

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE PRINCE RUPERT HOTEL, SHREWSBURY

ON

MONDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Ms Margaret Gilmore, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

**Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0HW
Telephone Number: 0207 960 6089**

Time noted: 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen. I should say actually my Lords and gentlemen, I think we have probably got more Lords in the room than anybody else. Lovely to see you, and welcome to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the West Midlands region. My name is Margaret Gilmore, I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to help them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the West Midlands region. I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and tomorrow, and I am also responsible with a fellow Assistant Commissioner, David Latham, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals for this region, and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised. I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff, led by Gerald Tessier, who is sitting beside me here, and Gerald will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies in this region. He will tell you how you can make written representations and will deal with one or two administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10.00 am until 8.00 pm, tomorrow it is scheduled to run from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm. I can vary that timetable, and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak. I should point out that under the legislation that governs the Commission's review, each public hearing must be held over two days and cannot be extended to a third.

The purpose of this public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the West Midlands. A number of people have already registered to speak and been given a time slot, and I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. If there is free time during the day or at the end of the day then I will invite anyone who has not registered but would like to speak to do so. I would like to stress, the purpose of this public hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals, and nor is it an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers, but they should do so through me as the Chair. I will now hand over to Gerald, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the West Midlands.

MR TESSIER: Yes, thank you very much and good morning. As Margaret has mentioned, my name is Gerald Tessier, and I am a member of the Commission staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Margaret has already

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

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for new constituency boundaries in the West Midlands region, which were published on 13 September 2016. In considering the composition of each electoral region, we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties. Therefore we have grouped some local authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities.

The Commission's proposals for the West Midlands are for 53 constituencies, a reduction of six. Our proposals leave seven of the existing constituencies unchanged. We use the European electoral regions for the template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled. That is not including the two constituencies to be allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counter-proposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the regions, but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional based approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals. Consequently, it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries, and to alter the boundary of some existing constituencies that have an electorate within 5 per cent of the electoral quota, which could otherwise be left unchanged, so as to ensure the electorates of all the constituencies throughout the region are within 5 per cent of the electoral quota.

We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Staffordshire and the south of Stoke-on-Trent; three of the existing constituencies in Staffordshire are unchanged. We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Shropshire and the unitary authority of Telford and Wrekin and combines the towns of Bridgnorth and Wellington. One constituency in Shropshire is unchanged. We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Shropshire and Herefordshire, which combines the towns of Ludlow and Leominster. Another proposed constituency contains electors from Worcestershire and Herefordshire, which combines the towns of Great Malvern and Ledbury. Additionally, we propose that electors from the south east of the County of Worcestershire be combined with electors from the south west of Warwickshire in one constituency. We also propose that electors from Solihull are combined with some electors from Warwickshire. Three constituencies in the County of West Midlands are unchanged.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries, known as wards or electoral divisions. We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well defined and well understood units, which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies will be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations, and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers, who are responsible for running elections. It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will splitting a ward between constituencies be justified, and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme is proposed to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided, and the extent of such ward splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 5 December 2016, so there is still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing, and they are also available on our website, and in a number of places around the region. You can make written representations to us through our consultation website at www.bce2018.org.uk. I do urge everyone to submit a written representation to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation, and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see, we are taking a video recording from which we will create a verbatim transcript. The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing along with all written representations for a four week period, during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and the written representations include certain personal data of those who have made representations, I therefore invite all those contributing to read the Commission's data protection and privacy policy, a copy of which is on the board over there, and which is also available on our website. So at this stage I will now hand back to the Chair to begin the public hearing, and thank you all for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Gerald. We will try our best to put the maps up about what you are speaking about up here, and rest assured, in front of me on my computer, our computers here, we have quite sophisticated ones which allow us to go into wards and things, so hopefully we will be following what you are saying, but when you do come up feel free, there is a pointer there, to point specific places out if you want to. Let us now call our first speaker, who

is Graham Statham, and just a reminder, as Gerald said, we need your name and your address.

MR STATHAM: (Telford and Wrekin Green Party) Right. My name is Graham Statham, I am Co-Chair of Telford and Wrekin Green Party and I live at 33 Burton Close in Dawley, Telford. We are very much in favour of proportional representation, and so that is what I want to talk about. The Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, Northern Ireland Assembly, London Assembly are all elected through proportional representation, the single transferable vote, which enables voters to vote across party lines and be elected as independent candidates. Polls constantly show that a large majority of British public support proportional representation. Proportional representation is conducted on the basis of registered voters rather than actual eligible population. Areas with lowest registered voters often get the least voice in politics. Reviews being undertaken on basis of a register almost a year out of date. The 5 per cent threshold means that some communities will be split up. The 5 per cent difference limit --- I am terribly sorry, I have lost my place.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are fine, just take your time, we are okay here. I take on board what you are saying about proportional representation, absolutely, but it is outside our remit. I know that you are very keen to put it on the record, but we do understand what you are saying about it. If you want to move on and talk a little bit about Telford, feel free to, because that is within our remit and what you say there can influence what happens in the future.

MR STATHAM: Right, okay. Can I just take on board then and watch?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. It is all on the record anyway.

MR STATHAM: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you want to come back a little bit later and talk about Telford?

MR STATHAM: Possibly, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Come and talk us and we will do that. Not a problem at all. Thank you as well for your time and for coming. So, yes, just a quick reminder that whatever I say you are going to say what you want to anyway, but it is not within our remit to have any influence over PR, or the number of constituencies, or which data we use. We must act within the confines of the law when we do this. Our next speaker is Rob Marris, who is the MP for Wolverhampton South West.

MR MARRIS: (MP for Wolverhampton South West) Can I give you my written

submission? It was submitted very late on Friday, so I suspect that even with your assiduous work you may not have received it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR MARRIS: I am in Wolverhampton, so I hope you have a map of that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, we will find one.

MR MARRIS: Right. For those of you in the audience, that is Wolverhampton right in the middle, and that is the ring road there. That is Wolverhampton South West, the constituency I currently represent, and these are the proposed boundaries. You know where you are, I was just saying right in the middle of the screen is the centre of Wolverhampton, and the C-shaped red outline, slightly to the left of the centre of the screen, is the proposed Wolverhampton West constituency, which encompasses part of what I currently represent, Wolverhampton South West constituency.

I have spent almost all my life in Wolverhampton, I like to think I know the city quite well, that is over 50 years in Wolverhampton. I have the great pleasure to represent the seat where I was born and raised and educated, and perhaps it is no coincidence my wife was also born in the constituency and educated and raised there, and she spent almost all her life in the constituency, and for the last 32 years we have lived in the same house in the Graiseley ward, I do not know if you have ward boundaries on your maps there.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR MARRIS: It is on the east side of the constituency, south of the city centre. Sorry, of the Wolverhampton South West constituency. My address is St John's House, St John's Square, Wolverhampton, WV2 4DT, and that is my office address. I hope you will appreciate, Ms Gilmore, that I do not propose to give my home address.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, that is fine.

MR MARRIS: Though I am proud to live in Wolverhampton, and many people in Wolverhampton do know where I live. Firstly, in terms of Wolverhampton as it is now constituted as a city, a city for the last 16 years, in the south east of Wolverhampton is Bilston, and in the north west of Wolverhampton is Tettenhall. I do not know if you can see them on there, there is a Tettenhall Regis ward and a Tettenhall Wightwick ward. If I can get this pointer to work I might be able to show you. There is Tettenhall Wightwick, there is Tettenhall Regis, over here is Bilston. Until 1966 they were separate district councils, I think Bilston was an urban district council and Tettenhall was a district council, that was until 50 years ago.

Apart from those two parts of Wolverhampton, to some extent, in terms of the social composition and the social cohesion of the city, you, as the Boundary Commission, could put almost any wards together. I am not going to stand here and tell you there are unique characteristics of the different wards within the Borough which must be observed, though I am glad you have observed, as geography perhaps assisted you in doing so, in not putting Tettenhall and Bilston in one parliamentary constituency, because they do have rather different histories. The reason for that is the minerals, Bilston had coal, Tettenhall did not, so Bilston was part of the Black Country. It is a long running sore in Wolverhampton. When I was a child in Wolverhampton we did not consider ourselves part of the Black Country, because Bilston was not part of the Borough, it is now, but in terms of wards overall you can, it is not quite the case, but you can almost perm any combination you want to put them together. I am sure that you will be addressed by people over the course of your hearings who tell you, and may well be quite the case for their part of the country, that certain wards, certain districts should not be put in the same constituency, because they are chalk and cheese. I think in Wolverhampton that is not the case.

I appreciate that you have had a very difficult job with the mathematics of it, because of the constraints set by Parliament on how this process is carried out. I am pleased and I think that most Wolverhampton residents would be pleased that the proposals do not include crossing the county line. I appreciate that again that in some parts of this region even you have had to do that, that is the mathematics forced upon you by Parliament, but overall I think it is good for Wolverhampton and the constituency proposed of Wolverhampton West that you have not crossed the county line.

I was born in what was Staffordshire, because I was born in Wolverhampton, which was then in Staffordshire until 1974. It surprises me with the effluxion of time how the links, community links between Staffordshire and Wolverhampton city have lessened in fact. So I am not saying in any way that we do not get on but in terms of community activities and so on, most things in Wolverhampton groups are called Wolverhampton et cetera, for example I am a member of the Wolverhampton rheumatology support group, it is not the Wolverhampton and Staffordshire rheumatology support group. The same with Alzheimer's and things like that. Staffordshire is a proud county, and I am proud to have been born in it, goes its own way, so those links are not strong.

I am pleased that the proposals do not include for Wolverhampton ward partition. Mr Tessier referred to that in his remarks, I think that is very helpful if that can be avoided. Again, I appreciate that sometimes the mathematics preclude avoiding ward partition, to use a double negative there, dictate ward partition, shall I say, but I think it is very helpful for the people that I have represented, and hope to have the opportunity to represent in the future, that there is not ward partition.

On the south east of the proposed constituency is Blakenhall ward, which is currently in the Wolverhampton South East parliamentary constituency. I do not represent that, it is

not part of Wolverhampton South West. There are strong links between Blakenhall ward and the adjacent wards of Graiseley, where I in fact live, and Penn ward, in terms of community links, in terms of schools and so on. I will not rehearse what is in my written submission in that regard. To give you one prime example, there is a split site school, which is split between Blakenhall ward and Graiseley ward, it is called the Royal School, it is where Eric Idle went actually, and on the west side of the Penn Road, which is the A469 running there, is on the west side of the road in Graiseley ward is the sports facilities and the junior school and infant school, and on the east side of that main road in Blakenhall ward the Royal School is the secondary school and more sports facilities. That is just an example, it does not mean that that is absolutely right, but in terms of community links, of what I was saying before, about wards are not chalk and cheese, that is the case with Blakenhall ward and Penn ward and Graiseley ward. For example, also, Graiseley ward has two Sikh gurdwaras. You may know there is a very big Sikh community in Wolverhampton, I am proud to say, Blakenhall ward itself has two Sikh gurdwaras, Penn ward, which is adjacent to Graiseley and to Blakenhall ward, has no Sikh gurdwaras, so many Sikhs go to worship in Blakenhall ward, which is in a different constituency, though of course, like the rest of us, they do not recognise that when they cross the line, as it were. So there are those links there.

There was a history book which was written which was called something like the history of Penn and Blakenhall, and I think you may be given a copy of it later, a local history book.

So in terms of the ward which would be not currently represented in Wolverhampton South West, but would be in the Wolverhampton West ward, Blakenhall ward, there are the community links there.

Conversely, in the north, where there is Oxley ward, which is not currently in the same parliamentary constituency as the adjacent Tettenhall Regis ward there, those two would be in the Wolverhampton West constituency. I have been on and off the Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West since 2001, that is I was the MP there from 2001 to 2010, and I was elected again in 2015. From 2001 until 2010 I represented part of what is now Oxley ward, because the ward boundaries were different there on what is called the Pendeford Estate, which was an estate built in the early 1980s, which was split between Tettenhall Regis ward and Oxley ward. On a previous round of boundary adjustments for wards it was decided that the Pendeford Estate should be all in one and so it is, it is all in one in Oxley ward, and therefore there are the community links there. In terms of the type of housing and the social composition, educational levels, et cetera, the Bushbury North ward, which is the one at twelve o'clock on the map on the proposed Wolverhampton West constituency, up there, between Oxley and Bushbury North ward, they are very similar in terms of, if you drove round them and looked at them, and so on, as is most of Wolverhampton.

