

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

VICTORIA SUITE, THE QUEEN HOTEL, CITY ROAD, CHESTER CH1 3AH

ON

FRIDAY 14 OCTOBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Mr Neil Ward, the Lead Assistant Commissioner

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Time noted: 9 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the second day of the Chester public hearing on the Boundary Commission's proposals for revised parliamentary boundaries for the North West region. My name is Neil Ward. I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner appointed by the Boundary Commission for England to chair these hearings across the North West and, with fellow Assistant Commissioners - Nicholas Elliott, who is here, and Graeme Clarke, who unfortunately cannot be here - I am tasked with considering all the evidence, whether oral evidence at these hearings or written evidence, and analysing the effect on the initial proposals and considering whether it is appropriate to make any revised recommendations to the Boundary Commission for new proposals for new boundaries for the parliamentary constituencies.

Just a couple of words on process. The purpose of this is to receive oral representations. It is not to generate a debate. It is not a forum for debate. Nor is it a forum for interrogating people who are presenting their material. There is an opportunity for individuals to seek clarification on any points that may be raised during the debate; I only ask that you do so through the Chair so that I can control the forum and make sure everyone can get the opportunity to make their points.

Looking down the list, I think most people are probably used to public speaking. For those who are not, it is not easy to come up and stand or sit at the front and give evidence in a public forum. I hope we will all be supportive of everyone who is due to speak. We typically allow ten-minute slots for speakers. We have several speakers already booked in for the course of the day. I shall try to stick to the timetable and give them their appropriate slot. My aim is to ensure that everyone who wishes to speak can speak and we will make adjustments accordingly to try to fit everyone in.

Our experience so far is that the timing of the day is fluid and we have been known to adjourn. I hope we will not need to do so so much today. It just depends on the timing of the arrival of other presenters. We will take lunch between 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm, but apart from that we will grab breaks. I imagine we will have a break from about 11.10 am until 11.30 am. It is the second day of the hearing and we will finish by 5.00 pm today. Despite the demand, I have no authority to extend into a third day and so we will finish here today.

Another thing on domestics. There are no fire alarms planned, so if the alarm does go off it is probably for real. The procedure is that we go out of the door here and out into the station forecourt. That is pretty easy. There are toilets to the right of the reception desk and down the corridor there. For those who want any, there is water and glasses at the front. Feel free to help yourselves as and when.

Is the way we are going to proceed reasonably clear? Several people here have heard this several times.

Let me see then. Mr Simon Eardley, would you like to begin our day? If you could begin by giving your name and full address and then please proceed.

MR EARDLEY: Simon Eardley, 257 Hoole Lane, Chester CH2 3ER.

I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on this important process. I have left a copy of these remarks with the Commission staff, which includes a small appendix which I do not propose to run through in detail. I intend to focus on two areas in particular: the City of Chester, where I live and represent a ward as a parish councillor in Upton by Chester, and the Elton ward of Cheshire West and Chester Council, and more particularly the village of Ince, where my family has lived and farmed for several generations. This village ward is to the north of Chester, currently in the Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency, and I would urge consideration for it to be moved to a Weaver Vale constituency.

In terms of the City of Chester then, I strongly support the Boundary Commission's initial proposals as they affect the City of Chester. The city has a long history of parliamentary representation with a constituency in some form, more or less, going back to 1545, soon after it was granted city status. My first point, therefore, is that there are strong historic reasons why there should be a constituency focused around the city itself and those areas in the immediate vicinity which look instinctively towards it as their focus, a point implicitly recognised by the Commission. Chester is a distinct and homogenous community, albeit made up of recognised suburbs such as Hoole, Handbridge, Vicars Cross, Blacon and villages such as Upton, in inverted commas, where I am a parish councillor. Importantly, though, all these constituent parts look to and relate to the city as a whole. Again, I strongly welcome the recognition in the initial proposals of this by maintaining a constituency focused around the city itself.

In the 2011 review - not implemented - there was strong support within the City of Chester for a constituency made up of what we would recognise as the city and strong opposition to the splitting away of the Vicars Cross area into a seat linked with Winsford. The 2016 initial proposals rightly avoid the disruption and breaking of communities of interest which would have been a consequence of the last review. I believe there would be strong opposition locally to anything that waters down what people recognise as the core City of Chester and some neighbouring Greater Chester areas, places like Huntington, Dodleston, Saughall and Mollington.

The Boundary Commission has been able to use the smaller and more manageable ward boundaries of the current Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council in this review which has helped the above. This is to be welcomed certainly, and it offers a strong opportunity to "keep Chester together", but in order to meet the electoral quota Chester needs to increase in size and the most logical way to do this is to bring into the city additional surrounding villages that naturally look towards Chester as their principal city. A number of villages surrounding Chester are already part of the City of Chester constituency - Christleton, Littleton and Guilden Sutton - and sit within the Chester Villages ward of Cheshire West and

Chester Borough Council. This ward name already recognises the strong association of these villages with Chester, their nearest city and county town and historical and cultural focus. It therefore makes logical sense to expand the City of Chester to take the whole of this ward in order to meet the electoral quota. This thereby brings Mickle Trafford, Bridge Trafford, Picton, Rowton and Waverton into a City of Chester constituency as proposed by the Commission.

Another advantage of this would be to focus the Chester Villages ward on one constituency rather than three - the ward is currently being split between Chester, Ellesmere Port and Neston and Eddisbury - providing clarity for councillors regarding which MP they deal with and allowing the MP in turn to focus his or her efforts more closely on a whole rather than split ward. In making this change, the Chester Villages ward also join what I would perhaps term "Greater Chester", those areas on the immediate and close outskirts of the core city centre and which have a long and clear association with the city itself - as previously stated, the villages of Saughall and Mollington ward, the area of Huntington and Dodleston ward, villages like Eccleston and Pulford - areas of similar outlook and possibly issues of concern.

This change would not have an adverse effect on accessibility, which is in fact enhanced, as there are strong road transport links between the Chester Villages ward and City of Chester. I will not detail the four that I have identified, but they are in my written remarks. Suffice to say all the villages listed have easy access to the Chester Ring Road, with multiple routes into the city. Furthermore, there are strong bus transport links between the Chester Villages ward and City of Chester. Again, I have identified in my written remarks four such bus routes which serve many of the villages.

Paragraph 60 of the initial proposal states:

"We consider that our proposals for the City of Chester constituency result in a reasonably compact constituency which, apart from alterations required due to changes to local government wards (including the Chester Villages ward, which is divided between constituencies), is otherwise unchanged..."

This is a positive outcome from these initial proposals for many of the reasons above but principally because it recognises the importance of the existing constituency boundary and constituency that people identify with - the City of Chester - and its long association with a seat in parliament. It proposes a seat that can easily be administered by the Member of Parliament because its constituent parts have a similar outlook and the communities represented are likely to face similar challenges and issues. It proposes a constituency that is relatively small in geographic size, and therefore convenient to travel around, which would positively impact on the effectiveness of the MP to represent his or her constituents and would result in minimal change for residents. In determining new constituency boundaries the primary rule is the electoral quota, but the Boundary Commission can take into account four other factors as set out in its terms of reference. I believe the City of Chester constituency as proposed meets all of these factors in a positive way

and indeed, on the latter point, enhances local ties by drawing into the constituency those villages which naturally regard Chester as their principal city and county town. The Commission has done an excellent job where Chester is concerned and I support the initial proposals entirely.

I move on then to Ellesmere Port and Neston/Weaver Vale and the Elton ward specifically. In the 2011 review I commented in a written submission on the small village of Ince where I was raised and in which my family have farmed for many decades. Ince sits in the Elton ward of Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and is currently in the Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency. Under the initial proposals it is proposed to remain there in Ellesmere Port and Neston, but in the previous review I sought to make the case that Ince - and I ought to extend that to its nearest neighbours - had strong connections to other communities moving along the east of the Manchester Ship Canal, i.e. towards Helsby and Frodsham. I understand that the Conservative Party has made a counter-proposal affecting a number of Cheshire seats and in the specific case of the Elton ward this would involve moving it into a Weaver Vale constituency. I do not propose to cover the whole of that counter-proposal in detail, but its existence does afford me the opportunity to make the case for Ince and other villages again, perhaps with a little more hope of seeing it realised this time. I will focus my short remarks on the area that I care quite a lot about as a longstanding former resident and where I am heavily involved still as a churchwarden of the parish church there, effectively serving the largest village of Elton in the ward and the smaller Ince and Thornton-le-Moors.

Whilst accepting the rather parochial nature of these comments, in honesty, the Elton ward is in some ways unique in character within the parliamentary constituency of Ellesmere Port in which it currently resides. Save for the more Wirral-minded area of Little Neston and Burton and Willaston and Thornton, it is comprised of a selection of small- to medium-sized villages, some physically separated from the urban area of Ellesmere Port by the Stanlow Oil Refinery but all of which cannot be described as urban. They are either rural or semi-rural, Elton itself having the largest population. Their outlook, and in most cases where they look towards as their focus and main town, is different. I would suggest that Ince, Elton and Thornton-le-Moors look east towards the large village of Helsby and the historic market town of Frodsham rather than to their dominant, built-up, industry-focused neighbour of Ellesmere Port. Ince in particular, with a population of around 200 only, has previously been plunged into a local government ward in the centre of Ellesmere Port to which it has little common affinity and its peculiar outlook and concerns have been lost within the inevitable pressures associated with a large town.

There is a long history of association between the villages of Ince, Elton and Thornton-le-Moors and their neighbours in this area dating back as far as the Domesday Book in 1086 and their inclusion within the historic Cheshire Hundred of Roelau. These three villages were then linked with Frodsham, Helsby, Alvanley, Manley and others in the historic geographic divisions of Chester for administrative, military and judicial purposes. Ince, in particular, predates the Domesday Book, with evidence of a Roman fort near to the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal likely to

have been occupied as far back as 80 to 100 AD. I appreciate this is not a history lesson, but this area, I would say, has a unique geographic and historic character distinct from its more dominant urban neighbour of Ellesmere Port. Helsby, for example, has also been the site of the discovery of Roman artefacts owing to its strategic importance on the Roman road from Chester towards Warrington. It is hard to miss Helsby and Frodsham Hills. Their sandstone composition reflects very strongly in the oldest architecture in the area. The geographical association is further illustrated with Ince Marshes and Frodsham Marshes running along the Ship Canal banks of the Mersey Estuary. There is a seamless merger into one another.

Basic road links between Ince through to Frodsham and Helsby are still protected despite current developments taking place in the vicinity. Indeed, these developments have led to the formation of two important local community forums which draw on representatives from the communities affected by the Frodsham Wind Farm and the Ince Resource Recovery Park. This clear illustration of a similarity of issues and concerns from the area stretching from Ince to Frodsham is a good reason in my view for them to enjoy representation from the same Member of Parliament. The Ince Resource Recovery Park Forum includes borough councillors from Helsby, Elton and Frodsham and parish councillors from Elton, Ince, Helsby, Little Stanney and District and Frodsham Town Council. The Frodsham Wind Farm Local Liaison Committee is made up of borough councillors representing Elton, Frodsham, Gowy, Helsby and Kingsley, and parish and town councillors from Frodsham, Helsby, Alvanley, Dunham-on-the-Hill, Hapsford, Ince, Kingsley, Sutton Weaver and Thornton-le-Moors. This illustration of communities bound by geography and communities working together would be enhanced by having a common Member of Parliament who might also focus on their concerns from a unified point of view.

There are also clear and strong transport links between the Elton ward and Helsby, Frodsham, et cetera in Weaver Vale. Although an infrequent service, Ince and Elton railway station is on the line to Helsby, Frodsham and beyond, with daily services stopping at each station. The A5117 road from the Stanney/Cheshire Oaks village end runs past Thornton-le-Moors, Ince and Elton, becoming the A56 into Helsby and Frodsham. Alternatively, the A5117 can link into the M56 motorway at the Hapsford junction, also accessible from the Stanney/Cheshire Oaks end of the M53, and travels past the villages, with junction 12 allowing easy access to Frodsham itself as well.

There also remains strong school links between the villages around Elton with Helsby, primarily with Helsby High School, though I understand not an official catchment area. Indeed, I myself attended Helsby High School in the 1990s with around 100 other students drawn from Ince, Elton and Thornton-le-Moors. At the time our catchment area linked us with the now closed Stanney Comprehensive School. My nephew, living in Ince, attends Helsby High School at the present time having also attended a primary school in Helsby where his sister remains a pupil.

Finally, the ecclesiastical parish of Ince as recently as the 1970s was joined with Helsby in a united benefice of the Church of England between 1968 and 1975, illustrating again a strong community linkage. The new parish of Thornton-le-Moors with Ince and Elton, created in 1977, sits in the Frodsham deanery of the Diocese of Chester. This deanery is made up of churches, amongst others, in Alvanley, Croughton, Frodsham, Helsby, Kingsley, Manley and Norley, together with Ince and Thornton-le-Moors, again a strong recognition of the common religious community links between the churches in this area. Significantly, they are not formally linked with those in the Ellesmere Port area.

In conclusion, I would give broad support to the Conservative Party counter-proposal as it affects the Weaver Vale constituency. Specifically regarding the ward I have detailed above, under this counter-proposal the primary rule regarding the electoral quota is met, but also strong recognition for the four other factors available to the Commission, especially those of local ties and geographical considerations.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. If you can just hold on a moment, we will see if there are any points. Can I just check? We like history lessons on community links. There was a lot of useful information in that presentation. Thank you for the written evidence. I have heard it argued that Elton has historic links to the Chester constituency rather than across the coast there.

MR EARDLEY: Yes, I think that is true by virtue of the fact that they are just eight miles apart or thereabouts and there are roads that link Elton and Chester, but I think for the majority of residents of the Elton ward, particularly those people who live in Elton and in Thornton-le-Moors, they would instinctively look towards the immediate towns in their vicinity. In fact bus routes have been cut between Elton and Chester in recent times, but there is still a bus service to Frodsham, for example, on a Thursday to market day. The supermarkets that people would go to --- Tesco in Helsby, for example, is much more accessible than anywhere in Chester, in truth.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any other points that anyone would like to query? (None). Excellent. Thank you very much indeed.

