

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

CIVIC CENTRE, DUKE STREET, CHELMSFORD, CM1 1JE

ON

TUESDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Ms Sarah Hamilton, The Assistant Lead Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW
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Time Noted: 9.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, everybody. My name is Sarah Hamilton and I will be chairing today's public hearing in Chelmsford on Day Two of the Boundary Commission hearing. We were due to start at nine o'clock this morning to hear from members of the public, but at the moment we do not have anyone booked in, so I am going to adjourn until 10.00 am. Thank you.

Time noted: 9.00 am

After a short break

Time noted: 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning again, everyone. It is now ten o'clock on Day Two in Chelmsford. As there are no members of the public who wish to speak at this time I am going to adjourn until 11.00 am. Thank you.

Time noted: 10.00 am

After a short break

Time noted: 11.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning again, ladies and gentlemen. For the purposes of people who have just joined the room my name is Sarah Hamilton and I will be chairing this morning's hearing, which is Day Two in Chelmsford of the Boundary Commission public hearing. We have a member of the public who wishes to speak, Mr Jeater. Mr Gita, if you would like to make your way to the front, I would ask you when you start to give your full name and address, and, just to let you know, all proceedings are being filmed today.

MR JEATER: That is absolutely fine. I must admit I was not expecting to speak quite this early in the morning!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We thought that, rather than make you wait an hour sitting here, we would let you speak now.

MR JEATER: (Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party) That is very kind of you, thank you. My name is Paul Jeater. I live at 80 The Furlongs, Ingatestone, Essex. I am here not only in a personal capacity but I am also here because I am the co-ordinator of Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party and also Chair of Eastern Region Green Party.

Fair political boundaries are crucial to ensure that our communities are fairly represented in Parliament and we believe that the Boundary Commission have acted appropriately and conscientiously within the remit they were given. The UK-wide review reduces the numbers of MPs from 650 to 600, and that has been justified as being about reducing costs. Of course, at the same time the House of Lords has been massively increased in size, so that blows that idea out of the water. The reduction in the number of seats cannot be seen to enhance democracy or increase MP contact time with constituents because clearly MPs are going to have far more constituents. Indeed, if enhancing democracy was under discussion at these hearings, then the electoral system itself would come under review, a system which does not convert votes into seats fairly in any way.

I am here as the representative of Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party and I am going to focus largely on Essex. However, wearing my regional hat, I should add how disappointed many people are that there is no hearing scheduled for Suffolk, when Chelmsford and Norwich are quite a distance during somebody's working day to get to. I can only hope that the people of Suffolk are able to make written submissions.

Essex, of all counties, is likely to be carved up differently. We are the county which loses a constituency from 18 to 17. After studying the proposed boundary map of Essex it seems clear to me and to our members that the decision to maintain Chelmsford as a single constituency has had repercussions throughout the county. The City of Chelmsford has grown substantially since the last review and it continues to do so, particularly at its north and potentially its north west quadrant.

As it stands, Chelmsford City Council boundaries will be within five parliamentary constituencies. What local ties do the residents of Broomfield and The Walthams have with Brentwood and Ongar? Arguably the answer to that question is none, except for those who travel up to London by train, who on a good day will travel through Brentwood very fast. In recent times that is not quite so often.

In what way do the people who live in Writtle associate with Brentwood? Do they send their children to school there? Do they ever shop in Brentwood? I would hazard a guess that many of the people in the wards being moved into Brentwood and Ongar from the existing Saffron Walden constituency have no connection with Brentwood whatsoever.

Could the Commission have considered new constituencies in central Essex? Would a Chelmsford North and Witham and Chelmsford South constituency have embraced all the wards and parishes within Chelmsford City Council's area? A quick calculation that I made last night says that they could between the 71,000 and 78,000 parameters that we are working to. Meanwhile, as other speakers said yesterday, there are substantial reasons why Warley should remain within the Ongar constituency. That is a view supported not only supported by some of the political parties that spoke yesterday but it

is also supported by Brentwood Council. Warley is in the Central Brentwood area. It is quite literally less than a stone's throw from Brentwood station. While it is not possible to make the same case for Ingrave, Herongate and West Horndon, the argument for keeping the whole of a local authority within one constituency if it is possible is a powerful argument.

