

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

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ON

**FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2016
DAY TWO**

Before:

Mr Colin Byrne, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

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THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, everyone. My name is Colin Byrne; I am the Assistant Commissioner who will be chairing this event today. I am joined by Sam Hartley who is the Secretary of the Boundary Commission, and one of my fellow Commissioners, Stephen Lawes, who will be working with me and Alan Nisbett on analysing the representations and producing a report for the Boundary Commission.

Today we are running from 9.00 to 5.00. We have a number of people who have booked in; they will have ten minutes to make representations. We will also permit questions for a point of clarification, not a debate but just so that people can clarify their understanding of what has been said. Our first witness is Rob Wilson MP.

MR WILSON: (MP for Reading East) My name is Rob Wilson; I am the Member of Parliament for Reading East. I will begin by thanking the Commission for its work to date. It is obviously very challenging work and I very much welcome the approach that you have taken which seems to me to be to very much minimise the disruption and difficulty in changes to constituencies boundaries. As I only have ten minutes I will launch straight into what I wish to say.

The initial proposals affecting Reading East are the transfer, as you are well aware, of Mapledurham of 2,392 electors from Reading East constituency into Reading West and the transfer of Maiden Erlegh ward, which is 6,500 electors, from the Wokingham constituency into Reading East.

The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 stipulated that the Boundary Commission may take into account, amongst other things, special geographical considerations (which include accessibility) and also any local ties that would be broken by changes to the constituency. My concern very much revolves around those two points, particularly with regard to Mapledurham ward where I do not think that those considerations have been taken into account sufficiently yet and I would like that to be reconsidered.

I should mention also, before I get too far into the presentation today, that I have consulted with local councillors in the area that are affected and also a number of constituents and other bodies have made representations to me, which is why I am particularly raising the Mapledurham ward issues.

The transfer of the Maiden Erlegh part of Wokingham constituency into Reading East I believe is a very logical move and I will address some points to that as we move on through the presentation.

Focusing first on Mapledurham ward, under the existing boundaries Reading East represents the entire community of Caversham, encompassing four electoral wards, all north of the River Thames. The wards are intrinsically linked through geography and extremely strong local community ties, both of which mean that Caversham is a very distinct entity within Reading Borough and indeed the surrounding areas as well. Let me first deal with the geography and map 1. The first issue is the River Thames. As you can see, this area of Mapledurham (indicating) will move from Caversham and Reading East into Reading West. It is quite clear that there is a permanent natural boundary between this area of Reading West in the new constituency and Reading West below here. There is a complete physical block and no bridge across. The only realistic routes from Reading West to the new part of Mapledurham would be to cross the bridge here at Caversham bridge or over here at Reading bridge. (Indicating) Both of those routes would require, to get to Mapledurham from Reading West, to go through Reading East geographical wards. These bridges are already severely overloaded, particularly during peak hours. There is access further west which involves going over Whitchurch toll bridge and going through Henley constituency here into Mapledurham. (Indicating) There is no doubt that moving Mapledurham to Reading West would isolate the ward geographically with the knock-on effects that that might have for representation. Travel between Mapledurham and the new Reading West would not be straightforward for the issues I have said. Reading also needs a new river crossing because of the pressure on these two crossings here (indicating). The Local Enterprise Partnership and the borough councils of Wokingham and Reading are working together to try and get a third Thames crossing but it will be to the east, not the west, of Reading. In the absence of a new river crossing between Mapledurham and Reading West, Mapledurham residents will be unavoidably disconnected from Reading West.

Looking at map 2, Caversham is a very distinct and self-contained community, as I have already said. Residents really identify with the strong links that exist. Mapledurham residents here (indicating) rely on services provided in the rest of Caversham. All their essential local services are provided north of the river, as it is known in Caversham, and none are available in the ward itself. These include, for example, primary and secondary schools, GP and dental surgeries, library services and other public services. Under the current proposals Mapledurham residents would have to cross from Reading West into Reading East for literally all their relevant local and community services. Neighbourhood policing treats Caversham as two areas but closely linked between those two police areas, but on the existing boundaries for Reading East at the moment. For shopping and recreation, Mapledurham residents gravitate towards Caversham town centre; they use the recreational and green spaces. Mapledurham residents have one green space called Mapledurham playing fields here that they use (indicating) but that mainly provides

football through an organisation called Caversham Trents Football Club which represents the whole of the Caversham area as well. Community organisations like the Caversham and District Residents' Association, Caversham Traders, Caversham Globe all represent the wider community of Caversham.

In terms of public services, schools, social and recreational life, it all revolves around the wider Caversham community, so transferring Mapledurham to Reading West would strain, weaken and potentially eradicate those strong local community ties which have been cultivated over a number of decades. Fundamentally Mapledurham would be isolated geographically and socially by the proposal which is, I think, clearly made on the basis of the numeric considerations that the Commission has. Mapledurham should remain in Reading East for the good of Mapledurham and for the wider Caversham community.

Turning to map 3, I have a few comments on Erleigh ward. I do support the transfer of Maiden Erleigh into Reading East. There is a very practical case in terms of geography, accessibility and the enhancement of already existing community ties, as I hope I can demonstrate in a moment. As you can see, the ward here is contiguous with Reading East around it so it fits in from a geographical point of view. There are no accessibility issues for residents; there is no chance of societal isolation as the case was with Mapledurham. Indeed, I think the opposite is actually true in the case of Maiden Erleigh ward. There are strong community ties already in existence, for example school catchment areas. This is Erleigh St Peter catchment area which goes over a number of wards, including Maiden Erleigh; Bulmershe Secondary School and Maiden Erleigh School serve these areas here (indicating). Indeed, when Maiden Erleigh School, which is in Maiden Erleigh, changed its catchment area a few years ago, it was fiercely resisted by Reading East residents because it was very much part of the local community. The resulting action was to open a satellite school from Maiden Erleigh inside the Reading East boundaries. It would be great to have both schools in the one constituency. The other great thing is that this would join up the whole of the university area. Reading East already has the whole of the London Road campus. The Whiteknights campus is split at the moment between Maiden Erleigh ward and another ward and that will be joined up so that Reading East represents the whole of the university area.

For shopping and recreation, Erleigh residents gravitate towards Woodley town; Reading East shops, restaurants and community facilities are all there. Loddon ward, South Lake ward, Bulmershe and Whitegates added to Maiden Erleigh ward do make a very strong local community. In terms of transport links, Erleigh Station, which is a key transport hub for Maiden Erleigh residents, physically sits within my current Reading East constituency.

It makes sense that both the station and the residents reliant on the service are united under one constituency.

Fundamentally the Maiden Erlegh ward would fairly seamlessly fit into Reading East, both geographically and with regard to social and community ties. That can only be a net benefit to everyone concerned.