MR EARDLEY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are doing well on time. Mr Charles Fifield, I wonder whether you would be ready to talk?

CLLR FIFIELD: (Weaver and Cuddington ward) I am.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Again, if you could give your name and full address and then please go into your presentation.

CLLR FIFIELD: I am Cllr Charles Fifield. I live at Willow Cottage, Acton Bridge, which is just outside Weaverham, CW8 3QP. It forms part of the Weaver and

Cuddington ward which I represent on Cheshire West and Chester Council. I am a local chartered surveyor who works in and around Northwich. I am a past chairman and current vice-president of Weaver Vale Conservative Association. I was first elected to represent Weaver and Cuddington ward in 2011. The ward at present is split between Weaver Vale and Eddisbury. Most of my comments will refer to Weaver Vale, although my initial comments will refer to Eddisbury. I would ask to speak to the Boundary Commission today in relation to its proposals for the Cheshire area and would confirm that I feel that the initial proposals are a very sensible solution to many difficult issues. I do however have some comments where I feel that, with a little bit of fine tuning, the proposals could be improved.

First, I generally support the Boundary Commission's proposals in West Cheshire as it is proposed - four seats to cover the area based on the four primary existing seats. As the councillor for Weaver and Cuddington, I am pleased that my ward will no longer be split between two constituencies. For example, most children in Cuddington and Sandiway go to the high school in Weaverham and there has recently been a school bus transport issue where both MPs were both connected because it was affecting the children in Cuddington and Sandiway but of course they were actually going to a school in Weaverham.

Second, I would also like to suggest that the proposed new boundaries for Weaver Vale and the Eddisbury and Northwich seat could do with some tidying up, as I believe is outlined in the Conservative Party counter-submission, which I understand will also help reduce the overall number of electors who are moving from one seat to another, which I do appreciate is causing some concern with some residents: for Farndon, Tattenhall and Tarporley to go back into Eddisbury; for Hartford and Greenbank to go back into Weaver Vale; for Elton to come into Weaver Vale; also for Audlem to go into Crewe and Nantwich.

I would support the proposals in relation to Tattenhall and Farndon being returned to Eddisbury so that they can continue their community of interest with Malpas. That would be very logical.

I would also support the retention of Hartford and Greenbank within Weaver Vale. Whilst this ward adjoins Northwich, it also adjoins my own ward of Weaver and Cuddington, which also leans towards Northwich, as indeed does Marbury ward. I do feel that there is a community of interest between the wards of Marbury, Weaver and Cuddington and Hartford and Greenbank due to their proximity to Northwich.

There is also a connection across the constituency from Northwich to Frodsham along the B5153, a road which goes through Hartford, Weaverham, Acton Bridge, Crowton, Kingsley and into Frodsham. A couple of years ago the councillors along this route all worked together to reduce the speed limit, which was a common cause of concern amongst residents along that route. I am also continuing to work with parish councils and residents in both Weaver and Cuddington and Kingsley wards with ongoing issues, including the volume of traffic from a quarry in Norley.

My ward of Weaver and Cuddington does have a community of interest with Hartford and Greenbank, as evidenced only last month when the new Weaverham Community Memorial Orchard was opened for the centenary of the Somme and was attended by residents, parish councillors and representatives from churches and schools in both Weaverham and Hartford. Indeed, despite being called the Weaverham Community Memorial Orchard, it is actually in the parish of Hartford.

The ward of Weaver and Cuddington also has a community of interest with Marbury ward. The boundary between them snakes to and fro across the A49. Marbury's new presence in Weaver Vale also strengthens the name of the constituency as its own boundary runs along the River Weaver.

There are, however, some differences between the wards within Northwich and those outside of Northwich. One specific difference is the existence of a North Cheshire green belt which affects more rural wards such as Marbury, Weaver and Cuddington and also the outskirts of Hartford and Greenbank.

At present, the town of Northwich is in essence represented by three members of parliament: from Tatton, Eddisbury and Weaver Vale. Whilst a single/principal MP is logical, I do feel a second MP does help reflect the wider and sometimes different needs of surrounding communities that still nonetheless look towards Northwich. Similarly, there is also continued representation for residents from Halton, which will again continue to have two MPs, and there are communities of interest across the council boundaries such as the M56 and the new second crossing over the Mersey.

The residents of Beechwood and Daresbury also have strong links with those in neighbouring parishes in the northern parts of the wards of Frodsham, Kingsley, Marbury and Weaver and Cuddington. Indeed, the boundary of my ward, Weaver and Cuddington, with the borough council -- with Daresbury in Halton -- actually runs straight through the front of The Tunnel Top pub. You can actually buy a drink in one council, walk to the table, sit down, and you are in another council area. Not that I do that particularly often!

I also support the proposal for the ward of Elton to join Weaver Vale. The previous speaker has outlined out in great detail his knowledge of that particular area. The only additional bit I would add to that is that I do consider there is a community of interest in the area. One other example is that the ward councillor for Elton is a representative on the executive board of the Castle Park Trust in Frodsham, along with councillors from Frodsham, Helsby, Gowy, Kingsley and Weaver and Cuddington, all of whom would be in the new constituency of Weaver Vale. Elton, like Helsby, Frodsham, Marbury and Halton, lies along the M56 corridor. Elton shares many rural concerns with these wards. Like them, and unlike Ellesmere Port, it is parished. Outside the built-up area, the ward is also covered again by the North Cheshire green belt, like most of the rest of

Weaver Vale. The similarities to Helsby, Frodsham and Gowby have been evidenced by the recent reorganisation by the Labour-run Cheshire West council, where the ward of Elton has remained in the rural district, which makes the Labour counter-proposal to move Elton into Chester rather surprising. I understand many parents in Elton chose to send their children to schools in Helsby.

I support the Commission's proposal for Tarvin and Kelsall and Gowby to be included in Weaver Vale. There is again a clear community of interest with both Kingsley and Weaver and Cuddington wards primarily due to Delamere Forest and, again, the North Cheshire green belt.

In short, I would support the proposed slight amendments outlined in the Conservative counter-proposals to the new Weaver Vale and Eddisbury and Northwich constituencies. For Weaver Vale, these counter-proposals reflect the interconnecting communities of interest, such as Delamere Forest, the catchment areas of Northwich, Runcorn and Frodsham, the M56, the River Weaver itself, and, between the built-up areas, Weaver Vale is covered by the North Cheshire green belt.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for its work in relation to Cheshire, which I am sure must have proved a particular challenge. I feel your position is broadly correct but with a bit of fine tuning, as I have previously mentioned, I feel it will provide the most satisfactory solution for the county. For the avoidance of doubt, the changes I support are for Farndon, Tattenhall and Tarporley to go back into Eddisbury, for Hartford and Greenback to go back into Weaver Vale, for Elton to come into Weaver Vale and for Audlem to go into Crewe and Nantwich. I would also again like to confirm that the entire ward of Weaver and Cuddington going into one constituency, that being Weaver Vale, is a very good idea. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. That was a very helpful summary at the end. Are there any points of clarification that anyone would seek? Mr Largan?

MR LARGAN: It is not clarification. You mentioned a particular road - a B-something or other - that linked them. I just wanted the number.

CLLR FIFIELD: It is the B5153.

MR LARGAN: The B5153. Thank you very much.

CLLR FIFIELD: A pleasure.

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

CLLR FIFIELD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr David Rutley, are you ready to speak yet?

MR RUTLEY: (Member of Parliament for Macclesfield) Yes, if you just give me one minute.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Of course I can.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In which case I shall extricate myself.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Take your time. It is fine. It is not often I have speakers waiting. If you could state your name and full address for the record and then please proceed.

MR RUTLEY: Home address or work address?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Whichever address you wish to put on the record.

MR RUTLEY: David Rutley, Member of Parliament for Macclesfield, House of Commons SW1A 0AA. Do I refer to you as "Chair"?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Whichever you prefer will be fine.

MR RUTLEY: With your permission, Chair, my remarks will probably go over the ten minutes that I was allotted, but it will not be significant; maybe 15 minutes. Will that be all right?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR RUTLEY: Thank you very much. I am grateful for the opportunity to make oral representations at this hearing today in Chester. It is much appreciated. I also have a hard copy to pass on to you afterwards if that would be of assistance.

I would like to set out my views on the initial proposals as the Member of Parliament for Macclesfield based on the communications I have had with those affected by the Boundary Commission's initial proposals since the publication. I may receive additional information or obtain further representations from constituents following this meeting which may mean that it will be necessary for me to make an additional submission to the Boundary Commission before the 5 December deadline. I trust that this fits with the approach that is being adopted by the Commission and would like to reserve that right to do so.

Before I get into the detail of the initial proposals, I would like to publicly state that I fully support the aim of reducing the number of parliamentary constituencies in the United Kingdom from 650 to 600 and the objective of making these constituencies more equal in size, just as I did in the previous hearings - amazingly five years ago.

I also realise that the Boundary Commission will no doubt have faced real challenges in developing these latest initial proposals given the requirements of the legislation to create constituents that fit a particular size range and the arithmetical challenges that have led the Commission to set out the initial proposals which include parliamentary boundaries that cross the county boundary between Cheshire and Greater Manchester.

This morning I would like to focus my remarks on what the Boundary Commission has proposed in the initial proposals for the sub region of Greater Manchester, Wirral and Cheshire, with a particular focus on Macclesfield and its surrounding communities. I will set out my representations in three sections relating to: (i) the communities in the existing Macclesfield constituency which remain in the proposed new Macclesfield constituency; (ii) Poynton and surrounding villages; and (iii) the village of Disley.

Let me start my remarks on the first section by saying that I believe the Boundary Commission is entirely right to propose that much of the constituency of Macclesfield continues to exist largely unaltered. It is absolutely vital that the integrity of the existing constituency remains intact as it largely reflects the strength of the relationship Macclesfield shares with its surrounding communities. I am pleased that the representations from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties regarding the North West region also support that view.

Macclesfield is a town with a strong and distinctive sense of identity. It is one of the largest towns in East Cheshire and geographically stands apart from other large towns and cities in the sub region including Congleton, Stockport and Manchester. This has been recognised and respected by the Boundary Commission for well over 100 years. In 1832, Macclesfield gained the status of a parliamentary borough and, following the abolition of the parliamentary borough in 1885, the new county constituency took the same name of Macclesfield. The influence of Macclesfield has been recognised by local government authorities. Before the creation of the Cheshire East Council unitary authority in 2008, Macclesfield had a borough council named after it for 34 years from 1974. Prior to that there was both a Macclesfield Borough Council and a Macclesfield Rural District Council which together covered much of what is the existing Macclesfield constituency.

Coming back to today in 2016, let me say at this stage that the residents and organisations and communities that are in the existing Macclesfield constituency and continue to be included in the proposed Macclesfield constituency are strongly in favour of remaining part of the proposed Macclesfield constituency. This view reflects the fact that today these communities continue to look to Macclesfield for vital public services, including the schools, the hospital, train links and for shops, other amenities and employment. This view is clearly held in the Macclesfield constituency, which includes the following Cheshire East Council wards: Macclesfield Central, East, Hurdsfield, South, Tytherington, West and Ivy and Broken Cross and Upton. It is good to see that the initial proposals have recognised the integrity of the town of Macclesfield and have not sought to break up the town

into different constituencies. This is vitally important given the historic ties and today's strong sense of local identity.

Other communities which are set to remain in the proposed new Macclesfield constituency also have strong links with the town. Starting with Bollington, this community has a strong sense of identity in its own right. However, Bollington clearly looks to Macclesfield for public services and a wide range of shops and local amenities. This is also true for Higher Hurdsfield, which is part of the Cheshire East Council ward as well. Turning to Gawsworth ward, I can confirm that the following communities - Gawsworth, Bosley, North Rode, Eaton, Henbury, Lower Withington, Marton and Siddington - again look to Macclesfield for work, services and amenities. Their residents want to continue to be part of a Macclesfield constituency in the future.

It is worth noting the strength of opinion in favour of remaining part of the Macclesfield constituency, which was strongly expressed by residents and community groups in some of these communities - Eaton, Henbury, Lower Withington, Marton and Siddington - in opposition to the previous Boundary Commission proposals in 2011 to include them in the then proposed Northwich seat. Just as five years ago, local residents want to remain part of a Macclesfield constituency as set out in the 2016 initial proposals.

I can also confirm that the communities in the Sutton ward, which include Langley, Rainow, Sutton, Wildboarclough and Wincle, look to Macclesfield for work, services and amenities. This also applies to the communities in the Prestbury ward, which includes Mottram St Andrew, as well. They look to Macclesfield for the provision of public services and local amenities and would be very keen to remain part of the Macclesfield constituency, like all the other communities mentioned in this first section that are part of the Macclesfield constituency, and continue to be included in the proposed new Macclesfield constituency.

Whilst the initial proposals have been well received by residents in the communities discussed in this first section, this is not the case in Poynton, as I will set out in this second section. Residents in Poynton, Poynton Town Council and the Poynton branch of the Macclesfield Conservative Association are concerned about the initial proposals, which place the village in the proposed Bramhall and Poynton constituency.