While not crucial in itself, it should be noted that the person who would be elected MP for Brentwood and Ongar would need to liaise with three separate local authorities based on the Commission's proposals as they stand.

Moving outside Brentwood and Ongar and Chelmsford for the moment, having been a parliamentary candidate in the Braintree constituency in 2015, the moving of Rayne from Braintree into Saffron Walden again moves local residents away from their natural community. The people of Rayne school their children in Braintree, they go daily to Braintree railway station, they shop in Braintree. Their whole life is geared around Braintree. To move Rayne into Saffron Walden really breaks long existing ties between communities.

Losing a constituency from 18 to 17, Essex will undoubtedly necessitate having its boundaries redrawn, more than any other county in the region. New constituencies will have to be created, some wards will need to be reallocated. However, I think there is a need to preserve local ties which seem to have been sacrificed in the examples I have given, and it is for these reasons that I hope that the Commission might look again at Brentwood and Ongar, Chelmsford, and to a lesser extent the Braintree constituencies in order that the local ties that people have with their communities are also considered along the mathematical parameters with which we are working. Thank you very much for hearing me today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Jeater. Do we have any questions from the audience for clarification? (None) Thank you for your time coming today.

We do not have anyone else booked in now until ten past 11, so I will adjourn for another hour. Thank you.

Time noted: 11.19 am

After a short break

Time noted: 12.00 noon

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to Day Two in Chelmsford for the public hearing of the Boundary Commission. My name is Sarah Hamilton, for people who have just joined us. I am the

Lead Assistant Commissioner for the Eastern Region. This morning we are hearing from members of the public and we are asking people to come and stand at the front and speak to us for about ten minutes. I believe we have Colin Riley? Mr Riley, would you like to step forward? Mr Riley, when you start would you give your full name and address, please, for the record, and we are videoing all proceedings. Thank you.

CLLR RILEY: Thank you very much. My name is Colin Riley. I live at 164 Doris Heath Road in Benfleet, and I have lived there for 35 years. I am here today as a councillor in Victoria ward, where I have been a member of the Conservative group for more than 17 years. I am currently the Leader of the Council as well, so I have a good standing with the proposals that you are putting forward, and clearly want to make sure that my views are heard and considered. As I have already said, I have been a politician for 17 years, during which time I have been very active in the community, not just as a Conservative, but working across political borders.

When I first came to Castle Point Sir Bernard Braine was our MP. He was also the MP for Rayleigh, so we have had a major boundary change at one time for our Member of Parliament, which then saw us come together as Castle Point. As you can see by the name, Castle and Point, The Point on Canvey Island and the castle in Hadleigh is where the name originated from, and this is why it is very important to us and to my residents for me to ask you to reconsider the proposal that I understand you are putting forward.

My concern is that Hadleigh, where the two wards are situated, my current ward, Victoria, and St James's ward, which is closest to the boundaries with Southend, is where our castle is. We have a close connection with Benfleet and Canvey Island, and any change to that I am convinced will not be good for the residents in both Southend and Castle Point. The reason for that is that the services we provide now with Essex County Council, which is the second tier of government locally, will put in real challenges for the changing MPs in both Southend and Castle Point. I think it will be confusing for the public not only to realise that their MPs' seats have changed but the services are still being delivered in the same way with Essex County Council and Castle Point.

My plea really is not to continue to do this. I also believe that we can achieve this magic number of 71,038, or whatever it is, by an ageing population. As you can see, I have been there for a long time and we have got lots of people moving into Castle Point. I believe that by the time the election comes along in 2020 we can probably achieve that magic number anyway. That is my submission and I would like you to consider changing whatever the decision you come to. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Riley. Do we have any questions for clarification? (None) Thank you very much for your time and thanks for coming.

Do we have anybody who wishes to speak this morning who has not booked in? (None) In that case we will adjourn for an hour until 12.45. Thank you.

Time noted: 12.04 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 12.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Chelmsford on Day Two. It is now quarter to one. We do not have any members of the public booked until two o'clock, so I will now adjourn until 2.00 pm. Thank you.

Time noted: 12.45 pm

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to the public hearing in Chelmsford, Day Two. It is two o'clock in the afternoon. We are continuing this afternoon hearing from members of the public. For people who were not here this morning my name is Sarah Hamilton and I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner for the East of England.