If we were to do all those things, keeping Mapledurham in Reading East for the reasons specified, there would have to be some other option on the table that would fit in with the Commission's desire to keep changes to a minimum. I have given that some thought and I shall share those thoughts with you now. If Reading East were to keep Mapledurham and gain Maiden Erlegh, that would be a new electorate of 74,416. If Reading West did not take Mapledurham but instead took Basildon ward from Newbury, that would be a much more practical fit in terms of geography and community ties to Reading West, plus numerically better equalise the electorates of each, the new electorate there would be 72,168. Newbury losing Basildon, the new electorate would be 74,334. I believe that proposal makes much more sense in terms of geography, community, local ties and local services than the current proposal.

Thank you for your patience. Good luck with the rest of your work.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have a chance now to have any questions in relation to that. I have one question. The ward that you mentioned, Basildon ward from Newbury, what sort of characteristics has that got vis-à-vis Reading West?

MR WILSON: In terms of West Berkshire wards, Reading West already has Pangbourne and Purley wards which geographically fit onto it but also in character and type those West Berkshire wards already represented by Reading West fit socially and geographically with other parts of Reading West.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There are no other questions. Thank you very much for your representation. We turn now to focus on Slough. James Swindlehurst, you are our first speaker. You were not in the room when I made introductions. I am Colin Byrne; I am the Assistant Commissioner who has responsibility for the South East with my fellow Commissioners. We will be taking all the representations on the initial proposals, considering them and making recommendations to the Boundary Commission. You have ten minutes.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: (Slough Borough Council) I will give you a written copy; I do not have a PowerPoint or anything.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: I do not know if you have access to your own maps document; I may refer to that a couple of times.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I should also say that we are videoing all our representations so for the record you will need to say who you are and where you are from and your address.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: I am James Swindlehurst; I am a councillor on Slough Borough Council. I live at 47 Cippenham Lane, Slough and I represent the Cippenham ward of Slough which is a little bit further to the west than Chalvey. I am here in my capacity as the Chairman of the Boundary Working Party that the council set up to examine the Commission's proposals. The council will be making a more formal submission in writing but our council meeting is not until 29 November so because of the tightness of the deadline we thought it worth at least reporting our initial views as to where we are.

This is about the changes required to Windsor constituency that have effectively meant that to grow that constituency a ward of Slough is being proposed to be removed from Slough for the purpose of parliamentary elections and put into Windsor. The two maps in the written document that the Commission has published are on pages 66 and 78, page 66 being the Slough map and page 78 being the Windsor map. The Slough proposal is really about solving a Windsor problem. This is a submission on behalf of our Working Party. It has met twice, so we are still in discussions but this is where we are and we will be making recommendations to the council which will be followed up with a full council submission sent to you at the end of the consultation process.

Obviously the Commission's proposals for East Berkshire propose removing the Chalvey ward from central Slough to join the Windsor constituency for parliamentary elections. This is about growing Windsor to be the right size. The Commission says in its statement that it did consider whether other wards of Slough could be included but the Upton ward bisects the town leaving Langley isolated. If that were chosen it is next door to Chalvey but it would leave Langley isolated on its own and the Commission did not think that was a good proposal. Any other ward will either be too big and make the Slough constituency too small or the Little Foxborough ward, which is a single member ward here (indicating) is about 30 electors too small to make Windsor up on its own. Were it not for the numbers issue that would be the most logical thing to do because it has been in Windsor Colbrook ward (inaudible) already in Windsor constituency. On the December registrations they were 50 people too small to do the job.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Cllr Swindlehurst----

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: Yes, I need to stay near the microphone.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There is a pointer for you to use.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: Thank you. At the moment the only ward of Slough that is in Windsor for parliamentary elections is Colnbrook, which is a sort of village that just about joins Slough because of the urban settlement here at the motorway (indicating) but it is south of the M4. The M4 is a very distinct hard divide which I will touch on later.

The council notes the review, we note where we are and acknowledges the problem in Windsor is to grow it to be large enough. We also note the Commission's comments in terms of taking a Slough ward that the only one that potentially works in numbers terms is Chalvey because Central and Upton cut the constituency right across here. (Indicating) Kedermister is too big anyway and Foxborough is too small. The Commission has also said that it has looked at Maidenhead and Bracknell and has left those unchanged, which are the other two wards that abut Windsor over here. (Indicating)

In summary, the council's submission is mainly an objection to the removal of Chalvey. Our cross-party Working Group has only met twice. The Conservatives at the moment have noted the proposal but are not convinced that the other wards are better alternatives from a different town and seem therefore to be moving perhaps to either making no comment or not objecting to that. The UKIP group and the Labour group object to the removal of Chalvey, which I will come to in terms of reasoning in a minute. In terms of discussions and the Boundary Commission we propose looking at taking either the Bullbrook ward of Bracknell or the Crowthorne ward of Bracknell Forest. I will come to that with a map in the back of my submission in a minute. They achieve the same goal in terms of numbers but do not have the effect of taking a great bite out of the central urban area of Slough.

At the moment the existing Slough constituency has an electorate of 76,668, which is within the tolerance required by the Commission. So the Slough constituency as it is now is exactly the right size, slap bang in the middle of the numbers. Bracknell constituency is just slightly larger than Slough at 76,900 electors. Both these towns are growing. Windsor has been constrained by the green belt and perhaps their own housing policies; it has not grown in anything like the same degree as the other two towns. The council considers that the removal perhaps of another ward from Bracknell Forest would be at the very least as viable as doing this and probably, in terms of fit, far more suitable because there are already four wards of Bracknell Forest in Windsor, some of which creep

into the existing urban area, some of which are more semi-rural in terms of Bracknell, but do not cross the M4 as this proposal does, which is a very hard boundary along the southern end.

We also looked at moving Bray ward, which you cannot quite see on this map but it is the bottom end of Maidenhead. It is the only Maidenhead ward that is south of the Thames. This is the great snake of Buckinghamshire coming down (indicating) which divides the lump of Slough that came into Berkshire from Buckinghamshire. This is all of Maidenhead; I think that is Bray there. (Indicating) Bray was historically in the Windsor constituency; it moved in the 2005 review and it is the only ward south of the Thames. The only problem in doing that instead, although it perhaps feels a better fit, is that Maidenhead is isolated to the north of Berkshire and if you take Bray back to Windsor you then have to make Maidenhead up in quite a complicated way. We understand why the Commission did not do that, although in terms of history Bray was there before. We started looking at Bracknell Forest as alternatives because we were trying to help the Commission rather than just object and we are considering in the review whether we recommend the Bracknell wards.

In terms of electorate, which you will see on the second page of my submission, taking one of those smaller wards from Bracknell actually produces a better average for the Windsor constituency and the Bracknell constituency closer to the required target numbers. Slough is slightly smaller than Bracknell and you end up with three constituencies that fit slightly better in the median in technical terms.