Wolverhampton is, as you may know, one of the most densely populated cities in Europe. We have a mixture of housing, we do not have a huge amount of high rise but that mixture of housing is similar across the city. It is not as if swathes of the city in one area are semi-detached houses and swathes elsewhere are terraced houses. There is a mixture and there is a mixture in each ward, for example the ward in which I live, Graiseley ward, which is adjacent to the city centre, I live in a terraced house. Very roughly speaking half of that ward is terraced houses, half of that is semi-detached houses. It is that kind of mixture you have. So there are those links, there are not those big divisions, and therefore I see no obstacle in terms of the way people would regard the representative boundaries, I see no obstacle to that for people saying "Well, why have they lumped me in with them" or "I can't even get in the car and go from one to the other". The transport links are there, so that is quite simple.

In terms of St Peters ward, which is in the city centre, if you come to the city centre and just to the north of the city, as you can see there, that is currently in Wolverhampton South West parliamentary constituency, I currently represent that. It is proposed that that be in the new Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency. I would be sad no longer to represent St Peters ward, as I have for over ten years, but it is not the situation that it is kind of over my dead body, or I think you have got it very wrong with St Peters ward. There are strong links between St Peters ward and Heath Town ward, which is the adjacent ward to the east, and strong links between St Peters ward and Bushbury South and Low Hill ward, which is the ward immediately to the north of St Peters ward, and Bushbury South and Low Hill, St Peters ward and Heath Town ward, those three adjacent constituencies, would be in the same parliamentary constituency under your proposals for the Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency. For example, most of the university site in Wolverhampton, it has several sites, it is a very large university as you may know, most of the Wolverhampton site is either in St Peters ward, or in Heath Town ward or in Bushbury South and Low Hill ward. You are looking there, Ms Gilmore, can you see where I am talking about?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, thank you.

MR MARRIS: Those three there. Most of the university is there, there is a lot in the city centre. There is Wolverhampton science park, which has been there for about 25 years, possibly 30, and is growing rapidly now, they are building on it now, that is in Bushbury South and Low Hill ward, there is a huge number of student residences in Heath Town ward. I do not know if you have had the pleasure of visiting Wolverhampton, but when you arrive in the station there are three 20 storey blocks of student residences, they look like Portakabins, stacked one on the other, it is quite a sight, I believe they brought them in from Dublin. Those are student residences, those are in Heath Town ward. There are of course student residences and houses rented by students in Park ward, which is within Wolverhampton South West constituency, and would be in Wolverhampton West, but an awful lot of the university, funnily enough, is in what would be Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency, including the university

technical college, which is being built in Heath Town ward as we speak. So there are links there.

There are road links because of the A449 running north/south from the city centre up to the M54, which is the blue line of course at the top of the map. That is the A449, there are strong road links there, and there are - parts of St Peters ward are easy to access from the rest of Wolverhampton South West constituency as it now is. Park ward, which is immediately to the west of the city centre, but parts of it are not because of Wolverhampton race course, incidentally Britain's only all weather floodlit racecourse, so if you want night time racing in the rain you can go there, Ms Gilmore. That is in St Peters ward but forms an obstacle, because race courses are quite big, and the canals, I cannot even remember, it is in my written submission, it is the something and Worcester Canal, there is an obstacle. I am not saying they are insuperable, they are currently in one constituency at the moment, with Park ward and St Peters ward, but in terms of transport links they are at least as good, if not better, going from St Peters ward up to Bushbury South and Low Hill ward, both of which would be in the Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency.

Finally, in terms of the name, and I think you will have received submissions to this, I say this as a Wulfrunian, that I think it would be preferable whilst one has a Wolverhampton West constituency, I am content, and I think most people living within that area would be, though those right at the north in Bushbury North ward up by the M54 motorway might think it slightly odd, but by way of comparison we have had the Wolverhampton South West constituency in various guises for many years, which includes Tettenhall Regis ward, which is up in the north west of the current constituency, and that has been part of Wolverhampton South West constituency I think all my life in terms of the nomenclature, certainly since 1966 when Tettenhall came in. I think actually before then it was part of Brierley Hill parliamentary constituency strangely enough, but for 50 years that ward in the north west of this city has been part of Wolverhampton South West constituency. So the name Wolverhampton West I think is very suitable. Less of a mouthful, so if I do have the honour to represent it that will be quite nice, but in terms of the Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency immediately to the east of the proposed Wolverhampton West, some of which is of course within Wolverhampton, my home city, and I got my first job in Willenhall many, many years ago, I do know Willenhall and it is kind of split between Walsall Borough and Wolverhampton Borough, as it then was. The difficulty with the name Wednesfield and Willenhall, I say with the greatest respect, is of course I was talking about St Peters ward at some length, which covers the city centre, there would then be, under your proposals, a parliamentary constituency which included the centre of Wolverhampton and had I think six wards in Wolverhampton but which did not include the name Wolverhampton, and I would urge the Commission to think again about that. I think having a triple barrelled name might be a bit long, Wolverhampton North, Wednesfield and Willenhall, I know there are some parliamentary constituencies with three communities in them, Pontefract for example, I cannot remember the other parts of it

but it has got three names, and sometimes that is necessary to be representative, but another possible name might be Wolverhampton North and Willenhall, to take in Willenhall, which straddles the border between Wolverhampton Borough and Walsall Borough. It would take in that proud name of Willenhall, the centre of the lock, lock making in the world actually in its time, the first job I had was in a lock factory, but I think Wolverhampton North and Willenhall might not offend those in Wednesfield, who regard themselves as Wulfrunians, residents of Wolverhampton, but would encompass the city centre. That is not a huge matter for me as a representative of Wolverhampton South West and a putative representative of Wolverhampton West constituency, if that comes to pass, but as someone who lives in the city and loves it, I think it would be a bit unfortunate if there were a Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency which did not include the name of Wolverhampton, even though it includes the centre of Wolverhampton.

In terms of the proposed third constituency, which takes in five wards in Wolverhampton, which is the Wolverhampton South and Coseley constituency, in the south east of the city, I know that area, I do not know it as intimately as, for example, my colleague Pat McFadden, the Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East as it currently is, but from what I know of that area, and I have known it for many years, of course, the proposals there do seem eminently sensible and from what I know of that area there are not clashes, as I was referring to in my opening remarks, a kind of chalk and cheese, "Why have you put us in with them". Coseley, for example, one of the wards in Coseley is already in Wolverhampton South East constituency. Coseley was, like Willenhall, a split community. Part of Coseley historically has been in Wolverhampton for quite some time and part has been in Dudley Borough for quite some time.

So overall I think the proposals for Wolverhampton, for the 20 wards within Wolverhampton, are very, very suitable to reflect the mathematics with which you are faced and to reflect the necessity to try to group together people who see that they have things in common, and that therefore not crossing the county line is a good idea, and not having ward partition is a good idea. I am obviously happy to answer questions, I know I am loquacious, that is why I took the liberty of booking a double slot, having checked that there were not a lot of people who were queuing up to see you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No problem at all, and that has been very illuminating, thank you. Are there any points of clarification from the floor? Anyone want to raise anything there? (No response) I think you have been very clear. I just have one question for you, which is, you mention here the name ---

MR MARRIS: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: --- of Wednesfield and Willenhall. Wednesfield has never had a name before in the constituency name, and as far as I can

see Willenhall has not either, has it? In which case what would you think - and I am not saying this as part of our plan, I am just raising it as a possibility - of Wolverhampton North, just as simple as that? How do you think people would react to that?

MR MARRIS: Well, I think those who live in Walsall, the Willenhall half, which is in Walsall, would be a little perturbed at that, if I might say so.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. That is useful.

MR MARRIS: That is why I was suggesting including Willenhall ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Including Willenhall, I see.

MR MARRIS: --- within some portmanteau title.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. I understand entirely, thank you.

MR MARRIS: Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for your time, and we can give that to our other Assistant Commissioner. Excellent, let us move on, and our next speaker is Lord Grocott.

LORD GROCOTT: I am Bruce Grocott, Lord Grocott. I always look round for someone else when someone says that. I am here in the capacity of having had the privilege for a number of years to have been the Member of Parliament for the Telford Borough constituency, which is basically, although it is 15 years since I retired, it is basically almost the same boundary as the current Telford Borough constituency. As everyone here appreciates, with it being a new town, Telford, we have had numerous changes of boundaries over the years, with a huge growth in population, but, as I say, I am here from the House of Lords, SW1A 0PW, and I am here on what I hope is a reasonably straight forward mission, which is that I do very much support the proposals that the Boundary Commission has put forward for Telford, although, and there is always a but in these comments I think, and I know, Chair, you will rule me immediately out of order for the next three sentences that I am about to emit.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think I know what is coming.

LORD GROCOTT: They are that I very much regret that it is necessary to change the boundaries at all. I would have preferred that they had remained as they are at present. 66,000 people roughly in the current Telford constituency which, having done the job, believe me that is a full-time job representing 66,000 people. It sounds good to say you are going to reduce the number of MPs, which is about to happen we think nationally, and also of course as far as representation of Shropshire more broadly is concerned,

but that may be a desirable objective, though I do not think it is, but what is not a desirable objective in my view is the inevitable consequence of that, which is that you increase the size of constituencies, and that we very much see in the proposals for Telford, which, under the new proposals, would increase the size of Telford Borough from 66 to 76,000 people, which slightly daunts me having represented 66,000 people once upon a time, though of course it will not be my responsibility to do it. But I recognise of course - and this is where I can come on to the positive bits as opposed to a mild complaint about the rules - that within the rules that the Boundary Commission is obliged to operate, I think it has been done pretty neatly. It comes well within the range, the 5 per cent variation we are allowed, that is between 71,000 and 78,000. As I said, the new proposals for Telford are 76,000. It also respects, as I understand it, the Commission is required to respect, as far as possible, existing council boundaries. On three sides, east, west and south, the new constituency continues to have the boundary of Telford and Wrekin Borough, and it also takes account of ward boundaries as they existed on the 7 May 2015, which I know part of the remit of the Boundary Commission. So I think it is a neat solution, to repeat myself, to an unfortunate problem, and I think any other solution would be quite difficult. By adding the 10,000, simply by moving the boundary north, perhaps we should just have a map of Telford up here.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is in the middle there. It is in the centre, are you able to put the old and new one in?

LORD GROCOTT: Yes, sorry.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Existing and new.

LORD GROCOTT: Yes, there is the boundary of Telford there as you can see, and basically it moves the boundary north, the current boundary, that is right. That is right. That is the current boundary of the Telford constituency, and what it does, it moves it north to include Donnington and Hadley, two boroughs which were added to the existing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Great. There is a pointer actually, which you might like to use.

LORD GROCOTT: I am not very good on new technology, I am afraid.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think you could manage it.

LORD GROCOTT: It is pretty simple, so it should not be too difficult. So it adds two boundaries to the north, and, as I have already said, if you move the borough south, east or west it would involve going over the boundaries of the borough.

I should say as well at this point that a new town, of course Telford Borough does not include the whole of Telford new town, but a new town does have a lot of common challenges and problems which it is important I think for an MP to be able to focus on exclusively as far as possible, and the new town on many issues speaks as one. It does spectacularly at the moment, for example, on the fight to defend all the services at the Princess Royal Hospital, and there again to have one voice speaking for those kind of issues is pretty important I think, but all the associations of rapid growth, rapid population growth, pressures for jobs, pressures for schools, pressures for hospitals, hospital facilities, all those things are common to the whole of the borough, and just as Rob Marris has said, you can argue about precisely where you put boundaries within the borough but I would say that this is as neat as you can make it. I particularly make the point that up here in the north east, where currently the boundary is the boundary of Wrockwardine Wood, and there is a boundary existing at present between Wrockwardine Wood and Donnington, lots of boundaries are artificial but that is a particularly odd one in many respects that people do not necessarily realise when they are going across the boundary, and of course there is the big army depot at Donnington, which provides employment for large numbers of people living not just in Wrockwardine Wood but in the whole of the southern part of borough. So I think for that, it is still a community of interest very much so to move the boundary north to include Donnington and Hadley.