We now have Mr Derek Jacobs. Mr Jacobs has booked four slots, each of ten minutes. As we have plenty of gaps this afternoon we are happy to hear from him. Mr Jacobs, if you would like to come and stand at the front, when you start please give us your full name and address. Just to let you know, everything is being recorded this afternoon. If you are still going, Mr Jacobs, after about 35 minutes I will let you know, just to give you a pointer.

MR JACOBS: Thank you. Derek James Jacobs, 57 Mayflower Way, Ongar, Essex CM5 9BA.

You should have a copy of the map, 406, and I have drawn it as opposed to what I am proposing. What I have done is section it into groups of councils. The first area I want to deal with is the one at the bottom of the list. I do not know if you have that list. If you have not I apologise. You should have a map to go with it as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have a copy, thank you.

MR JACOBS: If I can start with the bottom of the list, I have grouped north and east Essex, Tendring and Colchester, Maldon, Braintree and Uttersford Councils. Obviously, I can agree Saffron Walden, which is the top left. That is Uttersford Council plus the western part of Braintree. I can also agree Braintree. I hasten to add that, in relation to the map I have given you, the wardings have been changed in those two areas, but it does not matter because we agree those two seats, namely, Saffron Walden and Braintree.

When it comes to Colchester and Tendring, that is, Clacton and Harwich, Colchester area, I think ward 10, which is to the left of Clacton-on-Sea, where it could go in with Clacton and Harwich, Clacton being first in the title because it is larger than Harwich. Ward 22 should go out into North East Essex, so it is Little Clacton and Weeley. Also, I have kept ward 7 of Colchester outside Colchester Town, not that that matters too much.

The fundamental difference would be that I have put ward 23, which is above the Witham CC sign, it is a Colchester ward, and I have transferred it to Maldon and Witham. The reason for that is that Maldon with Witham and the Witham area of Braintree is not quite large enough in its own right. By transferring that ward I do not have to do what the Commission has done, which is transfer a Chelmsford ward in and another Maldon ward out. In other words, the whole of Maldon can go in along with Witham and Hatfield Peverel areas of Braintree, plus the Tiptree ward of Colchester.

Now we go to what I term Essex Central and South East. Those are the councils of Castle Point, Southend, Rochford and Chelmsford. With regard to Castle Point, I have to admit I was rather puzzled by the Commission's findings here. I have kept Castle Point intact and added the Southend ward of West Leigh, which is the one nearest to Castle Point, ward 11. This ward is adjacent to Castle Point, and especially the Hadleigh area of Castle Point, which houses the remains of the castle after which the district is named, so it is pertinent. If you drove along the A13 from Castle Point into West Leigh you would not notice the difference; you would not notice there had been a boundary, quite frankly, whereas to the west of Castle Point the A130 divides it quite dramatically between there and Basildon district.

Turning eastward and to Southend, I have taken the next three wards from Southend East and put them into Southend West. They are wards 5, 7 and 14. The remainder of Southend East, that is, wards 10 to 13 and 17, go in with the whole of Rochford district apart from the Rayleigh area. The Rayleigh area is the far west of Rochford district and I have taken that area out. The Rayleigh area comprises Rochford wards 3, 5, 13, 14 and 16 to 19, comprising 25,529 electors. If you take those off the total of the Rochford area and leave the remainder, you get a Rochford and Southend East, Rochford wards, 38,937, Southend wards, 37,836, giving you a total of 76,773.

With Chelmsford, obviously, the core seat I agree. Out of Chelmsford, which I have called Mid Essex, is the remainder, and that is 49,421 in total. Add it on to the Rayleigh area of Rochford, 25,529, and you get a total of 74,950. That completes two areas of Essex that I have defined by groups of councils.

The third group – I can come home, I suppose, – is basically Epping Forest and Harlow. That is west group. With Epping Forest what you have to do is add in wards 12 and 24. At present all that area is in what is called Brentwood and Ongar. That can go in with Epping Forest and I would extend what the Commission has done on the north east side to include the Ongar area and High Ongar, Willingale and the Roding ward as well as the ones that they have put in. In other words, everything to the east of Harlow that is in Epping Forest goes in with what I call Harlow and Ongar. That concludes that area.