In terms of geography, four Bracknell wards have already been moved into Windsor Bracknell council wards in order to make Windsor up. Those are Ascot, Binfield with Warfield, Warfield Harvest Ride and Winkfield and Cranbourne. In the Commission's considerations when the new Windsor constituency was established and when it took those wards, particularly the extra one in 2005, it made very clear that it felt that the only way you had a viable Windsor constituency was to look westward to take chunks of Bracknell. It is not illogical to group those wards and one of the wards that we propose into the new Windsor constituency because both of the ones we propose about the existing area. The map in the very back of my submission shades in blue the two wards that we have looked at.

If the desire is to keep Bracknell town intact in the new Bracknell constituency, Crowthorne might be the better fit for the simple reason that it shares the forested area with Ascot, the last bottom south-west ward of Windsor, and they are joined by the forest with the Ascot settlements to the east of Ascot and the Crowthorne settlement being at the further tip of the Crowthorne ward. The actual geography is very similar. The only

issue with that perhaps is that the people tend to be in the south-west of Crowthorne so they are perhaps a bit further away. When you drive through that area it all feels a very similar drag; it is very similar geographically. I quite understand there might be an issue about the residential element of Crowthorne looking more towards Crowthorne than the ward next door. If there was not perhaps the sense of keeping the town settlement of Bracknell intact, Bullbrook is in exactly the same position as the Warfield Harvest Ride ward up above, which is that it is the suburban edge of Bracknell but Warfield has already been transferred into the Windsor constituency for parliamentary purposes. Those two wards share all the same road network, local services and everything else. By moving Bullbrook you follow the pattern of two large main roads so that the edge of the Windsor parliamentary constituency follows the line of the roads. Hence we looked at those two as alternatives, but we certainly believe that they have less impact on the wider Bracknell constituency than removing the ward of Chalvey.

I have gone into some detail in my written submission about the statistics around Chalvey as a specific community. Chalvey is a predominantly Muslim ward of Kashmiri and Pakistani heritage population. It has more Muslims in it than the entire Windsor constituency, so that one single ward is more ethnically patterned than the entire settlement of Windsor, the 70,000 electors compared to the 5,900. Historically, the oldest part of the Slough settlement is the parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey which is this Chalvey ward here and what is now two bits of the ward next door. (Indicating) This is the historic town of Slough until it became Slough properly and, as I say, Upton-cum-Chalvey parish existed up to the early 20th century and has the oldest bits of Slough in it, including the 11th century church.

The nature of Chalvey is that it is an urban town centre ward of Slough. Only 58 per cent of residents in Chalvey have English as their main language; 11 per cent cannot speak English at all or certainly cannot speak it well. If you take other comparative areas outside Slough a minimum of 93 per cent residents have English as their main language and only a vanishingly small number of people cannot speak it with proficiency. I use that to illustrate that Chalvey is a very distinct ward.

In terms of housing stock, Chalvey residents are mainly private rented homes; 20 per cent of Chalvey is in social lets and 37 per cent own their own homes. In the Bracknell ward of Crowthorne or other parts of Windsor, 73 per cent of residents own their own homes. In terms of the fit in community terms, it is a very different community. The population of Slough as a whole is generally younger than its neighbouring towns and particularly in Chalvey the density of population is far larger than any of the Windsor wards for the simple reason that it is an incredibly dense urban area.

The big point of our submission is that the M4 is effectively the practical boundary between the settlements of Slough and Windsor and exists ramped up in a bunded area with acoustic barriers. The last but one map in my submission I think illustrates quite neatly the practical situation of Chalvey. You can see that the settlement is almost exclusively above the motorway; the motorway has been fitted in to cover the edge of the town of Slough. Apart from the single road of Willowbrook, which is ten cottages associated with Eton College, the entire rest of the ward is an urban part of central Slough. You will see from the map that Slough Magistrates' Court, Slough Police Station, the Slough Borough Council offices and, although we do not refer to it because MPs are perhaps not all the same personalities, but the Slough MP's office is slap bang in the middle of Chalvey where everyone from Slough visits her at her surgeries. All of this just illustrates the point that we are talking about Slough town centre here, not a suburb.

For these and a number of other reasons, certainly the UKIP councillor representative on the Working Party and the Labour councillors are unanimous in our objection to the removal of Chalvey from Slough because we just do not think at a practical level it functions. Although there are two roads out to Windsor, you are talking about going under the motorway and a high number of residents in Chalvey cannot drive. There is a set of practical issues that make this quite difficult.

The other issue is that historically Slough was in Buckinghamshire and although the Eton and Slough constituency briefly included the two little villages of Eton and Eton Wick, Slough and Windsor have never been connected in any practical structures of local government or anything else because until 1972 Slough was not even in Berkshire. Another Berkshire authority would perhaps be a better fit.

A final point I want to make to bring it to a conclusion is that the Conservative group are at the moment considering the report produced. Their early feedback is that they accept the work the Boundary Commission has to do and that it has to make Windsor up somehow and in that sense they are less supportive of making the argument that you pick a different ward. I suspect, without wishing to malign them, that some of this may be to do with the large number of labour voters that would be exported out of Slough which will be to their advantage. I do not think it would affect the majority of the seat; the seat has a 7,500 majority. Clearly we are all also dealing with the politics of this as political parties. The other parties represented on the council are firmly of the view that we need to make an objection.

We will be making a formal submission but I hope that touches on the practical issues that we wanted to raise. I am sorry if I have overrun.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, that was very informative. There are questions, only for clarification; we are not having a debate.

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. I appreciate your main case is that it should be a Bracknell ward rather than a Slough ward, but you did make a statement with regard to the Bray ward in terms of where it sits with the River Thames and the rest of Maidenhead. I wonder if you could just clarify that in relation to where the Thames is.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: Obviously the Thames crossing the ward, or part of the ward, is south but we probably need to get much more of Maidenhead in the slide. You can see, particularly with the motorway, that Bray is the one settlement that is all this side of the rest of Maidenhead. (Indicating) Certainly the M4 is a very physical divide. The river crosses through this part so that this ward is all south whereas the river snakes along. The basic point is simply that is the obvious ward you would remove from Maidenhead. The Commission, in moving Bray to Maidenhead, made the point that it probably looks more to Maidenhead than to Windsor for its identity and other things. The problem it creates means that you then have to take two wards from somewhere else. The reason our submission is not particularly looking at Bray is simply because the Commission seems to have already done that work and concluded that it causes more problems than it solves.

MR PRATT: Would you be good enough to highlight on there the Thames? I think I am right in saying that the Thames is all to the east.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: In Taplow ward. Fair enough.

MR PRATT: And is the boundary of the Maidenhead constituency right up?