Poynton, which is represented by the two Cheshire East Council wards of Poynton East and Pott Shrigley and Poynton West and Adlington, has a strong sense of local identity and regards itself as a proud Cheshire village. As such, it has much more in common with other Cheshire communities and sits south of the dividing line between urban Greater Manchester, as you can see on the map [here](#) on the wall, and rural Cheshire, with which its residents feel a much greater sense of affinity. Poynton has been part of the Macclesfield constituency for over 60 years - since 1950 - and before that it has always been part of a Cheshire constituency. Under the initial proposals before us today, Poynton would

be represented by a Member of Parliament whom it is feared would have a greater focus on issues relating to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester given the geographic makeup of the electorate in the constituency. As a result, residents in Poynton would prefer to go on being represented by an MP based in Cheshire. This view is strongly held by Poynton Town Council. Indeed, Poynton has resisted efforts to make it part of Greater Manchester from a local government perspective as far back as the 1970s. At that time my predecessor, Sir Nicholas Winterton, worked closely with the residents in Poynton to fight a high-profile campaign against these proposals which included delivering a petition to 10 Downing Street in a horse and carriage. The proposed move was ultimately defeated in the House of Lords in 1972 in the report stage of the landmark Local Government Bill of that year. Since then, any suggestion of Poynton becoming part of Greater Manchester has been strongly resisted. There is a strong tradition of resisting this move. Poynton's residents are keen to continue to be part of Cheshire. They want decisions about their schools, planning, council tax to go on being made by Cheshire East Council.

I think it is important to state that the initial proposals only relate to parliamentary constituencies and do not affect local authority boundaries. This means that Poynton would continue to be part of Cheshire East Council for local government purposes, whatever the outcome of the Boundary Commission's proposal. However, it is right to recognise the strong concerns felt by local residents that these proposals could help strengthen the case for integrating Poynton and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester in the years ahead. They feel, understandably, that the Commission's initial proposals are the thin end of the wedge in this direction. It is my strong opinion, and I trust this is a view shared by the Boundary Commission, that if the initial proposals are implemented in the future then they should not be seen as setting a precedent for Poynton to become part of the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council in any future review of local government boundaries. If this was ever proposed then I would join with other local civic leaders and residents to strongly resist any such suggestion. This also applies to Disley, which I will come to shortly. Poynton residents proudly regard themselves as part of Cheshire, as I have said, and are clearly not part of, or closely linked with, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council or the Greater Manchester area and should therefore not be included in a constituency that is made up wards in the SMBC area.

It is important to note that the villages of Kettlethulme and Pott Shrigley, which are in the Cheshire East Council ward of Poynton East and Pott Shrigley - I think that is on the map there in the bottom right-hand corner - and Adlington, in the Poynton West and Adlington ward, also look to Macclesfield rather than Stockport for the provision of services and amenities. They are geographically even further away from Stockport than Poynton. The residents in these villages clearly want to remain in the proposed Macclesfield constituency and to continue to be part of Macclesfield in any future review of parliamentary constituencies carried out by the Boundary Commission.

Let us move on to Disley, the third section. Poynton is clearly not alone in having strongly-held concerns about the initial proposals - we have already talked about Kettleshulme, Pott Shrigley and Adlington - and Disley also continues to clearly regard itself as part of Cheshire and not Greater Manchester. The strong arguments put forward earlier for retaining Poynton in a Cheshire-only seat equally apply to the Disley Cheshire East Council ward which includes both Disley and New Town. In 1894, the proud Cheshire parish of Disley formed the Disley Rural District until 1974, when it was merged into the Borough of Macclesfield. As you can see, the links with Cheshire and Macclesfield go back a long way. The local strength of feeling in Disley cannot be doubted given the views expressed in a recent referendum that was held in the village just in 2008. The result was clearly in favour of remaining part of Cheshire, with 65 per cent of the participants wanting to remain part of Cheshire, and only 35 per cent wanting to become part of Stockport or Derbyshire. The wishes of this significant majority should be reflected in the design of the Boundary Commission's proposals. As a result of these points, any thoughts of removing Disley from a constituency with a Cheshire-based MP should be resisted in this and any future reviews by the Boundary Commission. I know that clear representations will be made by Disley Parish Council and the Disley branch of the Macclesfield Conservative Association to strongly support this view during the consultation process.

As with Poynton, Disley residents want to be part of Cheshire and a parliamentary constituency represented by a Member of Parliament based in Cheshire. They, too, share the concerns I set out above about the Commission's proposals being seen as a slippery slope to the community being subsumed as part of Stockport in the years ahead.

Whilst it is straightforward to set out the concerns I have raised in section 2 and section 3 above which are felt by residents in Poynton and Disley, I recognise that it is more difficult to find alternatives that meet the guidelines that have been set out and required by Parliament and to address the arithmetical challenge as well. There are challenges that have led no doubt to the Commission putting forward initial proposals which include parliamentary boundaries that cross the county boundary between Cheshire and Greater Manchester. I recognise the challenges.

One clear alternative, though, could be to retain the existing Macclesfield constituency exactly as it is and add either the Cheshire East Council Alderley ward or Chelford ward. Both of these options would establish a constituency with an electorate above the minimum threshold of 71,031. Just to be clear, the proposal would be to have the existing Macclesfield constituency exactly as it is and just add in one other ward: Alderley or Chelford. This approach would also have the benefit of keeping the existing Macclesfield constituency completely intact, as proposed in Congleton and Crewe, and keep any disruption to a minimum. In addition, this approach would ensure that the MP who represents Poynton and Disley would only represent constituents in one borough council, which I know is a key consideration for the Boundary Commission, and in this case that clearly would be Cheshire East Council as is currently the case. Third, this would ensure that the

strong local ties that both Poynton and Disley enjoy with Macclesfield would be strongly and fully respected. Furthermore, such an approach could also lead to all the Cheshire East Council Wilmslow wards being located in one parliamentary constituency.

I am actively working with Poynton Town Council and Disley Parish Council to determine the best way of making representations during the consultation process on behalf of both of these communities. As previously stated, I would like to reserve the right to make additional representations before the end of the consultation period on 5 December.

Chair, in conclusion, I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for being able to make representations on behalf of residents and communities in the existing Macclesfield constituency this morning. I trust that these points will be given the full consideration by the Commission that they deserve as the Commission's final recommendations will have a major impact on the shape of the communities involved for generations to come. Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Rutley. I will just make one general point and then I have a query I might ask. For convenience, you wrapped up "the Commission" as it were. Just to make it clear to others in the room, as well as to yourself - I am sure you understand - the two Assistant Commissioners who are in the room are appointed by the Boundary Commission, one removed from them, in order to consider all the representations. We had no hand in the drafting of these proposals and we will be looking at them independently to decide how their relative merits stand up.

MR RUTLEY: Thank you for clarifying that. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just ask you to elaborate a little bit further? It is a general point, but you quoted it and so I will use it. You talked about concerns over education policy and whether Stockport Borough would be setting education policy for Poynton in the particular case you were saying. I think it was part of your "slippery slope" argument, but could you just elaborate why that should be a real problem at the moment rather than a ---?

MR RUTLEY: It is part of the "slippery slope" argument. What I stated was that residents in Poynton and in Disley want their education policies and social care policies to be decided in Cheshire East. The worry is that, should they become part of a cross-county parliamentary seat, first of all the Member of Parliament would have in a sense some divided loyalties, or at least, if that is too strong a view, would have a focus on issues relating to Stockport rather than to Poynton or to Disley. As I stated in my remarks, and as you will see in the written submission which mirrors that, the concern is that it would be a slippery slope. I cannot understate the fact that people are worried about that. There are all sorts of issues going on at the moment which are unrelated to this regarding the local plan and protecting green belt and there is a very clear tradition within both Poynton and Disley of having that green belt

to create the division of any potential urban sprawl between Stockport and those communities. The view would be that it is not just about the houses; it is about the degree of authority that could be asserted on them in the future. So you are right, it is a slippery slope argument - sorry if I did not clarify that for you - but it is one that is sincerely felt by many residents in Poynton and Disley.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Can I see if there are any other points of clarification that anyone would seek?

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Nicholas Elliott, Assistant Boundary Commissioner. In considering counter-proposals, has Poynton and Disley given consideration to the factor that one does have to break out of Manchester at some point and therefore, in giving consideration to any counter-proposal whereby they remain in Cheshire, where one breaks out into Cheshire?

MR RUTLEY: This is where you are going to have a very difficult job to work out where the break happens. I have a very clear job - to represent the people of the Macclesfield constituency - which is what I am doing today. I do not envy your task. I understand the challenges ahead. All I would ask is that in the process that you go through - and I am pleased that it has been clarified today that there is going to be a further degree of review, not just by the Commission itself but by you as well - that you take a look at the strength of opinion in these communities and the community links. It is going to be difficult for you to do. All I can say is that I hope I have made that case today and that I will do it more strongly if required in the months ahead with the communities involved. Those links are very clear in Poynton and Disley. The fact that there was a campaign in the 1970s and there is still the strength of opinion to resist becoming part of Stockport on a local government basis is a case in point. With Disley in 2008 just having had a referendum, to then be faced with the possibility of being represented by a cross-county parliamentary seat is not something that those communities would strongly want to see at all. In fact they want to resist it.

So it is a difficult task, but I think as you think about the different criteria that have been given to the Boundary Commission in making these proposals, if it is about trying to keep local government links intact in a constituency, if it is about respecting local ties, I think there are very strong cases for both Poynton and Disley remaining in Macclesfield. As I have said, all that is required is just one ward coming in. I do not have proposals for the jigsaw for the whole of the North West - there are others better qualified to think about the ripple-out implications - but with only one ward of 3,000 those ripple-out effects are minimal - if that was to be countenanced as set out by me, with just one ward being added to the existing seat.

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

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan from Bury metropolitan district. You mentioned this ward either being --- I cannot remember which.

MR RUTLEY: I do not think you can see them on here. It is Alderley or Chelford. They adjoin the Macclesfield constituency.

MR LARGAN: I know where Chelford is - it is just below Knutsford - but where is the other one?

MR RUTLEY: You can see on the map that they are right next door. (Indicating). It used to be part of the old Macclesfield constituency. I am sure Sir Robert will remember those days. Yes, they have a link.

MR LARGAN: Forgive me. I did not recognise what you said. I apologise. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr Rutley.

MR RUTLEY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. I understand Cllr Pamela Hall is in the room. Just before you speak, I see perchance that you happen to be down twice on my list here. You are not coming back again this afternoon?

CLLR HALL: (Great Boughton ward) No, I am not coming back. I can if you like!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are very welcome to and you are welcome to speak twice. Could you please, just for the record, state your name and full address and then begin?

CLLR HALL: I am Pamela Hall. I am a councillor from Chester. 28 Hartington Street, Handbridge CH4 7BW. I am here to mainly talk about the City of Chester constituency. In stark comparison to when I attended a similar meeting in 2011 as a Chester resident I am actually here today to fully endorse the proposals for this area and the City of Chester constituency particularly. I am delighted to see that Chester, the city and suburbs are all together in one constituency and that the many diverse communities surrounding both are all part of that whole - as was ever so.

As you will know, back in 2011, due to former complex ward local authority boundaries, we had the Mickle Trafford conundrum and the proposals resulted in natural and nearby parts of Chester being split either side of the city and into the Winsford constituency known as Eddisbury. As a local councillor at that time I represented that split ward of Vicars Cross, Huntington and Dodleston which straddled the city. It never made sense that those local communities and parish areas were to be cut off and merged into a constituency of countryside villages a long way away, divided not only by the city they felt part of but in some cases a whole country - Wales. Do you want me to point that out or does that help? What have I done?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There is a button.

CLLR HALL: We are in the wrong constituency now! (After a short pause) I have it. All right. So Dodleston and Huntington is a ward there. That is Great Boughton. Prior to the last review in 2011 this was a whole ward, which makes total sense except the fact that there is a river here which has to be crossed which can only be crossed basically here or here. Here is Wales. You can only get it to by land basically or you would have to come into the city here and out again. So that made no sense whatsoever. I am delighted that actually it is now just one big whole. This is Chester as the majority of residents know it. I hope that is how it stays in the final review.

Now that revised local ward boundaries are in place, I now represent Great Boughton. Vicars Cross and Boughton Heath are the largest areas. It is just this little patch here. In the last proposals, these were to be sliced away from Chester and into the Eddisbury ward, so that was to come basically here and hive off, so Chester was kind of going that way, but as you can see, this area here is actually part of the city and the city centre and it made no sense with the banks of the Dee part of the ward and the areas within the ward, so naturally an expansion of the City of Chester to move away was to break natural and local linkage. The local residents are very pleased this time around that the boundaries are back where they belong and have been for hundreds of years. It was ludicrous to have to travel through the city and across the river to get to a couple of villages in another constituency. Pulford, and indeed Huntington, has never shared communities of interest with Farndon, Broxton and those Cheshire villages along the A41. However, their great affinity is being part of Chester for shopping, schools, socialising and for work, as well as their residents being proud Cestrians. Chester has very natural boundaries which I think are well reflected in this proposal - Wales to the west, and the beautiful Cheshire countryside on the north, east and south - and the natural road boundaries of the A41 and A55 are also well reflected as part of this proposal.

In addition, the Great Boughton ward also covers the areas of Guilden Sutton and Piper's Ash, with their associated parish councils. These are part of the Cheshire Villages ward. Previously this ward was part of three different constituencies, Ellesmere Port, Chester and Eddisbury, whilst they are currently parts of the Chester constituency and the ward that I currently represent. All of the villages are delighted that they are aligned into one. It has never made sense that it is split. They are pleased and relieved that they are actually part of Chester. They are closely aligned communities. The parish councils work very closely together. The schools and residents are closely linked. They are all very much part of the City of Chester.

Whilst we are disappointed to lose Aldford on that side of the city, in reality that has very distinct local community links with neighbouring Churton and Farndon, which do make sense, and also with the more rural parts of Tattenhall and Broxton, and the other villages along the A41. Again, they share transport links, community hubs, and

of course lovely countryside, and many local and rural interests, challenges and opportunities.

I agree with the Commission's description of a "reasonably compact constituency", as that is a great description of Chester itself, easy to travel around, with similar communities around the suburbs and surrounding villages and they all look to the centre as their hub for most activities away from the home.