The last area is south west, which is the councils of Thurrock, Basildon and Brentwood. Thurrock stays the same. With South Basildon and East Thurrock we have a slight problem in that it is about 900 short, so what I have done is switched Thurrock ward 12 out; that is Orsett, and Basildon ward 12 in. Basildon ward 12 is ten o'clock to the letter A. There is 900 difference there, so that will then put that seat right. That is part of a county division as well that includes Basildon wards 10 and 11, so there is a reason to do that apart from the figures.

Brentwood goes in with Billericay rather than Ongar and Rural. Basildon wards 1 and 2, which are right at the top of Basildon district, Billericay east and west go in with Brentwood, and the only ward to go out of Brentwood is ward number 5, which is Haringate, Ingrave and West Horndon ward. It is a largely rural ward to the south of the centre of Brentwood and borders the A127 Southend arterial, so it is quite a reasonable fit with what I would call Basildon and Wickford. Basildon and Wickford replaces Basildon and Billericay, and Billericay becomes Brentwood and Billericay instead of Brentwood and Ongar. Harlow and Ongar replaces Brentwood and Ongar. That is the end of Essex, Thurrock and Southend, to be precise.

I next deal with Suffolk, which is quite an easy one to deal with. Again, I was slightly puzzled with the Commission's findings, but what I have done – I think I have given you a little map of it - ... there is a ward on the north west of Ipswich, which is outside Ipswich at the moment. It is an Ipswich ward, Town ward. It is called Castle Hill, and I would put that in rather than the urban Babergh district ward to the south west of Ipswich. In other words, I would leave Suffolk South as it is and replace it ... I think if you look up ... I do not know if you have got that ... (pause for checking) ...

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is okay. We will just work off the map that you have provided us with.

MR JACOBS: Okay. I would take that ward into Ipswich. It is obvious they do not have to confer with any other council because it is Ipswich to Ipswich. Similarly, Mid Suffolk District Council, I would put in wards 15 and 20, which are Needham Market, number 15, and Ringshall is number 20. They come to 5,744, which replaces Castle Hill, which is 5,582 electorate, so there is only about 162 difference between the two. Replacing that with that leaves every seat in Suffolk correct. I believe that is a better option than what the Commission have done because they have taken all sorts of lumps out of areas to the east of Bury St Edmunds and the south becomes more central. The other situation is that it means that Babergh Council, which is South Suffolk, does not have to liaise with Ipswich or Mid Suffolk, because these wards are internal to those councils, the ones I am suggesting. That is Suffolk.

I then come on to Bedfordshire and Luton. The top three, North East, Bedford and Mid Bedford, I cannot disagree with. They are very tight numbers in Bedfordshire, similar to Hertfordshire, and you cannot do anything else, quite frankly, so I agree those three areas. The problem I have with the south of Bedfordshire is that there is a large rural ward right at the bottom that backs on to Hertfordshire and Hemel Hempstead and that area, called Caddington. When they had a ward reorganisation they increased the size of that to include parish areas of Whipsnade, Studham and Kensworth, which are west of the A5, and I do not believe they suitably belong with Luton South, which is very urban. What I have done is take two wards from Luton North and put them in Luton South. There should be a map showing you that. I have included Dunstable in the residual Luton North rather than Houghton. There is one ward in Dunstable that I have not been able to include because the numbers are so tight, so I have had to leave it in South West Bedfordshire. That is Manshead, but I believe in time, with increasing population in Linslade, Leighton Buzzard and other areas, that could easily be transferred across if one were minded to go along with what I am suggesting. That concludes Luton and Bedfordshire.

We are now on to Hertfordshire. There should be that, which tells you all. On the west side I have not got too much disagreement, but I would say that there are three wards which I have listed which do not have to be transferred, for the reasons that I have given there. I do not want to go into great detail on that because it is all on there, so that deals with the west side. The Commission can either take up my proposal or stay with what they have got, unless someone else comes up with something better, but I doubt it because the figures are tight in Hertfordshire as well as Bedfordshire.

The east side is the interesting part. There should be a map. I do not know if you have got it, says he, hopefully. There are two copies of it there somewhere.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, East Hertfordshire.