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: In a way the conclusion we have reached is that it is not worth looking at. The motorway is the bigger and more obvious point. It crosses there (indicating) and the rest of Maidenhead is all to the north, Bray is in the south. The Thames snakes over here and goes up. (Indicating) The Maidenhead settlement is up that way, that is all I was trying to say.

MR PRATT: It is all to the west. I do not want a debate.

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: I accept the point on the map that that is a bit of Taplow. Yes, it goes all the way up there.

MR PRATT: I am grateful. I just wanted to clarify that because of the statement.

MR SLEIGHT: David Sleight from the Conservative Party again. You talked of one of the Bracknell constituency wards moving from Bracknell to Windsor. You also talked of Bullbrook or Crowthorne. Which one are you making a counterproposal on?

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: At the moment our Working Party has met twice. We are still trying to establish a consensus to make a cross-party submission if we can when we meet at full council. One of our objections is that the urban settlement of Slough is being significantly disrupted. What we noted, if you take a town centre ward of Bracknell or a suburban ward at the edge of Bracknell, is that you are having the same impact on the urban area. If you want the town to be the core of the Bracknell constituency you would not pick Bullbrook. If you wanted, therefore, a more village rural area like the wards in between as they journey to Windsor, you would pick Crowthorne. If, on the other hand, the settlement being at the south-westerly tip of the Crowthorne ward makes that more disruptive to people, the Commission might prefer to take a town centre ward for the suburban ward of Bracknell for the simple reason that it has already taken two out before. We are not at this stage able to pin down which we prefer; we are trying to point out to the Commission that it has a choice of other wards it could look at and they have different issues and pitfalls around them. This is Slough town centre and our primary purpose is objecting to the removal of this from Slough into Windsor. What we are saying is that there other ways you can make Windsor's numbers up. You could look at Bullbrook because Warfield Harvest Ride up above has already gone and you could look at a more rural ward where the urban settlement is not disruptive of Bracknell town. One of those will be probably something we would point harder to, but we are really just saying do look at this issue again to avoid taking out Slough town centre from the Slough constituency if you ca.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There are no other questions. Thank you very much for that very informative representation. We will now hear from Christine Hulme. Could you please say who you are?

MS HULME: My name is Christine Hulme; I am actually a resident in the Chalvey ward in Slough. I have just come along today really to raise some objections to why we think this move should not take place. Obviously Cllr Swindlehurst has outlined alternatives to the proposals by the Commission.

Just some background basically, I moved to Slough and specifically to Chalvey ward in 2007 from West London. The reason for that was cheaper housing in Slough compared to London. The reason for the Chalvey location also was its central location within Slough

town centre. It has easy access to the train station for commuting, shopping, et cetera. I actually got a job with the Civil Service in the Job Centre so it was ideal for me to be quite close to the town centre.

In terms of the actual ward itself, it is quite important to point out, as has been alluded to already by Cllr Swindlehurst, the actual dynamics of the ward and why a lot of my neighbours, including myself, believe it remains firmly in Slough as opposed to being moved into the Windsor constituency. A lot of that is to do with the make-up of the community within the Chalvey ward, outlining the diversity of the community is one key issue. Residents who live there are not just connected to the one ward. For a lot of families, family members also live in other parts of the town. There are issues also connected with places of worship; they may live in Chalvey but worship close by, it may be another ward or close to the town centre.

There are issues in relation to social deprivation within the ward itself that Slough Council and I believe our MPs will speak in a moment and explain to you that there are an ongoing number of social issues that the current representation within the town deals with quite well. They are complex and they do require a lot of work and a lot of casework. It is important, I think, for the residents in Chalvey who are already used to dealing with the current organisation in terms of the council, in terms of political representation in Parliament that those relationships do continue. They are quite important that the experience that has built up within the constituency office continues for residents within the ward.

In terms of the dynamics and the make-up of Chalvey itself, the social issues are quite embedded. There are issues around houses of multiple occupation; there are issues around street prostitution; there are issues around street homelessness; there are issues around worklessness, et cetera. The ward itself is quite a difficult ward in which to live and to deal with. I think the current representation that we have is making some inroads into dealing with some quite complex issues.

On a logical basis, Cllr Swindlehurst has already alluded to the issue of the physical barrier between Windsor and he has also mentioned the issue about transport. We do have a poor transport system unfortunately so the idea that people are going to have to travel to Windsor will create some issues for quite a few people when all the services that they use at the moment are more or less on their doorstep. Again, that is quite important to flag up for the Commission. If the Commission could just look at the social issues connected with the relationship of Chalvey ward to the relationship of the rest of the town, I think it is quite crucial that those issues are taken on board.

I will leave it there.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any questions? No. Thank you very much indeed for your representation. Our next representation is from Fiona Mactaggart MP.

MS MACTAGGART: (MP for Slough). I am Fiona Mactaggart; I am the Member of Parliament for Slough. I am not going to come up with an alternative proposal to the Commission's proposal but it struck me that the Commission's introduction says quite clearly in paragraph 12 that these provide a starting point for consultation on changes. You say, "We have taken into account the existing constituencies," (one of which is Slough) "local government boundaries and geographical features to produce a set of constituencies that are within the statutory electorate range and that we consider to be the best balance. What we do not yet have is evidence and intelligence of how our proposals reflect or break community ties." The concern in Slough is that removing the centre of Slough breaks community ties in a way which is actually intolerable. These kinds of things do not normally get resonance with ordinary citizens. It is kind of dull. Most of the people here are from political parties and so on. Actually, this one has because Chalvey is the centre of Slough. Let us reflect on what ways it is the centre of Slough.

The first thing to look at is local government because that is the first thing within the Boundary Commission's list of reasons. There is one ward in Slough which is already within the Windsor constituency. That is Colnbrook ward. Colnbrook is a village stuck on the edge of Slough. If you were to talk to anyone from Colnbrook about where they live, they would say Colnbrook. If you were to speak to anyone in Chalvey about where they live, if you also lived in Slough they might say Chalvey, but if you did not also live in Slough they would certainly say Slough. That is the fundamental difference.

Slough historically started as a parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey. It was what became the town of Slough. I am wearing a brooch which is made of Ordnance Survey maps and which the middle of has "Slough" written in it. Everything in the middle of this brooch is in the Chalvey ward. There is a little bit of the Central ward also in it. We are talking about a ward which not only in the maps is bang in the centre of the town, the ward underneath the bit where the Ordnance Survey actually writes "Slough", it also has the town hall in it, it has the council offices, it has our swimming pool, our ice arena, a five-a-side football area, the bowling club, the town centre park; it has the Granada Bingo Hall where the Beatles did their first concert in Slough. It has my office. When the Conservative Party used to have an office in Slough it had the Conservative office in it. It has one of the oldest churches in Slough in it, which is part of a parish which is the Upton-

cum-Chalvey parish. It has schools in it. If we look at those kinds of boundaries, because Slough has the 11-plus there is no travelling from Slough even for schooling on the whole into the Windsor constituency. It is a place which is very compact, very connected, very urban.

