkshire.

The initial proposals cross local authority boundaries for only one constituency in the Doncaster area, three constituencies in the Sheffield and Rotherham areas but five constituencies in the Barnsley area. Barnsley borough has actually been split into six different constituencies, four of which are mostly made up of wards from other local authorities. Three of these constituencies contain only one Barnsley ward. We feel that an election on these boundaries would see Barnsley giving wards to four different local authorities, which would dilute the local representation that Barnsley would receive in Parliament as our MPs would be mostly representing other communities. This compares very unfavourably with our neighbouring local authorities in South Yorkshire, we have of which gives away to at most one other local authority. Considering these circumstances, we do not think it is equitable that Barnsley should have to give away four times as much and therefore see our representation in Parliament considerably diluted.

Our second objection is around the disruption of community identity. The town of Barnsley and surrounding communities that make up the Barnsley borough have significant historic and cultural ties together that make it unsuitable to be split in the way it is proposed. There is little historical or community connection to the areas of Doncaster and Kirklees in particular, and areas of Barnsley have been included in both the Coleman Valley constituency and the Doncaster West constituency.

The Barnsley borough forms part of four constituencies, two of which are fully contained, or almost fully contained in the case of Barnsley East, within the borough, but the rest are mostly made up of other local authorities. The current arrangement that is currently in place does form part of four constituencies, two of which are fully contained within the borough and two of which are mostly formed by other authorities. This arrangement does not deliver an outcome where every resident of the borough is represented by a Barnsley MP, but it does not divide communities in the way that these current proposals do. The Boundary Commission's proposals not only present too great a shift from the current arrangement but split established communities in a manner that the council feels is unacceptable.

Barnsley Council has significant concerns over the proposals to place the Dearne North, Dearne South, Penistone East and Penistone West wards into separate constituencies. In all of these cases, the wards together - Dearne North and Dearne South and Penistone East and Penistone West - represent single communities, and the local

government boundary that splits them in two is appropriate for local representation but we do not feel is appropriate as a boundary for a parliamentary constituency.

The proposed boundary between the Barnsley East and the Doncaster West constituency, in particular would split the town of Goldthorpe in two, with the residents of the north western half, together with the residents of Thurnscoe, being placed in a Doncaster constituency that they have no relationship with. Currently, these wards are in the Wentworth and Dearne constituency, which is mostly made up of the Rotherham area, but we do feel that this is a more preferable arrangement as it leaves the Dearne community, Dearne North and South, united within a single constituency.

Similarly, the boundary between the Penistone East and Penistone West wards splits the town of Penistone more or less down the middle, and we feel that whilst this is appropriate for local government representation, it is, again, not appropriate for a parliamentary constituency.

It may prove necessary for the Penistone communities to be included in a constituency with areas of North Sheffield, as is currently the case, but we do not feel it is appropriate, particularly for the Penistone East ward to be included in a constituency that goes as far south as the Dore and Totley and Beauchief and Greenhill wards of Sheffield City Council, as is currently proposed.

With reference to that constituency in particular, Barnsley Council does not believe that it can be impossible to achieve constituencies that fall within the statutory electorate range and effectively represent local communities without this constituency existing. We do not feel that this constituency is as necessary as the Boundary Commission have suggested in their initial proposals.

Thirdly, we feel that there are other local circumstances that have an effect. Barnsley Council is the smallest of the South Yorkshire local authorities and therefore we have the smallest electorate size for our wards. The average Barnsley Council ward has only 58% of the electorate of a Sheffield City Council ward, and it seems from the proposals that our wards have been redistributed between other authorities because the electorate size of those other wards has proved too large to create a constituency within the statutory limit.

We feel that it is not within the principles of the review or within the principles of representative democracy to dilute the democratic representation of an area because other areas have created wards for their own local representation that are unfeasibly large for the joining of parliamentary constituencies. We feel that in this instance the Boundary Commission should give greater consideration to split local government wards where they are unfeasibly large rather than taking advantage of a smaller neighbouring authority.

The Boundary Commission seems to have considered that local government ward boundaries are of greater importance than local authority boundaries and Barnsley Council takes the opposite view.

We also note that Sheffield City Council has had new ward boundaries since the commencement of this review and we feel that these should be taken into account as the Boundary Commission draws up revised proposals.

In summation, we consider that these proposals are unacceptable to the people of Barnsley as they split local communities, whilst failing to ensure an equitable level of parliamentary representation for the people of Barnsley. We hope that the Boundary Commission will now look to revise their proposals with these objectives in mind, to achieve a solution that the people of the borough of Barnsley are able to support to achieve an equitable distribution of parliamentary constituencies that does not disadvantage local communities.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Clark. Can I just check with anybody else in the room, is there any clarification anybody needs for what Mr Clark has said? (No response) No. Mr Clark, thank you very much indeed.

MR CLARK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sir, as you come back down, let me just say this for your information, and, again, colleagues in the room have heard me say this so it will come as no surprise to them at all. Just when you go back to Barnsley, you said in your initial commentary that you do not propose to bring forward any counter-proposals at this stage. I assume that implicit in that remark is that you will bring forward some counter-proposals, and whether or not you do I would encourage Barnsley Council to think about that. I would encourage you to remind the council of the rules that we are obliged to comply with. They are available for reference outside but on the website, the details which are available to you and to councillors in Barnsley. The electoral quota number is the only must in there. Collette and I cannot do anything about that, it is fixed, it is there, and we absolutely cannot go outside of it.

You are quite right, in the Boundary Commission's introduction it talks about significant disruption. This is not only happening in Barnsley, and I understand that is really where you are only interested in and credit to you for that, but we have to try and find solutions where those numbers work. In its commentary, the Boundary Commission also says that we are able to give greater weight to any counter-proposals that take effect of what we describe as the ripple effect. We have not done any of this, by the way, but it might help just to illustrate. If we start, say, in the middle of Bradford and work our way out, that will work better for Bradford than it will for people as we get to the edge. If we start in the middle of Barnsley and work our way out, it will work better for Barnsley. So,

whilst Collette and I will try our very best to make it work well for everybody, at some point something has got to give. We have not come to any conclusions at all yet.

We are no more wedded to the initial proposals than we are to anything else anybody else has said, but if Barnsley do bring forward any further submissions and the consultation is open until 5 December, so there is still some considerable time, please get in touch with us through the website with those counter-proposals because Collette and I want to see what you think might work in order we can take that into account with the broader submissions. Does that make sense? Okay, thank you very much indeed.

The next speaker is scheduled at 9.30, so I will adjourn until then. Thanks very much.

After a short break

Time noted: 9. 28 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Hello again, everybody. It is nearly 9.30 so resuming day two at Sheffield. Mr May, good morning. I adjourned after the last speaker for a small gap, but everybody who was present then who indicated they wanted to come back and our observers have come back in so we will carry on.

By way of introduction, and I am talking to you because everybody else has heard this but I make no apology for that because you need to know. My name is John Feavoyour and I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility, together with my colleague, Collette Rawnsley, who is the other Assistant Commissioner for Yorkshire and the Humber region, to listen to all the representations made at the public hearings, Leeds last week, Sheffield, Northallerton this week, and Hull next week, and also to consider the written representations that come into the Boundary Commission about this region. Then it is up to us to decide the representations that need to be made to the Commission as to whether the initial proposals need to be changed in any way and, if so, to what extent.

In order to help us do that, all of the evidence that is given at the hearings is recorded and then transcribed verbatim, and that will be available to everybody else who wants to make comments, probably by the spring of next year. In that respect, we are videoing recording proceedings today. So in a moment I will ask you to come up to the lectern if you would and start by giving us your name and address and then tell us what it is that you want us to hear. On that basis, can I invite you up now, please.

MR MAY: Is it all right if I sit here?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, if you would be more comfortable sat down the front there that is absolutely fine.

MR MAY: No, no that is fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you okay?

MR MAY: Yeah, yeah.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. It is not designed to be daunting.

MR MAY: No.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is designed so that we ---

MR MAY: No, it is part of the room, I guess, you know.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, I have to say, and this is nothing to do with the work that we are here to do at all, I have never been here prior to yesterday and I was blown away by this place, what an absolutely fantastic building it is.

MR MAY: Yeah.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is just stunning and talks to the history of Sheffield, I suppose.

MR MAY: New to me as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So we are in fabulous surroundings.

MR MAY: Yeah, okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are next up, so if you would like to start by reminding us, for the tape, your name and address and then tell us what you would like us to hear.

MR MAY: Okay. I am Paul May. I live in Sheffield in Ecclesall on Millhouses Lane, 232 Millhouses Lane. I am Chair of the Ecclesall Forum, which is a neighbourhood group, obviously representing the ward of Ecclesall, and we aim to improve facilities, improve the environment, tackle local issues like social isolation, ward boundaries, we had an input on the ward boundary and managed to influence that to a certain extent last time. I am speaking as a representative of that forum, and obviously we are going to focus on Ecclesall ward.

We would like to see the status quo maintained, so Ecclesall ward to remain in the Hallam constituency. I will just run through three reasons to support that statement.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR MAY: First of all, I understand one aim of the Commission is to avoid “splitting up or grafting together different communities.” I would argue that if Sheffield became part of the proposed ward, then that would be the case. It has got little in common with the central Sheffield area; it has got a lot more in common with the area to the west, which is the Ecclesall and Dore ward, so we see that as a social entity.