MR JACOBS: Right. If we start with Welwyn and Hatfield Borough Council you will find that the total electorate for there is 73,296 for the borough council. One of those wards

is not in Welwyn and Hatfield seat at the moment; it is in Broxbourne, so what I am proposing is to transfer it to Welwyn and Hatfield. It seems logical to me. Then Welwyn and Hatfield is within limits and it does not have to confer with any other council. That leaves Broxbourne short, so the three wards between Broxbourne and Hertford town and Ware, which are twin towns, really, there are three wards there. The Commission is proposing to transfer one at the moment. They are all just over the 2,000 mark. I prefer to transfer all three, and that puts wards 9, 12 and 23, Great Amwell, Hertford Heath and Stansted Abbots. That then puts Broxbourne correct. That leaves Hertford and Stortford slightly short, but that can be corrected by putting in Hertford Rural South; that is East Herts ward 15, which at present the Commission have said should go in with Welwyn and Hatfield, but I have already covered Welwyn and Hatfield. That then puts Hertford with Stortford correct.

Then we come on to Stevenage, which is short, but we can put Watton-at-Stone in, which is ward 30, which the Commission have proposed as well, and we can put Hertford Rural North in. That is number 14, which then puts Stevenage just over the top. Then we come to North East Herts, where the problem is, but we do not need to transfer ward 25 because we have already covered Stevenage with these other wards. That is Walkern, which is to the east of Stevenage town. That can stay in North East Herts, which gives a total of 67,112, which is below the total, but that can be covered by transferring just one South Cambridgeshire ward instead of three, which the Commission are proposing, and that is ward 20, Melbourn, not to be confused with Melbourne, Australia, because it has not got an "e" on the end. That is 4,170. That puts North East Herts correct. That is Hertfordshire.

I am now on to Cambridgeshire. You should again have a map. It might be pertinent to look at the front of that sheet. Remembering that we transfer one ward of 4,170 down to Hertfordshire, I have known for some time that if we transferred ward 9 of Huntingdon, which the Commission also agreed to do, that is fairly obvious because it then puts Huntingdon correct, so we can agree that. What I have done in the north, to the east of Peterborough, is put Peterborough ward 7 into Cambridgeshire North East. It used to be in Cambridgeshire before the time when Huntingdonshire was a separate county and Peterborough was called "the soak of Peterborough" and it was allied to Northamptonshire. It shows my age. As you can see, it is a very rural ward. What I have done is replace it with wards 14 and 13 to the south west of the current Peterborough seat, which are part of Peterborough and very urban. I have therefore replaced one urban ward and one rural ward with two urban wards. That has the effect of making North West Cambridgeshire correct as well without any further alteration. In fact, Huntingdonshire, ward 4, does not have to go into Cambridgeshire South East; it can stay where it is.

On the south and east side, what I call Cambridgeshire proper, South Cambridgeshire is the most complicated but it is quite simple at the moment. Ward 11 of Cambridge City Council at present is in South Cambridgeshire. It should go into the city, and that

immediately puts the city correct without any further addition. The Commission has put another ward further north in there as well, a small ward, but it is not part of Cambridge City Council area and it is not needed under my scenario.

On the north side of South Cambridgeshire you have three wards, 8, 19 and 26. They are South Cambridgeshire wards. At present they are in South Cambridgeshire seat. They should be transferred to South East Cambridgeshire. Conversely, on the south east side of Cambridge City at four o'clock, you have two wards, 1 and 18, which are likewise South Cambridge Council wards, but they are at present in South East Cambridgeshire. They should be transferred to South Cambridgeshire. That corrects South Cambridgeshire, which is 72,398 in total. With those adjustments South East Cambridgeshire can lose the Ely City ward area. That is 6, 7, 8 and 9, I believe. They are immediately above the "B" on the map. They can go into North East Cambridgeshire and that puts South East Cambridgeshire correct. That leaves North East Cambridgeshire at about 100,000, but the Wisbech area, which is the one at the top; you can see Wisbech Town and it is the furthest north you can go, is right smack on the Norfolk border, so I think it is appropriate it goes there. All that area can go in with South West Norfolk. The total of that area is about 26,000-odd.

At this stage I did a little bit of mathematics. If you look under the "3", about halfway down this sheet, I have done a recce of Cambridge/Peterborough less the Melbourn ward of 550,000-odd and Norfolk 645,000-odd [sic]. That translates into seven and one third seats for Cambridge/Peterborough and eight and two-thirds seats for Norfolk, so the cross-border wards should be one third Cambridge and two-thirds Norfolk, and the 26,000 is roughly one third, so that is Cambridgeshire.