How do you get out of Slough? In order to get to Windsor if you live in Chalvey, you cannot get a bus. There are no buses which go north/south through Chalvey to Windsor; they all go east/west. Yet this is a ward in which 35.6 per cent of the residents do not own a car. A much larger proportion of the residents do not have access to a car because if there is a car in the family, let me just say that in this particular ward it is very unlikely that the women will be able to drive it. We are talking about a ward which, as well as having many of the facilities of our town, also includes part of our high street and, as Cllr Swindlehurst has pointed out, it is separated from Windsor by the hard boundary of the M4. It is true that there are a handful of houses which are the other side, but they are all actually on the road which leads into Slough, so it is not particularly dispersed. It includes our Magistrates' Court, the police station. It is a place which is the centre of Slough. I would say that if this ward is to be removed from Slough you would have to rename the Slough constituency. It is a bit like creating a kind of polo constituency. We make Mars Bars in Slough, but we do not make Polos. You are taking the heart out of Slough.

How is it different to Windsor? I think that is quite important. Cllr Swindlehurst has already pointed out that there are more Muslims in Chalvey ward than in the whole of the Windsor constituency. It is very different to Windsor constituency in many ways, not just faith, because of course Christians in the Chalvey ward are a minority. I do not think that is true of any ward in Windsor. Most people were not born in Britain. It is also much younger than the Windsor constituency. One of the very striking things about Slough as a whole is that it is a young constituency. I represent very few pensioners; there are a lot of young people. Chalvey is a very young ward. I can provide you with age profiles, but if you just look at these in big you can see that that is Chalvey ward (indicating) with very few people who are in the older age groups. There are many people in the younger age groups compared to Windsor constituency, which is a completely different shape.

I also have something that I pulled off yesterday from Thames Valley Police, the neighbourhood update for October for Chalvey/Upton/Town. I brought it because it seems to me that if you just look at Thames Valley Police they regard Chalvey as bang in the centre of the town. I did not pick it because it is representative of a particularly high crime area, although we do have more crime in Chalvey than I wish we did and probably a lot more crime than most of Windsor. Nevertheless, I brought it as an example of how Chalvey is right at the heart of Slough.

I invited a local business owner who runs a supermarket in Chalvey and he said, "Being the owner of a business which has been based in Chalvey for over 30 years, it would be a shame to suddenly change from being part and heart of Slough to Windsor." These are his words: "With regards to attending the meeting scheduled for this Friday, I am afraid I will not be able to attend as on Friday I already have other commitments and also Friday, as you know, is a day especially where I attend the mosque to offer afternoon prayers." That is why more people from Chalvey are not here today, because it is Friday and because a very high proportion of my constituents will be praying in the mosque today. It has different challenges to the rest of Windsor.

It is striking if I look at my constituency casework that the issues that I deal with in Chalvey are particularly acute when it comes to housing. My average proportion of housing casework in Slough as a whole is one in five; in Chalvey it is 35 per cent of the cases that I deal with. We are talking of an area where there is a real housing problem. In fact, it is estimated that something like one in five households in Chalvey are at least one room short of what they require. That is not reflecting some of the other problems in Chalvey. For example, when the scandal of beds in sheds, which you might have heard about, was first investigated, it was in Chalvey where the work was to try to make sure that you did not have residents living in unregistered homes, basically garden sheds. It was Chalvey where that programme was started. Twenty-four per cent of the people in Chalvey are amongst the five per cent of those who are most deprived in the whole of Berkshire. That is a different place to Windsor. The life expectancy of the people in Chalvey is 75.5 years; in Windsor it is 82 years. The emergency admissions to hospital in Chalvey is higher than expected. Forty per cent of people in Chalvey who are at work are working in manual occupations, 21 per cent of them in elementary occupations; 20 per cent of people in Chalvey have no formal qualifications. I am used to representing these people; they are not that unusual in Slough and they are part of what makes Slough the kind of place it is. Slough is a town which is intensely diverse and yet is peaceful. When there were riots in other parts of the country, there were people who tried to stir them up in Slough and we managed to stop it. We managed to stop it because we know each other, because we are a united community despite some of these challenges I have described which exist in Chalvey. Therefore, the proposal that the Boundary Commission is making is genuinely unacceptable to Slough. It is, as was said by one of our local newspapers, ripping the heart out of the town.

I quite understand that taking another ward might cause a problem of splitting Slough up and therefore I am with those who would say to take the ward from somewhere else. I notice that Bracknell is bigger than Slough, so perhaps something could come from Bracknell. I am not going to solve the problem I am leaving you with. I am just telling you

that if the Boundary Commission sticks with its present proposal it will leave Slough with a serious problem.

One of the difficulties in Slough is that the people of Slough rather feel that the areas around Slough pick on us because we are different. We used to be a pimple on the bottom of Buckinghamshire and now we feel we are a pimple on the back of Berkshire, frankly. If you just look at your map you will see that in the north of Slough, close to the edge, there are gravel excavations. In the south of Slough there are about to be gravel excavations. What happens is that the constituencies in the areas around Slough who have minerals extraction obligations always do them bang next to Slough so that it is Slough residents who have to face the lorries, who have to face the air pollution and so on because they think they can get away with it, brutally. If the Boundary Commission is also to treat Slough with the same amount of disrespect it would not be fair. I think you are better than that and I am hoping that you will, on reflection and in learning about how Chalvey is at the heart of Slough, change your minds and find somewhere which fits with Windsor better but not take away the heart of our town. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Would anybody like to ask a question? (No response) Thank you for that representation. We are now on to Lydia Simmons, please.

MS SIMMONS: Good morning. My name is Lydia Simmons and I used to be on Slough Borough Council from 1979 until 2007 so I know the town very well. I came from London to Slough in the 1960s and lived in Chalvey for ten years. The reason why I had to move from Chalvey was because of my housing problem where the council built some houses in another area which I had to move to because I had a family. My daughter was born in Chalvey; she is now 53 years old, so I know Chalvey very well.

What happened, in the 1960s a lot of Caribbean people came to Slough and they settled in Chalvey. The reason why, because Chalvey, we had a community relation council in Chalvey which actually welcomed the foreigners that were coming. They called us foreigners, yes, but we were British subjects. So I got involved with the Caribbean community and we formed a West Indian Parents' Association because we had quite a few West Indians in Slough at the time. There were more West Indians in Chalvey at the time than Asian but then the Asians came in and they out-numbered the Caribbean people.

I became mayor of Slough, the first black mayor in the UK and some would say in Europe because it was a time when Slough was the only place that could ever produce something like that because of the good community relations that we shared in Slough.