In addition, I welcome the proposals across the Weaver Vale, Eddisbury and Wirral constituencies. As a Cheshire West councillor, it impacts quite a lot of these areas. With a Wirral heritage, I think the proposals actually make sense across the whole. I think it recognises communities of interest and local links.

Thank you very much for your time and for bringing these well-considered proposals which truly reflect the right constituency and community balance of Chester. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Cllr Hall. Can I just check whether or not anyone has any points of clarification they wish to seek in relation to that? I imagine not. (None). Thank you.

CLLR HALL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Is Mr Graham Evans available? Are you ready to speak now?

MR EVANS: (Member of Parliament for Weaver Vale) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you could give your full name and address and then proceed with your presentation.

MR EVANS: Graham Thomas Evans, House of Commons. I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for the hard work that it has done. This is a very difficult task. You may or may not recall in the previous review there was a Mersey Banks constituency proposed which potentially made me have two wards that I would have to travel over the River Mersey to conduct surgeries in, et cetera. I am grateful that the boundary review has looked at that. I believe it has come up with largely a very, very sensible proposal in terms of Weaver Vale. There are three quick points that I would just like to make.

Runcorn: I have six wards currently and it is down to five with the additional ward going into Halton. Although I am disappointed to lose Halton Lea, where I conduct my constituency surgeries, that does make sense for that part of Runcorn. I will still have a substantial part of East Runcorn - I am regarded as the East Runcorn MP for Halton.

In terms of Northwich, currently there are three MPs. The boundary of Northwich has Tatton, Weaver Vale and Eddisbury and a little bit of Congleton. The proposal, I believe, uses the Northwich Town Council boundary. Again, this makes sense.

One proposal I would ask the Commission to consider is the parish of Hartford. Hartford has its own distinct parish council. Perhaps you could consider keeping it in Weaver Vale.

Although I am very, very disappointed to lose Northwich, Northwich does deserve to have one voice and one Member of Parliament. It is a growing town. I understand why the Boundary Commission has proposed to do that, although I would be disappointed to lose it.

Finally, there is a proposal for Helsby community to be connected to Ince. The parish of Ince is very much part of the Helsby community, not least GP services but also the schooling - the two primary schools are feeder schools into Helsby High School - and therefore Ince does look to the Helsby community. It is a very rural community and it tends to look towards Helsby, and therefore Weaver Vale, rather than Ellesmere Port and Chester.

That is essentially my submission. I welcome the Weaver Vale boundary. I welcome the very difficult work and decisions you have had to make, but I think it makes very much a sensible conclusion for Weaver Vale taking in the communities collectively. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Perhaps I might just ask. You referred there twice to the parishes of Hartford and Ince. Ince, we have heard already in this discussion, is part of the Elton ward and that moves across. When you talk about the parish of Hartford, do you just mean the parish of Hartford and therefore whether we would split a ward?

MR EVANS: You could potentially consider that. There is the Greenbank ward which is part of Northwich Town Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But is it only the parish of Hartford that ---?

MR EVANS: It is referred to as the ward of Hartford and Greenbank. The majority of Hartford is Hartford Parish Council. The vast majority of that ward is Hartford Parish Council.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any other points of clarification that anyone would wish to ask? (None). Thank you very much, Mr Evans, for coming.

MR EVANS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are slightly ahead of our timetable. Mr Osborne, are you ready to speak?

MR OSBORNE: (Member of Parliament for Tatton) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Again, if you could give your full name and address and then proceed with your presentation.

MR OSBORNE: Absolutely. George Osborne, Member of Parliament for Tatton, address House of Commons.

I thank the Commission for providing me with the opportunity to make my representations on behalf of my constituents. Let me start by saying that whilst I completely support the overall work of the Boundary Commission and support the requirement to have more equally sized seats and accept there will be fewer seats in the North West, I must express my regret that the constituency that I have represented for 15 years is being divided in five different ways by the initial proposal. That is a matter of personal regret for me because it has been a very happy constituency to represent, but of course I accept that there is going to be considerable change to the Tatton constituency. I am not proposing today to object to that but rather to address two particular concerns I have about the Commission's proposals and to propose an alternative which I believe satisfies the goals that the Commission has set itself.

I want to focus my remarks on two concerns, which are that the mainly Cheshire county town of Knutsford is being moved into the largely Greater Manchester seat with Altrincham, separating Knutsford off from one of its local rural wards that is has traditionally been tied to - Chelford - and, second, that the other major town that I represent, Wilmslow, is being divided into two separate constituencies. I am not objecting to the changes in the west of my constituency: the moving of the Marbury ward into Weaver Vale or the Shakerley ward and the Rudheath ward into the Northwich and Eddisbury seat. I am not objecting to that. So let me focus on those two areas of concern, first of all Knutsford.

Knutsford is a historic county town in Cheshire and has been long established as such. If it were to be linked with Altrincham, it would be a rather unnatural link. The two communities are divided by the River Bollin and the M56 motorway. You would have a rural unitary authority in one part of the constituency and a Greater Manchester council in another. Of course from next May that area would also have an elected mayor for Manchester and would be part of a combined Greater Manchester Authority. They are two different communities with no obvious ties. In Trafford the education system, for example, is a grammar school and secondary modern school system. In Knutsford it is a comprehensive education system. The people of Knutsford look entirely to Cheshire for their identity, for their healthcare and for their shopping. For example, my constituents in Knutsford would use the local community hospital, but they would much more likely go for more serious complaints to the district hospital at Macclesfield. They would study at the

FE college in Macclesfield. As I say, they would not look towards Trafford and Greater Manchester. Indeed, if you look at the transport links in Trafford, they are consistent with an urban area and they all point towards the centre of Manchester rather than out towards Cheshire.

At the same time, Knutsford has around it the three rural wards of Mobberley, High Legh and Chelford. These have always traditionally been linked with the Knutsford constituency or the constituency in which Knutsford is in. Two of those wards go to the new constituency proposed by the Boundary Commission of Altrincham and Tatton Park, but one of them, Chelford, is left out and moves to the Macclesfield seat. That seems to me, again, an unnatural arrangement and breaks the ties that the local community has towards Knutsford, as the traditional county town in the area. People in Chelford would go into Knutsford again for their policing, their fire, their library, their dentist, and indeed their healthcare, and they would also do their shopping there. So that is the first concern I have.

The second concern, briefly, is that the town of Wilmslow, which I am proud to represent, is being divided into two completely separate constituencies, with three wards - Wilmslow East, Wilmslow West and Chorley and Wilmslow Lacey Green - going into the Macclesfield seat and two wards, Dean Row and Handforth, going into the new Bramhall and Poynton seat. This breaks the local ties that hold the town together. It is a town with a strong identity. They have the same schools, the same school catchment areas, the same shopping, the same healthcare. For residents in the two wards that are being proposed for the new Bramhall and Poynton seat, the wards of Dean Row and Handforth, the primary schools in those areas send their children to the academy now in Wilmslow, the secondary school in Wilmslow, their GP surgeries are in Wilmslow, again their shopping patterns are in Wilmslow and the local employment is in Wilmslow. Indeed, there is not a very close link to Bramhall. There is not continuous development, for example, between the two communities.

So those are my two concerns. I believe there is an alternative that both meets the Commission's objectives whilst also better preserving these local ties. I would propose that Knutsford and its three surrounding rural wards of High Legh, Mobberley and Chelford are moved into the Macclesfield constituency, creating a new Knutsford and Macclesfield constituency. You would then have two traditional, quite similar in many respects, Cheshire market towns with their rural hinterlands together in a single Cheshire seat and with a single local authority. You would be preserving the ties that bind those towns together, such as the district hospital and the magistrates' court and the like.

A second proposal would be to keep Wilmslow together as a town, as I do not think it is necessary to split the town in half - in other words, have all five wards in Wilmslow together - and then link that to the neighbouring community of Cheadle rather than to Bramhall. Cheadle is contiguous to Wilmslow. There is contiguous residential development from Wilmslow into Cheadle. It does cross over the Greater Manchester boundary, but I think it does so at a more sensible place than

Knutsford and Altrincham because the boundary would not be obvious to people who are not very familiar with local authority boundaries. Unlike Knutsford, which is a Cheshire-facing town, I would suggest that Wilmslow looks more towards the Cheadle community: their shopping is there, their commutes to work are there and their healthcare is there. It all takes place along the spine of the busy national A34 road, one of the busiest roads in the country, which links Wilmslow and Cheadle.

So in conclusion, with this approach of moving Knutsford and its surrounding wards into the Macclesfield seat, keeping Wilmslow together and linking it to Cheadle, I think we could achieve the Boundary Commission's objectives in terms of seat size, we have more coherent local authority boundaries, we would preserve ties, Knutsford as a Cheshire county town, Wilmslow connected to its neighbour, and instead of my seat being split five ways it would only be split four ways!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Which sounds a bit better! Thank you very much. Can I just clarify a couple of points for myself? Knutsford and Macclesfield: does that include Poynton?

MR OSBORNE: No. To be fair, I wanted to just address my own constituency. Poynton is not in my constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: But on your proposition there it did not include Poynton?

MR OSBORNE: It did not include it. Under this arrangement the implication would be that Poynton would be in the new Poynton with Hazel Grove - the Marple seat, I think it is called.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bramhall.

MR OSBORNE: Sorry. Bramhall and Poynton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You argue that residents of Knutsford look to Macclesfield rather than Altrincham and beyond, or to Trafford, for their services and the like. When you look at the map, the communication routes seem to run north/south rather than west/east. Is that not the case?

MR OSBORNE: People in Knutsford would go to Macclesfield for the district hospital, for example. They would not go to the hospitals of Greater Manchester. That is where they get their treatment. Indeed, the community hospital in Knutsford, which is a small facility, is part of the hospital trust with Macclesfield. I think Knutsford residents feel very much that they are a long-established traditional county town. It feels if you live there some distance from Manchester, and there are these natural barriers of the River Bollin and, if you can call it a natural barrier, the M56.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any other points of clarification?

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Nicholas Elliott, Assistant Boundary Commissioner. Picking up on that point that my fellow Assistant Commissioner has made, that is how Knutsford feels. How are Wilmslow and Alderley Edge going to feel, though? Do they not also look towards Macclesfield and hospitals ---?

MR OSBORNE: I should have made the point in the reply to the earlier question. Of course the three rural wards around Knutsford would always have looked to Knutsford itself, but in these proposals the Boundary Commission is splitting those wards. On that question, Wilmslow and Alderley Edge feel more like commuter towns into Manchester. They were built as such as the railway developed. The hospitals that people would use, which I always feel is quite a good guide, would be much less Macclesfield District Hospital and more the hospitals of Stepping Hill, for example, or Wythenshawe in South Manchester. Also, the shopping patterns take people up the A34 into Cheadle. Indeed, I think they were once linked in a constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other points? (None). Thank you very much, Mr Osborne.

MR OSBORNE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am just looking at our timetable to try to fit people in. Mr Eric Foulkes, would you like to speak? Are you ready to speak?

MR FOULKES: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR FOULKES: Eric Foulkes, 166 Brookhurst Avenue, Bromborough CH63 0PF. I'm just simply a member of the public.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Lovely. Thank you. Can you just give us one moment whilst we close the door? The entourage moved in and out very quickly there. Sorry, Mr Foulkes.

MR FOULKES: I wish to discuss the proposals for the Wirral situation - if you can put Wirral up. It is mainly Wirral South, but I shall be discussing the whole of the Wirral. The situation in the Wirral is that it divides between east and west. East: we are at Wirral from the Irish Sea down to Chester, which is the populated side of the peninsular. The River Dee side of the peninsular is basically country, with farms and similar occupations. In fact it is used as a place where you can take half an afternoon either walking, climbing large hills, having a very great meal in a small, old railway station, et cetera. It is a place for leisure as far as the main population is concerned.

The proposal for the new Wirral constituency extends south on the east side of the area, and I have no problem with that at the moment, but there is a problem with the west side. The roads crossing across the estuary area are all very old roads. They twist and turn. They are very narrow. They have very few means of communication. The bus route, for example - and I can produce it if I need to - from Bromborough to Heswall, which is apparently a straight line, takes just an hour. It pauses halfway at Clatterbridge Hospital and changes its number and there is a brief pause. It takes a tedious route around the villages around that area. As a result, the communications from Bromborough to Hoylake and Meols, which incidentally is not the northern end of the Wirral, is quite long and difficult, going diagonally across this route. In fact the quickest way to get to what is marked as Hoylake and Meols is to go to Birkenhead and come across.

At the peak of this area is a place called West Kirby, which is at the mouth of the River Dee where it runs into the Irish Sea. West Kirby is a notorious town to the local people because it is almost impossible to park a car there. In fact the easy way to get to West Kirby is to drive to one of the railway stations and then catch the train, which sounds inconvenient to say the least. There is no bus route into West Kirby from the southern part of the Wirral and therefore it is a difficult place to manage. Wirral South constituency is based in Bromborough, at the far east end of the proposal, and to get to the outer limit is therefore an extremely difficult situation.

I have a proposal which would make things a little bit easier, taking the area around West Kirby, instead of putting it into this constituency, and putting it into the Wallasey constituency. The Wallasey constituency then will stretch from the River Mersey to the River Dee, right across the peninsular. I will let you catch up with that! However, that means that the Wallasey constituency gets too large. Can I just make reference to my notes? (After a short pause) Taking the Wallasey constituency - can you put that up, please - I propose that the ward marked as Seacombe on the southern side of this be then moved into the Birkenhead constituency, which is south of this, and, taking the Birkenhead constituency, that the Rock Ferry constituency then goes south and into the Wirral constituency. That simplifies all means of communication.

I shall be giving you a copy of the bus arrangements as part of this submission which gives you an idea of where the people are and where the open areas are. I trust this is clear.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand. I wonder if I could just ask a question. You are moving Rock Ferry into what is the residual Wirral constituency there.

MR FOULKES: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: How would one get from Rock Ferry to Heswall, for example, given your earlier presentation ---?