We finish up with Norfolk. There should be an old map here, which hopefully will help, plus the one that I have done for the whole lot. If we start off from the north west and go round in a clockwise direction, I agree Norfolk North West. I cannot really do anything else. When we come down to North Norfolk, in council terms it includes the Thakenham area, which is below ward 20, which is right on the border, and that at the moment is in Broadland. I have included that council area of North Norfolk in the North Norfolk seat, and on the east side three wards there, 26, 31 and 32, I have transferred to Great Yarmouth, which has a shortfall. I hasten to add that I did all this about three years ago for the previous aborted test. I have done three wards simply because that is what the Commission proposed last time. I originally proposed just doing number 31, but they must have had a reason for it. Perhaps it was a better line; I do not know, so I have kept with them on that one. You can check up with them and see from three years ago that I am reproducing the Norfolk that I produced three years ago.

That is three seats done. We then come to Norwich. In Norwich what the Commission have done is taken one ward from North and put it in South and done one or two other things. All you need to do for South is extend one ward westward, which is, looking at South Norfolk, Old Costessey, ward 25. It is below a squiggly line. That squiggly line is

the River Wensum which goes through Norwich. That ward there below that transfers from Norfolk South to Norwich South, and that puts both seats in the correct manner. A one-ward transfer corrects both seats.

Right above the Old Costessey ward, north of the River Wensum, are four Broadland District Council seats, which are urban, and I have transferred those to Norwich North. I hasten to add that at this stage that leaves Norwich North and Norwich South at about 75,000, which in my view means that in the next couple of reviews they should not need to be altered; that is the theory anyway, whereas at present with the Commission I think the Norwich seats are about 71,000, so they will probably have to be altered anyway with increased electorates. That leaves the rest of Broadland minus those four seats. Broadland used to include the Fakenham area of North Norfolk District Council but it cannot any more, so we now go on to Breckland Council, for which you should have a separate sheet, that one.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, that one.

MR JACOBS: The north side of that is what I call Dereham. There is a town to the west of Norwich called Dereham, so I have taken all that area, Dereham and to the north of that the Breckland Council and substituted that for the Fakenham district to go in with Broadland. The rest of Breckland Council, to the south of that area, becomes the new Mid Norfolk apart from four wards on the west side, which go in with South West Norfolk, which goes in with Wisbech. That is it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Jacobs. You have spent an awful lot of time and effort on that and we are very grateful. Does anyone have any questions for clarification from the audience?

MR PRATT: Roger Pratt, Conservative Party. That was a very extensive run through Eastern Region. You referred to a number of numbers when you were referring to wards. Can you tell me what numbers they are you referring to when you have referred to the particular numbers?

MR JACOBS: Yes. Have you got any particular ones in mind?

MR PRATT: No. I cannot see where the Commission refer to wards by numbers. You referred to wards 20 and 19 and all of those.

MR JACOBS: You should have a list from the Commission and you should have the maps and this. This is from the Commission's website and lists all the wards. All I did was print it out.

MR PRATT: I am with you, so it is from the detailed list rather than Appendix A?

MR JACOBS: Yes.

MR PRATT: I am grateful. Can I ask one or two specific things with regard to wards? It would be helpful if you could let me know by name. In terms of Hertfordshire you said in East Hertfordshire there were three wards that you returned to their existing constituencies. I wonder if you could tell me which three wards those were.

MR JACOBS: I thought I had mentioned them but I will try again. Do you mean the ones that are going into Broxbourne?

MR PRATT: No. I think you said in East Hertfordshire there were three wards that could go back to their existing constituencies and then you moved on to more general Hertfordshire.

MR JACOBS: I suggested first of all Welwyn and Hatfield.

MR PRATT: Yes.

MR JACOBS: If you look at the total for Welwyn and Hatfield ---

MR PRATT: I understand that is coterminous.

MR JACOBS: Right. Having taken that ward back into Welwyn and Hatfield, it means that Broxbourne is short, so the three East Hertfordshire wards between Hertford, Ware and Broxbourne then go into Broxbourne. The Commission is saying one ward at the moment because it has got the ...

MR PRATT: Yes, so am I right in saying that therefore in South West Hertfordshire, Hemel Hempstead, Watford, you are not doing anything?