Our MP's office, as we said already, is in Slough. I also received an OBE for the work that I did with the elderly and with children. It was not just black people I worked for; I worked for the community because that is what the Caribbean people are like. We shared our culture, we introduced our culture, our food in Slough and we built up Slough for the white people in Slough to get to understand what black people were all about. If you look at England, you will find that Slough is the most community relation town. I used to be on Thames Valley Police as a member for ten years. When I was on Thames Valley Police they were so proud because they used to send all the policemen to Slough for training because Slough was such a good town community-wise that that was where a lot of police came for training. If you look around Slough, they moved them from Slough to London, all over England, and the training they had was from Slough.

Nobody has mentioned this, but historically ethnically Windsor was not very welcoming to Caribbean and Asian people so that was why so many Caribbean and Asian people settled in Slough because Slough was more a welcoming town. I was very involved so I know that this was true. Even now, if you look at Windsor, the people have not moved over there, the housing problem or anything. Another thing is if we move Chalvey out of Slough to Windsor, we will have to rewrite Slough's history. We have a mound in Slough at Montem - I do not now if you know about this - where it is a burying ground that cannot be disturbed. They have got pictures of when the royal family used to come into Slough for funerals there, royal families. If you look at that, you will have to rewrite the history of Slough because Chalvey is Slough's history and I am very, very disappointed if we have to move Chalvey out of Slough because I do not think that has been well put forward to the people of Slough because I am sure you will find all the ethnic people in Slough. We also have two black churches in Slough. Chalvey, the Methodist Church, you go there on a Sunday, it is all Caribbean people in there. There is a little church along Chalvey High Street, a black church that I actually supported to get them to build there.

So please, please, reconsider what you are all doing. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have a question? (No response) Thank you for your representation. Our next representation is from Mrs Gorniok. Would you please say your name for the record? We are filming the whole of this representation so if you could just say your name for the record and your address and then tell us what you have come here to say.

MRS GORNIOK: Good morning, everybody. My name is Evelyn Gorniok; I live in Normandy, just outside Guildford. I have lived there since 1961. There has been a certain amount of development in Normandy at various times and we are now proposed to have

a much bigger development in Normandy which has caused a lot of alarm. However, I will just outline to you what our situation is.

There is good transport from Normandy to Guildford but we come under Woking constituency. There is a train that will take us straight to Guildford and there are buses every quarter of an hour which is very useful for the people of Normandy. There is no transport for us to Woking unless you can go by car. If we do want to go to Woking, we have to change at Guildford. Quite a lot of the inhabitants of Normandy are, like me, ageing and find that a bit tiresome.

Normandy has always used Guildford for schools, for hospitals, for shopping, for socialising and consequently they have a knowledge of the people in charge, shall we call it, in Guildford, the who's who when council decisions are being taken, but we belong to Woking. There is little connection with Woking to us and vice versa. The status quo is acceptable in Normandy but that also means apathy, although one does not know where to turn when there are problems.

We propose that we should really belong to Guildford, because it is much more realistic and practical, and not Woking. Those are my reasons which I have given to you already. I think we would get a lot more active participation from local residents in Normandy, especially as we are going to have a lot of development in Normandy and it would be more feasible that they were directly connected with the Guildford Council and the Guildford constituency rather than Woking.

Thank you for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I will just ask if anybody has a quick question. (No response) Thank you very much for coming and making your representation. Our next speaker is Rob Deeks.

MR DEEKS: My name is Rob Deeks; I am director of Together As One, a Queen's award winning charity established in the aftermath of racial violence in the ward that might be moved from Slough to Windsor, tensions that took place in Chalvey around 20 years ago, specifically the violence was between young Sikhs and Muslims, young people from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. If you ask people why those tensions took place, some will attach them to contemporary issues such as drugs or extremism, but others traced it back to 1947 and the drawing of a boundary between India and Pakistan. I have the utmost respect for what is happening here because boundaries affect lives, they affect communities, they are going to affect the people of our town. Chalvey is not just a part of Slough; as you have already heard, it is the heart of our town. This ward contains the headquarters of our major political parties, our police station, our local authority

headquarters. It is an area that is so important to Slough and has been ever since it was one of the villages that was amalgamated into the town we see today.

I work with some of the most socially excluded communities in Slough, in Chalvey more specifically, and I fear that they will not be served and democracy will not be served by this boundary change. The Windsor constituency, although by no means uniform, has a character and the Slough constituency, although by no means uniform, also has a character. Although there is diversity between wards, culturally they have much more in common than what divides them.

As we have heard, Chalvey is home to some of the poorest and least socially mobile people in Slough and it bears very little resemblance to our predominantly different, well-to-do some might say, neighbours. Statistically there is more child poverty in Chalvey than anywhere else in Slough and currently the people in this ward are at the heart of Slough's democracy. If they have a problem they can simply go along to one of our MP's surgeries and get the support that they need. With the redrawing of the boundary it is likely that a Windsor MP, if they did have a surgery, would be in the heart of Windsor and our most vulnerable people, cut off from the rest of the electoral area by the M4, would be forced to get the train to seek help. That is supposing that this hypothetical Windsor MP held regular surgeries; they might not because perhaps the majority of their constituents might not need them. Windsor has one pocket of depravation that I can think of. It is not on the scale of Chalvey and it is not characterised by those barriers of language and culture and poverty that you really want your MP to understand.

We have communities, such as our Roma gypsy community, that a Slough MP understands. They are not statistically significant insofar as they do not affect thousands of people, but the issues that they face are hugely significant. A Windsor MP, to support our communities in Chalvey, would have to develop almost an additional parallel avenue of support for people in this area. We know that having an MP reflecting the local authority boundary makes sense and it makes even more sense to me when I consider some of the people that I personally have been working with recently: young gypsies that do not have a place in Slough schools; a 22 year old woman left to bring up her 12 year old cousin because his father has died and his mother has a drug and mental health problem; an Irish traveller family evicted by their private landlord and unable to find affordable, alternative private accommodation, effectively rendered homeless; a Polish family with little English, including an autistic young man with a suspected misdiagnosis of schizophrenia and his pregnant 16 year old sister. These are people whose problems will only be resolved through liaising with Slough's local authority, admissions and the education department, children's trust or social services, housing, a broad range of different agencies within the local authority.

The voluntary sector is also necessary to resolve these issues. Our MP not only has links with Slough charities like the one that I serve but also, just to name a few, Slough Homeless Our Concern, Slough and District Association for the Disabled, Slough Autistic Spectrum Disorder Support Group, Slough Community Transport, Slough Crossroads Care, Slough Food Banks, Slough Furniture Project, Slough Immigration Aid Unit, Slough Mencap, Slough Refugee Support. That is just naming a few of them, without even starting on associations and groups that can help people from specific communities or faiths like Slough Ghanaian Association, Slough Irish Club or Slough Islamic Trust.