MR FOULKES: Rock Ferry to Heswall is a difficult route. Again, as far as I know there is no direct service, so you would naturally go into Birkenhead Bus Terminal and then catch the appropriate Heswall bus.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Did you give any thought to Bebington?

MR FOULKES: Bebington is easier actually.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Did you give any thought to positioning Bebington?

MR FOULKES: I have considered Bebington. Incidentally, in your list of proposals you mention Bebington as being a proposal, but it does not include the ward of Bebington, which seems rather strange. I am not criticising that; I am just commenting.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Can I ask if anyone else has any points of clarification? At the front here.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sorry. Can I just be clear about the ward that you are talking about transferring under your proposal? You talk about Seacombe ward from the proposed Wallasey to the proposed Birkenhead.

MR FOULKES: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You talk about Rock Ferry from the proposed Birkenhead to Wirral. You mentioned West Kirby, which is one of two wards. West Kirby is not the most northerly or westerly, whichever way you look at the map, of the proposed Bebington and Wirral constituency. Are you suggesting to move two wards from that area?

MR FOULKES: No, just one.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. You are talking about the Hoylake ward only?

MR FOULKES: The difficulty I have here is ---

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You mentioned West Kirby, but you were referring to the Hoylake ward rather than West Kirby ward. Is that correct?

MR FOULKES: Yes. I am referring to the Hoylake and Meols.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is the Hoylake and Meols ward, not the West Kirby and Thurstaston ward?

MR FOULKES: That's correct.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. I just wanted to be clear about that. Thank you, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is helpful. Thank you very much, Mr Foulkes. That was very helpful.

MR FOULKES: Thank you, Sir. I will sort out my paperwork and then pass it to you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Cllr Stuart Parker? Thank you. Again, if you could give your name and full address and then begin your presentation.

CLLR PARKER: (Chester Villages ward) Thank you. Good morning. My name is Stuart Parker and I live at Roselea, Station Lane, Mickle Trafford, Chester. I am also one of the ward councillors for Chester Villages ward. I am here today to also represent my other ward colleague, Cllr Margaret Parker, who unfortunately cannot attend these meetings due to other commitments but endorses all the comments which I will be making.

First and foremost, I would like to say that we fully support the recommendations from the Boundary Commission to include the whole of Chester Villages ward into a single Chester constituency. Chester Villages ward is made up of six villages which nestle three miles to the south of Chester city centre. The six villages are currently split between three parliamentary constituencies as follows: Mickle Trafford comes under Ellesmere Port constituency; Guilden Sutton, Littleton and Christleton come under the Chester constituency; Waverton and Rowton come under Eddisbury constituency. This creates utter confusion for our residents who cannot understand why they are not part of Chester and why they have a different MP from their neighbours in the next village. Margaret and myself, as ward councillors, spend most of our time, especially at parliamentary elections, having to produce three different sets of election papers for distribution in the appropriate villages within the ward and having to explain to confused residents why they are not part of Chester and therefore why they have a different MP to vote for. This is an absolute nonsense. It must be pretty unique in England for a local council ward to be operating under multi constituencies. Furthermore, the six villages are also represented by individual parish councils. As the first tier of democratic representation, and in the spirit of austerity, the six parish councils often work together to economise cost, but this also creates confusion due to the segregation of the neighbouring villages, controlled by different constituencies.

Chester Villages ward residents see themselves as totally affiliated to Chester. Each village is serviced well by public transport into Chester, with residents undertaking the majority of their shopping and social entertaining and dining in the city. Chester Villages only has one high school, which is situated in Christleton and serves the whole of the ward, with the next nearest high school being situated in

Upton, an urban area of Chester which some Chester Villages children attend, again forging links with Chester.

It is madness that the ward is segregated with three different constituencies and three different MPs when all Chester Villages residents want to be working together under one Chester parliamentary constituency. The ward is called Chester Villages and should operate within a single Chester constituency three miles outside the city centre as a rural villages sector surrounding and bordering the urban areas of Chester.

In conclusion, Margaret and I totally support the Boundary Commission's proposal to move the whole of Chester Villages into a single Chester constituency which will remove residents' confusion and enable the six villages to harmonise under two ward councillors and one Member of Parliament. Finally, the transfer of Mickle Trafford and District, Waverton and Rowton into a Chester constituency will increase the present representation quota to the Boundary Commission recommended level. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Cllr Parker. I will ask whether there are any points of clarification required, but I suspect not. (None). That was very clear. Thank you very much.

CLLR PARKER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just check, but I do not think he is in the room at the moment, Jim McMahon MP? (No response). No. Mr Adrian Walmsley? Thank you, Sir.

MR WALMSLEY: Good morning. My name is Adrian Walmsley. I live at 4 Ambleside, Chester. I should say at the outset that Cllr Parker and I are not a double act. I had no idea he was here this morning. I will be repeating some points he made.

So my name is Adrian Walmsley. I have lived in Chester for over 20 years. Ten of those years have been spent being an elected councillor, both on Chester City Council, now defunct of course, and latterly on Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. I am currently chairman of Upton-by-Chester Parish Council, one of the largest parish councils in the county of Cheshire and the largest in terms of resident numbers. My parish council meets next Monday evening following which it will produce its own written submission to the Commission on the proposed changes for the City of Chester constituency. However, I am here this morning in my own right to speak in support of the Commission's proposals for the City of Chester, with particular reference to the proposal to move certain villages located to the east of the city into the constituency.

I believe that with my councillor experience I am well qualified to speak on this issue. I am an individual with close knowledge of local communities in Chester and indeed

beyond throughout the entire West Cheshire area. The wards that I have represented over the years have been in the North Eastern part of Chester, all suburbs of Chester, who all look to the city itself, a city steeped in history and heritage, made up of the city centre itself and recognised suburbs such as Newton, Upton and Hoole. Those are the three areas where I have represented residents in the past. These, together with the communities of Handbridge, Lache, Vicars Cross and Blacon and the surrounding villages of Mickle Trafford, Christleton, Waverton, Littleton, Rowton, Saughall, Mollington, Dodleston and Huntington, all look to the city as one combined entity.

The initial proposals submitted by the Commission recognise that the suburbs and villages mentioned should be viewed as Chester, as one whole locality, and that the constituency boundaries should reflect this. The borough ward known as Chester Villages within Cheshire West and Chester Unitary Council includes the villages of Christleton, Guilden Sutton and Littleton, which are all part of the existing City of Chester constituency. The borough ward name of Chester Villages reflects the strong ties that these localities have with the city itself. Chester Villages is presently split between the three separate parliamentary constituencies of City of Chester, Eddisbury and Ellesmere Port and Neston. It does seem both logical and sensible to unite Chester Villages and bring the localities of Bridge Trafford, Mickle Trafford, Waverton, Rowton and Picton into the City of Chester constituency. In its proposals the Boundary Commission supports this view and I commend it entirely for this important recommendation.

So that the equality quota - the number of electors - can be met, the City of Chester constituency has to increase its size. By bringing into the constituency the surrounding Chester villages mentioned a few moments ago, the people number requirements is duly met. I am aware that the Commission is likely to receive a representation that the Cheshire West and Chester Borough ward of Huntington and Dodleston should be moved away from the City of Chester constituency. In my view, not only would such a move damage the strong villages link demonstrated in my remarks but it would also give the Commission great difficulty in meeting the required equality quota, unless some very strange boundary changes were introduced, incompatible with what the electorate expects, to retain the longstanding traditions of a Chester-wide community.

So I wish to congratulate the Commission for its initial proposals affecting the City of Chester with particular reference to those villages located to the east of the city currently excluded from the Chester constituency. Bringing them into Chester, rather than retaining them in neighbouring constituencies, will strengthen their links with their county town and principal city. Let us please bring Chester together. Thank you very much indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any points of clarification? (None). I thought not. Thank you very much indeed. That was very helpful. We have a slight hesitance here because the next speaker, Mr Jim McMahon MP, is here somewhere but we cannot quite locate him in the

building at the moment. Maybe it was his alarm that was going off! Apologies if it distracted you at all when you were giving your presentations. We will just sit for a couple of moments. He is due to speak at 10.50 am.

After a short adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome, Mr McMahon. Are you ready to speak now? Can you give your full name, address and then proceed with your presentation? Thank you.

MR MCMAHON: (Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton) I am Jim McMahon. I am the Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton, address at the House of Commons. As I have said, I am the Member of Parliament for Oldham West and Royton, but before entering parliament I was the leader of Oldham Council. I have also been a councillor in the Failsworth East ward, which is actually in the Ashton constituency, since 2003 and I continue to be a councillor today. I intend to make general points about the approach in Greater Manchester, the impact on constituencies in Oldham and then go into detail about how it affects the township of Royton in particular.

Whilst the economic development of Greater Manchester is becoming far more interlinked, people travelling to and from different towns and constituencies, actually from a community point of view Greater Manchester is extremely local. People identify with their very immediate local area. I do not think any kind of fair reflection on the Boundary Commission proposal could be seen to be balanced. With a starting point of no change in a handful of constituencies, the result is a shift towards very significant change for those at the back end of that review. Actually a more balanced approach perhaps would have been to look at maybe more constituencies being changed but being changed in a more minor way that better reflected local community identity. There has been no commentary provided in the report from the Boundary Commission on why this has been the case and why a different approach was not taken, but in paragraph 45 it does highlight that that approach was taken, in that a number of constituencies were not changed at all. That was the starting point, but the impact of that further down the line means that other constituencies are changed significantly. In paragraph 51 it states that itself. It says that the break-up of Rochdale is only as a result of changes elsewhere. In effect Rochdale, and by extension Oldham, is an afterthought. I think the towns deserve more than that.

The impact on Oldham then is that there is significant change. The constituencies that are being proposed in large part lack a community focus and will lead to three MPs working across four local authorities. The borough of Oldham contains six historical townships and the rural villages of Saddleworth. Since local government reorganisation in 1974 the townships have sat within the Oldham borough, but they are all very much local communities in their own right: Chadderton was established in 1863, Failsworth in 1894, Oldham in 1849, Royton in 1863, Crompton in 1894, Lees in 1863, and Saddleworth was unified over quite a long

period from the 1900s. Since 1974, when the Metropolitan Borough was created, a lot of effort has gone into trying to create a sense of one Oldham and convincing people in Chadderton, Failsworth and Saddleworth that they are now Oldhamers because a line was drawn on a map. Of course the effect of that was actually quite a lot of community tension, where people felt very much connected to their historical community - with some actually still believing that they live in Yorkshire in Saddleworth - and the council eventually realised that actually it is far better that it promotes local identity to create unity rather than forcing people to have a relationship with an identity that they just do not feel part of.

So I come to Royton. Roytonians are very proud of their identity. I took great pride in talking about the town's rich history in my maiden speech in the Commons. For me, parliamentary representation is more than just numbers - it is about people, it is about community - and actually the criteria laid out by the Boundary Commission does recognise that. Royton has never in its history been separated or split up in its representation in parliament. Since the Reform Act of 1832 the township has been represented by a single MP yet today, 184 years later, for no logical or electoral advantage, a proposal is being put on the table to split that township in half. In fact you could go even further back to the 1200s and the first English parliament, when the town was in the Lancashire constituency and represented by the knight of the shire. I think it has seen 440 parliaments since then and been represented by a single MP, so to reach the point now where it is being separated just does not make sense. It is one town, with one town centre, one market, one town hall, one leisure centre, one library, yet it is under these proposals to have two MPs. It does actually matter to local people. This is not just a numbers game where people are expected to go on the website and discover who their MP is by typing in their postcode. You actually develop longstanding relationships that really do mean something to local people.

For my own part it matters because I hold advice sessions in the three component towns of my current constituency in Oldham, Chadderton and Royton, and I do that because actually geography is a barrier to people being able to access advice and support. If Royton were split into two, we would be expecting two MPs to double up on that work and hold advice sessions in that town or, more likely, that actually advice sessions would not take place in that town at all and people would be expected to travel even further for that support. The same is said for the street stalls that I do on Royton Market every month, where I am there, accessible to local people. To imagine that two MPs would do that I do not think is realistic for what is effectively quite a small town.

I am aware of the proposal put forward by Cllr Jean Stretton on behalf of Oldham Council. That proposal would be to have two MPs contained within the borough of Oldham. There is a great deal of sense in doing that, for the reasons that Cllr Stretton would have outlined, and it would actually fit the criteria that the Boundary Commission says in terms of minimal change and impact on communities, respecting local government boundaries, et cetera. For my own part, I do have to tread a very sensitive line between reflecting on the proposal put forward by

Oldham Council, which from a community perspective is very logical, and of course the Labour Party position, which I am obviously bound to support, which has wider responsibilities across the region.

I will finish on this. Even if it is not possible to create two Oldham constituencies, it certainly is possible to create a solution that keeps Royton united. I would put forward this. Actually in the way that Royton is separated in the current proposal, so too is Saddleworth West and Lees, which is separated out of the Littleborough and Saddleworth constituency, separating an historic township in its own right. Actually, with very minor change Royton North could be brought into the proposed Oldham constituency, Saddleworth West and Lees could be brought into the proposed Littleborough and Saddleworth constituency, and then the most logical, St Mary's, could easily be moved down into the proposed Failsworth and Droylsden constituency. So even if it is not possible to create a borough with two MPs within its boundary, it certainly is possible to have a solution that reflects local identity and does meet the criteria set.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any points of query or clarification that anyone wishes to add?

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan from Bury metropolitan district. I know Royton Market very well. We go for carpet there.

MR MCMAHON: You should go back. It is good.

MR LARGAN: You mentioned about "barriers". Could you please amplify what you mean by the barriers there?