So by changing the boundaries in this respect the Commission I do not think is violating community links at all, seriously. I frequently, as an MP, as I am sure this is true of most MPs in urban areas, would get people coming to my advice bureaus who did not live in the constituency. Most frequently the case I have just mentioned, I get people from Donnington thinking that there was still one parliamentary constituency covering Donnington and Wrockwardine Wood, and of course that boundary will cease to exist if the Boundary Commission's proposals are put forward.

So, I mean, in conclusion I would say, I thought they were fine as they were, in a rapidly growing town, of which you had the flexibility to allow for smaller populations, which you know are going to grow rapidly. That it not the case, and within the proposals within the remit of the proposals which you are obliged to operate under, then I would wish to support the proposal for Telford Borough constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Lord Grocott. Just to add that it is very important that we hear of support as well as people who object, because then we can make sure that we are getting the balance right. So thank you for your time. Any questions? We have one here. Do we have a roving microphone? Lovely.

MR RILEY: Ian Riley. Lord Grocott, a counter-proposal has been submitted that suggests that Apley Castle ward should be added to the new Telford constituency and Donnington taken out. Would you like to comment on the connections between

Donnington as opposed to Apley Castle, which one do you think would be most suitable to be attached to Telford?

LORD GROCOTT: Well, very much I reiterate, I am trying to be absolutely fair about these things. Wherever you draw boundaries within a borough that has been a new town and as one, then there are bound to be arguments about where the precise boundary should be, but I think, as I have emphasised, the boundary between Wrockwardine Wood and Donnington, which exists under the present parliamentary constituency, has always been in my mind a pretty artificial boundary, as I would invite anyone who wishes to go and visit the area would quickly see. It is not just that there are strong historic ties, as there are with other parts of Telford, it being essentially when it was formed as a new town an area with a rich mining and manufacturing history, which certainly applies to Donnington and to Wrockwardine Wood. In fact the pit in Donnington was the last one to close, admittedly going back a way, not a long way as far as I am concerned, but to the 1960s, which I fear many of us in this room can remember, but Donnington and Wrockwardine Wood are a natural link I would say, as is Hadley, which is the adjacent ward to the west of Donnington. So that, to me, is a natural connection.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any further points of clarification? (No response) Thank you very much, Lord Grocott. Our next speaker is Philip Dunne.

MR DUNNE: (MP for Ludlow) Thank you very much. My name is Philip Dunne, I am the Member of Parliament for Ludlow, and have been since 2005, and while you bring it up, I think I should start by saying that I support the process that you are going through as the Boundary Commission. I support the reduction in the number of Members of Parliament to 600, and I therefore think on the grounds that I think it is fair that we should equalise the size of constituencies more closely than we do under the present system, and I recognise that therefore that will lead to some significant change in some areas, regrettable as that is, and I have to say, for those who have to go through it, I have to say that the proposals for the Ludlow constituency as presently constituted, by dividing it into three separate constituencies in the future, are one of the most significant changes in the region, and will lead to, as you can see on the map, the largest constituency in the West Midlands. It is currently I think the largest constituency, so that is no change, but it becomes very much substantially larger. I think it is currently the sixth largest geographic constituency in England, and I do not know, because I have not done the research, where it will rank in future, but I would think we would move certainly into the top five, possibly even into the top three in terms of geographic coverage.

The proposals that you have come up with are no great surprise given they follow quite closely the proposals that you made in 2011 for this seat, and I recognise that you had to make a decision as a Commission between crossing a county boundary somewhere within the Shropshire/Worcestershire/Herefordshire area, and I regret that you chose to

do it in my area, because there had been very strong historic links between, across the southern third of Shropshire, which has currently represented in Ludlow, by the Ludlow constituency, and while there are strong links along the Welsh Marches, and therefore I can recognise there is some logic to your proposal, it is nonetheless introducing a great deal of complexity to the role of a Member of Parliament for, in particular, the Ludlow Leominster ward, having to now, if that proceeds, work with a unitary authority in Shropshire and a county council in Herefordshire. Having said that, I think that it did not come as a surprise that that was the decision that you wanted to make, and I suspect that this will have greatest impact on the small number of people who support the Member of Parliament, the local association that supports them, and will be not hugely troubling to the public at large, because I do not think that they identify with constituencies as a rule. I think they identify with much more local forms of government, they might identify with the individual. So I am not here to rubbish your whole proposal, recognising that I do not really want it to happen.

So if I can just turn to the proposals themselves. I will give you a small history lesson, if I may. I did a bit of research this summer, or following the last general election, into the composition of parliamentary constituencies in the area that I represent, and until, between the Great Reform Act of 1832 and 1885 the current Ludlow constituency was represented by eight Members of Parliament. There were two for both Ludlow and Bridgnorth, but also two for Much Wenlock and Bishop's Castle, and then that came down to one in the Redistribution of Seats Act in 1885. So this has been a continuous process over a prolonged period of time, but for the last 130 years the southern third of Shropshire, with some minor adjustments to the east, has been in one single constituency.

Your proposals to divide into three are much better than the proposals made in 2011 for two particular, well, three reasons. Over to the east you have more or less taken the River Severn as a natural boundary, and if I can use the pointer, can we expand. If I take the top one on the left, so can we expand this area around Bridgnorth. Thank you, and then come in a bit, or shrink it slightly. Can we go to the ward by ward. Thank you. So in 2011 this ward, which is called Alveley and Claverley, which is two major villages in that ward, were proposed to be kept with the Ludlow constituency rather than move with Bridgnorth into the Wrekin, and that was completely illogical because there was no river crossing. Although it says on the map there is a river crossing, it is only pedestrian, and therefore was totally illogical, and it is quite right that you have kept that connected to the ward immediately to the north, which is the Worfield ward and Bridgnorth, because the river crossing, Severn here is a wide river, with steep banks on much of one side, and that runs right the way round past Broseley. So it is appropriate to keep Bridgnorth, which has two wards, one more urban than the other, with the two wards on the other side of the river, because the river runs through the Bridgnorth East ward there. So that was better than proposed before.

The proposal has five wards from the east of the constituency moving into the Wrekin, Wellington and Bridgnorth constituency, and it was interesting that I think Mr Marris, who has gone, said there are not many three named constituencies. I am not going to argue over the name, but I have some sympathy with his suggestion that having three names is quite a mouthful. It is quite hard as a Member of Parliament to describe where you are representing if you are not sure yourself. The proposed ward of Wellington, the Wrekin and Bridgnorth will, for example, have I think three separate newspapers, certainly two local newspapers, one the Bridgnorth Journal, another covering Wellington and Newport, and it is quite hard when you are a Member of Parliament, describing where you represent, to have such a complicated title, so I do not have a proposal for you but I would ask you to think about it.

The other ward that I have not touched on, which you are proposing to sort of work with the current Wrekin constituency is Broseley. Broseley is predominantly a small town, it has one very rural bit, sort of half of a parish to the south and east, but already it is on the west bank of the River Severn, and there is a small bit, that little finger there, of the current Telford constituency, there is one ward which crosses the river rather peculiarly, and you are right not to mess around with that, but we have already got the principle of the river being crossed there because there is a bridge and it is possible to do that. Broseley very much looks to Bridgnorth or Telford, primarily to Bridgnorth for shopping and schooling, and to Telford for work. So I think there is a logic to keeping Broseley with Bridgnorth.

The other ward, sorry, the sixth ward therefore is Much Wenlock, and I will come back to that at the end, if I may, because that is where I have a counter-proposal to make.

If we just enlarge for a moment to go back to the other side of the constituency, and I apologise for doing this, but because you cannot see it all on a page it gives you some idea of the geographic complexity of the constituency, can we enlarge the map to go to the far west. So the other thing that I think is appropriate, if there has to be a change, is that the ward, the current Ludlow constituency ward of Chirbury and Worthen, which is where I am indicating here, you are proposing should join the Shrewsbury constituency. So Shrewsbury to Chirbury is about, I think of it as 18 miles, I think it is 20 miles in fact, it has a direct road, decent road, which does not have to scale a mountain to get there. So the bus route's natural travel flow is towards Shrewsbury, if not into Wales. There is a range of hills, the Stiperstone Hills here, which divide one ward from the next ward, and it is already challenging. To get from Ludlow up into that ward is a 50 minute drive. I live just further to the south, it takes me an hour to get to that ward at present because the road network is along the A49, the main north/south route is there, all of the roads to the west of the A49 tend to travel more or less east/west, and obviously there are connecting roads going north/south but they are small lanes by and large, and it is entirely logical in my view that that ward should go with Shrewsbury if it has to leave Ludlow.

Coming back then, if I may, to the counter-proposal, which I think you should take very seriously, which is the Much Wenlock ward to the north east. Much Wenlock is a very proud market town. As I said, it was represented by two Members of Parliament for over 130 years, it shares many of the characteristics of a small market town with the others that are in South Shropshire, so Ludlow and Bishop's Castle, Church Stretton, in that it has small independent stores. You might regard it as a very traditional type of rural lifestyle. It also has a secondary school that draws kids in, young people in from the surrounding rural hinterland, and the ward itself has a long finger pointing west, as you can see [here](#), through the villages of Shipton, Bourton and Brockton, which have everything in common with the Corvedale, which is the large ward to the south, and very little in common with the wards to the north. So I regard Much Wenlock as a rural ward with a town in the middle, or at the top, and the road network, well, there is a direct road across between Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury, so it straddles that main route, but it also has a main road coming down into, towards Ludlow [here](#), to which it also looks. So I would urge the Commission to think very carefully about adjusting the proposal to include Much Wenlock within the Ludlow and Leominster ward, because I think it has more contiguity with the wards that are remaining within the Ludlow and North Herefordshire proposal.

That takes me, if I may, just down to the south. I cannot talk with any great authority about North Herefordshire, because although I happen to live just across the border in North Herefordshire rather than in my own constituency, I am not familiar with all of the wards, but if we could raise the map slightly to see the southern part of the proposed enormous county. I should have said earlier on, one of the things that is better about this proposal than the 2011 proposal is that you are only proposing to give the constituency by my count a 64 mile boundary with Wales, as opposed to a 75 mile boundary, which was your previous proposal last time. So removing Chirbury and Worthen at the north, maintaining the River Wye as the boundary to the south, which more or less is what that line is, and therefore keeping the two southern Hereford wards of North and South Golden Valley with Southern Herefordshire makes a great deal more sense.

The issue that I would point you to here, is again the geographic contiguity. Can we go up to the ward pictures that put the ward lines in. I am particularly looking at this bulge [here](#). Close up is fine, because what I was getting to is this bulge [here](#). On the eastern side of North Herefordshire there are two wards, they have not come up, but they are around the village of Bromyard. There is a tight in ward here and then essentially this bit is called Bromyard Bringsty. So [that](#) is Bromyard Bringsty and [this](#) is Bromyard. Our counter-proposal would be to retain Much Wenlock within Ludlow/Leominster, and to move - you are dividing Herefordshire, North Herefordshire as significantly as you are dividing Ludlow. So where you choose, which wards you choose to move it seems to me is largely arbitrary, or should be done with some logic. If you look, we have a bulge coming into the proposed seat from West Worcestershire, which is around Tenbury Wells, the other side, through which a river flows, and the other side is Burford, and

much of Tenbury Wells' activity is in the current Ludlow constituency around Burford. The community hospital, for example, is operated by Worcestershire NHS Trust but is situated in Burford in the north side of the river, whereas the remainder, the majority of the population is in the south side in Tenbury Wells. It is one of those towns with two names but it is essentially one community. That historically has been in the West Worcestershire seat. Many of the people, I would argue, from those that I know who live certainly to the north of Bromyard, look to Tenbury Wells as their market town. It would seem to me to be logical to add the two Bromyard wards into the West Worcestershire seat because it is combining Worcestershire and Herefordshire, you are crossing the county boundary further to the south by combining Malvern and Ledbury, and there is more sort of geographic logic to removing that bulge from the seat. So I think I have probably had my ten minutes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just on time, yes.