There is much integration between the Ecclesall ward and the Dore and Totley area in terms of churches, activities, choirs, retired group activity. You probably will know that the age profile of those two wards is top heavy with age, retired people. Lots of activities going on like bridge crosses the boundary; U3A activities in various venues across those boundaries, and Friends of Porter Valley, which is an organisation, a very active organisation, where the chair has contacted me and supported what we want to say. They operate in Ecclesall and Dore areas on the Porter Valley.

So we think that Ecclesall has little in common with central Sheffield area and much more in common with the area it is already associated in in the Hallam constituency.

Secondly, the geography of the area, you will know, or perhaps you do not know, Sheffield, of course, is made up of lots of hills and valleys and so physically there are obvious links between the Ecclesall area and the Dore area. Two major rivers, the Porter Valley, I have already alluded to, and the River Sheaf. They both link in with source is in Hallam, in the Hallam constituency, and by the time you reach the eastern edge of the Ecclesall ward you are approaching the city, those rivers have gone, they still will be underground but the valleys have gone, so that physical link disappears at that point.

There is the same continuity, I would argue, of topography. The watershed and the valley sides start in Hallam and they continue on into the city, so the shape of the land lends itself to seeing this area as a continuous linked physical and cultural landscape. It peters out at the end of the Ecclesall ward.

As a geographer I consider that to be particularly important. I look at the geography, the landscape, the social and the physical and the topography.

Thirdly, communications. As above, really, as I have just said, there are two main A roads running through the Ecclesall ward, that is the A625 and the A621. They run east and west and link Ecclesall to the Hallam constituency and on, of course, into town. Flows of traffic and people naturally move out from Ecclesall west to the country, linking those two areas. The bus routes, the density of the bus routes does the same, they follow that same pattern and they finish in the Dore ward on the outskirts of that particular ward there.

So those are my three reasons. I wrote these last night and I am thinking, “am I clutching at straws here, with some of these.” and I reviewed it to myself. I thought, “No, no.” As I say, being a geographer I do consider those to be part of the cultural landscape and I can define it as such and I do see those links between those two wards, and I do not see those links between Ecclesall ward and the area towards the city.

Of course, we do appreciate that numbers have to change. Trying to just expand that now, looking at the slightly wider picture, I would argue that an alternative to be to exchange the Ecclesall plans for the Beauchief Greenhill ward. I do not know if you want to look at those on that map there. So that is the proposal, is it not?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

MR MAY: Yes. The previous boundaries all show that Beauchief and Greenhill ward are in an existing ward that goes towards the city. I am just suggesting why might it be better to, as it were, swap Ecclesall and the Beauchief ward? Well, Beauchief and Greenhill, as a community, has got far more in common with the central area than it has with Ecclesall. If you know anything about the social make up of those areas, you will appreciate that. It has got far less in common with Dore and Totley than has Ecclesall, so when we are looking at linking, either Ecclesall with Dore and Totley or Beauchief and Greenhill, I would argue that Ecclesall has a lot more in common with the Totley and Hallam area than has the Beauchief.

Secondly, the main A61, they have got their own main communication running through that ward, linking it into the city centre, so it has its own main artery going into the city.

Thirdly, geographically, again it is not linked to Dore and Totley in the same way as is Ecclesall, from topography and so on, except for the River Sheaf, which does form the boundary between that ward and Ecclesall for some of the distance.

Fourthly, the existing constituency map, as I mentioned earlier, shows that it is currently part of a city centre ward, so there would be no change if it stayed in that constituency rather than leaving it and going into the Hallam constituency. It could also revert to include its existing Woodthorpe ward, which is in the north east of that area, which the proposed plan takes it out of. Yeah, it takes it out, whereas I am suggesting that it could go back in and then that ward and that parliamentary boundary would stay essentially as it is now; you do not have to mess about with it.

I said I was speaking on behalf of the Forum and we had a talk in the Forum and obviously there is a range of views. I would say that certainly the majority would favour the sort of things that I am saying, but I do appreciate and have to say that there were some people who liked this plan we see in front of you but they were in the minority.

I have just got one little quote to finish with, from somebody from the ward who was supporting the proposals. She said, "I am sick of living somewhere with inner city pollution, traffic and other problems, but being seen as part of the rich posh area." I am not too sure what that was meaning, but I mean, there is this feeling about Ecclesall seeing itself as different and seeing itself as socially - be careful what I say here - people do consider it to be a posh area full of posh people, so I would not want that to be part of what we are talking about now. I see it as geographically a link with those two constituencies, those two ward boundaries, rather. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr May. Any points of clarification that anybody would like from Mr May? (No response) Mr May, thank you very much indeed.

MR MAY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sir, as you are return to your seat, I will mention two things, if I may. First of all, can I just say it was really refreshing to hear you give a balanced view based on the communications you have obviously had back in your ward. I thought that was great because you were saying this was not a unanimous view actually, this was conversation, but on balance, so I thought that was good.

Then I will say the same as I have said to everybody else who has come in. There is only one must in the legislation and that is the electoral quota. We cannot fiddle around with that, it is fixed, we have got to come up with a solution that fits the numbers, but all of the other things we have to have regard to, and it is great to have people like you coming along to the hearing to say what it means locally, because we are not from Sheffield, so that is the whole point of these hearings. But the consultation is open until 5 December, so anything that anybody wants to submit up until 5 December through the website, details of which are available on the notice board on the way out, I would encourage people to make those submissions. The fact that you have come along today highlights what is going on in Ecclesall, so Collette and I can make sure that we have regard to that.

I also enjoyed the fact that you had given some thought to, well, if we do what you would like us to do with Ecclesall there is a knock-on effect and that is one of the biggest challenges for us. We can fix any area in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, treated in isolation, but there is a ripple effect and that is part of the challenge that we have got. So it is simply a reminder to you and to your Forum back in Ecclesall that 5 December is the deadline, and if you have any other thoughts or anything else you would like us to think about take the opportunity, through the website to let us know and we can do that in the New Year. Thanks very much indeed.

My next speaker is scheduled to come at 10 o'clock, so I will adjourn until just before 10 o'clock. Thanks very much.

After a short break

Time noted: 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, after that short adjournment, everybody, we are carrying on with day two of the Boundary Commission for England's hearings in Sheffield. My next speaker is Clive Betts, MP for Sheffield South East. I think we have got that right. Mr Betts, I am addressing you now because everybody else in the room has heard what I have got to say. I make no apology for repeating myself on their regard. My name is John Feavoyour. I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility, together with my colleague, Assistant Commissioner Collette Rawnsley, who is also in the room today, to listen to all the representations made for the Yorkshire and the Humber region, and then in due course to consider those and everything that comes through the website into the Boundary Commission or otherwise into the consultation period, up until 5 December, which is when consultation closes, to see whether we need to make representations to Commission as to whether the initial proposals need to be changed or amended in any way and, if so, what. In that regard, everything that is said at these hearings is recorded, so the video is running, and when I call you forward in just a moment, I would like you to start by just reminding us who you are and then tell us what it is that you would like us to hear. So in your own time, Sir, thank you.

MR BETTS: (MP for Sheffield South East) Assistant Commissioner, Commissioner, thank you very much for inviting me today. I am Clive Betts and I am Member of Parliament for Sheffield South East. I want to talk today specifically about the proposal to include Mosborough and Beighton wards in the Rother Valley constituency, and then more widely about the implications for Sheffield as a whole, because I think there are some issues raised in that particular proposal that have wider implications.

I looked at the criteria the Boundary Commission use when drawing up constituencies. I have to say when I looked at the proposal to create this new Rother Valley seat with Mosborough and Beighton in it, I could not see how any of the criteria applied to that proposal.

Now, we know that it is a very difficult job for the Commission because of the constraints upon you. One of the things that people tend to look at is the local authority area, the city, in this case, in which they live. Well, of course, the new Rother Valley seat does not have any regard to that at all, it takes two wards from Sheffield and a number of wards from Rotherham, puts them into a seat called Rother Valley. The majority of the electorate is in the Rotherham borough area, and by far the overwhelming amount of the geography of that seat, the area, is in Rotherham as well.

So people feel no affinity, no attachment, no community of interest with this constituency because of that essential local authority division, which I will come back to in a minute.

Secondly, community of interest. Sometimes yes, you can get wards in different local authority areas where there is a community of interest between them. In this case there is none. The children do not go to the same schools, people do not shop in the same shops. There is nothing that connects those communities together, either now or historically.

What, however, the proposal does do is to break up some very real connections in community of interests. Just one example, the Hackenthorpe Estate, which is divided between the Beighton and Birley wards, currently in the same constituency. People on that estate do shop at the same shops, they do have their children both at the same primary and the same secondary schools, they have got the same local tenants and residents association; they are a community. They happen to be in two different wards. In future, according to this proposal, they will be in two different constituencies.

What actually is stranger, of course, is that some people in the current Birley ward - sorry, the Birley ward as was in 2015, the one that the Commission has based its proposals on, according to its requirements - now have moved across under the Sheffield local authority boundary review to the Beighton ward. So you are going to have to have people who are in the Beighton ward as far as they understand it, but they are going to be in the Beighton ward in the future with some residents of the old Beighton ward who have gone to Rother Valley, way over to the east, and some who are going to be with the old Birley ward that have gone westwards towards the new South Sheffield constituency. That splits a community up in a most undesirable way.