MR MCMAHON: From a practical point of view, my Royton advice session which takes place every two weeks is one of the busiest advice sessions I hold. It will generally have eight to twelve people who are booked in for those advice sessions. If that was split into two, you would be expecting either two MPs to hold advice sessions within that town. The most logical place is the town hall in Royton, which is where I hold mine, which would either be in or out of the constituency boundary, if that makes sense. It would not make sense to hold it on one of the housing estates around the town centre itself. But for me it is less about convenience for MPs. I think MPs need to be very careful in this process that they do not appear to be self-serving and opting for something that suits them. For me, this is about community identity and making sure that Roytonians have their identity respected. I cannot see that a proposal that splits that town in half - unnecessarily in half - is the right thing to do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I just check again what seemed to be quite a simple proposal at the end there, which was to move Royton North into the proposed Oldham and move St Mary's out?

MR MCMAHON: Effectively the three constituencies that are proposed for the Oldham borough, which is the Oldham constituency, the Failsworth and Droylsden constituency and the Littleborough and Saddleworth constituency, would involve effectively moving one ward around each. It would knock Royton North and Saddleworth West and Lees into the Littleborough and Saddleworth seat and the St Mary's seat, which is the most logical one, because from a practical point of view under these proposals Moston cannot move, Chadderton you would want to keep united because, again, in the way that I have argued for Royton to be united, I can make the same case for Chadderton. The Coldhurst ward has a very large Bangladeshi population that actually does come into Chadderton, so from a community point of view it is one and the same area now. You cannot get to St James' and Waterhead from the Failsworth and Droylsden seat. The logical one would be St Mary's just from a practical sense.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I have not rapidly done the sums, but have you done the sums to see whether shuffling them around would produce the ---?

MR MCMAHON: Unsurprisingly I have done the sums. At the moment, the largest constituency and the smallest constituency within these boundaries has an electoral difference of 4,000. If you were to make the changes proposed, you would have them within a couple of hundred of each other. You would have three more balanced constituencies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: All within the overall electoral constraints - the legislative numbers?

MR MCMAHON: Yes. They are about 76,000.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have a question over here.

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Thank you very much. Roger Pratt. I just want to ask a question in terms of the local ties. You have mentioned the St Mary's ward. Could you tell me what the ties are between St Mary's and St James'? Is part of St Mary's part of Oldham town centre?

MR MCMAHON: Not particularly, no. St Mary's is split in half effectively by Oldham Way, which is a bypass that runs to the south of the town centre. The northern half of St Mary's is predominantly a council estate just on the edge of the town centre. Could I point to the map perhaps to make it slightly easier?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you just press the button at the top.

MR MCMAHON: Okay. So Oldham Way, which is the bypass, skirts this. It cuts a ward in half - St Mary's. By and large, this is the town centre. Very few people actually live in the town centre, but there is an estate towards the north of the ward. The south of the ward is effectively --- If you were in Oldham, you might call that

Oldham proper. It is the terraced streets that run across the whole of that area there. Alexandra has a very similar characteristic. They both share the same park on the Glodwick/Alexandra boundary, which is Alexandra Park. If you were to live in this area, you would be blind to the red line on this map. It would feel like it was the same community. Again from a practical point of view, if the argument is accepted for unifying Royton then it would be ridiculous at that point to try to separate Chadderton because it has the same historical identity. So if under the proposals Moston cannot be moved and you want to retain a united Chadderton, and you accept that Coldhurst is a continuation of Chadderton here and Royton here, which it is, then actually you can only move St Mary's at that point into this seat.

MR PRATT: Okay. Otherwise you just have two seats within Oldham. That would be the other alternative.

MR MCMAHON: The proposal put forward by Oldham Council, which will form a formal submission that comes through, from a local community perspective does make sense. It requires minimal change to the existing constituencies. It just means that Failsworth is brought into the Oldham West seat and Medlock is moved into the Oldham East seat. That just creates two quite neat constituencies in a town that has a very strong identity. Equally, it would have the impact in Rochdale of course of unifying the Middleton and Heywood seat and the Rochdale constituency as it stands. The reason I am not able to formally endorse that today is that that is not the Labour Party position and what I have not seen is what impact that has across the rest of Greater Manchester. My submission today has been solely on my existing constituency and making sure that the people of Royton have representation in this process.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr McMahon.

MR MCMAHON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry. Bear with me for a moment. I am just working out our timetable. (After a short pause) Is Cllr Peter Jones here?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: (Norton North Ward) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you like to speak?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Yes, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We will then take a break after Cllr Jones' presentation.

CLLR LLOYD JONES: (Norton North ward) I am going to be quite short, Sir. I am Peter Lloyd Jones. I am a councillor on Halton Borough Council. I have also been a Cheshire County councillor and generally involved in local government politics since

1981. I have a fair knowledge of Cheshire as a whole because of my county council ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Just for the record, could you please also state your address?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Yes. 14 Peckforton Drive, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 3HG.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Sir. Please continue.

CLLR LLOYD JONES: I want to speak very briefly and just say that I support the Labour Party's proposals for the constituencies in Cheshire, particularly North Cheshire and Central Cheshire which will in fact be aligned on an east/west basis rather than roughly the north/south basis of the current proposals, and I do that essentially on the ground of social cohesion.

If you accept the east/west proposals, which would include East Runcorn, the villages or townships of Frodsham and Helsby, which are quite significant areas, and the adjoining villages, this would effectively maintain the existing enlarged Weaver Vale constituency which appears to have worked quite well. Indeed it so happens - because of my age - that it also reflects the boundaries roughly of the previous Runcorn constituency which included the whole of Runcorn. I appreciate that we are now talking about only East Runcorn, but it included the whole of Runcorn, Frodsham and Helsby and the villages at the rear. I was indeed the Party chairman for some time and so I do have knowledge of that situation. That worked all right as well. Certainly the existing situation of East Runcorn linked with essentially Frodsham and Helsby has worked satisfactorily. Although they appear on the face of it, without knowledge of the areas of Frodsham and Helsby, to be somewhat different socially -- and the social makeup from Runcorn -- in fact there are quite strong links. Many people live in Frodsham and Helsby but work in Runcorn, so significantly they are in fact commuter areas.

It is accepted that one of the wards in East Runcorn must be transferred to the existing Halton constituency in order to make up the magic numbers. That is accepted. A group of us did give very considerable thought to the situation, with considerable knowledge of the areas, and we did at the end of that fairly lengthy discussion come up with a Windmill Hill ward which does in fact have some links with the Halton constituency in terms of the adjoining Halton Castle ward. When there was a high school on the Castlefields Estate, which forms the bulk of the Halton Castle ward, the children from Windmill Hill went to the high school there at what was then called Norton Priory School. So there are links. In our view this was the appropriate ward to be transferred.

My overall plea today is a general plea. It is applicable to our proposals for the east/west alignment of the new constituencies but it also has general application throughout. I am deeply concerned at the present state of affairs in this country, as indeed evidenced by the local referendum and what is going on in the USA.

Currently there are huge sections of our population who are strongly alienated and disenfranchised from the system, as very much noted in the recent referendum outcome and the vote there, not least in my own ward and in East Runcorn wards generally. I spoke to a significant number of people there and what they said was: "We were all better off before". They were not being racist. They did not, most of them, mention migrants. It was about somehow we were better off before. I know that at the recent general election barely more than 50 per cent voted. We are facing, in my view, a very serious issue in this country of being a split society, with huge sections of it very strongly alienated and increasingly disenfranchised. For them the past is another country, but it is the present which is another country, to use those words, and that has seriously, seriously alarmed me.

I know that it is a priority and that social cohesion is a factor that you take into account, but I do urge you to make this a very strong priority in considering the general makeup of the new constituencies. Social cohesion, social links and the nexus between the various peoples that make up the new constituencies should be very much taken into account. If I may say so, I would urge that they should in fact, with all due respect, be a paramount consideration. That is my submission, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Cllr Jones. If I can just hold you for a moment because there may be queries or points of clarification. I agree with you that social cohesion is important. That is why we rely on these hearings in a sense for people to explain where they are because maps and lines and boundaries do not give us the community links and the community sense of which are the right links and which are not. I am grateful to you for that. Are there any points?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Cllr Jones, can I just be clear? You say you endorse the Labour Party proposals for Cheshire. Is that correct?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you therefore thought of the consequences in other parts of splitting communities? Reference was made a few minutes ago to Dodleston. You are talking about moving Dodleston and Huntington from Chester as proposed by the Commission. Is that correct?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: I think that would be very much straying into your prerogative, Sir. I know that they have been taken into account elsewhere. The proposal was put forward on the basis that the overall situation in that region that you are considering - you have split the country up into regions - was taken into account, and it did seem to me from the maps I have seen that they were taken into account and do not seriously interfere with the magic numbers I know you have to arrive at for each of the new constituencies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Just a reminder: if anyone is going to speak from the floor, if they can just remember to state their name and address again, please.

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marle Croft, Whitefield, in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. I just wanted clarification. When you mentioned Norton Priory High School, I was not clear whether it was still open or had closed.

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Norton Priory High School was a high school based in the Castlefields ward of Runcorn. It was closed some years ago and amalgamated with another school of which I am a governor as it so happens.

MR LARGAN: Presumably the pupils from Windmill Hill go to the new high school?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Most of the pupils from Windmill Hill now would go to the new school which was set up in East Runcorn, which is an academy school actually, so I do not think it is very helpful - it is the Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy, at which I am a governor - but that is as maybe.

MR LARGAN: Could I ask, Chair, which particular ward that new high school is in, please?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: It is technically in Norton South ward. The ward boundaries are somewhat odd. It is close to the boundaries of Norton South and Norton North, which is my own ward.

MR LARGAN: Could I ask a supplementary question? If in fact you put Windmill Hill into Halton constituency, would it be a detached ward because to get from Windmill Hill you would have to go through Daresbury to do so?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: No. No, not at all, Sir. It is a separate community. It is probably in the top five per cent of social deprivation. I was party to the discussions about 15 years ago that advocated that it would be set up as a separate ward because we hoped it would result in extra resources being put into that ward. It is in fact adjoining the Halton Castle ward. There are very clear links with the Halton constituency by road. There are main road links and so on. There is no problem. It is very much, if you look on the map, a cohesive part of Halton, and equally it is currently a cohesive part of East Runcorn, but it equally would make sense to put it into Halton. It would make as much sense as any of the wards in East Runcorn which are being considered to be put into the Halton constituency.

MR LARGAN: Does that main road you have mentioned to get from Windmill Hill into Halton Castle ward have a number?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: No. It is Windmill Hill Avenue. There is also a series of dual carriageways within East Runcorn. There is no problem. It fits in as well as the others, and in our view better than the others - and in my view too, in fact better than

the other wards - but certainly as well as the other wards which have been considered for transfer. I live in one of the wards, Beechwood, which was also a ward put up for possible transfer. All three lie on the boundary of the Halton constituency as it is at the present time and so all three could conveniently from that point of view be put in. We just thought, a group of us, that Windmill Hill was the most suitable.

MR LARGAN: Can you clarify for me? It is Windmill Avenue that you get ---?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Windmill Hill Avenue East, I think it is called, yes.

MR LARGAN: Into Halton Castle?

CLLR LLOYD JONES: That is the main road that links that particular estate with the rest of Runcorn both ways.

MR LARGAN: I am grateful for that clarification. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed.

CLLR LLOYD JONES: Okay. But it is the social cohesion bit that I am most concerned about, which does not seem to be fully taken into account in the original draft proposals, Sir. That is what I am overridingly concerned about.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. In fact rather than take a break now, I am going to suggest, if he is ready, Cllr Mike Jones. Would you be ready to speak?

CLLR JONES: (Tattenhall ward) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is a few minutes early, but then we have a significant gap so we will take the gap on the other side of that. Thank you. Cllr Jones, please state your name and full address and then in your own time begin.

CLLR JONES: Thank you. My name is Mike Jones. I am a City councillor. I represent the ward of Tattenhall, which actually is on the diagram as you have it now. That is convenient. I have represented the Tattenhall ward in various shapes and forms for just under 25 years and know the area reasonably well. I have come to just discuss the aspects in the proposals for Tattenhall that you have outlined in your plans. My full address is Hargrave Hall, Hargrave, Chester CH3 7RH. I actually live in the ward of Tattenhall now, although I did not before the boundary was changed last time. These things move around. They do not stay stable and the boundaries move.

I just want to talk about Tattenhall and Farndon and Malpas. Malpas is just to the south of that, which actually is proposed to be in Eddisbury. Malpas has the main secondary school for that part of the rural area and the majority of young people in

Farndon and Tattenhall actually attend that school. There is very strong social cohesion within that area. The three villages of Farndon, Tattenhall and Malpas are pretty similar, closely associated, similar size, and there is a lot of interaction between the communities of those areas, so it is slightly unfortunate that through the numbers game they have had to be split apart, or are proposed to be split apart from as they are, with Malpas remaining in Eddisbury and Tattenhall and Farndon being separated out into Weaver Vale. There is very little cohesion or relationship between the likes of Marbury, Kingsley and Gowy with the Farndon and Tattenhall area of South Cheshire. There is quite a big divide.

What I am seeking to do is ask you to consider that Tattenhall and Farndon actually move into Eddisbury, or remain in Eddisbury as it is now, in the reconfigured style. I appreciate that it causes a few issues with your numbers, because Tattenhall has 3,626 residents and Farndon has 3,346, so what I would like to do is help solve that sort of conundrum of moving the numbers around. I know it is not an easy task that you have done here. I am aware that Audlem has quite a lot of affinity with Crewe and Nantwich. It is very closely associated with them. It is in Cheshire East, so I am not entirely familiar, but I do spend some time around there. Potentially Audlem could move into that. To compensate for that, Elton, which has a very close relationship with Helsby and Frodsham because a lot of the children at Helsby go to those schools, could move into Weaver Vale. With Ellesmere Port's numbers being 77,000, that could be accommodated without any other changes. Weaver Vale, with 73,000, would be about right if that moved into Weaver Vale, those two moved out, and Audlem moved into Crewe and Nantwich. So I think the numbers actually would work out, as far as I can see, to enable that to happen. I think by doing that the children that currently work or associate with each other at the school at Malpas --- I think that would work. I think it would work with Elton in terms of the schooling there and the parent relationships and the community relationships. I think on balance that would probably be a good way forward.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points that anyone wishes to address? (None). That was very succinct. Thank you very much.