MR DUNNE: I would just add, if I may, that without going too much over history, there was a Member of Parliament for Ludlow from I think 1748 to 1768 called Henry Bridgeman, who, having served 28 years, 20 years serving the people of Ludlow, he decided to move to Much Wenlock, and he was the Member of Parliament for Much Wenlock from 1768 to 1794, so he was an outstanding public servant, committing much more of his life to politics than I have, and the point of that illustration is that Wenlock and Ludlow have very significant historic connections which I think should be respected through this process. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. I am just trying to have a quick look at the figures here. Presumably you do not have them to hand.

MR DUNNE: I will write to you with them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I can actually see, if you brought Much Wenlock back in it would push us over the maximum number of electorate we would have, but then you are suggesting you lose both the Bromyards to compensate for that?

MR DUNNE: Indeed. I think the resulting figure is around 76 and a half thousand, so it is well within the boundary.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, so it would go down a bit.

MR DUNNE: So I think the knock-on effect, going round to Worcestershire, also keeps the seat within the parameters that you are looking for.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, yes, I can see that. Okay, that is good. Any questions from, or points of clarification? We have one over here.

MR MURRAY: David Murray, West Midlands Liberal Democrats. As Wellington is actually in the Wrekin constituency currently, and is not called Wellington and the Wrekin, it would seem logical, and I would like to know what you think, if the new constituency was called Bridgnorth and the Wrekin and not include the Wellington name, which is already in the Wrekin and therefore does not add anything to having a triple title.

MR DUNNE: Yes, I am not going to comment on Wellington per se, but I think what you say, certainly if we are looking to reduce the length of the name of the constituency, Bridgnorth would be the largest market town within the enlarged constituency, I think, it has over 10,000 population, and personally I would be very much in favour of calling it Bridgnorth, but I might be a bit biased, and I would be more inclined to drop the Wellington and the Wrekin.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any other questions or points of clarification? (No response) Mr Dunne, thank you very much indeed.

MR DUNNE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I call David Turner now, please.

CLLR TURNER: Thank you, Chair. My name is David Turner, my address is Woodhouse Farm, Wyke, Much Wenlock. I am the Shropshire councillor for Much Wenlock, which is the home of the modern Olympic Games. I am also a member of Much Wenlock town council, and I am going to fairly quickly put forward my point of view. I am unable to match Philip Dunne's historical account of the town and indeed the constituency, but I do have a view on this particular issue. I am a member of Ludlow Conservative Association, which is aligned to the views Philip Dunne has just articulated so well.

At its meeting last week the apolitical Much Wenlock town council reached the same conclusion. Much Wenlock parish includes about two thirds of my division's electors but less than half of its geography. As a Shropshire council ward member I find myself in accord with this view. The current proposal would allow the new constituency to intrude between the proposed Ludlow and Leominster and Shrewsbury constituencies. The only connection to the proposed Bridgnorth, Wellington Wrekin constituency, or whatever we are going to call it, would be a short boundary to its eastern edge. My division is about 14 miles from the bank of the River Severn, runs down a scenic valley, the Corvedale, towards Craven Arms. Its western tip includes Shipton. Whilst the community looks to Bridgnorth, Craven Arms and Ludlow, and indeed Telford for

different purposes, cultural, social and employment, the largest area lies in the Corvedale, which is down here, which is adjacent to a Shropshire council division appropriately named Corvedale, which is this large one here, but the road that runs down the middle of here, which Philip Dunne referred to, down towards Craven Arms, serves all of this area as well, so they are very much part of the same community.

Some employment in Much Wenlock is local. A large proportion of workers commute, some to the towns I have already mentioned, but a significant minority much further afield to Birmingham and the West Midlands conurbation. So employment is not necessarily confined to its immediate neighbours. For many residents the River Severn forms a boundary to their activity. The River Severn of course being over here.

To associate the division with a constituency including Newport on the border of Staffordshire would be incomprehensible to many, and I am fairly widely travelled, but there are places in the proposed constituency which I think are in the current Wrekin constituency, places I have never heard of let alone visited. I speak for the people of Much Wenlock in this regard, and I urge you to reconsider the allocation of Much Wenlock along the lines set out by Philip Dunne. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed, very clear, and do we have any questions from the floor? (No response) In which case, no, that was great, very useful. Thank you. Our next speaker is Philip Walker from Wolverhampton.

MR WALKER: (Labour Party) Thank you, my name is Phil Walker. I am secretary of Wolverhampton South West constituency Labour Party, and I am here making representations in that capacity. Personally I know the constituency of Wolverhampton South West as is, and presumably as was, well. I have lived in the west of Wolverhampton for 30 years, and I believe that I have either lived or stood for election in five of the seven wards which currently make up Wolverhampton South West constituency in that time. I am largely going to echo and expand on some of the points that Rob Marris made.

Before doing so, I would just like to reflect on the position the Commissioners, that you find yourselves in. We certainly do not like the terms in which you have been required by law to operate. You are having to exercise judgement within the law clearly, but it is in a position which, without beating about the bush, we regard as gerrymandering, particularly the requirement to go on December 2015 electoral registers against which were drawn up in a way that against the explicit recommendation of the electoral commission. Okay, but that still leaves you some room for government, despite what - that still leaves you some room for discretion despite what the Government is wanting you to do.

So, in context, broadly I am going to speak in support of the recommendations for Wolverhampton West, and there is three broad aspects I would like to concentrate on in doing that. The first is the treatment of Blakenhall ward, which is basically being brought into what were the boundaries of the old Wolverhampton South West ward. That is Blakenhall ward there. Now, there are very strong links between Blakenhall ward and Wolverhampton South West. Wolverhampton South West constituency has existed, the name, since 1950, and from 1950 to 1974 two things happened. Firstly, Wolverhampton South West was represented by Enoch Powell MP, and the constituency gained a certain notoriety in the latter part of that, and secondly, throughout that time Blakenhall ward was within the boundaries of Wolverhampton South West, Blakenhall and St John's it was called then, but that ward was within Wolverhampton South West, so there are historical links there. Those historical links with the west of Wolverhampton I think are reflected in this book, which one of our local councillors actually had, called Penn and Blakenhall, in the historical series of books that you are very familiar with, but I think it is significant that the author chose to group together Penn and Blakenhall as being sort of a logical sort of part of Wolverhampton. It is a significant choice, it represents the reality of the close links that have historically linked between districts in the west of Wolverhampton, particularly Penn, Graiseley and Blakenhall. If I quote from the book, just on the back page actually, "Blakenhall and the related area of Graiseley, with their densely packed streets of terraced houses, were home to some of the greatest names in British motoring history", and further on into the book, talking here about Blakenhall and Graiseley in particular, the author says, "Only with the recent widening of the Penn Road has there been much of a distinction between the two areas. Before the physical barrier of the dual carriageway they were almost always regarded as one large suburb". I think it needs to be pointed out as well that that dual carriageway extends only probably about half a mile from the southern end of the link road up about half the current boundary from the Wolverhampton ring road, up the A449, and ends about where the pointer is there. So there is certainly not all dual carriageway between the Graiseley and Blakenhall boundary.

So that confirms the link between Blakenhall and Graiseley. I think the title of the book confirms the link between Penn and Graiseley historically.

Some other points. Rob Marris I think mentioned the Wolverhampton Sikh population. Wolverhampton has got a very big Sikh population, one of the biggest in the country. There is, I think on the 2011 census, there were 22,000 Sikhs in terms of religion. Now, to put that into context, that is more than the number of Muslims and Hindus combined, so the Sikh population is the dominant ethnic minority in Wolverhampton. On the census figures Blakenhall has got the most, this is in wards, Penn has got the third, is the third highest, Graiseley is the fourth, Park is the fifth. So we are looking at the map, we have got Blakenhall there, we have got Penn third, Graiseley fourth, Park fifth, okay. So there is a concentration of the Sikh community. That is reflected in the new community links. The Dudley Road shops are particularly important, as a shopping area for, if I may, in these days you do not need to make a physical visit, just get on

Google Earth street view, and go down it, and you will be able to confirm that for yourself, but the actual shopping centre down the Dudley Road is well-known, and of course it draws in the Sikh population from the west of Wolverhampton there. The gurdwaras, the temples, the Sikh temples, there are two in Graiseley, there are two in Blakenhall. There is none in Penn, which is the third highest Sikh population, as a consequence the Blakenhall ones are well used in religious terms. There is also two free schools now, one in Graiseley and one in Penn, those are opened in the last year, but it reflects the concentration of the population.

Going on, and just looking at the schools in the wider sense, there are no state, Rob Marris mentioned the Royal School which is an independent school, which straddles the Penn Road there, there are no actual state schools, state secondary schools, sorry, in Penn or Graiseley ward, and as a consequence the children there have to go across ward boundaries to go to secondary school. Colton Hill School is there, where the pointer is, basically very close to the boundary of Penn ward, so there is a lot of children going from Penn ward into Colton Hills in Blakenhall, there are also some going from Graiseley to Colton Hills. The other big school serving area is Highfields School, which is actually on the boundary of Merry Hill ward. Now, you might think that is remote from Blakenhall ward but the actual school bus service, the 712, starts at Highfields and goes up through Coalway Road, through Coalway Road here, and hits the boundary with Blakenhall ward there. So it allows children ready access to Highfields School on the bus service. The number 2 bus follows the same route. I think the reason they got the 712 is that there is just, the number 2 bus itself would not be enough to cope with the school children. So that is Blakenhall ward.

The other two points I wanted to make are, the next one is about the county boundary, and in supporting the proposals generally for Wolverhampton West, and I think it should be said we are supporting them for Wolverhampton West, despite our reservations about the whole process, the county boundary that you are respecting here between Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire, that is a very real urban rural boundary. It was tidied up at local government reorganisation, there were a few roads that just went across the boundary like Bellencroft Gardens in Merry Hill and Windsor Gardens in Tettenhall Wightwick, and a few others that were tidied up, but the consequence is, it is a very real urban rural boundary, and I think that is important, because you want an MP that can speak for urban people, you want an MP who can speak for rural people. You do not want sort of a mishmash that leaves you wondering which, who your MP is speaking for.

The one urban area that is close to Wolverhampton is Perton here. I just want to dwell on Perton, because the map is very deceptive, because Perton looks to be very close geographically to Wolverhampton. In reality, if you live, so the boundary does come in a little bit there, if you live in Perton there, you cannot by car get from Wolverhampton without going right back to Wrottesley Park Road and then either north on the A421, sorry, north on Wrottesley Park Road to the A421, and in here, or you go, again the

same journey, and then south on Wrottesley Park Road, and actually you cannot turn, there is a left turn prohibition into Wolverhampton along Pattingham Road here, you have to continue to the A454 here, and then go in. Okay. So the actual geographical proximity of Perton to Wolverhampton is very deceptive for any car user. The consequence of that is the community links do not exist, because communities do not get together, there is a two mile effectively physical barrier. Generally that is also reflected in all the local government boundaries, like the Tettenhall neighbourhood plan we had adopted a few years ago, covers the two Tettenhall wards, it does not go into South Staffordshire at all, as you would expect. There are moves to make Tettenhall, the two Tettenhall wards into a parish council being pushed by some. So those are sort of community links there, but it is a very distinct boundary, and that is good, and it should remain that way. If you started varying it for parliamentary terms, then it would raise all sorts of questions in local government terms, and you would have the parliamentary review wagging the local government boundary dog. That sort of thing needs to be addressed in local government reviews, not parliamentary reviews.

The final point I wanted to just mention is the treatment of St Peters ward. St Peters ward here is within Wolverhampton South West at the moment and it is planned to go into the Wednesfield and Willenhall constituency, if that name sticks. Now, frankly, we could stand here and make a good case for St Peters to stay part of Wolverhampton West but because it is the city centre ward you can make, in the middle of Wolverhampton, you can make a good case for it to go almost anywhere in all honesty. So there is just two points I want to really emphasise. Before I do so, basically you have got Whitmore Reans here, which can look to the Park ward, but similarly you have got Dunstall Hill up here, which looks more to the east, on the Stafford Road side. The two points I want to emphasise are, firstly, the proposal as it stands separates out Oxley and St Peters on that boundary there into - sorry, on that boundary there, that is Oxley, that is St Peters, Oxley comes into Wolverhampton West, St Peters goes into Wednesfield and Willenhall. That makes a lot of sense in boundary terms, because the only way you can get, well, you cannot physically get from St Peters to Oxley ward. There is a boundary there that starts with Oxley Park golf club, and then Wolverhampton race course, and the railway sidings, and then the Aldersley leisure village and all the open land around the canal, and if I wanted to go by car from St Peters to Oxley I would either have to go down here, along the Hordern Road boundary, over the canal and then up here and in that way, or I would have to go this way, up the Stafford Road, which is a dual carriageway. So if I am coming down actually technically I am in Bushbury South and Low Hill. So the ability to go by car directly from one into the other is quite heavily constrained, and that limits community links. So it does make sense for those two wards to be in different constituencies.