So there are not any community ties between the Beighton and Mosborough wards and the rest of Rother Valley. There are real ties with Birley and Woodhouse wards historically the local community college, the Peaks College, serves the whole of that area, for example, so very real ties there.

We know that you cannot, of course, when you are reducing MPs from 650 to 600, take, you know, an exact account of existing boundaries, but Mosborough and Beighton, since they came to Sheffield - they used to be in Derbyshire until 1967 - and when they came to Sheffield at that time the next parliamentary boundary review in 1974 saw them come into what was then Sheffield Attercliffe. Well, actually it is almost the same constituency now, Sheffield South East. They have been in that constituency for 42 years, along with the Birley wards, the Woodhouse wards, the Darnall wards. Historically, that is where their connection is, so for the first time in 42 years that connection will be broken.

Just two other examples. You mention in your comments about the Hallam constituency, Hallam and Stocksbridge, being geographically large. I measured it. It is 22 miles on my Google map - I do not think I am allowed to advertise on this occasion - 22 miles from Dore to Cawthorne. It is equally 22 miles from Mosborough to Maltby. All right, it is east to west rather north to south, but it is still the same 22 miles. Geographically this distance is also unacceptable.

Finally, I also note in the Boundary Commission - I think it is quite an important point - you say, as far as possible and it ought to be possible as far as I am concerned, you do not have constituencies which contain detached parts. Well, actually Mosborough and Beighton are detached from the rest of Rother Valley. Go and have a look. You cannot drive from Mosborough or Beighton across directly through the new constituency into the rest of Rother Valley. If you go to the north, you have to go at least through the new Rotherham constituency, and actually, if you are technically accurate, because the boundary between Beighton and Woodhouse wards goes down the middle of the A57, you actually have to drive through Sheffield, the new Sheffield East constituency as well, through two constituencies to get to the other side of the new Rother Valley constituency.

If you go to the south, you do not really have to go through another constituency, you go through another district, another county and another region. These two parts are not joined up. The reason is there is a great big country park in the middle, which I think might well be termed a special geographical consideration, a country park with a lake. That divides Mosborough and Beighton from the rest of Rother Valley.

So it is no surprise that it is not merely me as the MP or the local councillors who are opposing this, the community just does not see the sense of it. We have been collecting petitions, not just me but actually community groups have been out collecting signatures, and everyone says "This isn't right, we are not part of Rother Valley, we have no connection with Rother Valley. We want to be in Sheffield." We have already got over 2,150 signatures on a petition. That is an awful lot of people on a petition saying "This constituency is not really, it doesn't work, it is not where we belong." And we are still collecting them. We have a lot of letters in from community groups who have already indicated to us, saying "This proposal is not right."

So what do we do about it? Well, the problem is, Assistant Commissioner, that in Sheffield you cannot address these problems of removing community ties and creating constituencies which are really artificial without splitting wards. I have seen the proposals from both the Lib Dems and the Conservatives. The Lib Dems just split one ward. I think that is a bit of tokenism really because it does not address the fundamental problems of Rother Valley, which I have addressed. The Conservatives do actually. I am not saying I agree with their proposal in entirety, and I will say a little bit more about that in a minute if I could, but what they do is to recognise that you can make sense of Sheffield with five seats in the city with maybe marginal changes, I know

they proposed Stocksbridge going to the north, five seats in the city as long as you are prepared to split wards. Then you can deal with the problem of this new Rother Valley seat and you can put Beighton add Mosborough into a wholly Sheffield seat as the petition requests.

Now, I note in the Commission's criteria it says that you want to use wards as a building block, and that is the position that you start off from, because they have, they are indicative areas, as your wording says, which have a broad community of interest and any division of these units between constituencies would likely to break local ties. I think it is not quite as certain as that in Sheffield's case because the wards are so big. You know, wards are more than one community; there are actually a number of communities in a ward, so you can actually divide them if you do it properly in a sensible way.

I would also argue Sheffield is an atypical case. Indeed, it may be a unique case, where because you are actually using the 2015 local authority wards, you are actually, if you divide them you are dividing wards that no longer exist. You know, the local authority Boundary Commission has already changed these wards and changed the way communities relate to each other, so you are not actually really undermining a community of interest by, in principle, looking, if you do it correctly, to split wards in that way.

You say that, you know, problems may be created for local parties and returning officers but they are going to have the problems anyway because whether you build constituencies from the 2015 wards or splits in the 2015 wards, there is not going to be a direct relationship any more between the new constituencies and the new wards that were drawn up for the city council in 2016. You are going to have that disparity anyway whatever you do. So that is not the fundamental objection.

What you do say, however, is that you can split wards providing you can make a case that you are doing the splits in order to ensure that community ties are kept, and that, I think, you know, where a whole ward option, as you say, in an area will significantly cut across local ties.

I think I have shown in the Mosborough and Beighton case whole ward options for the city do cut across those ties and I think people can demonstrate similarly in other parts of the city. I think there is a very good case for splitting wards because the whole ward option does split ties. It builds artificial constituencies because you get the big wards in Sheffield and you try to find some smaller wards outside to tack on to the Sheffield seat to make the numbers up, basically.

You also can split wards where a whole ward solution will create a domino effect. Well, I think it does. Yeah, you virtually change every single constituency in Sheffield and it is unnecessary, it really is.

I was looking at the Conservative proposal again and they did an analysis by splitting wards how you could retain a greater percentage of people in their existing constituency. That, I think, actually, is a useful piece of work that they have done to identify that actually the domino effect is there with the proposal from the Commission. You can avoid some of it, you cannot avoid everything because there will be some changes, you can avoid a substantial amount of that if you actually go for a split ward solution.

Now, how do you split the wards, of course, is the great challenge. I see the Commission is saying, you know, "split as few wards as possible." Well, that is sensible. You know, obviously we want to get the best community split.

Assistant Commissioner, I have come up with two ideas. I have not put them before you today but I am happy to send them to you. At this stage, we are still looking at them from a wider Labour Party point of view. One of which just works with the Sheffield wards alone and that involves three splits. I think the Conservative proposal which takes Stocksbridge out has three splits as well. I do not think you can really do it with much less than three. We can come up with a two split solution, but that means moving Stocksbridge out and one ward from Rotherham in, which might cause some difficulty, so I think it is a better community connection than the proposals the Commission has so far come up with.

I think you have got to split at least two, maybe three wards to get a solution. What I will contend very strongly indeed is that splitting those wards does not really break up communities because the wards themselves no longer exist for the most part. It does provide a much better solution for Sheffield, where people are in a constituency which they understand is part of their city and people relate to cities in the end more than anything else. People know the district, the estate where they live in; they know the city which they live in; they do not necessarily know the ward, particularly when they have all changed recently.

So I think actually as long as you can keep those districts together and keep constituencies within cities, that is actually a more powerful issue of local connection.

So, how should we do it? What the Labour party will do, and I can speak on behalf of the Labour party more widely now, they are going to look at the two ideas I put forward which I will send to you. They are going to look at the Conservative proposals, because we are trying not to be narrowly party political, we think the Conservatives have tried to address the problems. Whether they have got it absolutely right, we are not sure. We will come back to you with something within the course of your consultation period to try and address the very real problems that I think I have identified today.

Coming back to it, Mosborough and Beighton do not belong in Rother Valley. Over two thousand people and counting and rising, I have got the petition here today, you know, these are not Labour party people, many people collecting the petitions have not been Labour party people, they are people who think about their community and want to remain in a Sheffield seat and community groups are going to come forward with similar proposals. I hope, Assistant Commissioner, that in the further work that you are doing and your revised proposals, which hopefully we will see in due course, you can take that particular problem in Beighton and Mosborough, but I think you have to do so in part of a wider solution for Sheffield, five seats for the city, but having a few split wards to achieve it. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Betts, thank you very much. Just before you just step away from the ---

MR BETTS: Of course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: --- can I just check with anybody else in the room, is there any points of clarity in relation to what the MP has mentioned today, anybody like to just check? (No response) No. You have obviously got that across very well. Thank you very much indeed.

MR BETTS: Assistant Commissioner, thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As you return to seat, Sir, you mentioned a couple of things; I simply play them back. You mentioned that you are going to come up with some proposals. I remind you the consultation closes on 5 December. We will look forward to receiving those in due course, and no doubt you will be making representations about the size of the petition as well, because, again, it is precisely why we are here, to hear from local people as to what does not make sense for them. I really do encourage you to come with alternatives because if we get a consistency amongst different parties represented here about what those alternatives look like and they fit the rules, I am sure that Collette and I will have great difficulty doing other than what that looks like.

MR BETTS: (Inaudible)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. You are also quite right to identify the ripple effect; that is a big problem that we have got to try and manage. Thanks very much.

We have another speaker scheduled for 10.20 so I will stand down for 15 minutes to allow him to arrive. Thanks very much.

After a short break

Time noted: 10.20 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, everybody to the resumption of Day Two of the Boundary Commission for England's hearings in Sheffield. The next speaker on my list is Mr Robert Murphy. Mr Murphy, good morning to you. I am only talking to you directly because everybody else in the room has heard what I have got to say, but I make no apology for repeating it; it is important that you know.