CLLR JONES: That was fairly quick and painless, was it not?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It certainly was for me! We are at a point where we have no further booked speakers this morning until 2.10 pm. I say we take a break now. I will come back at 12.00 noon in case anyone has reappeared and we can take a judgment call then as to whether or not we will just take a long lunch. Thank you very much.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we have no other arrivals for the moment and so I suggest that we break now until 2.00 pm, which will incorporate the lunch break. Our next speaker is due to speak at 2.10 pm.

We may have a few minutes waiting if they come just afterwards. We will be back at 2.00 pm. Thank you.

After the luncheon adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We will resume for the afternoon session now. We have a couple of speakers, both of whom are here I believe, and I wonder if I might call upon Mr Roger Parrin.

MR PARKIN: Parkin.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Parkin. Sorry. My apologies.

MR PARKIN: It is probably my writing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is definitely my writing! Please come on up. Because we are speaking on the record here for the public consultation, if you could give your name and address into the microphone and then begin your presentation. Thank you.

MR PARKIN: Good afternoon, Sir. My name is Roger Parkin. I am really here as a private individual, though I am also a parish councillor in Mickle Trafford, two or three miles down the road. My address is Blue Tiles, Mickle Trafford, Chester CH2 4EA.

My reason for coming here really is because I was completing your online form this morning to support your proposal that the area comprising Mickle Trafford's district and parish council should be transferred from currently Ellesmere Port into the Chester parliamentary constituency area, i.e. within the Chester Villages ward, and I strongly support that - I spoke in favour of it at the previous inquiry you held a few years ago - but whilst filling in the form, and that is what prompted me to jump in the car and come here and ask to speak, I was somewhat surprised to see your reference to "the metropolitan boroughs of Greater Manchester be combined in a sub region, with... Wirral... [East and West Cheshire]... Halton and Warrington". I wondered where that came from and I wonder where the democratic accountability is going to be applied to it. We already have a sub region comprising Cheshire West and Warrington. I would like some clarification. I could not find any reasonable clarification in the papers that were submitted. I would like to understand better where that comes from, who is going to implement it and how political it is. That is really all I want to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. We are going to see if a member of the Boundary Commission would like to answer that.

MR REED: I will do.

MR PARKIN: Shall I go and sit down now?

MR REED: If you wish. It is purely an administrative sub region to help us in formulating constituencies. It carries no legal weight whatsoever. It will not affect anything. It is just that in the North West region we are looking at 68 constituencies and it is a way of parcelling up areas. In particular, we did propose a constituency that crossed between Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester and also between Cheshire East and Greater Manchester. It is just basically parcelling up the region into manageable units that are self-contained. Beyond that, there is no other reason. It was purely an administrative proposal for us so we could actually work and focus on particular areas.

MR PARKIN: Could I ask then that it is made more clear? We are already talking sub-regional terms in relation to LEPs and things of this nature and I think people are going to get terribly confused if you are going to have one sub region comprising one lot and a sub region comprising others. People like me get very nervous when one sees sub regions comprising Greater Manchester - which is an enormous powerhouse, whichever way you look at it - and how it might affect the smaller units comprising sub regions like, for example, Cheshire West and Chester.

MR REED: Your point is taken, but I can just reassure you that it is really an administrative convenience for the Boundary Commission to parcel up areas within a particular region. Beyond that, there are no further implications whatsoever.

MR PARKIN: Conspiracy theories on my part! Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think it is worth stating that all the political parties agreed with the administrative convenience of being able to do that.

MR WALSH: (Conservative Party) John Walsh, speaking on behalf of the Conservative Party. We accept that because of the number of seats to be allocated to the North West region it is not possible within each of the counties to have a defined number of seats, and therefore we have accepted that there is a need to cross certain county boundaries. All three political parties - all four political parties, I think, probably - at the first day of the Manchester hearing, three or four days ago, agreed that that was therefore an expedient that was necessary in order to give the requirements of the legislation --- We have looked at a number of options and one might say that that is the least worst.

MR PARKIN: Thank you for the clarification.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr Parkin, for coming. Cllr Keith Board? Again, if you could give your name and address for the record and then, when you are ready, please begin.

CLLR BOARD: (Great Boughton ward) Thank you, Chairman. My name is Keith Board and I live at 11 Ivy Court, Pulford CH4 9EZ. Good afternoon. I am Keith Board, elected member for the Great Boughton ward of

Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council since its formation eight years ago. I am also an elected member of Pulford Parish Council since 2011.

What a difference. In 2011 I spoke at the then 2013 boundary review consultation, speaking against the draft proposals as they proposed to split Chester in two, and my ward, known as Vicars Cross and Boughton Heath, was to be separated from Chester and attached to another constituency. Thankfully that boundary review was never adopted. Of course that review had been formulated according to the last completed review at that time, which had been based upon the year 2000 electoral register. It is no wonder that there was such a strong reaction against that.

But today I am speaking to the 2018 boundary review draft proposals and I am here to welcome your proposals for Chester and to congratulate the Commission for keeping Chester intact. These proposals clearly recognise the local links and the connections which were ignored in 2011. In fact by reuniting the Chester Villages you will be strengthening these ties even more.

As the elected member I am aware, speaking to my residents, how proud they are of Chester and to be part of Chester. During the last review there was an anger to think that they were to be cast aside to this other constituency. As a new Cestrian - I moved to Chester in 2004 - I was drawn to contest the Chester City Council elections in 2008. However, this was overtaken by a local government review and the election was for the Cheshire West and Chester Unitary Council instead. I reside in Pulford, as I said just now, a village in the old Dodleston ward which was part of the Chester City ward pre 2008, so I have always considered that I live in Chester, as do my fellow residents. As stated earlier, I am a member of the parish council, with all the local engagement that that brings, and the message from that engagement is a wish to remain in Chester and to have a City of Chester constituency. It is so important to the local community as there are just no local links to Farndon, Eddisbury, Winsford, et cetera.

Chester is a small city - a "boutique city" in modern parlance - and the urban area is part of the city. Chester has three natural boundaries to the south: the River Dee, the Welsh border and the A55. The River Dee is inclusive to the city. As it leaves the city going south-east it becomes a natural barrier, separating the old Dodleston ward, now part of Dodleston and Huntington ward today, from the proposed Weaver Vale constituency. It also enjoys the Welsh border to the east and bridges the A55 to link the Chester South East urban area. The A55, as it sweeps around the south and east of Chester, is again a natural barrier to the proposed Weaver Vale constituency and it retains the wards of Great Boughton and Huntington within this natural boundary. I hope you share my view that Chester is a special city. It is a community centre, a small city, with its natural urban areas and natural barriers, which together meet the criteria required from this review, i.e. to keep the number of constituents in each constituency within the range of 74,769 plus or minus five per cent.

I appreciate how difficult a job it must have been to develop the draft proposals, not only to reduce the number of constituencies in the North West to 68 but also to keep the number of constituents in each constituency to the required range. In the City of Chester case your draft proposals provide for 73,723 constituents, leaving room for growth in the future. It is not an easy task, but as you say in this draft report “[y]our proposals for the City of Chester constituency result in a reasonably compact constituency”, which must be a near perfect result for this review. I congratulate the Commission on its draft proposals and for keeping Chester intact. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Board. I am sure the Commission will have heard that. I for one believe that Chester has been a lot more welcoming this time than it was for our predecessors in the previous review.

CLLR BOARD: When they came last time I think there was one person and the secretary, so it has grown a bit since then.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There is a point of clarification here, if I may.

MR WALSH: John Walsh, 52 New Hall Lane, Bolton, on behalf of the Conservative Party. Can I be absolutely clear on what you have said -- Dodleston looks entirely to the city and has no links whatsoever to the east to the wards which sit beyond the city?

CLLR BOARD: Dodleston has always been part of the city, going back to the Chester City days of the council. I live in Pulford, which is adjacent to Dodleston, but it is in the Dodleston ward. It has always been the case in my experience that it has been part of Chester and the old district council.

MR WALSH: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I cannot see any other hands up. Thank you very much, Mr Board.

CLLR BOARD: Would you like me to leave the papers with you?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please. That would be very good. Thank you.

CLLR BOARD: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am afraid we have a gap now before our next speakers, who are not due until 4.00 pm. One of the hazards of pre-booking is that people can choose the time. We have had a couple of times where we have had gaps. What I am going to suggest is that I come back at 3.00 pm just to see if anyone else has arrived who wishes to speak. If not, we will then wait for Antoinette Sandbach at 4.00 pm. Thank you very much.

After an adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, everyone. I am pleased to say that Antoinette Sandbach MP is here and is ready to speak. If you could give your name and address and then please proceed. Thank you.

MS SANDBACH: (Member of Parliament for Eddisbury) My name is Antoinette Sandbach. I am the Member of Parliament for Eddisbury. My address is House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

I thank the Boundary Commission for the opportunity to come to talk to you this afternoon. I am a relatively new MP - I have been elected for a year. It has been a huge privilege to represent my constituents and of course there is an element of sadness in losing some of them in the proposals that the Boundary Commission has made.

I want to start perhaps with the proposal relating to Crewe and Nantwich. Since I have been a Member of Parliament Audlem has obviously formed part of my constituency. Under the previous boundary changes the Audlem ward, which is at the bottom right if you look at the constituency map, was moved from the Crewe and Nantwich constituency into the Eddisbury constituency. It is quite a difficult part of the constituency to get to because of the way that the road network is configured and Audlem does not have the same links into the rest of the constituency that perhaps other wards in my constituency do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Eddisbury?

MS SANDBACH: Of Eddisbury, yes. Sorry. The Eddisbury constituency. It has always looked towards Crewe and Nantwich for, for example, its schools and culturally, I would say. Certainly in my time as Member of Parliament there have been a lot of people that have expressed to me the view that Audlem feels part of Crewe and Nantwich. It is my impression that they very much consider themselves still to be part of Crewe and Nantwich even though they are actually in the Eddisbury constituency. That is exemplified, I think, by the fact that a number of residents there will contact Edward Timpson, the MP for Crewe and Nantwich. So I would support the proposals that suggest that the Audlem ward should go back to the Crewe and Nantwich constituency, where it has always considered itself to be, if I can put it that way. Certainly in terms of parents who live in that ward, all the road networks, the links for schooling, are all in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency, particularly Nantwich. They have a very strong connection with Nantwich. There is an issue at the moment with the local Post Office. Unfortunately the local Post Office is facing difficulties and is not currently open and my constituents are driving from Audlem into Nantwich to pick up their post and collect their pensions. So they very much identify with the Nantwich part of the Crewe and Nantwich constituency.

Of course that means there would need to be some form of counter-proposal were Audlem to move over. Similar considerations apply to the Farndon, Tattenhall and Tarporley wards, which are currently proposed for Weaver Vale but are at the moment in my constituency. I have three schools in my constituency of Eddisbury: the Bishop Heber, the Winsford Academy and Tarporley High School. All school children in Farndon that move from primary school to secondary school, or a lot of them, go to Bishop Heber in Malpas, so there are incredibly strong links between the Farndon ward and Malpas for parents particularly. Again, in terms of that is the route that they travel. The transport links are good between Farndon and Malpas.

Farndon has traditionally never had any links at all with Weaver Vale. Under previous constituencies it has always been part of Chester or the predecessor to the Eddisbury constituency. I would therefore strongly argue that to split Farndon and Malpas in terms of constituencies, particularly as school transport has actually been a major issue for me during this parliament, would be an error -- not an error, but it would break community ties and very strong links.

The same applies for Tarporley and Tattenhall. If Audlem were to move then I would argue strongly that Tarporley should come back into the Eddisbury constituency. That part of rural Cheshire is mainly dominated by four large landholdings which have very strong links. They mainly have tenant farmers who are associated with particular estates which at the moment are cut in half by the boundaries proposed by the Boundary Commission but which span the Tarporley and Wrenbury area and indeed the Tattenhall and Wrenbury area. Because those holdings have traditionally been tenanted for many hundreds of years, the farming links and the farming community there are incredibly strong because they identify with a particular "estate", if I can put it that way. Not only that, but again with the schooling links that are there with Tarporley and Tattenhall, Tattenhall has the benefit of looking two ways: it can feed into Malpas and Bishop Heber or it can feed into Tarporley High School. Both schools are extremely popular and there is therefore a real desire to be linked with those areas.

In relation to Chester Villages, at the moment I have three county council wards in my constituency that are split between constituencies. I may even have four: Chester Villages, Davenham and Moulton, which is currently split, and indeed Sandiway and Cuddington. So I have four county council areas that are split. I welcome the fact that you appear to have kept the county council wards intact. I think it is quite confusing for residents to know who their MP is or where the boundary is when they are in a different county council ward area. I would say that town council wards are less important because they will still have a county councillor for that particular area. I have, for example, two councillors that represent one half of Davenham and Moulton and one that represents the other half and it is quite difficult to get that overview of what is happening in a ward if you only represent half of it. You will be aware of the difficulty of MPs having to notify their neighbours if they are going over constituency boundaries. So I welcome the fact that you are keeping county council wards intact and I therefore support the notion that Chester Villages goes into the Chester seat and that the whole of the Goway ward

goes into the Weaver Vale seat. Under the current proposals the whole of Davenham and Moulton would then be united in the Eddisbury seat. So I do support that because I have a lot of issues around planning that are communicated to me and, again, it is very difficult for me if I am trying to deal with it and I do not have an overview.