MR JACOBS: I propose that three wards in the South West are should be left where they are. It does not matter whether they are transferred or not. You are still within the tolerance figures. I am saying that three of the ward transfers are not necessarily; you still would hit the figures.

MR PRATT: It is those three I am interested in rather than the others.

MR JACOBS: You are interested in the South West?

MR PRATT: Yes, the three in South West, Watford, etc.

MR JACOBS: When you get home, if you look on the Three Rivers District Council website you will find a map of the wards that have been altered. It is quite extensive and it shows you everything. What basically happens is that the Commission are

proposing to put Leavesden, which is north of Watford, in with St Albans. It does not need it because St Albans just needs the one transfer to reach tolerance.

MR PRATT: You are suggesting Leavesden remains in Watford?

MR JACOBS: Correct, and then to the south South Oxhey at the moment is in South West Hertfordshire, so I am saying why not leave it there.

MR PRATT: Okay.

MR JACOBS: The last thing is that Decoram ward, 5, Ashridge, which is up to the north west of Hemel Hempstead, the Commission are saying put that into South West Hertfordshire. I am saying leave it where it is.

MR PRATT: In Hemel Hempstead?

MR JACOBS: Yes.

MR PRATT: Does that make the numbers right?

MR JACOBS: The Commission's proposal numbers are right and my proposals are right. You have a choice. You can either stay with the Commission or do what I am saying.

MR PRATT: Basically, you have put Ashridge into Hemel Hempstead?

MR JACOBS: Leave it where it is in Hemel Hempstead.

MR PRATT: What do you do with Gade Valley?

MR JACOBS: You leave that in Hemel Hempstead. You have to have Gade Valley in Hemel Hempstead; otherwise the figures do not work.

MR PRATT: I am with you. You move Ashridge, you move South Oxhey and you move Leavesden?

MR JACOBS: Yes, back to where they were, back to where the sheets say they are now.

MR PRATT: To the existing constituency?

MR JACOBS: Yes.

MR PRATT: So Ashridge, Leavesden and South Oxhey?

MR JACOBS: I am not going to fall on my sword over this. It is an option; that is all I am saying.

MR PRATT: Okay. That is extremely helpful, to try and work that out. The other one that I ask if you could explain is Peterborough. Can you tell me the wards you are taking out and the wards you are putting in to the Peterborough constituency?

MR JACOBS: There is a rural ward to the east side of Peterborough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is it Rural, Eye and Thorney?

MR JACOBS: Something and Thorney.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, Rural, Eye and Thorney.

MR JACOBS: If you look at old maps of Cambridgeshire you will find that that ward used to be in Cambridgeshire, and it is a rural ward. What I am saying is that if you take that ward out and put it in North East Cambridgeshire, and put two urban wards of Peterborough from North West Cambridgeshire into Peterborough, you are killing two birds with one stone. You are increasing the urban area of Peterborough and you are correcting North West Cambridgeshire at the same time without having to take one ward out and put it into South East Cambridgeshire.

MR PRATT: Which wards would you put into Peterborough? You take Eye and Thorney out. Which wards would you put in? The Commission put Fletton and Woodstone in. Which other two?

MR JACOBS: The wards that go in are ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is it Urban Alton?

MR JACOBS: 13 and 14, Orton Longueville and Orton Waterville. They are on the south west side of Peterborough.

MR PRATT: I see.

MR JACOBS: They come to 12,500. What I am saying is that it is preferable to put two urban wards into Peterborough and take one rural one out, which used to be in Cambridgeshire anyway. Not only does that put Peterborough just within limits; it produces enough of North East Cambridgeshire that I can take Wisbech out, and it also corrects North West Cambridgeshire without taking one ward of that out. If one looks at Huntingdonshire district ward number 4, Earith, the Commission were going to have to put it into South East Cambridgeshire.

MR PRATT: I am grateful. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks very much. Does anybody else have any questions of clarification? (None) Thank you very much. We will go away and consider all of this.

MR JACOBS: Thank you for your forbearance.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: May I now ask Cllr Roy Whitehead to come up and speak to us? Would you please give your full name and address for the record and, as I think you are aware, all proceedings are being recorded this afternoon?

CLLR WHITEHEAD: Cllr Roy Whitehead, 80 Park Lane, Ramsden Heath, CM11 1NH, and I am the Leader of Chelmsford City Council and welcome you here. I am sorry for a delayed appearance but I have been abroad and got back late last night. I will not trouble you too long, I hope.