So my name is John Feavours, I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. It is my responsibility, together with my colleague, Collette Rawnsley, Assistant Commissioner, to listen to all of the representations made at the hearings for Yorkshire and the Humber region, Leeds last week, Sheffield, Northallerton this week, and Hull next week. And also to look at all the representations that are made to the Boundary Commission through its website, right up to its deadline at the end of the consultation period, which is 5 December.

So what we have been doing is we have been recording proceedings throughout, which means that a verbatim record of everything that is said and who said it will go on to the website in due course, which means that anybody else who is interested can see what you have said and what other people have said and in fact comment on that if they wish to do so. That is the appropriate time to comment on it, not today. The only question I will be putting at the end is just checking with everybody else if they need you to clarify anything that you have said.

So because we are going on record, when you come up in a moment I will ask to give your name and address and then tell us what it is that you want us to hear. In your own time, could you come up to the lectern, please? As I say, name and address and then off you go. Thank you.

CLLR MURPHY: My name is Rob Murphy. I live at 57 Tyzack Road., that is S8 0GL. First of all, I am also a member of Sheffield City Council and a former councillor for Central ward, which is now City ward, and I am a councillor in City ward at the moment.

The main thing I have come to talk to you today about is Central constituency and how it affects the surrounding constituencies.

Generally, I think it is a good proposal. There are definitely some improvements on the previous Sheffield Central. I think moving the Manor Castle ward out of Sheffield Central is a good idea, and there are some strong geographical boundaries between Manor Castle and the rest of the Sheffield Central constituency. There are railway lines, roads, a river, and also quite a big hill, Park Hill, between Manor and the rest of the Sheffield Central.

I think there is a strong boundary to the north and east of Central ward, as it was, and that makes sense for a boundary for the future. I think Crookes has got a lot of links with Sheffield Central as it is at the moment, so there are strong links between Crookes and Walkley and the communities there and Crookes and Broomhill, especially as there is quite a large student contingent of people who live in Crookes, so I think that is a good move to bring Crookes into Sheffield Central and West as it will be called.

The main objection that we have is the removal of Nether Edge. I think if you look at the map it looks strange. I understand why you have done it, to make the figures add up, but I think really that is the main problem we have with the current proposals.

I have come to suggest a possible solution for you today, which I hope you will be happy to hear, in basically moving Ecclesall back into the Hallam constituency, Nether Edge back into the Central constituency, and Beauchief and Greenhill back into the Sheffield Heeley constituency, or Ecclesall into Hallam and Stocksbridge, Nether Edge into Central and West, and Beauchief and Greenhill into Sheffield South.

Obviously the numbers do not quite add up if you do it in that way, but Sheffield South would be okay, the numbers still fit. Sheffield City and West would be slightly down, and Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge would be slightly up. That could be made into the size that you want by moving one polling district between Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge into Sheffield City and West.

So I have got one proposal for a possibility of moving one polling district in and another proposal for moving two polling districts in, which I think is probably the better one because it keeps the community links in that area.

The proposal would be to move the Banner Cross polling district from Ecclesall, which is, I believe, LB; it has 1,143 electors, so that would even the numbers up enough to pass your test of equity, if you like. There are strong links going back a long, long time in Banner Cross. The actual Banner Cross itself is in Nether Edge ward. It is broken down now; there is not much of it left. There is a Banner Cross Hall, which is also in Nether Edge ward. That is formally an Elizabethan mansion. It has now been rebuilt in the 19th century, but it is quite a good building and it is headquarters of Henry Boot PLC at the moment. Both of those are in Nether Edge ward.

On the other side, in Ecclesall ward, you have Banner Cross Methodist Church. You have the actual Banner Cross polling district, as it is labelled, and you have the Banner Cross shopping district. So if you go onto the website of the Banner Cross neighbourhood group, you will see that it says on the front page that the area is split between Nether Edge ward and Ecclesall ward. I believe it would be a good proposal to bring those two parts of Banner Cross together and make more of a community rather than splitting it.

If you look on the map, there is also a polling district, LD, I think it is called Greystones, which stretches down to Rustlings Road. Now, if you included that as well in Sheffield Central and West, then it makes more sense as a community, because Banner Cross polling district on its own is quite small and it does not stretch all the way down Ecclesall road towards Rustlings Road and Endcliffe Park. If you included the LD, I think it is, then you would have a more cohesive community around the park, Endcliffe Park, sorry. Also there are shared community facilities, such as the rest of the Banner Cross shopping centre, Ecclesall road, which is quite a big shopping area. There is also Hunter's Bar School, which is on the corner at Hunter's Bar by the roundabout. I have mentioned Endcliffe Park. There are also strong transport connections into the centre of town and the rest of Sheffield Central constituency.

That is our main proposal to bring either Banner Cross polling district itself, just to make the numbers add up, that is the minimum of changes for to get past your numbers, or another proposal to bring LD and LB, Banner Cross plus Greystones, into Sheffield Central and West, which would even up the numbers. I think it works out about 74,000 then in Sheffield Central and West and 74,000 roughly in Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge, so the numbers would be a lot closer and I think at the end of the day that is what you are trying to get it as close as possible. That is the proposal. That is the proposal there.

Just to talk about bringing Nether Edge back into Central constituency, my ward of Central ward ran up to a road called Chippinghouse Road, which was the boundary between Sheffield Central ward and Sheffield Nether Edge ward. Chippinghouse road is just a residential road, there is no reason why there should be a boundary there, and to anyone in that community it is not a boundary.

It was often quite difficult working up to that road and telling people that the other side of that road, just that they were not represented by us, they were represented by somebody else. I think that is not something that we are looking for, we are trying to keep communities together rather than splitting them on lines that nobody really understands why it is there. I think moving Nether Edge into Sheffield South has the problem of moving it across Abbeydale Road, which is a main road. There is also a railway line down there. It is the basically the bottom of Sheaf Valley and it is not a place where people go. People do not generally walk down one side of the valley and up the other side, they walk into the valley and go one way or the other. I do not think Nether Edge really fits in Sheffield South.

I would actually live in the Sheffield South constituency, as it was, and not far, in Graves Park ward it is, which is not far from Beauchief and Greenhill, and I think the people of Beauchief and Greenhill see themselves as part of Sheffield Heeley constituency. There main shopping centre would be Woodseats, so it is an area where transport links go down Chesterfield Road, and I think Beauchief and Greenhill definitely sits better in Sheffield South.

I mean, at the end of the day, if you just look at the map, the map looks a bit strange and it could be changed quite simply. It is asking for splitting up of one ward, but it is not a major split and I think there are community arguments and geographical arguments for doing that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you.

CLLR MURPHY: Thanks very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Murphy, thanks very much. Can I just check with anybody, any points of clarification that anybody needs from anything Mr Murphy has said? (No Response) No. Mr Murphy, thank you very much indeed.

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As you return back to your seat, I will just say a couple of other things. First of all, to remind everybody that the consultation period is open until 5 December. So, whilst we are very interested in people coming along today and it is highlighted for Collette and myself where people want us to go give further thought to things, that is great, but 5 December is the deadline, so any time between now and then go through the website, let us know what your proposals are, to make sure we know what you are thinking.

The other thing I am minded to say, prompted by something you said, Mr Murphy, you talked about your word was “equity”, to be clear, the electoral quota that we are required to work to is 74,769 registered electors per constituency, but the legislation allows us to go up or down from that by 5%. There is nothing in the legislation or in our guidelines that says we are trying to get everybody the same. We are trying to get everybody within the plus or minus 5%, but we are not exercised by getting it as close to the electoral quota as we can. So as long as it is within the boundaries and we are complying so far as we can with all the rules, that is fine, we then do not have to try and fine tune it to get it right in the middle, if that makes sense. Go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just a second. We will just put this on the record so we capture it. We will give you the microphone.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, I will just say that the closer you are to the ideal, the less chance there is of having to change it next time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is a fact and I recognise that. I am simply making the point that we are not required to get it to do that.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Absolutely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is not part of our thinking. Thanks.

People who have been here before will know that whenever we have a gap in the booked speakers, I have been taking an adjournment. I will be adjourning now for a morning break until 11 anyway, so I am going to do that and I will come back at 11. My next booked speaker is not until 2 o'clock, so again I will repeat what I said yesterday: I think it is unreasonable if somebody happens to come along to the hearing on spec and wants to speak, for them to wait for longer than an hour. I will keep coming back on the hour just to see if anybody is here and if they are I will hear from them at that point. I am going to stop now until 11. I will come back at 11. If there is nobody here, I will tell you now that I am going to adjourn until 12, and at 12 if there is nobody here I am going to adjourn until 1, and I will take a break between 1 and 2. I will not put all that on the record, I will simply come in and check with staff and if there is nobody here I am not going to turn this thing on and turn all the paraphernalia on just to tell you that because you all know as I have just told you.

If there is somebody here, we will hear from them at those times, so you will not miss anything. I will not start anything beforehand if somebody turns up in between because I know there are observers here who want to hear what is being said. So we are stopping now. Come back at 11, check, 12, check, lunch between 1 and 2.

Thanks very much.

After a break

Time noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, everybody, welcome back to the Boundary Commission for England's hearing in Sheffield, day two. Mr Hodson, Mr Whitehouse, welcome particularly to you two. I have some things to say by way of introduction which everybody else has heard, so I am really talking to you two.