I firmly believe that the Slough MP and the borough have developed links and will go on to develop more links to support people like those that I mentioned earlier. I know from first-hand experience that a Slough MP is linked into groups like those I mentioned because it is necessary to support the people of Chalvey to get the help, support and recourse that they need when straightforward options have failed. I honestly do not know how a Windsor MP would possibly know where to start in terms of getting people there the help that they need.

I understand that we, as a country, are looking for more parity where democracy and voter-power is spread more equally, but I do not think that that is best served by moving this incredibly diverse, unique community from its current area where it fits and where recourse is easily accessible to a different electoral area where it does not. The people of Chalvey need a Slough MP to help them with their problems. They are almost inevitably involved and need to liaise with other Slough agencies. I respect the fact that changes need to be made but I do not think that this is the right one for the people of Slough.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Does anybody have any questions? No. Thank you very much for coming in today and making your representations. Cllr Swindlehurst, do you want to speak again?

CLLR SWINDLEHURST: Very briefly on behalf of the Labour Party, not very much at all. Just on the executive, they had asked that submissions be made and I have made them already. I will be brief this time. They will be my own words and not those of our Working Party report. All the things that the Labour Party locally had asked me to say I almost do not feel the need to now. The point has probably been made rather more admirably than by me by some of the residents. The council's submission is trying to deal with the technical issues the Boundary Commission has to deal with. The paper is produced by all the people sat in it. They are obviously trying to help the Commission out by saying, "Look at some other places; they might work better" because at the very least we have

some limited reach of geography into the surrounding areas. I certainly accept we will not know Bray or Bracknell as well as we know Slough.

Returning to the executive of the local Labour Party, they wanted someone to come, I was in a car already so rather than send two people I have come with that hat on as well. There is a cultural concern about all of this. It broke in the papers locally about two or three weeks ago. It has been the subject of local gossip. Lots of people in Chalvey are thinking their house prices might rise. I think they like the idea. There have been a lot of people from Windsor on Facebook being appalled by the idea. You get the feeling from the picture that has been painted that these are two totally different communities. The concern the Labour Party wanted to make sure was expressed was that Slough is this sort of cigar-shaped, banana-shaped urban area above the motorway and the motorway was fitted underneath it because that is the divide and the kind of reach up does not work as a fit. Technically Slough is the right size. On its current boundaries it is such a big constituency it does not need to change to take 50 MPs out of Parliament. Bracknell, because they have promoted housing growth, the need coming into the Thames Valley means that it is a growing town as well. We are both growing; we will grow. In the next reviews we might have to revisit this issue for both our towns. The last review took two or three wards out of Bracknell. The neighbouring towns that are growing are the only way that Windsor can get filled. The Slough concern is simply that this does something different to what has been done in Colnbrook. Colnbrook is a village on a road out of the motorway down towards the airport. Although it does not look much like a village anymore, the people who live there identify as something different to the main settlement of Slough. Chalvey has none of those issues. Chalvey is central Slough. The Labour Party and its ward councillors were very, very keen on behalf of the Party somebody said that. I think it has been said. On that basis I will not say any more.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We will hear now from Cllr Finnie. Could you just introduce yourself and say where you live?

CLLR FINNIE: My name is James Finnie, F-I-N-N-I-E. Everybody spells it with E-Y. The famous Finneys seem to have E-Y. I have lived in Crowthorne for 40 years. I came down on business and moved into Crowthorne and found it an extremely caring and very friendly area to live in. I cannot believe 40 years have passed so quickly. I have just heard of the possibility of being moved to the Windsor constituency which is actually disastrous. We have no connection with Windsor whatsoever. We have a lot with Bracknell. We are part of the Bracknell Forest, one of the six sectors of Bracknell Forest Council with Sandhurst, Bracknell, Winkfield, Warfield and Crowthorne. It is a very caring community. They have many connections with the Wokingham Without; again the residents would be horrified with the Boundary Commission. They were horrified by the

Boundary Commission splitting us already, putting part of us in Bracknell Forest and part of us in Wokingham Borough.

Our guide to Crowthorne is a guide to Crowthorne and Wokingham Without because Wokingham Without was part of Crowthorne but the Boundary Commission changed it. The people are very, very upset about this. They want to remain as a village. They would like the whole of Crowthorne to be together in everything. When you say Crowthorne, are you talking about the parish of Crowthorne or the village of Crowthorne? The village and the parish are two different things, so you have to get that correct as to what you are talking about. If it is the village it is one part, but only part of that is in the parish. It is very confusing to the public. People say, "If I'm in that part of the village, I get wheelie bins; if I'm in this part of the village, I don't get wheelie bins. I get leisure facilities if I live there; I don't get them if I live here." So let us try to work together. I thought the idea of this country was to help communities. Crowthorne is a very successful community. You can see from the guide the number of facilities that there are. It is very go-ahead. They have a wonderful carnival every year. They have late night shopping at Christmas, which is unbelievable, the streets are packed with people. To come to Windsor, that is a tourist attraction. They love going to Windsor but they have no connection with Windsor at all. The buses do not go from Crowthorne to Windsor; you have to change bus. The train service is the same. They are two separate areas. Bracknell is just down the road. Take the schools. I am a governor of the schools and we had a meeting last night when we were talking about the sports facilities we have with the other local schools, not with Windsor. That is a good day out for the children. There is no political connection at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Just to be clear, the Boundary Commission has not proposed ---

CLLR FINNIE: Sorry, somebody has proposed. Forgive me, I only got this story last night.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just for the record, the Boundary Commission is not suggesting a Crowthorne ---

CLLR FINNIE: I apologise for that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: However, people have suggested in their representations ---

CLLR FINNIE: Whoever did suggest it clearly does not know.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: One last point. People will have the opportunity to make a formal response to the representations that others have made to the Boundary Commission. It will also be possible to make a formal response to any representation that we do receive that suggests that Crowthorne ---

CLLR FINNIE: My apologies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is just for clarity. Does anyone have a question for Cllr Finnie? No. Thank you very much for coming, particularly at such short notice. We do not have any more speakers until 11.50. Unless there is somebody in the room who wants to speak, I will adjourn until 11.50. Thank you very much.

After a short break

Time noted: 11.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We do not have huge crowds here today but you are more than welcome to be here. The whole proceedings are being videoed so when you start you just have to introduce yourself, your name and where you live. That gives us a record of who you are. You then have ten minutes to make your representation. You may then have questions from the audience just to clarify any point. It is not a debate. If you have said something and they want a bit more clarity about it then they may ask. I think it is unlikely because we do not have a huge audience. Whenever you are ready, over to you.

MS ROBERTS: Thank you very much indeed. Good morning, everybody. My name is Anne Roberts. I am a resident of Byfleet Village and a past councillor, which will be in my speech which is about why Byfleet should be kept in Woking constituency.