The other point I wanted to make in terms of community is that St Peters is by far, has by far the biggest concentration of students in Wolverhampton, and that is because Wolverhampton University is located about there, all the halls of residence, they are located here in St Peters, but recently there was also the Victoria Halls development,

which is a high rise in Wolverhampton, which is there in Heath Park ward. There is also planning application now for a further 800 halls of residence in Bushbury South. So the student community, I think in terms of that community it does actually make some sense, and that is an argument for keeping those together.

So one final point, and this is a minor point, but what I am trying to say is just because St Peters is coming out of Wolverhampton South West, it does not detract from the proposals as such. It is a perfectly logical set of proposals because of that, just as you could make arguments the other way. In terms of the name, Rob Marris suggested Wolverhampton North and Willenhall, geographically I would suggest it is probably Wolverhampton East and Willenhall, but you might want to mull that one over. There is plenty of permutations, but the idea that it does include Wolverhampton somewhere in the name with six Wolverhampton wards I think is the point. Willenhall is part of Walsall so I can see again why people of Willenhall might want their name preserved in the constituency name, but that does sound quite catchy. So that is it basically, I have got the book, I am quite happy to submit that as evidence to you. Please peruse at your leisure.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think we are fine, we can get hold of the book ourselves if we need it.

MR WALKER: Okay, that is fine.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If I am honest, but thank you very much for that. Do we have any questions or points of clarification from the floor? (No response) Thank you very much indeed. Mr Statham, do you want to come up again, or would you like to think about it through the break? You will think about it through the break. Lord Rooker, would you like to speak now or would you like to have your tea break first? You are actually due on after tea, after the tea break, but whichever you prefer. Why do you not take to the floor. Just before, I should put it on the record that when I was on the board of the Food Standards Agency Lord Rooker was my chair, we have not discussed boundary issues since I became an Assistant Commissioner, nor will we until my term as an Assistant Commissioner ends.

LORD ROOKER: As I said to the previous inquiry, we first came across each other when I was a Home Office minister doing a press conference in 2002, as Immigration minister, and you were doing your job as a BBC journalist, and you would not stop asking questions.

My name is Jeff Rooker, I live at the Barleymow, Lower Broad Street, Ludlow, SY8 1PQ. It has been my home for almost a decade. I am here, I support the Commission's proposals overall for the West Midlands, and in addition to the points I made about three Birmingham constituencies last Friday, I have a brief comment about the proposed Ludlow and Leominster constituency, on the basis as living there. As a beef I have to

say that South Shropshire is not connected to and ignored by North Shropshire where the Local Authority leadership live, and the key decisions are taken, but that is nothing to do with the Commission, I just feel happier saying it.

South Shropshire is very clearly connected to North Herefordshire, and while Ludlow funnily enough is midway between Shrewsbury and Hereford, it takes half the time to get to Hereford from Ludlow than it does to get to Shrewsbury. It is just easier to get to. It is also the case that travel around North Hereford via the A49, the A44 and the 412 is very good compared to South Shropshire, and as such while it is a large constituency, and as Philip said, I mean, it is probably going to be one of the largest in the country, I looked at the square miles and there used to be one that was 1200 square miles, I am not sure if it is that large, but it will be very large, but I think it will be very easier for the member to get around. The Commission will hear a lot about travelling around constituencies, by and large most people do not do that. The person that does that is the elected member. This is in terms of communication, as I know that from my previous experience, but a seat from what we have got here, of Church Stretton, just north, to just north of the Hereford city centre, and bordered by Wales, as Philip made clear, and Worcestershire, it makes a square-ish shape, and while it is large it is a tidy shape, although frankly, as I will say, I think that it could be slightly modified.

I think five years ago, when the Boundary Commission published proposals for Ludlow constituency, it actually took the constituency around the city of Hereford. I cannot quite remember, but that is the Hereford city centre, the constituency actually we could not believe what we were reading in the area from a constituency management point of view, geographic point of view, a context point of view, and it was treated with some derision. Obviously this was not proceeded with, basically because the partners in the coalition Government fell out, which is why we are doing it now five years later, but as such though, I do not think, and I have read, there is a proposal, I know Philip did not refer to this so I do not know if it will be pursued, there is a proposal I think to put Credenhill ward to be added, which would actually bring the constituency, if you come up on the wards, there is a large ward here, which would be a finger in this constituency which would come around south of the city of Hereford. I think that, frankly, would be a mistake, because I think the Commission has been quite careful with the way the wards are granted, you have used solid wards and that is important. You have kept it away from the centre of the Hereford city, and I think it would be a mistake to bring the constituency by adding in Credenhill ward. I cannot see what would come out to make the numbers work in that case, so I think the present proposal of the Boundary Commission at that point there, I think is much to be supported, but I have to say, and I am purely an incomer to Shropshire, purely an incomer, I think Philip's proposals about Much Wenlock and the position here I think I would support those. I think they make good sense. He is absolutely right with the description of Much Wenlock, and he did not say much about North Herefordshire, obviously he does not represent it at the present time although he lives there. To me, I probably do it more than Ludlow before I went to live there, it was an area where I holidayed weekends. There is at least one school in

this area that has got two labels on that I opened the school, and five years later, as a Northern Ireland minister, they asked me back to open the extension, which is at Weobley by the way, which is just around this area here, but I think the Boundary Commission has achieved what some thought impossible, given the rules set by Parliament, and I agree very much so the constituencies have to be as near equal as possible, so the value of each elector's vote is the same. I mean it is, at the moment there is a three to one ratio, which is very, very unfair. I think the golden rule for the Boundary Commission to remain within the region, as you have called it, the European parliamentary regions, and use only whole wards is correct, and I think you are not being asked to split any wards here, but it maybe elsewhere, and I think using the building block of the electoral system, which is a ward, they are all different shapes and sizes, is very important.

The price to be paid for that of course is crossing local authority boundaries. Now I do not see, it is an inconvenience but it is not a difficulty and should not present any problems for elected representatives. Where you are putting a one off ward, I think it has been described in one of the proposals I have read, an orphan ward, just one ward into another local authority could isolate it considerably, but in this constituency you are not doing it. You are putting the great piece of South Shropshire with North Herefordshire, and I think that makes good sense, so whoever represents that it is almost 50/50, it is not quite that, but I would agree with the changes that Philip proposed in these two areas, one in there and one out of this area there. I think it would make sense.

Finally, I take the trouble to attend two Boundary Commission hearings to comment on four constituencies, where I am qualified either by means of living or previous representation, because I realise the Boundary Commission does hear a lot from those who oppose proposals, and as at least two occasions in the past I have done that myself for the Boundary Commissions in 1983 and 1997, and then do not hear from those who agree. You then publish a second set of proposals and all those that stayed silent and agreed with the first lot and did nothing about it, then complain about what you produce for the second time round. So I am here basically to say stick in the main to what you have produced. On the margin changes, there is one example this morning which I think is incredibly practical and convenient, but be very careful of other changes because of the knock-on consequences to the other constituencies. It is true that a small change in one area could lead your number crunchers to say actually we have affected a constituency miles away from here that was not intended, to keep within the rigidity of the plus and minus 5 per cent which Parliament has agreed to, and which I agree as well. In other words, I agree more or less the proposals, those two modifications, and do not do the southern extension to Credenhill, because it makes a ridiculous position to come south of the city centre in Hereford. That is the conclusion.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Lord Rooker. Any comments, questions from the floor? (No response) Thank you very much, thank you

for your time, really interesting. Do we have anyone on the floor who wants to speak later this morning? Otherwise I think we are going to adjourn. We actually do not have any speaker now listed until 2.30. If we will just take a second while we discuss how long we will adjourn for. So what we are going to do is we are now going to adjourn until 12.30, double check if anyone else has come, who wants to speak, and we may then have a further adjournment until 2.30. So if we reconvene at 12.30, thank you very much for your help so far.

Time noted: 11.30 am

After a short break

Time noted: 12.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for coming back, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back, and we do have one speaker, Keith Hudson has very kindly agreed to speak, so the floor is yours, and a reminder, Mr Hudson, name, address, and we will put the map up of your area, and there is a zapper thing that you can point if you need to.

MR HUDSON: (Shrewsbury and Atcham Labour Party) I am Keith Hudson, I represent Shrewsbury and Atcham constituency, Labour Party. We want to just briefly comment on the proposals for Shrewsbury and the neighbouring constituencies. I want to say at the beginning that we actually regret that the review is taking place at all, we see no necessity of reduction of number of MPs from 650 to 600, and we are concerned that the figures that the Commission had to work with are based on December 2015. However, given that, we think, given the parameters within which the review had to take place, we think the Boundary Commission has done a good job and we broadly support their proposals for the West Midlands. In particular those for Shropshire, Telford and the Wrekin.

We note that the West Midlands allocation of constituencies is to be reduced by six, and it is inevitable that the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin area will no longer be entitled to five whole constituencies. We understand that at least one constituency will have to be a cross county constituency, and therefore there will have to be significant change particularly in the south of the county.

We support the Commissions' view that Staffordshire, including Stoke-on-Trent, should be considered separately, and therefore we are of the view that the cross country cross county constituency must be one that involves parts of Shropshire and parts of Herefordshire.

I now go on to make some specific points. We are pleased that no change is recommended for the boundary between the current North Shropshire seat and the

current Shrewsbury and Atcham seat, and that North Shropshire well within tolerance is left as it is at the moment. So that is something that we welcome. We expected something similar to be recommended for the Shrewsbury and Atcham seat, because it is very, very close to the average, I think varying by only 1.2 per cent from the recommended average for all English constituencies. However, we recognise there is an issue in South Shropshire, and in particularly surrounding the Chirbury and Worthen division. Ideally we view Chirbury and Worthen as staying in a Ludlow based constituency, however as has been alluded to this morning, the Ludlow constituency will cease to exist, largely divided in two, partly linked to Wellington, partly linked to Ledbury. Chirbury and Worthen is the one county division within the existing Ludlow constituency that is not included in either seat. To include Chirbury and Worthen in the Ludlow and Ledbury seat would make what is already a proposed very big geographically large constituency even larger, and the Boundary Commission alluded to that in their own recommendations. More importantly, if Chirbury and Worthen were transferred to the Ludlow and Ledbury seat, it would take Ludlow and Ledbury out of compliance, and therefore something else would have to be moved out of Ludlow and Ledbury into a neighbouring constituency, and we think that that is inappropriate.

We are pleased that the Boundary Commission have made no further recommended changes to the existing Shrewsbury and Atcham constituency. We strongly support the provisional name of Shrewsbury for the amended constituency. It is usual for a constituency name to be retained where there is little change made, but we think this constituency is an exception. At present where two or more names are included in the name of a constituency this is normally either because there are two or more similarly sized towns within the constituency, or a constituency crosses a significant local government boundary and they want to make acknowledgement of that. Neither of those cases apply to the recommended Shrewsbury constituency. Shrewsbury is far and away the biggest settlement in the proposed constituency, and is the only town of any size. It has got two thirds of the electorate. We know that some have got a sentimental attachment to the 'and Atcham', but we think that is no longer appropriate. The name was appropriate when the Borough of Shrewsbury and Atcham existed, but that was abolished some time ago. The proposed constituency will no longer be coterminous with the old borough, and Atcham itself, though an ancient settlement, with an ancient name, nowadays only refers to a small village, which is part of a much more extensive rural division, and I do not think it is any more appropriate that Atcham be included in the constituency name.

We realise there has to be significant change in the south of Shropshire. We see no alternative to a constituency that crosses into Herefordshire. We note that the Boundary Commission has drawn attention to the relative large geographical size of that seat, and I have already alluded to that with relation to the Chirbury and Worthen division. We can consider Ludlow and Ledbury are towns with much in common, ancient marches, market towns, considerable rural hinterlands, some distance apart,

but given the constraints under which the Boundary Commission has had to work, we consider that the best solution.