My name is John Feavour. I am an Assistant Commissioner with the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility, together with my colleague, Collette Rawnsley, also an Assistant Commissioner, to consider all of the representations made here today, as well as what we heard in Leeds last week, we are in Northallerton later this week, and Hull on Monday next week, Monday and Tuesday, alongside all of the written representations that come in through the website. The consultation period is open until 5 December, so we will consider everything that comes into us up until that point.

All of the representations, whether written or oral, today, will end up on the Commission's website, so we are recording everything today; the guys at the back are videoing what is going on. So, in a moment, when I call you up in turn, I will ask you to come up to the lectern here, tell us what your name is, tell us where you live and then tell us what you need us to hear. In due course that will all be transcribed and that will go on the website alongside everything else. Without any further ado, Mr Hodson, would you like to come up? Thank you very much.

MR HODSON: Right. I assume this is live, is it?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes it is, Sir, carry on.

MR HODSON: Okay, all right. My name is Mike Hodson and I am secretary of Carterknowle and Millhouses Community Group in South West Sheffield.

The recent proposals for boundary changes to constituencies in Sheffield whereby the numbers of constituencies are reduced from 65 will mean a radical shakeup in nearly all areas of Sheffield, but particularly in our area, the south west.

Many people in the south west are going to be very unhappy with these proposals. They seem to bear little relation to people's sense of community and the areas within which they live, work and conduct their social activities. They also take no account of topography or other geographical features, thus the current Sheffield Hallam constituency becomes Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge, covering an enormous area stretching from Totley in the extreme south to Hoyland and Breighton in the far north, a distance of some 26 miles over about six major river valleys, with connections to three separate urban centres - Sheffield, Barnsley and Wakefield. This is surely a ridiculous anomaly.

There is a more serious anomaly though, locally. If the current proposals are followed through, this will have the bizarre result that our Millhouses area, half of our community area, will be in Ecclesall ward and will become part of the new Sheffield Central and West constituency, while the other half of our area, the Carterknowle area, will go in Nether Edge ward into a new Sheffield South constituency, so splitting our ward in half effectively.

This cuts completely across the new ward boundaries adopted for the last council election, which brought our two areas, Millhouses and Carterknowle, together into the same ward as part of the current Hallam constituency. So what one Boundary Commission has put together, another Boundary Commission proceeds to tear asunder, to be a bit biblical about it.

The reason for this anomaly is that you, the parliamentary Boundary Commission are apparently bound by law to use the old ward boundaries from pre-2016, the boundaries

which the local government's Boundary's Commission, a separate body, of course, has just changed, and changed for the better I might add.

We do understand that Parliament is concerned to reduce the numbers of MPs and to equalise the size of constituencies, but Parliament presumably should also want to make sense and this proposal does not make sense; it is a nonsense and an absurdity. I think it will bring the work of the Commission and the important principle of parliamentary representation, or several principles, into ridicule, and I hope that the next proposals from the parliamentary Boundary Commission will remedy some of these idiocies. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Hodson, thank you very much. Anybody got any questions of clarification that they want Mr Hodson to just deal with? (No response) No? Mr Hodson, thank you very much indeed.

MR HODSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I have Mr Whitehouse, please? Sir, as before, if you give your name and address for me and then, in your own time, off you go.

MR WHITEHOUSE: Good afternoon. My name is Alan Whitehouse. I live at flat 6, 94 Tapton Crescent Road, Sheffield, S10.

A little background. I used to be on the planning board here for the 13 years I was a councillor, so I have an overview of Sheffield which is not unique but is important.

The first question that I was asking myself is "What is happening to Hillsborough in this proposal." Hillsborough has been, for a number of years, vulnerable economically and it needs to be held up and revived. I cannot see how, if Hillsborough is split into two constituencies, two MPs could be there to support it in Parliament and to propose things which need to be done.

My primary concern is Hillsborough. When I looked at that what I concluded was that the current proposals are unworkable. Then I was looking at possibly the Hallam constituency as proposed and, as this gentleman has just pointed out, 26 miles is a long way, it is almost as big as the Hope Valley ward which is next door, where there is mostly sheep. I want to put in your mind the idea that what we should have is sort of a radial thing, so it is clear for the city centre that everything radiates out. That is also simulated by the bus companies; they run radial routes across, forward and back across the city. What we do not have is basically a radial model for Hillsborough, which should, when you see that it should go out. I have actually come up with some ideas which I clearly will email in, but what I am proposing is that the --- You say that it is the old wards, so I have got the old wards here. I would expect there to be a Hillsborough

constituency made up of Stocksbridge, Stannington, West Ecclesfield, Southey and Hillsborough itself, and then taking in some of Walkley, particularly the lower end in the valley. That seems to me a coherent thing and fits in with this sort of, this model.

Then obviously I have other ideas about the city centre which, as you know, because of the demographics, particularly the students, and I am not sure if you have got the latest information or whether it is in fact relevant, we have a lot of foreign students and I do not know whether they are being counted in the numbers, but there is certainly a movement more of students going towards the city centre.

I used to be a councillor for Broomhill, which had a lot of students, student, accommodation, which it still has, but students now are going to terraced houses, initially, but in the last five years they are now moving into purpose-built accommodation. So there is a change there and I do not know whether this Commission is picking that up.

I have proposals to change the, what is now the Hallam constituency, that would be to cover Fullwood, half of Ecclesfield, would cover Nether Edge, Beauchief, Greenhill and some of Gleadless in there and some other changes. They are my suggestions at this point. I have nothing else to say, Chair, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Whitehouse, thank you very much. Does anybody want to ask for any clarification of anything Mr Whitehouse has said?

MR HARSTON: Hello, it is Jonathan Harston. You mentioned Hillsborough being split between two MPs, do you mean the current Hillsborough and Brightside constituency?

MR WHITEHOUSE: Yes, the proposal. It needs to be a coherent place, because, as I say, it is vulnerable at the moment, it has problems with competition with the city centre, but it has Sheffield Wednesday football ground, it has got some good places and shops and it needs a development, and it really needs a good MP standing there and promoting it, and you cannot have it split over two constituencies.

MR HARSTON: Okay.

MR WHITEHOUSE: That is my main point, Chair.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any other points of clarification? (No response) Mr Whitehouse, thank you very much.

MR WHITEHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is where everybody else in the room goes, "Oh, we know what he is going to say now," but I am and I make no apology for

doing it. For both of you, we are very interested that you are going to let us have your ideas by email. Please do that. I repeat what I said earlier, the consultation period is open until 5 December, so everything that we get up until that point will go into the consideration that Collette Rawnsley and I have to have regard to.

One of you made reference to numbers of students and what have you. The numbers that we must use, because it is in the primary legislation, is the electoral quota, and this is the number which is about 74,000. I have forgotten the exact number now. Hang on, it is 74,769, plus or minus 5%, which is 71,031 up to 78,507. Now, you can petition Collette and I as much as you like, those numbers are fixed and they cannot change. Okay, so that is an absolute. How we get there involves a number of other things that we have to have regard to. So, if you like, the number is the “must” bit. The “have regard to” started off by saying, when the initial proposals were put together, was very much along the lines of “we will try very hard not to break ward boundaries.

Now we know what has happened here in Sheffield and you have made reference to it, we are aware of that, but the way in which the legislation is couched we are obliged to consider the boundaries here as they were before the most recent local government review. Now, you can have your views on that and I can have my views on it as well, but it does not make any difference. So the initial proposals, which incidentally I am not wedded to in any more way than any other proposals, were designed around meeting the electoral quota, and so far as possible, trying to come up with a solution that did not split wards. I am not going to tell you know what Collette and I are going to recommend the Commission because, frankly, I do not know yet until we have heard all of the material, so we need to do that before we start, you know, pontificating on where we might go.

The reason that I am reiterating this to you both now is that whilst on the one hand I am encouraging you to use the portal through the website to let us know of any further thoughts that you have got, please have in mind the things that I have just said to you. There is no point whatsoever in suggesting something that does not meet the numbers thing, because I just cannot do it, but if you have in mind some other things that you have mentioned today and you wish to expand on those, then we are very, very keen to hear that. I hope that makes sense, and, as I say, that is open until 5 December. Thank you very much indeed.

Our next speaker is also in the room and he is due to start at 3 o'clock. We are in your hands, Mr Harston. You are invited to do so if you are happy to do so. I think you probably know the routine by now.

MR HARSTON: Hello. My name is Jonathan Harston. I am currently staying at 70 Camm Street, Sheffield, S6 3TL. Communication can be made with me there. I am currently a town councillor in Whitby and for 11 years I was a city councillor here in Sheffield. My family is originally from Whitby and I have recently moved back there, but

I found it more convenient to come here to address the Commission -- excuse me, it is a long time since I have stood at the front and given a presentation on anything.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will try not to be too scary for you.

MR HARSTON: Yeah.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And, frankly, this is not about making you feel nervous, this is about ---

MR HARSTON: Getting the information ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: --- really listening and trying to understand, Jonathan, what it is that you want to say to us. Now, let me just get you some water.

MR HARSTON: Yeah. I have made submissions to the last two parliamentary reviews, including the aborted review two years ago and to the last local council ward reviews in Sheffield. The slide going on the screen, when reviewing an area, it is best to start by seeing if the area can be split into sub-units that can be reviewed separately without adjustments having knock on effects into other areas. The natural sub-units for Yorkshire are the four county areas, however, of these, only Humberside is entitled to a close enough number of whole seats. To deal with this, in the aborted review the Commission proposed many seats crossing the North Yorkshire and Leeds boundary and these were universally disliked.