What I looked at when this first came out, and I am looking at this from a council perspective to a certain extent rather than individual areas, was that the proposals you had put forward would have had five Members of Parliament dealing with one city council and not that large a city council but nonetheless a city council. We currently have three Members of Parliament, Maldon and Saffron Walden and Chelmsford, and even so that is slightly more, I think, than many areas have. There are lots of things that you could do, and I am not suggesting you do any of them, about having Chelmsford North and Chelmsford South and so on, because those have always seemed logical to our residents. Nonetheless, I understand what you are trying to do and I am not trying to query masses of it.

What I am trying to do is reduce the number of orphan wards to a certain extent because you have two in particular that have been pushed into other areas to make the numbers right, and I am offering you a solution to try to get rid of that particular orphan part of the story.

In particular, you have got Basildon and Billericay, a new area which has 74,410 electors. That includes the ward of South Hanningfield, Stock and Margarett, a Chelmsford ward amongst all the other Basildon wards. Despite everything else, that is not high on the list of those residents there, but it is an orphan; all the rest are Basildon wards. The suggestion is to remove Stock, South Hanningfield and Margarett, 4,472, and add the ward of Vange, which is from South Basildon, which is 6,547. That would make Basildon and Billericay 76,485, which is within your parameters. That would be removed from South Basildon and East Thurrock, which has at the moment under your proposals 77,670. Removing Vange, 6,547, would leave 71,123, again, within your parameters.

Moving on to Rayleigh and Woodham Ferrers, which is 77,607 in your proposals, that would add in South Hanningfield, Stock and Margaretting where it once used to be, but, to balance that you would remove the ward of Purleigh, which is another orphan within it, and Maldon ward pushed in there all by itself, and so you would solve another problem, and that would take it down to 75,012, again, within your parameters. Witham and Maldon is currently shown as 73,939. If you add Purleigh to that, 2,642, you would come to 76,581, and again that is within the parameters. Those are the simple suggestions that we, the City Council, on whose behalf I am speaking, come to.

I believe it is of help to all our residents, who always struggle anyway within Chelmsford to understand why currently some of them are in Saffron Walden. You have different proposals for that, to move them round to Ongar and so on, in that the wards over there are effectively swapping from one side to the other. Again, it is not a perfect solution but one we would not object to are those wards in that particular part, the north west part of Chelmsford, which are probably not too unhappy with the idea of going in that direction. Certainly they do not understand why they are in Saffron Walden. One of the areas is Broomfield ward. Broomfield Road is right outside the Civic Centre, so there are a lot of things you could do, but I am not suggesting any complicated moves. The ones we are suggesting we think balance it up, make it more important that the residents, certainly those of Stock and so on, feel that they have been in Chelmsford, they have been in Rayleigh, they are currently in Maldon, and to go to Basildon is perhaps a step too far. I cannot deny that I represent that ward, and therefore will add my own personal weight to it. That series of numbers which I have given you I believe simplifies what you are currently doing without unbalancing anything, and so we end up with, let us say, four Members of Parliament rather than five, so a step from three to four is understandable and we would not necessarily disagree with that. Basildon and Billericay under your proposals would have all Basildon wards within it and that clearly makes it easier. As I say, Rayleigh residents are used to doing that, so that again makes life easier, and the Maldon makes it easier from that point of view.

Those are the very simple suggestions we would wish to put forward rather than a very complicated change that I could propose but have no intention of doing so.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have any suggestions for clarification? (None) In that case, thank you very much, Cllr Whitehead, for your time.

We have two bookings for people who have not yet arrived, so I am going to adjourn for ten minutes until three o'clock and we will come back then. Thank you.

Time noted: 2.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to Chelmsford. I have decided we will adjourn until quarter past three as we are expecting someone else and she may be stuck in traffic. Thank you.

Time noted: 3.00 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 3.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is now quarter past three. We are going to adjourn until four o'clock. Thank you.

Time noted: 3.15 pm

After a short break

Time noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is now four o'clock on Day Two in Chelmsford. As we do not have anybody else booked I am going to draw these proceedings to a conclusion and I would like to take the opportunity to thank everybody who has spoken over the last two days for all of their contributions. Thank you.

The proceedings concluded at 4.00 pm

J

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