In Telford, Bridgnorth, Wellington and the Wrekin, neither the existing Telford and Wrekin seats are within parameters set, therefore there has to be change. Ludlow seat has to be divided in two. We support the proposals for a central Telford seat, largely urban, another seat which combines the Wellington, Shifnal and Newport areas with the Bridgnorth area, a mixture of small urban settlements and a rural hinterland. We consider, given the necessary constraints, that this is the best solution for Shropshire. We are unsure about the proposed name, we think it unnecessarily convoluted. Basically that is what we have got to say, we are very much in favour of the proposals for Shrewsbury and the surrounding area, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, and I think just one tiny thing, when you were talking about Ludlow, you meant Leominster, you said Ledbury a couple of times.

MR HUDSON: Ledbury, yes.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Leominster.

MR HUDSON: Sorry?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ludlow and Leominster. Yes? Yes. Okay. Any anything from the floor? (No response) Very clear, very grateful for your support, it helps us get to the nub of what people really want to hear support as well as objections, so very useful to us, thank you very much indeed. Is there anyone else in the room who wishes to speak? (No response) In that case, we have a number of speakers this afternoon, but none until 2.30, so what we are going to do is adjourn until 2.20, and at that point if anybody does come in who wants to speak we can slot them in at 2.20 before our 2.30 speakers. So will now take our lunch break and we will reconvene at 20 past two. Thank you very much indeed.

Time noted: 12.38 pm

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to this our afternoon session, and I think we will just remind you that our remit is obviously limited to the boundaries and the initial plans that we are looking at, and we do not have any jurisdiction over the data we are using, the number of constituencies that we are being reduced to, that type of thing, and I would remind

everyone that we do need you to give your name and an address before you speak, and you are being filmed. Our first speaker this afternoon is David Wright, who is the former MP for Telford. We will put the map up and there is anything if you want to point anything out.

MR WRIGHT: Well, thank you, Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed boundary changes relating to the current parliamentary seats of Telford, the Wrekin and Ludlow. My name is David Wright, I live at 17 Elderberry Close, the Rock, in Telford. I strongly support your current proposals as published, your initial proposals. I served as Member of Parliament from 2001 to 2015 for the Telford seat, and I have lived in the area all of my life. I submitted evidence as part of the last boundary review, and was pleased to see that following that process the Commission finally proposed a Telford seat which included wards from the current Wrekin constituency. Your current proposal in my view quite rightly puts this option forward again as the best solution for the area, and I think it is clear to say, therefore, that it has already been subject to quite a considerable amount of public review and scrutiny, and in my view the solution you have put forward this time, which again, as I say, was your final proposal during the last boundary review process, fits well. I have consistently believed that Telford needs to have a distinct seat in Parliament which enables the interests of this urban area to be effectively represented.

There are a number of factors that lead me to believe that your proposal is the best one available. Telford has a unique industrial heritage, and a new town heritage, which is very different to the rest of Shropshire, and it is important that it has an MP who is able to focus on the communities which are drawn together by their new town identity. There is a strong loyalty amongst people here in Telford to the towns that make up our borough, such as Dawley, Oakengates, Madeley, Ketley, Donnington, Hadley. It has taken some time for these communities to meld together since the 1960s when Telford new town was created, and this needs to be acknowledged by creating a seat which takes in as much of the new town area as possible.

Now, if you look at the plan on the board behind us here, you can see that your proposal relates broadly to the area of South Telford and covers the Telford boundary pretty well. If you look at the wards to the north, that currently sit, if you look at the wards to the north here that currently sit in the Telford seat, it is perfectly logical therefore to expand the size of the existing Telford seat to take in these neighbouring wards which currently sit within the Wrekin constituency. That creates a seat which provides the largest possible seat for the urban area of Telford and makes sure that it has a distinctive voice in Parliament.

Now, if you think about Telford's history over the last few years, the creation of the new Southwater development and significant investment in the town park in the centre of the town, have led to Telford having a heart which goes beyond a retail presence for the first time. For many years the town centre was merely a shopping centre, and it is now

becoming just that, a town centre for Telford, it is now becoming just that, and your proposal ensures that the MP that represents this new heart of the town also represents the communities that gather around it. The Queensway is the main route through Telford, the main transport route, and runs from Trench right the way through to Madeley. This is the spine of the town and it is the spine of the town's transport network, and it links the communities together extremely well. You cannot really see it on this map, but it basically runs along this line [here](#). So it basically runs throughout the town and it links the communities together, and this fits well with the proposal to create a seat which serves the community sitting along that particular transport link, and it works particularly well in my view.

Now I would have liked to have seen a parliamentary seat encompassing all of the new town as designated in the 1960s, however this would be far too large to fall within the parameters on electoral numbers that you are working to as part of this review of the boundaries, and it is therefore logical within that context to, as I have said, create a seat which makes the largest possible seat to cover the new town of Telford, and then places the Wellington area into a seat alongside towns such as Newport, Broseley, Shifnal and Bridgnorth. Wellington has a strong market town tradition that dates back centuries, and it has served the farming communities of East Shropshire for decades, indeed centuries before Telford was born. This makes it somewhat different from the towns of Dawley and Madeley, Oakengates, Ironbridge, Hadley, Ketley, Donnington, which have more of an industrial heritage and industrial background, these areas thrived on mining, engineering, and, to put it bluntly, metal bashing, over the years, and they have been the towns upon which most of the new town housing in Telford has been created over the last 50 years. It is logical that these communities are represented together in Parliament, and it is logical within your proposals to create what is effectively a rural and market town seat that wraps around that Telford new town seat, and I think the proposal works extremely well.

In my experience and the 14 years that I was in Parliament serving Telford, and as a life long resident and still a current resident, people who live in Telford value the fact that they are represented together as an urban area in Parliament, and this is particularly the case when you consider that the seat containing Shrewsbury, where we currently are, has its own MP, representing its own interests fairly exclusively, and they have a strong voice from the rest of Shropshire, and I think it is important that Telford has a strong voice to represent the interests of the new town. Telford needs an MP that can focus on growth, in terms of housing, leisure and industrial activity, and can focus on the needs of this large town which is different to the rest of Shropshire in terms of its nature and the types of communities that it serves.

Now I have focussed most of my remarks on the Telford seat, as you would expect, however I hope you will ensure that the name the Wrekin is preserved in any new parliamentary seat that covers part of the east of the old ceremonial Shropshire county area. The name the Wrekin is important to people, both in Telford and Wrekin and

in the wider Shropshire area. The Wrekin is a significant local landmark, and I hope you will keep that name, even though there is not a town specifically called the Wrekin, I hope you will keep the name the Wrekin for one of the parliamentary seats that exist after this boundary review. As I have said, hopefully that seat that is the market town seat that sits around the Telford area.

Now I know there has been some discussion within this process about which wards should go in and out of the seat to the northern boundary of the new proposed Telford seat, as I pointed out earlier in [this](#) area of the plan [here](#), and I know there was a discussion about which communities fit best within that new town area. It is logical, very much logical for me to see towns like Donnington included within the new Telford parliamentary seat. If you look at the boundary, the existing boundary between the Telford and Wrekin seats, I always thought it was very strange that I would be walking down one small urban street and knocking only on one side of the door of the street, on the doors in the boundary between the existing Donnington and Wrockwardine Wood seats, it did not really make a lot of sense to me, and if you think about the connections between those communities of Donnington and Wrockwardine Wood and Trench, most of the children who were educated in Donnington have historically gone to the Sutherland School, which is no more, but it sits within Wrockwardine Wood, and they would now go to the new academy that sits on the old Oakengates leisure centre site. So the children living in these communities here in Donnington would come across into Wrockwardine Wood to be educated in the north of the town. There are social clubs, such as the Wrockwardine Wood and Trench social club, that takes people, custom from communities in Donnington, who cross over into Wrockwardine Wood to socialise, people from Donnington use the leisure centre in Oakengates for their leisure activities, they will go and take their dog for a walk on an area called the Cockshut, which is an area that I played on as a child. Those communities are very, very closely linked, they have employment connections, people who work in Wrockwardine Wood and Trench very much would see the Donnington MoD depot as a main source of employment for those communities. So there is somewhat of an artificial boundary under the existing parliamentary boundaries between Wrockwardine Wood and Donnington, and it absolutely makes sense for those communities to come together in a newly created Telford seat, which, as I said, makes the most of its new town heritage, and creates a seat with the most possible wards from the new town within a newly proposed Telford parliamentary seat. Thanks, Chair.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Just one tiny question, how do you think people would feel, it is not actually about Telford but it is about the renaming that you suggested, or where you want to keep the Wrekin, how would people feel if we lost the Wellington? Now the Wellington is in there in the initial plans this time but has not been in the name before.

MR WRIGHT: I think, I genuinely would say you would have to ask people in Wellington that particular question. I think it is important that people who live in Wellington, who

live in the area surrounding Wellington have a say about that. That part of Telford was not in my parliamentary seat, I would not like to second guess the people of Wellington and what they would want. In my view it would be very important to have the name the Wrekin somewhere in that seat, whether you incorporate the name Wellington or not I think is a matter for people who live in that community, but I think it would be really nice to keep the name the Wrekin as a significant historic statement about - that name has been used for parliamentary seats in that part of Shropshire, in our part of Shropshire for generations and decades, and I think it would be really nice to keep that name in any format of seat that you create, and I do think it is logical that Wellington, which has always looked to the rural areas, goes within, as I have said, that market town seat. Wellington of course was included in the new town, was not in the first designation in the 1960s, because initially Telford was, as you probably know, called Dawley new town in the 1960s, it was expanded by the then Labour Government to include communities that are now in Telford to the north. Wellington was included at that later point, as were areas like Oakengates, so I make no special case for that, but all I am saying is that Wellington has always had a slightly more rural feel and a community that perhaps looks to the wider Shropshire area than a town like Dawley or Madeley, who are very much focused in on mining, engineering, they were very much towns that grew out of their urban heritage really, and that is why they were initially contained within the town that was Dawley new town.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any further points of clarification from the floor? (No response) In that case, very useful to help us get the balance between objections and support so that we get it right hopefully in the end, thank you for your time.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Right, let us move on to our next speaker, who is Angela McClements from Arleston ward.

CLLR McCLEMENTS: (Arleston Ward) Thank you. If I can introduce myself to everyone, my name is Angela McClements, and I live at 1 Shoveller Drive, Apley, Telford. I am the borough and town councillor for Arleston ward in Wellington. I have lived in Wellington for 44 years before moving to Apley 14 years ago, which is adjacent to Wellington. My family have lived in Wellington for many generations, and are proud to be called Wellingtonians. It is therefore with some knowledge and awareness of the area that I grew up in and now live in that I wish to make representation today.

Firstly, I would like to say that I wholeheartedly support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals. They are common sense proposals and clearly recognise that Telford should be one constituency with its thriving economy, supported by the council's business winning, business supporting ethos and growth strategy. It is crucial that you raise the profile of the town, for business, for tourism, for commerce and for industry.

For me Telford has to be identified as one name, one town and one cohesive community.

However, moving on to where I live and my involvement as a local ward councillor, my starting point is that I do believe that the current Wrekin constituency, which includes Wellington and Apley, should be part of a rural based constituency. My town of Wellington, where I grew up, has a proud tradition of being a market town, and for many years was known as Wellington rural council until 1974. It identifies more with other rural towns across the borough, Newport, Shifnal, that is in the Wrekin constituency, and there are some Wellington residents who have never quite felt comfortable about being under the umbrella of the new town of Telford. Indeed, some Wellington residents do not put Telford on their post code, on their postal address. Wellington people associate themselves very much with their own historic landmark, the Wrekin Hill, and being part of the Wrekin constituency ensures we maintain that important identity.

Regarding Apley ward, which is where I live, and I have lived for the past 14 years, I support the Boundary Commission's draft proposals for it to be in the Wrekin Bridgnorth seat. Apley ward borders on the Wellington wards of Dothill, Park and Shawbirch, and has a clear identity with Wellington for shopping, schools, doctors and public transport. When I moved to Apley in 2001 my children went to Charlton School, Wellington. It was and still is the catchment area for Apley children. My children, now grown up, walk there every day via Apley woods, and it took them less than 15 minutes to get to school, and you may or may not be aware that the Charlton School is now even closer with the new school being built on the Whitchurch Drive, which is right across from the PRH Hospital in Apley. It is clear that Apley residents do want a rural identity, Apley was previously under the umbrella of Leegomery, but many residents of Apley felt that the historic name of Apley needed to be recognised. In particular, focusing on the beautiful Apley woods, of which there is a fantastic Friends of Apley Woods group.