The current proposal of just the North Yorkshire area, by just removing two small pieces at the very southern tip near Knottingley, this is a much better option. Whitley ward is entirely south of the River Aire, which for much of it is length here forms a local authority boundary. Recently, when working near Kellingley Colliery, I had to keep reminding myself I was actually in North Yorkshire and not West Yorkshire, the boundary being less than half a mile away down the road. Brotherton is tied into the Castleford Knottingley area. If parts of North Yorkshire have to be trimmed off to balance numbers, this is the better option. This allows the review to treat Humberside as a single entity with exactly nine seats. I have no strong opinions on any specific options in Humberside.

The trimmed North Yorkshire allows the review to treat it as a single area with exactly eight seats, and North Yorkshire I will comment on two areas.

The Commission have proposed two seats in York, coterminal with the two current seats and also coterminal with the City of York council area. This is a very good model. While I have no opinion on how to arrange two seats within York, the city is entitled to 1.97 seats, which is close enough to allocate exactly two seats. It is so close to two

seats that to insist on an allocation of 1.97 would require split wards and overlapping council boundaries in this area for no good reason.

The next on, slide 3, please. Scarborough Borough Council is very slightly over quota to have one seat, and the current Scarborough and Whitby constituency is very slightly under quota for one seat. The proposal to add the single ward of Filey into the seat is the best option for this area. It keeps as much of the council area in a single seat with just the one southern ward left outside.

The next slide, please, slide 4. One bit I particularly want to support is keeping the whole of the Esk Valley in a single constituency. This is the former Whitby urban district and Whitby rural district. It has a distinct character and community of its own. It is isolated on all sides by moors to the landward side and sea to the other side. The whole valley looks towards Whitby for its focus and local facilities. I have seen proposals that slice bits out of the Esk Valley but they would break up the consistent whole that the Esk Valley forms.

Moving on to South and West Yorkshire, I support the current proposals that do not have the sorts of seats overlapping the West Yorkshire/North Yorkshire boundary that the aborted review proposed, with seats stretching from the centre of Leeds out into the North Yorkshire countryside. In South and West Yorkshire, I will just concentrate on the Sheffield area.

Sheffield has an entitlement to 5.1 seats. That is close enough to a whole number to build a justification to allocate exactly five seats entirely within Sheffield. It would result in five seats averaging 2% over quota. With careful work, all five would be within the required tight 5% quota requirement.

Sheffield has 28 wards, drawn up in 2004 and redrawn in 2013 with the knowledge and expectation that Sheffield would have 5.5 seats in a 650 seat Parliament. Unfortunately, Sheffield is now entitled to five seats and dividing 28 by 5 does not give whole numbers, so to do this wards would have to be split.

Sheffield, along with places like Leeds and Birmingham, has a particular characteristic of having very large wards. The Commission have taken this and drawn long straggly seats, overlapping into multiple adjoining authorities to include smaller wards, driven by the need to meet the required target. This is by choice rather than compulsion; the Commission have done this to avoid splitting wards. The larger a ward is, the less likely it will be a sub-multiple of an ideal constituency size. Conversely, the larger a ward is, the more likely that those wards will contain multiple communities rather than be one whole community that would be split if the ward was split.

I will show two examples from Sheffield from areas I used to represent on the council. Slide 5, please. The ward I used to represent, Walkley, has two clear areas: Walkley

itself to the west, and Netherthorpe Upperthorpe to the east, shown by the line across the map (Indicated.) Before 2004, these two areas were in two different wards. A small point of interest is that Walkley currently has the smallest occupied polling district in the entire country, polling district Z1, due to a block of flats being built on top of the old boundary. As long as Walkley and the Crookes part of Crookes and Crosspool end up in the same constituency, this anomaly will disappear.

Next slide, please. Moving to Crookes and Crosspool, this also has two clear communities in a single ward, Crookes itself to the east and Crosspool to the west. Before 2004, half of one of these communities, Crookes, was also in my ward of Walkley.

In addition to this, as pointed out yesterday, the quota requirement when drawing wards means that in some areas communities straddle ward boundaries. Bearing this in mind, it is possible to come up with many workable possibilities for five whole seats in Sheffield with a minimum of ward splits. The following slides are some proposals discussed on the Vote UK forum, a psephological discussion forum where there has been active discussion of boundary proposals over the last six months since the review started. The example models are ones that have been discussed on the forum.

Slide 7, please. Oh, is it possible to zoom in? Thank you. Slide 7 - five seats with only two ward splits proposed by user YL and Vote UK, an update of Dr Jordan's model in the aborted review. Broomhill split neatly into Broomhill itself at the north and Hunter's Bar to the south; Burngreave split neatly into Burngreave itself in the main body to the south and Shirecliffe to the north. This has the bonus of uniting the Shirecliffe area south of Herries Road, along with the rest of the community on the other side of Herries Road, which currently has a ward boundary running along it, which was forced, through the middle of the shopping area to make up numbers. These five seats would have electorates that vary from the quota of 1.3%, 0.3%, 3%, minus 5%, plus 2.4%, and the numbers are in the papers I will leave with you later.

The slide also shows an example of how the rest of South Yorkshire could be allocated, showing how Sheffield could be isolated and dealt with on its own and the rest of South Yorkshire filled in without domino effects running through them. The user YL described this map as demonstrating that it was possible to draw constituencies in South and West Yorkshire, minimising crossing council borders and minimising the split wards, the result being just the sole two split wards in Sheffield.

The next one, please. Discussion on the Forum queried if it was possible to at least get the Crosspool part of Crookes into Hallam and draw a seat similar to the pre-2010 seat. This slide shows how that could be done, again with only two ward splits, the previous Burngreave split and putting the Crosspool half of Crookes and Crosspool into Hallam and the Crookes half in Central. Half of Crookes itself did used to be in Central prior to 2010.

Next slide, please. Another method, we use three ward splits, as in this slide here. However, I think using three or more split wards is going too far when workable solutions can be made with two, or possibly one. Having five seats entirely within Sheffield would address the concerns raised at having seats crossing the city council boundary and the feeling this gives of areas being pushed out of Sheffield. I would support any model that built five seats entirely within Sheffield.

Next slide, please. Thank you. I will say a few words about the difference between the old wards and the new wards. In places, this has left tiny anomalous polling districts where an old ward has been used as a constituency boundary but the new ward has moved slightly. In some cases, such as the Walkley ZI district, it is just a matter of a few feet. I have looked at all these instances where this occurs, and, other than two points, I feel that the anomalous polling districts are large enough to be manageable. Considering the constituency boundaries are now to be reviewed every five years, it is acceptable to leave them tied to the old ward boundary until the next review in five years' time.

The two most extreme anomalies are on the Walkley/Crookes border, which is in the top left of that slide (indicated), but as long as Walkley and the Crookes end of Crookes are in the same constituency, they will vanish. There are two, however, that are along the proposed constituency boundaries that are slightly marginal and the Commission may feel it best supports community grouping and electoral administration to use the new ward boundary. One is along Seagrave Crescent, on the border between Birley and Richmond, which is the centre example here. (Indicated) The ward boundary has moved from behind the houses to in front of the houses, leaving half of Seagrave Crescent trapped between two boundaries.

The other example is on the border between Crookes and Broomhill where the boundary has similarly moved from one side of a block of houses to the other side, leaving the block between Ryegate Road and Tupton Crescent trapped between two boundaries. The Commission may find it justifiable in supporting community grouping and electoral administration to nominally split the old wards by following the new ward boundaries in these two specific cases. That is everything, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Harston, thank you very much indeed. Can I just ask people out there, any points of clarification that anybody wants to ask about what Mr Harston has said? Can I just bring the microphone to you, and I know we have heard from you before, but, for the record, just give us your name and then ask the point of clarification.

MR HODSON: Okay, Mike Hodson from Millhouses and Carterknowle Community Group. I am interested in this reference to the aborted review and perhaps you could explain a little bit about that.

MR HARSTON: That is the review that started - I would have to ask the Commissioner for clarification - in 2012, would have reported in 2013, but Parliament cancelled it, postponed the entire review, which restarted this February with the current review that we are in now.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am grateful to Mr Harston for being absolutely spot-on with his answer, which in truth really was mine to give, but he is quite right. When the legislation was first put into place, there was an expectation that there would have been a 2013 review reporting to Parliament, and for a number of reasons that review was abandoned, however a lot of the work had been done and that work will still be of interest to Collette Rawnsley and myself when we are considering what there is going forward, but, of course, I am more interested in hearing what you guys are saying locally because I think that is more up to date.

MR HODSON: Can I just follow that up then as a supplementary?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You can. Can I just check first of all, are there any other matters of clarification for Mr Harston? Tim?

MR BOWDEN: Sorry, Mr Harston, it was very clear but I just have one point of clarification which I think will be helpful, I think, for the Commissioners. Can I just clarify, is this one constituency? (Indicated)

MR HARSTON: No, the two colours are very slightly too close together.

MR BOWDEN: Okay.

MR HARSTON: That is a North West constituency, sort of vaguely Sheffield Hillsborough, and a sort of vaguely Sheffield Attercliffe. It is just that they touch each other in the railway station area, so ---

MR BOWDEN: I just wanted, for the record, to be clear that was two constituencies and not one.

MR HARSTON: Yes.