If you look at the current proposals for Weaver and Cuddington, you will see Weaver and Cuddington in the new Weaver Vale ward. At the moment, this is split and so I actually have rather a large number of currently split wards. I do support the proposal that Weaver and Cuddington is in Weaver Vale and I would support the fact that the whole of the Davenham and Moulton ward is united. It is particularly difficult when you are looking at things like neighbourhood planning if you have a split ward and you cannot have an overview of how developments are affecting a community. I would say that apart from broadband, which fortunately has nothing to do with this Commission, planning issues are one of the main things, both for county councillors actually and for MPs, and concerns about how those are happening.

In terms of the Northwich constituency coming into Eddisbury, my current "line", as it were, is something like that, around there, with that split in half, so if Farndon, Tarporley and Tattenhall - which I would argue need to be looked at really as being very closely linked - moved over into the Eddisbury constituency then there would clearly need to be some changes in the north, if I can put it that way. The southern part of my constituency obviously does not have big links with Northwich, but Winsford potentially does. I welcome the whole of that coming together. I understand that there may be representations that Hartford and Greenbank should go into Weaver Vale. All of that area in fact -- Hartford and Greenbank and in fact Winnington and Castle -- is currently in the Weaver Vale constituency.

I am aware, having just been shown it today, that the Labour Party has put in proposals that perhaps Winnington and Castle and Hartford and Greenbank could go back into Weaver Vale. I would say that I am obviously supportive of the proposals that Graham Evans has put forward. I think the numbers work either way, but it would need to be an alternate one or other of those wards. It would need to be Hartford and Greenbank or -- but not both. Am I making sense?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MS SANDBACH: In relation to the Shakerley area, which is obviously currently in Tatton, I am not familiar with the area because I am not its current MP and so I would be unable to answer any questions in relation to the Tatton, Witton and Rudheath wards because I am not familiar with them as they have a different local MP. I would also say that I am not familiar with the Hartford and Greenbank ward or the Winnington and Castle ward. I would therefore suggest that any representations made by the current members in respect of those wards would be --- They have a far greater knowledge than I do in terms of what ties there may be.

I think that is probably the extent of my submissions. I think on the whole we see why the proposals have been made. As I say, I very much welcome the fact that the county council boundaries are being looked at because I have this current problem of four split wards that border on Weaver Vale. I do not know if there are any questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Let me see if there is anyone on the floor who wishes to ask any points of clarification.

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan. I come from 56 Marle Croft, Whitefield, part of Bury metropolitan district. You mentioned Hartford and Greenbank and Winnington and Castle and you seemed to be saying - perhaps I misunderstood it - that either one or the other, but not both, should come into this constituency that is up on there. Did I catch that right?

MS SANDBACH: No. The constituency that is currently shown on there has both of those wards in it, but because of the move, if Audlem moves out, the constituency becomes below the minimum number of electors required by the Boundary Commission. There are very strong cultural and local ties in relation to Farndon, Tarporley and Tattenhall linked with Wrenbury, Malpas and Bunbury. If those wards move into the Eddisbury constituency, there needs to be a corresponding ward that moves out in the north of the constituency in order to ensure that the Boundary Commission complies with its requirement to have a minimum of 7,100-something electors (*sic*).

MR LARGAN: Which one were you suggesting?

MS SANDBACH: The suggestion is that Hartford and Greenbank moves over because it is a distinct parish, but what I am saying to the Boundary Commission is that actually the figures work on either of those two wards.

MR LARGAN: The second ward was Hartford and Greenbank or ---?

MS SANDBACH: Winnington and Castle.

MR LARGAN: I will have to look at it. I understand now.

MS SANDBACH: There are pros and cons in relation to that. The pro is that the River Weaver, which is the historic heart of the Weaver Vale, runs through Winnington and Castle. The difficulty is that it breaks the town council boundary. Winnington and Castle forms part of the town council area and therefore the question is where the Boundary Commission wants to concentrate. All I am saying is that there is a choice, and I am saying that I am not the local member for that area and therefore they should listen to the submissions from local people from that area in relation to those two wards.

MR LARGAN: Can I also ask a supplementary? You are saying the links with these rural areas to the south are with Winsford, but ---

MS SANDBACH: No.

MR LARGAN: No?

MS SANDBACH: They are with Tarporley. Tarporley is a beautiful village. I very much encourage you from Bury, as you are here, to come and spend time and visit Tarporley.

MR LARGAN: I have been to Tarporley many times.

MS SANDBACH: I am delighted. Then you will know that it has a vibrant and truly fantastic high street, with a lot of independent retailers, and it is something that is very much supported by the rural communities that live around Tarporley. There is a very strong link with the local communities to the south of the current Eddisbury constituency and Tarporley because it has a fantastic high street which means that you can go and shop there without having to travel into Chester or to Winsford, or indeed to Northwich, which are much further away and probably not as strongly linked. I would say that the main focus and the main heart of the Bunbury, Wrenbury, Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall area is Tarporley and that is where they would look. Otherwise, they look south to Whitchurch, which is over the border - a European border. It is a hard border from the point of view of electoral purposes.

MR LARGAN: I am well aware of Whitchurch. My sister-in-law used to live there.

MS SANDBACH: There we go. So was there a particular question around Winsford?

MR LARGAN: I was just looking in terms of the transport links, looking at that, to sort of see whether there were any problems with transport links, but what you seem to be saying is that Tarporley is a focal point of that southern community and therefore the transport will be to that direction, Winsford will have its own links up there, and that does not cause a problem in terms of transport.

MS SANDBACH: I would say that my local communities travel up the A51 and the A49 and the A41, but in terms of being a community hub they are very much linked together through those roads.

MR LARGAN: I am exceedingly grateful to you for you clarifying that. I apologise for not grasping it first of all. Thank you very much indeed.

MS SANDBACH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any other points that anyone would like to raise? (None) In which case I am extremely grateful for you taking the time at the end of what I know has been a demanding and draining week for you. Thank you very much indeed.

MS SANDBACH: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand that Cllr Razia Daniels is here. Are you ready to speak?

CLLR DANIELS: (Handbridge Park ward) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please come on up. I would ask you, please, to give your name and full address, and then please go into your presentation. Thank you.

CLLR DANIELS: I am Cllr Razia Daniels. I am also the Deputy Lord Mayor of Chester. I represent the Handbridge Park ward of Chester, which consists of Handbridge, Curzon Park and Westminster Park. I was first elected in 2006 and since then I have been through a unitary election which split Cheshire into two - East Cheshire and Cheshire West and Chester - and local boundary changes which split my ward into two, splitting my community and making Lache a separate ward, which was very sad in my opinion, so when I read the Boundary Commission's proposals published for Chester I was delighted. I welcome the proposals. I am very pleased to see the City of Chester as a constituency name.

Chester is a distinct city with clear boundaries and communities within it which are all linked with a common association to the historic city itself. There are strong local ties across the city from Handbridge Park, Hoole, Boughton, Blacon, Newton, Upton, Huntington to Dodleston. They are all unique in their own way, but they all look to Chester as a clear binding factor in their identity. As Deputy Lord Mayor of Chester, I meet residents from all these areas who are so proud to be part of Chester. As a resident who has lived in the heart of the Chester city centre since 1985, I believe it is really important that a constituency based around the city itself is maintained and welcome these proposals which do that rather than split the city in any way, which has been proposed in the past.

I do appreciate as a local councillor the disruption people feel when their parliamentary or local boundaries are changed in any way. I believe the lessons are applicable at both the parliamentary and local level. In 2009 local elections in my ward, the Overleigh ward, were split into Handbridge and Lache Park ward. It caused a lot of confusion and resentment as residents from Curzon Park and Westminster Park felt their identity was lost and was being lumped into Handbridge, i.e. the Handbridge Park ward which I represent now. When we hold our monthly street surgeries, residents from Lache ward come and speak to us, saying "Although you are not our councillor, will you help?" and, yes, of course we help them. I know how disruptive splitting a community can be and so I am really pleased that these

proposals represent very little change to the Chester constituency aside from some tidying up of wards currently split between Chester and other constituencies.

I accept that the City of Chester constituency needs to expand in size to meet the Boundary Commission electoral quota and I therefore welcome the inclusion of the whole of the Chester Villages ward into the constituency, which would see an area in the immediate vicinity of Chester brought into the seat to which the villages concerned have long historic, cultural, shopping, transport links and ties. As a ward councillor, based on my personal experience of dealing with just one Member of Parliament for my own ward I feel this would be beneficial for the Chester Villages ward, too, as it is currently split across three constituencies. This creates confusion which thankfully I do not suffer in my own ward.

So I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for its initial proposals which respect the long history of a Chester constituency in parliament and will ensure this area continues to be recognised in that way. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Is there anyone who would like to raise any points? Mr Largan?

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marle Croft, Whitefield. You were saying about obviously the resentment when last time parts of Chester were excluded from the proposed Chester constituency. I remember Vicars Cross and Boughton Heath, I think it was.

CLLR DANIELS: Yes.

MR LARGAN: Are there any other areas that have been excluded from that proposed constituency of Chester that are still resentful of the fact that they are not included in that constituency?

CLLR DANIELS: I am not aware of that. I can only tell you what is happening in my ward and what residents come and say to me. I have no other evidence of that.

MR LARGAN: I am thinking in terms particularly of the Elton ward to the north. Does that have any links with the City of Chester?

CLLR DANIELS: It does have links, but my ward does not have any links to Elton and so I cannot comment on that. I am sorry.

MR LARGAN: It is okay. Thank you very much for trying.

CLLR DANIELS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. We have no other listed speakers. I am looking in your direction as the nearest person in the room. Do you wish to speak at all? You do not have to.

MR COPELAND: (Eddisbury Conservative Association) I only have one comment, Chairman. My name is Peter Copeland. I am deputy chairman of Eddisbury Conservative Association.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could you just give your address as well for the record?

MR COPELAND: Moss Cottage, Cotebrook, Tarporley.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR COPELAND: It is really just a question in relation to titles of the constituencies. I have mentioned this to our Member of Parliament, who is sitting here, and so it does not come as a surprise to her. Eddisbury constituency was based on the old Eddisbury hundred, which was situated more or less around the Kelsall ward, and that will of course be excluded from the new Eddisbury and Northwich constituency. Obviously people are familiar with the term Eddisbury. I am not sure what the Boundary Commission's view on this is, but I would imagine that it is its intention to try to reflect geographical accuracy when naming constituencies. In this particular case, as I say, the hundred of Eddisbury would not fall in the proposed constituency boundary. Similarly, a lesser case could be said about Weaver Vale, which does have some of what could be the Weaver Vale wards within it, but also a large amount of the area has no relation to the Weaver at all.

One suggestion which has been considered, which has a rather historical flavour, is that the boundaries as proposed by the Boundary Commission and the modifications proposed by the Conservative Party in fact closely reflect the old division of the forested area of Cheshire which was known as Mara and Mondrem. The dividing line between the two proposed constituencies is more or less the dividing line between the old historical areas of Mara and Mondrem. Whether that is a helpful comment in the present situation I know not, but I just thought I would like to make the point that Eddisbury is certainly not within the area. It may be something that you are happy to continue with, but I merely bring it to your notice.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I cannot speak for the Commission itself, but I am sure that we, as Assistant Commissioners, will be looking at what the proposals are. Can I just check where Mara and Mondrem are? If we were to apply it, to which constituency might it apply?

MR COPELAND: It is the dividing line more or less going across from Winnington and Castle and coming right down the A49, which is here, I think, so it is more or less a south-west/north-east line.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is Mondrem?

MR COPELAND: It is M-A-R-A and -M-O-N-D-R-E-M.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry. The second one was ---?

MR COPELAND: M-O-N-D-R-E-M.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mondrem. Thank you.

MS SANDBACH: May I ask a question?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please go ahead.

MS SANDBACH: Antoinette Sandbach, Member of Parliament for the current Eddisbury. Mr Copeland, you have said that you are a resident in Tarporley. I do not know whether you were able to hear all of my representations to the Commission.

MR COPELAND: Most of it.

MS SANDBACH: Are you able to comment on the representations that you did hear in terms of the links between Farndon and Malpas and Tattenhall?

MR COPELAND: I would be happy to endorse what you said there. Living in Tarporley, as I do, we see it very much as the centre to which the whole of the southern part of Cheshire looks, particularly those wards which were mentioned, and certainly to divorce Tarporley and Farndon and Tattenhall from the rest of South Cheshire would be in my view a retrograde step. The logical fit is as was proposed earlier. I feel very strongly about that and I feel most of the people who live in my part of the country would agree with that view.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Nicholas Elliott, Assistant Boundary Commissioner. It is a point of clarification. You have made your point about the name of Eddisbury and I understand that. If the wards of Farndon, Tattenhall and Tarporley moved back into a constituency which we will name just nominally as Eddisbury, would the name still not quite fit because it does not include Kelsall, or would it be appropriate in those circumstances?

MR COPELAND: The Eddisbury name?

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

MR COPELAND: Eddisbury would still technically be outside the boundary.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Would you be able to think up something else for us then, please? Not now, but write in.

MR COPELAND: I take your point, but I think it is important that the naming of the constituency should be based on logic and it perhaps would not be logical to have a constituency named after a feature that was not within that constituency.

THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are happy to have input from members of the public who know the greater detail of it. For my part, I would be grateful if, having thought about it, you could write in.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Copeland.

MR COPELAND: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I will just check if anyone here knows whether anyone else is likely to be coming along this afternoon.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not to my knowledge, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. In which case I think I will formally close the hearings in Chester. We are enormously grateful to everyone who has been able to come along and make representations to us. It is particularly helpful to us to be able to get this sense of emotional and community commitment to the proposals, either alternative or existing proposals on the table, because it puts flesh on the bones of the proposals. When we, as Assistant Boundary Commissioners, later go off and consider them, they are often the things that carry enormous weight with us when we are looking at proposals. Can I just thank the Boundary Commission for England staff for all the help they have given us in these two days? For those who are heading to Carlisle, I look forward to seeing you up in Carlisle early next week. Otherwise, thank you very much. I close now.

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