On Wellington town council website you will see that they refer to Apley woods being in Wellington, just 20 minutes walk away from the centre of Wellington. The Apley Castle steering committee refer to Apley Castle being "the only authentic manor house park in Wellington and could, if managed sympathetically, make a powerful contribution to the regeneration of the town", that town being Wellington. Indeed, Apley Castle and the Charlton family, who owned Apley Castle, are vividly recalled in Wellington's official coat of arms. The Charlton school in Wellington is named after that very family, the connections with Wellington go back a long way.

In closing, and you have touched on it, I would like to mention that the parliamentary constituency name, there has been a long and strong history of the name the Wrekin, and I would therefore ask that the Boundary Commission consider changing the name to, whether it is the Wrekin and Bridgnorth or it feels so obliged to go one step further and call it the Wrekin, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Any questions? (No response) Just one from me, which is exactly the same as the question that I asked to the other person, we are thinking of putting Wellington in there, what do you think if we did not put Wellington in there? You obviously do not mind.

CLLR McCLEMENTS: I do not mind, and I actually do not think many of Wellington people would not mind. I think the important one is the Wrekin, because they identify with the Wrekin, it is a name, the Wrekin, which has to have prominence, and I also think if we actually put Wellington in there you might have the residents of Newport saying why is Wellington in there, why have they got prominence and not us as another market town. So I think I have got no problem with it myself.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You think it adequately reflects the sort of community that the people of Wellington and elsewhere live in and they would be happy with that?

CLLR McCLEMENTS: Yes, absolutely, yes, definitely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Any further points? (No response) In which case, we really appreciate your time and for coming in, thank you. One of our speakers has moved from today to tomorrow, so I wondered if Cllr Elizabeth Clare would mind taking to the floor now, it is a little bit early, thank you.

CLLR CLARE: (Donnington Ward) Thank you. My name is Elizabeth Clare, better known to most as Liz Clare. I live at The Farm, Furness Lane, Trench, Telford, and I am the Donnington, well, one of the Donnington ward councillors. Might I start with and just say confusion all round, my postal address is Donnington, is Trench, I actually live in Donnington, and the road that David Wright was talking about is the road in which I live on, which is Furness Lane. So what you have got in Furness Lane is, you have got a set of parish councillors, Wrekin councillors on one side of the road, plus the MP, the other side of the road you have got another set of parish councillors, two lots of borough councillors, plus a different MP, which is the Telford MP. I actually think, and did so last time, that the Boundary Commission's submission to incorporate Donnington into the Telford ward was the most sensible way forward, and I say that from being the Donnington councillor for too many years I would like to go back is, that when we sit at a surgery and people come to us and say they have got this problem, a lot of it is to do with benefits which are Government controlled, and we say, well, your best way forward is to make an appointment with your MP. "Ah, I know the MP, it's David Wright", I said "I am sorry, it is not, that is the Telford MP, you need the Wrekin MP". "Ah, but I live in Telford". One of the things that is really confusing for the people is where we all sit and what we do.

Another thing for me is, and I believe this should be for all MPs, where you can make a constituency that is predominantly urban and have an urban MP, and a rural constituency that is basically looking after the rural areas, I look at it, you can then concentrate and learn your expertise that deals with urban issues or rural issues, and believe you me, a lot of the time they are completely different. I said at the last boundary review, I do not care who you are, once you are elected you represent all those electors, whether they voted for you, voted for the other side, or indeed shamelessly never went out and voted at all. You get two big planning issues, one in the urban area, and one in your rural, and you have got conflict. Where does that MP stand on representing the people that put him into Parliament, or put her into Parliament? Difficult decisions.

Another thing for me is, and perhaps not quite so simply, you would not ask a brain surgeon to fit somebody with a broken leg. They are both doctors but they specialise, and I would like to see more specialism in our MPs. I am also a great believer that your MP should live in the ward, and when I say live in the ward what I do not mean is come to some area that they know nothing about, find themselves elected, and then decide whether they want to live there or not. It is important for me that whoever the MP is, that they are seen out shopping, they are using the shops, they are using the leisure centres, they are using all the facilities on hand.

Donnington was right at the last Boundary Commission to be within Telford, and it is right now. It makes Telford the whole.

I will just briefly touch on the Wrekin side, which of course at the moment as Donnington people we are in the Wrekin constituency. I think we need the name to be Wrekin, I actually, if I had my way, it would just be called the Wrekin. There would be no that it is Wrekin and Bridgnorth, Wrekin and Wellington, Wrekin and Newport, and when I say that what I am saying is that it is a rural constituency that has pockets of urban within it, not one being any more important than the other, and once the Boundary Commission decides what they want to do, and they make their decision, and I am hoping that we have not got to go to a third round to recognise that Donnington should be in Telford, that the constituency which is the Wrekin, whoever the MP is, it will be his or her job to sell the facilities of what is in the Wrekin. We are very fortunate of what we have got within Telford, it is not hard to sell to the people of Telford what we have got, we are still growing, and of course the rest of England is still growing, but the things that we have got on offer, and of course being the Borough of Telford, we also recognise that some of your pockets like Newport, Wellington, are part of the borough, and we as a borough council recognise and look after those areas as well to the best of our ability. We do not discriminate with trying to put in leisure facilities in any parts of the borough. That is our job, but the MP is a bigger, wider job, so let them be experts in their own field, whether it is they are urban, or whether it is they are rural, and for those issues that the people on the ground, the electorate, know and identify with either the Telford MP or their Wrekin MP. I appreciate you allowing me to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. This issue of what to call it has come up a couple of times.

CLLR CLARE: Yes, I have only said that because, without you asking me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, that is fine. So at the moment we have it down, or the suggestion is, and I am very open minded on these things, that is why we are here, Bridgnorth, Wellington and the Wrekin. If it went to the Wrekin only, given that it is hugely expanded now and goes almost all the way round Telford, do you think every little corner of the newly expanded, even the people below would be happy with that?

CLLR CLARE: I would say that it would be a new constituency and whoever the MP was, or the Boundary Commission, it would be up to them to identify and say that this is the Wrekin constituency. I think it would be difficult to single out any part of it, just because it is new does not mean, well, it does not to me, mean to identify with it you have got to take - you just take Telford. We do not call it Telford and Shifnal. Sorry, you know, Shifnal is in there, you know, they would like to be recognised. All I am saying is, when you put one in, why are you not putting two or three in. It is like Telford, why do you not call Telford Dawley, Madeley and Donnington? You know, it would be easier then, would it not, unless of course you lived on the wrong side of the road, and you found yourself, like we do at Donnington, that we are in Donnington but we have got a Wrekin MP, and, as I say, whoever is elected it would be their job to go out and sell themselves as they are the parliamentary representative.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So I suppose what I am asking, because I do not know this area, is that the Wrekin is something that people right across that wide area could feel an identity with?

CLLR CLARE: I think so. It is a personal point of view, you appreciate.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. Thank you so much, anyone want to raise any question? Yes, we have one point of clarification, if you just remind us your name, even though we know, thank you.

MR MURRAY: David Murray from the West Midlands Liberal Democrats. You have spoken about the Wrekin as being the name that should cover the existing Wrekin constituency, less Donnington, Hadley and Leegomery, but Bridgnorth is actually outside of the Wrekin area and maybe that should remain in the name to be recognised, so it was Bridgnorth and the Wrekin. I can understand all the bits that are already in the Wrekin, like Wellington, Newport, Shifnal, and Albrighton, and other places, do not need to be separately specified, but do you think that in fact because Bridgnorth is an addition to the Wrekin it should actually get some recognition because of its size?

MRS CLARE: I do not actually. As I say, a personal point of view. I understand what you are saying, that it is something new coming in, but come back in ten years' time, would it make a difference? I do not know, but thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your time, very useful. Do we have anyone else in the room who is wanting to speak? (No response) In that case we are going to adjourn. So we are going to adjourn until 3.30, thank you very much indeed.

Time noted: 3.01 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 3.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Is there anybody in the audience who wishes to speak? (No response) In that case, nobody has come in, we have to go through this process, we have to be open, and we have put stuff out on the local radio today, so, sorry about this. I am now going to adjourn until five o'clock, and see if anybody has come in to speak, and after that I will then probably adjourn until 6.30. We have two speakers listed, one at seven and one at 7.40 today. So we might bring the 7.40 one a little bit earlier and try and get them together, apparently we have got the contact details, so try and get them together with the seven o'clock one. So we will keep you posted. So five o'clock we will decide what time we will reconvene, if we can get the 7.40 one, you know, 6.30, we might do it that way. Sorry about this, and see you at five, or not.

Time noted: 3.31 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 5.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So I have a very exclusive announcement to make to you, sir. So we now have three people this evening but nobody now until seven, but three people at seven, 7.30 and 7.40, so I think sensibly we should adjourn until 6.30. I think really 6.30. Sorry about that, but thank you for coming back, not a lot we can do.

Time noted: 5.01 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 6.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, everybody, reopen this session officially, and our speaker is Paul Watling. Let us call Mr Paul Watling, and just a reminder that you are being filmed, that we will, you are a councillor anyway but we will need you to give us your name and your address. We will bring up the constituency on here that you are talking about, and there is a little pointer if you want to help us at all with that. The floor is yours.

CLLR WATLING: (Madeley and Sutton Hill) Thank you. Well, I have lived in Telford for 26 years, and chose to live here because of the specific nature of this green new town. At the time we were parents of very young children and we wanted the benefit of living in a distinct environment that the new town brings, that mixture of urban and rural key opportunities that this brings to the communities that live here: employment, social, economic and recreational. The bringing together of several rural towns into the urbane and cosmopolitan community that welcomes incomers with open arms and brings with it many positive opportunities.

When I first moved here my MP covered the whole of the Borough of Telford and Wrekin, which made sense to me, as the needs of this community were diverse to those of the rest of the county, and it makes sense to have a voice in Parliament to represent those views. Since 1997 those boundaries have been different, we have had two MPs, one within the majority of Telford new town conurbation, and one within a much more rural constituency. It has always surprised me that the more urban part of Telford was split in this way, the M54 kind of split, because there are urban areas of Telford which have very distinct needs. In 2012 I was pleased that the Commission agreed to put this right, and I am again happy that the Commission sees the natural community of Telford as a whole and the majority of the community will have one voice in Parliament. The fact that you bring in Donnington, Hadley, and if I can show you those, Donnington, so Hadley and Donnington I think are those two there, into the constituency with the rest of this part of, this part of Telford, but it is bringing that area into one constituency, they are very, very similar needs as a community. The people of Donnington, the people of Hadley do relate to the people of Madeley, I live in Madeley and I am the councillor for Madeley here and Sutton Hill, and this is an industrial community, very much like Donnington, Hadley, and those areas, Leegomery. I can see the natural community that that brings together as a constituency, and it needs one voice in Parliament to represent those people.

I think that having that constituency, the distinct needs of the community here are represented by one voice. It has been difficult at times, people who have seen the representation from the south of the town, and not having the same kind of representation in the north of the town, they have asked why that question, they have asked that question, and do not really understand why they are not in Telford

constituency, and I think the decision by the Commission to put that right after these years is a good decision.

So I would just like to finish by saying that the areas have strong mining and industrial heritage and would therefore be better served by the one MP, as I have said, who would know and understand the needs of a growing new town and urban area. I want to thank the Commission for being as astute as they have been on their overall findings for Telford. I understand that there has been some suggestion that Apley should come into there and Donnington should stay with the rural community. Apley is the Wellington, I think this one here, so taking Donnington, which is a very, a clearly industrial community out and Apley, which links more to Wellington and is seen as part of Wellington really, would be ridiculous I think. The Donnington community, as I say, ex-mining community, ex-MoD, military community as well, and still an MoD community thanks to the work that Telford Council has done to bring MoD Donnington into the next century, and I am really pleased that you see that Donnington should be there. Apley is much more linked to the town of Wellington. I am sure people would not understand why they would be represented by a different MP in Apley and a different MP in Wellington. As I say, it has been hard enough to explain that across Telford as a whole. That would be a less natural community than the one that the Commission has already highlighted.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have heard from one or two people that the people living in Donnington feel much more drawn to Telford than the other way. Would that be your experience as well?