MR BOWDEN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Tim. Anything else? (No response) Mr Harston, thank you very much indeed. This actually is not a forum for questions and answers but I have got plenty of time so I am very happy to try and help you if I can. Could you let Mr Hodson have the microphone again? Go ahead, Sir.

MR HODSON: Right, I suppose my question refers back to my presentation in some respect. Had the review actually taken place when it was originally scheduled to take place, presumably then there would have been recommendations for parliamentary boundaries which then might have influenced the local government Boundary Commission in this proposal to change local government boundaries, because what has happened, as you will appreciate from what I was saying, is that because of the delay in the review the local government Boundary Commission went in one direction and you are busy heading off into the sunset in the opposite direction.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You would not necessarily expect me to comment on the implication in your remarks. No, the issue is this. I will let Mr Harston sit down because he has done his piece. I have to comply with the law that is in front of me now. There is an inherent problem with having reviews at different tiers at different times. I do not think it takes, you know, a genius, and I am not one, to work out that whichever one comes first will inevitably cause the subsequent one to have to scratch its head, if I can put it that way.

Collette and I will definitely have in mind this: whilst the initial proposals were put together trying very hard not to cut across wards, even recognising that those were the wards which are no longer relevant for local government matters, and having produced initial proposals which meet that requirement, it is still within the “must have regard to” area as opposed to the “must” area, so it is the electoral quota bit which we cannot change. This bit over here, my sense is this: if the Boundary Commission had put forward - I do not want to pre-judge where I am going further on down the line, so you will understand my nervousness but I think this is okay - if the Boundary Commission in its initial proposals had begun to divide existing wards, existing pre or post the local government review in Sheffield, my sense is that just opens a floodgate for proposals which could then roll out all over the place. So I actually think it is not unreasonable to come up with initial proposals that do not split wards.

Collette and I came here to Sheffield, and in fact we were in Leeds and we are in Northallerton later and then in Hull, not putting or not seeking to put a Commission’s view ahead that would split wards. What we have heard, and this will come as no surprise to you at all, particularly in Sheffield and particularly with reference to the fact that Sheffield has large wards, many commentators say, “In order to make this work and preserve community ties in the way in which we would like you to and in the way in which the guidance says you ought to, you need to split wards”. But that is a strong message coming from you to me, not from me to you, and I think that is right because it means that Collette and I can now go away and try and take account of what you have said and come up with some revised proposals that, so far as we can, meet that and take account of that. Does that make sense?

I do not need to defend the initial proposals; that is not what I am here to do. In fact, quite the contrary, I am delighted that the initial proposals have generated the kind of

responses that we have got because that then adds weight to the things that you and others have been saying. That is where we are at the moment. The only other thing to finish off with before we adjourn again, before any speakers, would be to say that you are all inviting us just to deal with Sheffield, and I get that. Mr Harston, you have generously given us some other thinking to do around the rest of South Yorkshire, and you will understand if I remind you that I have got to deal with the whole of North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the Humber, so we cannot only deal with any piece in isolation, we also have to deal with what we are calling the ripple effect.

Now, you can fix any bit of it to a local requirement but it will have a knock-on effect, and I am in no doubt at all that when we come to write our final report we will have to make comment as to how difficult that has been and there will undoubtedly be people who will be less than happy with what we come up with, but we will do our level best to try and take account of your comments. Sir, you had another question. This is Mr Hodson.

MR WHITEHOUSE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, Mr?

MR WHITEHOUSE: Whitehouse.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Whitehouse.

MR WHITEHOUSE: I will try and be gentle with you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You can be as gentle as you like.

MR WHITEHOUSE: You are in, let us face it, an invidious position. Would it be advisable and I am just looking at you, do not say anything, that people who are putting in an application for changes which will inevitably cross some boundaries in Sheffield, ward boundaries, present two versions of it, one with the current boundaries that are just agreed in 2015, and one with the ones as laid out by the Commission? You do not have to say anything.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: My answer is clear, actually, I know exactly what I need to say to you.

MR WHITEHOUSE: Okay, say it quick.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Which is this: we invite people to come up with counter-proposals. We will consider all of those counter proposals. What is also clear in our guidance, which is available on the website if you need to have a look at it,

is that any counter-proposals that are put forward which also take account of the knock on will inevitably carry more weight than those that are unable to do so. Now, that is not to say that we do not want to hear about those that do not deal with the ramifications for elsewhere, but, of course, if you are able to help us with what that might look like elsewhere, then it gives us a starter for ten; we have not got to do all the thinking ourselves. If there is anything that means I have to do less thinking that has got to be a good thing.

MR WHITEHOUSE: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are very welcome. Right, I think what we will do is, as some of you know, I have had a list of people and a sort of a time slot for everybody and the next speaker I have got scheduled is 4 o'clock. I have typically been adjourning for about an hour and I was going to stop at about 3.50 for a short time anyway. I am going to propose that I am going to come back at 3.50. If anybody else comes along in the meantime, I will hear them at 3.50. We then have speakers scheduled at 4 o'clock and 4.15, and unless I have anybody else come forward up until that point, my proposal probably would be to close the hearing at that point, unless, as I say, we have got a queue out of the door, in which case we are here until the queue goes away. Thank you very much indeed.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the reconvened Sheffield day two in relation to the Boundary Commission for England's proposals. I am just checking around the room Ms Mills, you are the only person who has not heard what I am going to say, so if they do not take any notice it is not because they have lost interest they have heard it all before, but it is important that you hear what I have got to say.

My name is John Feavvour. I am an Assistant Commissioner with the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility to Chair the hearings here in Sheffield, last week in Leeds, later in Northallerton and in Hull next week. Then also, with my fellow Assistant Commissioner, Collette Rawnsley, it is our responsibility to consider all of the representations that have been made at all of the hearings and all of the written representations that are made to the Boundary Commission through its website. Details are available and you may wish to have a look at those and make sure you have got a note of those on the way out. The consultation period runs until 5 December, so quite a long time. All of the records of everybody who contributes to the Commission will end up going online so that anybody else can have their say about what any of the counter proposals are, if that makes sense.

We start off with some initial proposals which have been put together by Boundary Commission staff. Assistant Commissioners have then been appointed to go and listen to what people think of those initial proposals. But I had no part in developing the initial proposals; I am not wedded to them any more than I am to any other proposals, subject to some details that I will remind you of perhaps after you have said whatever it is that you have got to say.

Because all the representations end up being transcribed and put on the website, we are recording those proceedings. So in a moment I am going to ask you to come up to the lectern here and do the same as everybody else has done and that is put your name and address on the record and then tell us what it is that you want us to hear. So in your own time, off you go.

MS MILLS: Okay. Shall I just say my name?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Name and address first please, yes.

MS MILLS: My name is Jo Mills at 141 Sandford Grove Road, Sheffield, S7 1RS.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS MILLS: Okay, I have got five points. My first point is to do with the proposed Sheffield South constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MS MILLS: That will stretch around the south of the city of Sheffield, not touching on the centre of Sheffield. Graves Park ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Hang on just a second, Jo, we are not quite getting you.

MS MILLS: Oh, dear.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There you go.

MS MILLS: Have I got to start again?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, start again. Deep breath.

MS MILLS: Jo Mills, 141 Sandford Grove Road, Sheffield, S7 1RS.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MS MILLS: Five points. The first one is to do with the new Sheffield South constituency proposed, which will cover Nether Edge, Graves Park, Gleadless, Arbourthorne, Birley and Manor Castle, skirting around the south of Sheffield, not touching on the city centre.

Now, Sheffield is a city that is all about valleys and its hills. It works like the spokes of a wheel. Public transport goes in and out of the city; it does not go around it. Where I live in Nether Edge, we connect to Sharrow and the centre of town and we connect along the Abbeydale Road, Chesterfield Road corridor. Looking at the map I can see that there probably would be a population that would stretch from the centre outwards like a fan, and I cannot see why that cannot happen for the whole of Sheffield, because the new boundaries are kind of like bits of doughnuts all over the place.

Point two. This is that constituencies should be based on actual populations, not of people who signed up to vote, because MPs have to represent everybody, including children and including the apolitical. Also, at the moment, Central constituency in Sheffield has the largest percent of students of any constituency, so they are a bit a floating population.

My third point is a question: why are we being given fewer MPs? Is it just so save money nationally? We need representing. I think our local MPs work very hard. They have to represent a lot more people than actually are registered to vote.

The next point is to do with the fairness of the voting system, and I know you are not here to look at that but I think the order in which you make the changes would make a difference. Sorry, I will start again. The order in which you make the changes to the boundaries, it would make sense to make a change to the boundaries after there has been a change to the voting system, to make a fairer voting system, and then after that do the boundary changes. If you are not doing that, then base the numbers that you are using -- sorry, I am losing my ---- I should have written it all down. Anyway, if we had a fairer voting system I believe a lot more people would register to vote because a lot of people just think there is no point in voting, and I think, "fair enough," because, I am going to say it again, it takes 32,000 people to vote in a Conservative MP, it takes 40,000 to vote in a Labour MP, it takes nearly 4 million to vote in a UKIP MP and it takes more than a million to vote in a Green MP. It is just not fair and that is why people do not bother to vote.