CLLR WATLING: Yes. Socially and economically the old communities are industrial working class communities, and Donnington is that. Parts of Apley are parts of new town development. The community of Donnington clearly identify themselves with the rest of Telford much more so than Apley. Apley see themselves, as I say, as part of Wellington definitely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. I do not think we have anything from the floor. It is really useful, and we have said this to others, to have the positives as well as those objecting, because we do not want to be in a position where we get a lot of objections and do something that the majority are happy with. I am really, really grateful that you have come along tonight and given us your evidence.

CLLR WATLING: I think it is really important, the new town of Telford sees itself as a whole and it is really important for that to have the identity of one MP as well. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We are just going to formally adjourn until the next person comes along.

Time noted: 6.38 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 7.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, we are now reconvening this session, this evening session, and we have our next speaker. Thank you very much for coming, we love to hear from everybody. Mr Overton, we are a little bit exclusive this evening, as you can see. Just a reminder that you are being filmed, that we do need your name and your address, and if you come up and speak here, we will have where you are speaking about up on the screen there, and if you want to point anything out to us, you do not have to but if you want to there is a pointer there. Thank you.

CLLR OVERTON: (St Georges) I am Cllr Richard Overton, I live in 14 Grove Estate, St Georges, Telford, Shropshire, TF2 9JH. I have come along here to support the Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for Telford and Wrekin. I remember travelling to Ludlow a few years ago to attend a similar hearing to this one, where I was arguing for an urban Telford constituency.

I was born and bred in Telford. I have lived in St Georges all of my life, and have seen the growth of Telford new town. Where I live has a great heritage in mining, brick working and steel mills. These have been replaced now by shops, offices, and modern factories, but we all know that Telford has a proud heritage since Abraham Darby the Third started the industrial revolution and built the iron bridge, which now is in the fabulous world heritage site.

Telford is a thriving place, the shopping centre is being regenerated and expanded, and Southwater is bringing night life to the conference and economy, and the council's business winning and business supporting ethos has seen new factories and businesses coming to, Telford. We see expanding housing developments, and people wanting to live and work here in Telford. We have increasing exhibitions, conferences, and tourism in Telford, and we must ensure that Telford is retained on the parliamentary constituency map.

I class myself as a Telfordian, someone proud of where I am from, and since being elected to the council proud of saying where I come from when going around the country meeting other councillors and officers. Telford is a great place. We also have some specific needs that need to be addressed as a new town, and a legacy that has been left. I believe that these can only be recognised by having a constituency that has a strong representation in Parliament, focused on its urban and new town needs.

The proposals put forward by the Commission are logical, and keep communities together, but also bring some communities back together. Donnington and St Georges,

through their mining and Ministry of Defence workers from the ordnance base have very strong links as well as Hadley. My councillor colleague for St Georges, Cllr John Miner, was born and grew up in Hadley and then married and settled down in St Georges with his wife, Janet. The old villages are strongly connected and I welcome the Commission's proposals to put them back together. Since 1997 Telford was put on the parliamentary map and long may it be there.

The commission has also recognised the strong historic parliamentary constituency of the Wrekin, and that is also refreshing. The creation of a Wrekin and market town seat linking Newport, Wellington, Bridgnorth and Shifnal, identifies the key needs of the market towns and it can be argued forcibly that their links of semi-rural with the rest of the rural areas need a strong voice too. One that is heard loud and clear to fully represent the needs of the rural areas and the key ones of market towns.

We all recognise that the needs of an urban industrial town are considerably different to that of the rural market town and agricultural areas, and those needs, whether employment, transport, housing, planning and health, et cetera, need strong representation that is clear, and not diluted, and the Commission's proposals have recognised this.

Telford was a new town in 1968, it is now a town that is growing and expanding and one that will celebrate its fiftieth birthday in 2018, it will be a fitting tribute that it stays on the constituency map for another 50 years or more. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. One of the things you mentioned there was the Wrekin, and we have had heard quite a bit about the name.

CLLR OVERTON: It is a bit of a mouthful what is proposed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I just wondered if you had any views on that?

CLLR OVERTON: Well, as I said, the Wrekin parliamentary seat has a long historic history, and I would welcome, you know, I think the Wrekin should be in the name. I do think Wellington can be not in the name, to make it a bit shorter, but it should be Wrekin and Bridgnorth, to recognise the Bridgnorth seat, the Bridgnorth part of the town and the historic history of Bridgnorth, but also because Wrekin has been on the parliamentary map a very long time it should be the first name in the title, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed, and obviously the point that you have made we take on board that you are happy with the plan for bringing in Donnington and that area.

CLLR OVERTON: Yes, well, as I said, my granddad was a miner, and lots of people went to the coal pits at Granville, which shut in 1979 I will say, but they were from Donnington, St Georges, Oakengates and all those areas. So there is very strong links between Donnington and St Georges and Oakengates and that area, so I welcome the Commission's proposals to pull them back together.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Anything from the floor? Yes, we have a question. We will bring the mic over.

MR RILEY: Ian Riley. Cllr, a counter-proposal has been submitted which suggests that Apley Castle ward should be added to Telford and Donnington taken out. Could you comment on that in terms of what is most connected to Telford?

CLLR OVERTON: Well, Donnington has been, as I said, is one of the borough towns in Telford and Wrekin, and, as I said, it is just, it has got strong links with St Georges, Oakengates, with the mining community, the army, ordnance depot. Apley is quite a new area of Telford and has very strong links to Wellington. I am sure if you spoke to many people in Apley they would regard themselves more of a Wellington market town link than to the Telford new town seat, because of the type of area it is. So the strongest links are the old historic links of Donnington and St Georges, Oakengates, et cetera, than the Apley. I had not heard of that before, but other people have other ideas I suppose.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Any further points? (No response) Thank you very much for your time, we really appreciate it and we appreciate the fact that you come to give the plan some support because it helps us to get things into proportion, not give too much weight to objections if there is support for something. Obviously we are here to listen, so we appreciate you coming in, thank you, thank you so much. We will temporarily adjourn until 7.30.

Time noted: 7.08 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 7.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is Mr Mark Kirby from Ludlow. Take your time. Right, Mr Kirby, if you would like to come up here and speak into the mic, if you do not mind, because you are being filmed, and also we need your name and your address when you get up there. If you want to, we will have the map up here, and if you need to point at anything or want us to bring up any of the wards, you just tell us and we will do that. Thank you.

MR KIRBY: Okay, my name is Mark Kirby, my address is Newlands, Livesey Road, Ludlow, SY8 1EZ. I am the secretary of Ludlow constituency Labour Party for context. The first point I wish to make is largely in relation to Ludlow constituency, because that is where I am secretary for the constituency Labour Party, is to underline the importance to me and my members of the key point made in paragraph 40 of your own guide to the changes, which refers to changes in a number of electors, and in your document you state, and I quote, "The BCE does not take the view that it is obliged to shut its eyes entirely to growth or decline that has occurred since the review date". Since they, you, do not, I do not myself believe we should either, and my first comment is the way in which the BCE has been set up does rather tend to lead to the danger which they themselves implicitly acknowledge in their point above.

The requirement to make changes based on data from 2014 and 15 does have the clear danger of creating a democratic deficit and disenfranchising the poorest who are the least likely to be registered. Our branch Labour Party's NCLP have both discussed this, and argue that the review should be revised, because in parts of your document you talk about people having identities with their wards. I would argue among my members quite a lot of them probably do not know what ward they are in, but a lot of them, or rather all of them recognise that they are in Shropshire, so the county boundaries to me seem a more important part of their identity, possibly, and obviously we are being shoe horned arguably in some ways, but I recognise because of the way you have been shoe horned that is a problem. So I think that is the first point about the problem of shoe horning. It seems to me that that is because you have been forced by the legislation, and it is precisely why it would be desirable to review that. This may also allow for consideration of the way the population of Shropshire and Herefordshire is higher than in the figures quoted and used in the review, and would, I think, enable six seats to be drawn up, which could not cross county boundaries as long as the tolerance was also made 10 per cent. I realise you may not necessarily welcome that last point, but it does, nonetheless, reflect my views and more importantly the views of my 900 members, and I think it is their democratic right to say that. If, however, and obviously we hope they do not, but if however the BCE decide to continue with the process that is, because of the points I have made, full of democratic deficits, and we are left with the constraints put in place, I believe we would still need to argue that we should arrive at the best possible outcome, recognising the imperfect nature of the situation, and in this context I would have to argue that in relation to the proposals for the current Ludlow constituency, the proposals you make do make sense and do reflect links that are there. So although I would prefer that there be a review of this, if we are stuck with the constraints I think the proposals you make are sensible.

I am not entirely sure, this is your new map, is it not? So the existing sort of, by bringing the existing boundaries go about there, and up here, so the two changes are to include North Herefordshire. I can point, thank you, thank you. This sort of bit of North Herefordshire is the new bit that is included, and although, for the reasons I have

outlined earlier, linking Shropshire and Herefordshire is not ideal, because we are then dealing with two local authorities, there are nonetheless real links between Ludlow, Leominster, notably the A49 there, and there is also a rail link. So we recognise that these are communities and links that exist.

More importantly I would argue that the changes proposed up here, with the creation of a new seat called, I think, Bridgnorth, Wellington and the Wrekin, is again something that we would support because it reflects the sort of links which run in that direction, and certainly for my point of view the potential links between Ludlow down here and Bridgnorth and Broseley up there are stretching the notion of a community as it is at the moment. This is a very big geographical constituency, as it is at the moment, and so the proposals that you are putting place I would suggest within the constraints and the parameters you have had placed on you are sensible, and we would wish to support them as a full representation, bearing in mind the point I made earlier about our preference because of problems of the constraints you have been given, which is obviously not your doing.

If that issue of a revised review cannot be addressed, and we are faced with a review heavily constrained in terms of the allowed constraints, then it seems to me that in relation to the Ludlow constituency as is, your proposals are sensible and we would wish to support them. That is what I wanted to say, thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Just before we let you go, any, we have no question from the floor. During the day today we have had a few people in who have supported most of it but have talked about Much Wenlock, and whether that should be incorporated and something else go. I just wondered if you felt your people had a view on that, and then Bromyard might go to a different constituency.

MR KIRBY: I see.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So it would be that little tip at the top.

MR KIRBY: Yes. If I can use your pointer, Much Wenlock is this bit here, which is currently in our constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, and would not be under the new plans.

MR KIRBY: Right. I think, I mean, it is linked to Broseley at the moment. It would be ideal, although I think there is not, it is not something that we would go to great arguments about, but it seems to me it would be ideal if it was, yes. As for Bromyard, which must be situated somewhere down here, there it is, there it is, that would go into presumably one of, what, one of the Worcester constituencies?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That would be an idea, yes.

MR KIRBY: I do not honestly have any strong view one way or the other on that to be honest. It is clearly going to be a big geographical area whichever way you do it, but I do not particularly have any view on that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine, and obviously just to say we do not have any jurisdiction over some of your earlier points, we have to stick within the law and cannot really influence them, but thank you for what you have said. It is good to hear support as well as objections, so that we can get this all into proportion and know whether there is any support without giving too much weight to simply objections. So thank you very much for your time, it is really important that you came here and we appreciate it.

MR KIRBY: Thank you for the time, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: At which point I will formally adjourn this meeting until tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Tuesday 8 November 2016

C

CLLR CLARE, 36, 38, 39

D

MR DUNNE, 15, 19, 20

H

MR HUDSON, 28, 30

K

MR KIRBY, 45, 46, 47

L

LORD GROCOTT, 12, 13, 15
LORD ROOKER, 25

M

MR MARRIS, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12
CLLR McCLEMENTS, 34, 36
MR MURRAY, 20, 38

O

CLLR OVERTON, 42, 43, 44

R

MR RILEY, 14, 44

S

MR STATHAM, 5

T

MR TESSIER, 2
THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43,
44, 46, 47
CLLR TURNER, 20

W

MR WALKER, 21, 25
CLLR WATLING, 40, 41
MR WRIGHT, 31, 33, 34