I know that it has to be a referendum that makes the change to that system, but a start to that will be to change it locally. We do not have proportional representation in the city, in local councils, so Sheffield is dominated by Labour. We do not have any Conservative councillors in Sheffield, and in my view that means that we do not have the ear of the Government in any way, and it is the same in the south of England. If the Labour government was in, labour has no councillors in a lot of the Tory shires so they have no voice.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MS MILLS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask, has anybody got any points that they would like Jo to clarify from what she has said? (No response) Ms Mills, thank you very much indeed.

We have one more person who is booked in to speak to us today, who is Mr Carrington. Mr Carrington, just before you come up, let me just give you a few words of introduction and then we will ask you to say what you have got to say, and then with everybody else's permission I will just say a few words of closing towards the end of the day.

My name is John Feavours. I am an Assistant Commissioner for the Boundary Commission for England and it is my responsibility to listen to representations made at the hearings in Yorkshire and the Humber region, including Leeds last week, here, Northallerton and then Hull next week, and also to consider all the representations that are made through the portal via the website. The consultation period runs until 5 December, after which, together with my colleague, Assistant Commissioner, Collette Rawnsley, we will look at all of those representations to decide whether to make any recommendations to the Boundary Commission itself about any necessary changes to the initial proposals.

What we have been doing, in order to make sure that everybody knows what everybody else has said, all of those representations will ultimately end up on the website, including a verbatim record of what has been said at these hearings. In order that we know who has said what, everything is being recorded. The first thing that we will ask you to do when you come up to the lectern in just a moment is to give your name and address and then tell us what it is that you would like us to hear. So in your own time, thank you very much.

MR CARRINGTON: Hi there. I am Jack Carrington. I live on City Road, so just in the Manor Castle ward on the sort of the east side of the city there. I am primarily here just as a member of the public, although sort of active in local community groups and things like that.

I think I will start by commenting first on things that are definitely in your remit so the proposed boundaries there. I guess the first obvious comment, and I am sure you must have heard this a lot, is that at the moment these are arrangements of wards that no longer exist. I guess the most obvious example would be the bottom of what is or used to be Central ward and where it goes on to the sort of Nether Edge area. You have got a whole sort of section there that has been put into Sheffield South, and you will see it crossing the train line there. I mean, it is just a sort of basic thing, if there is to be any

attempt to sort of recognise natural communities, at least as a starting point I think you have got to use the boundaries that people will now be recognising as the wards they are electing in. I mean, if you think about the last ones lasted 12 years, these wards are going to outlast these boundaries you are drawing now.

It seems, frankly, quite silly to use the old ones. I know obviously the legislation obliged you to use everything that is in place, I think in December 2015, but ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You understand the legislation correctly.

MR CARRINGTON: Yes. But even though these are initial proposals, I think because of the recognition of natural communities, it would have been nice to see these tweaks already in place for people to then comment on further. I guess in general, for what I have seen and the areas I know better, it would be hopefully bringing the Nether Edge area upwards to be reunited sort of with the rest of sort of Sharrow and Highfield and so it is placed to that. When you see the Ecclesall ward, especially when it goes all the way out to Ecclesall Wood, to have that in the same constituency as the sort of focused city centre area where you have got large transient populations, particularly student populations, just seems a profound mismatch. It looks like there is a very easy fix without even having to mess around too much with neighbouring constituencies, because you will see the sort of Ranmoor and Endcliffe areas, I mean they are very large student villages there, so obviously it means drawing lines in both existing and previous ward boundaries but you would essentially be creating much more, frankly, suited natural constituencies by moving more of Ecclesall in with more of the rural areas of Dore and Totley and the rest of it and then bringing Ranmoor and Endcliffe into the central and west.

I have only had a sort of cursory glance as you go north, but it is interesting that the constituency that contains both Dore and Totley, all the way up to Stannington and Stocksbridge technically it ends further north than Barnsley, which is, I am sure, baffling to people who you may have heard from that live a lot closer to that area than I do. I have been hearing that essentially like travel between these areas is next to nil. So obviously I understand the constraints of the plus or minus 5% but there must be scope for moving areas down there so it is a lot less convoluted, let us say.

The border with Rotherham, I hope there have been people from Rotherham in to comment on there, but I am not familiar with the area to know what precisely would be the correct solution there.

Those, I guess, are general and specific comments, but I would also like to echo the views, as I am sure have previous people, and just having it on record that in terms of making everyone's votes equal. A boundary review does not achieve this and it can never achieve this and there is a constant process of trying to I guess badly create natural communities and then redraw them constantly, you do not have that sort of

lasting connections between MPs and populations, where you have to constantly carve up the country into 600 or 650 small areas rather than saying have a multi-member constituency called Sheffield that stays permanent and can just have it with the number of members moved up or down as populations change.

Apologies that I have not managed to prepare any real notes or anything for this, so I am not sure how I am doing on time. I am not sure anything else is occurring to me at this moment, so I will make sure I do a proper written submission, hopefully with some figures, so it will lessen your workload and we can hopefully end up with a little bit less of a mess on our screen there.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Carrington.

MR CARRINGTON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Does anybody wish to clarify anything Mr Carrington has said? (No response) Mr Carrington, thank you very much.

MR CARRINGTON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Carrington, Ms Mills, the others have heard this but I think it warrants saying again anyway. We have been working through a list of people who had booked to come in today to make comments and I have repeatedly said if anybody turns up on spec I will be happy to have them speak. We have not had anybody turn up on spec all day. Theoretically I am supposed to stay here until 5 o'clock, but on the basis that that is not very far away and because I have had nobody else come on spec all day, I propose to close the hearing in a few moments time.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: She came through, yes. She said she might pop back down to see what was going on but she did not give me any indication she wanted to speak. Let me say this, because this is relevant for what I think it is that you are asking. You are obviously very keen that we have comments from as many people who need to tell us things anyway. My advisors are encouraging me to see if anybody else wants to have another go. Sure? Okay. Jo, let us give you the microphone and then we can hear what you are saying. Go on.

MS MILLS: One extra comment that I forgot to put in and that is I understand there are 2 million people who registered to vote after the start of this year and they are not going to be counted, are they?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Let me deal with that directly.

MS MILLS: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Here are my final comments around this: The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 is the piece of legislation that gives rise to us doing what we are doing now. The Boundary Commission's job, if I can use less than technical terminology but hopefully reflect what I have heard from you and from others, is about carving up the map into 600 bits roughly the same size. It is much more eloquent in the act, but that is effectively what we have got to do. It is not part of the Boundary Commission's remit to comment at all on the voting system that we have heard from various people about. So whilst I hear what you say, I cannot do anything about it. Why am I telling you this? Well, I am telling you it because - and I have said it all the way along - this consultation period goes on until 5 December, and I am encouraging you, as I have encouraged everybody else, to go from here, have a look at our guidance, which is online, have another think and see if there is anything else you want to tell us. The reason why I am encouraging you to have a look at the guidance is whilst you can tell us whatever you like, I would encourage you, frankly, not to waste my time and yours telling me things I cannot do anything about, because I cannot do anything about it.

There is only one "must" in here and in the legislation and that is a thing called the electoral quota. For England - there are separate Boundary Commissions for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland - for England the electoral quota is 74,769, and everybody that is involved in this process knows where that number came from. It is the total number of registered electors (minus the Isle of Wight; that is a different case) divided by the number of available constituencies. We can vary that by plus or minus 5%. So we can go up to 78,507 and we can go down to 71,031. That is fixed. For this review those numbers are fixed. I cannot do anything about that at all. So when Collette and I are thinking about how we might petition the Commission to change the initial proposals that reflect some of the things we have heard from you guys and from others, if your suggestions and your counter-proposals do not deal with that fixed electoral quota Collette and I cannot do anything with it; it is just outside of our remit.

However, everything else is in remit. So you are quite right when you say that these initial proposals were put together using the wards in Sheffield, for example, as they were last May.

MR BOWDEN: May 2015.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As they existed - it is in the guidance - the government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. And I know they have changed here since then, I know that, but the reason we do that is because if you go to the primary legislation it tells us the date that we are supposed to use. But, remember, that is not in the "must," that is in the "may," so we must stay with the electoral quota, we

may stay with the wards. We have heard from you and we have heard from many others, and you have invited to us split wards, split the wards as they were. Whether to do that leads us to a place where we are compliant with the new wards or whether some other solution is the right thing to do is something we have got to have a think about. This is why I am encouraging not only you two but anybody else to have a think about how we might do that, because with the best will in the world Collette and I will do our best and we will try and find a solution that works with the numbers and best fits the things that you have told us about. You are the folk from Sheffield, you are the folk from Yorkshire and you will know better than I, better than Collette, how we can do that.

As I say, I finish the hearing here in Sheffield by renewing that invitation to remind yourselves of the guidance, let us have any other details in the portal before 5 December, and I promise you that we will do the very, very best we can for you for Sheffield, okay?

Good to see you all here today. Thank you all very much for your attendance. We are now closed here and we will start again in Northallerton in a couple of days' time on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock.

The hearing concluded

B

MR CLIVE BETTS MP, 11, 16
MR BOWDEN, 30, 39

C

MR CARRINGTON, 36, 37, 38
MR CLARK, 2, 5

H

MR HARSTON, 24, 25, 26, 30
MR HODSON, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31

M

MR MAY, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
MS MILLS, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39
CLLR MURPHY, 17, 20

T

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37 38, 39

U

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER, 9, 20, 21, 38

W

MR WHITEHOUSE, 23, 24, 32, 33