I have been a resident of Byfleet Village for over 40 years and represented it as a borough councillor for 12 years between 2004 and 2016. Byfleet has a traditional high road, a village green and a history going back to the Domesday Book of 1086. It is surrounded by the waters of the Wey Navigation and Basingstoke Canal and just inside the M25. The ancient parish lies to the west and the new borough ward is Byfleet and half of West Byfleet which joins us together when elections take place for Woking Borough Council. The current county council, representing exactly the same area, resides in West Byfleet. Byfleet has been in Woking constituency since 1950 and it is the transport link to the west that leads villagers to look to Woking as its major town and administrative centre. The A245 Parvis Road is a major thoroughfare through Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford. There are no strong road links to towns north or east.

Since the demise of the parish council in 2006, I and other councillors have worked hard to represent the village on Woking Borough Council. Likewise, organisations such as the Residents' Association would also see it that way. The Residents' Association comprises Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford, the three villages. To cut Byfleet off from the other villages would be illogical and confusing. For example, Byfleet Care, of which I am a committee member, which provides transport for elderly citizens to the health centre in West Byfleet, would have its operations split across two constituencies and have to liaise with two MPs. Byfleet Football Club has also looked to Woking Borough Council for help and support.

In summary, organisations, businesses and residents of Byfleet see Woking and Woking Borough Council as their local focus. There are no similar links to any of the towns to the north and east such as Addlestone, Chertsey and Weybridge. Egham in Runnymede is some nine miles north, while Woking is just six miles distance.

My view is that the residents of Byfleet would be very unhappy if the village is transferred to another constituency with which it has no connections. It should stay in Woking constituency for historic and administrative reasons and be served by an MP who lives nearby. I understand that both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties are recommending that parts of Egham be moved into the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency to address its insufficient numbers. I urge you therefore to look at these proposals with a view to keeping Byfleet Village completely and firmly in Woking constituency. The M25 is not a suitable divider between our constituencies.

Thank you for listening and if there are any queries or questions I would be pleased to answer them.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Does anyone have a question or query? No. Thank you very much for your representation and thank you very much for coming.

MS ROBERTS: Thank you. I have left a copy at the reception desk.

MR HARTLEY: Thank you, that is helpful.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. We have no other booked speakers so I am going to adjourn until 12.45 just in case somebody comes before lunch. If nobody comes by 12.45 we will adjourn for lunch. Thank you very much.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome to the afternoon session. We are fully booked. Mr Howarth, the floor is yours. As we are recording and videoing everything, you have to stand at the lectern. You also have to introduce yourself by saying who you are and where you live. Then you have ten minutes for your presentation.

MR HOWARTH: I doubt that I will need ten minutes, although I am always saying I am going to be brief and then not being brief. My name is Chris Howarth; my address is 7 Virginia Court, Station Parade, Virginia Water, GU25 4AF.

I am here to speak about the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency and how that fits in the Surrey area of constituencies. The proposal at the moment from the Boundary Commission splits Chertsey, one of our premier small towns in the constituency. The residents consider themselves to be part of one town and splitting the town between two parliamentary constituencies would seem to reduce that coherence of the town itself, ending up with two different MPs representing people from one single community. Whilst for large towns and cities we appreciate that happens, here the town is an integral part of the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency. We would like to see that continue to be the case.

We also believe that it is possible to achieve the same aims that are required for the Boundary Commission to deliver with a simpler process. At the moment there are a number of different ward moves throughout Surrey. We believe that by moving merely Thorpe into Spelthorne and Hersham South into Runneymede we can achieve the same thing without splitting any towns and without splitting communities. Things like GP surgeries, school catchment areas, et cetera, no longer then need to be split between constituencies.

Personally and the local groups that I am representing feel that simpler is better than more complex. I think that is my case. Let us move Thorpe and Hersham South and let us leave Chertsey town and the surrounding elements of Chertsey together.

There is one other thing I would like to say. I am aware that another group has suggested moving Egham Hythe. That is quite a similar suggestion but you will notice that Egham Hythe is attached to Egham Town and so it does the same thing as splitting Chertsey. I am opposed to that proposed amendment to the original plan. I am opposed to the original plan for the same reasons. I would rather we did not split communities and we kept communities together. That is my submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Could I ask you two questions? First of all, you said the people you represent.

MR HOWARTH: I am the Chairman of Runnymede and Weybridge Conservatives. As you see, I am also a resident within the borough. I use the town of Chertsey. I am representing the Conservative voters of Chertsey but also speaking as a person who uses the community.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: My second question: you made the point about splitting communities, the alternative you suggest splits Hersham South from Hersham North. I am not familiar with these places. Can you give me a sense of to what extent those are one community versus the Chertseys or the Eghams?

MR HOWARTH: We already have a split that works around those two constituencies, between Esher and Walton and Runnymede and Weybridge. As you obviously have not been able to, we cannot find a perfect solution but we already have working across those boundaries so that makes more sense to us.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Across the two Hershams?

MR HOWARTH: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Does anyone have any other questions?

MR WINTER: Roger Winter, with the Boundary Commission. I have a question about the Thorpe ward. What are the links between Thorpe back into the Spelthorne constituency as it is currently situated?

MR HOWARTH: At the moment Thorpe is in Runnymede and Weybridge. Obviously people go into Staines, which is in Spelthorne. Staines is indeed to me, as well, the nearest large town to Thorpe. At the moment it would be true to say that Thorpe and Virginia Water have more of a link than between Thorpe and Spelthorne. As I say, that is going to happen whichever moves you make. To be frank, moving more wards means more of those kinds of unfortunate competing ideas than moving fewer. I think our proposal has the fewest moves of any and, therefore, fewer people who have a negative answer to the same question that you have just asked.

MR WINTER: Absolutely. We keep hearing the phrase "least worst option" so I was just trying to understand some of your thinking. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much and thank you for coming and giving us your time. We do not have any other person booked in until 3.00 pm. We are adjourning until 3.00 pm. Thank you very much.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. Are you ready?

CLLR WHITEHAND: (Woking Borough) If you are ready for me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are ready; we have been waiting all afternoon! We are filming so you just have to give your name and address.

CLLR WHITEHAND: Good afternoon. I am Melanie Whitehand; I am a borough councillor for Woking Borough. I am also deputy chairman of the constituency for the Politics. I am here principally as a councillor representing the Conservative councillors of Woking Borough. We have the administration supporting, but I am also backing it up with my political role from the constituency. I have brought along with me some papers that we consulted at the full council meeting last night because I thought they might be handy for you all to be able to have sight of later. It is specifically about the review of the parliamentary boundaries and pretty much endorses what has been proposed. Wearing both hats, I am in full support of what has already been proposed.

We are keen to retain the Byfleet wards, which was one of the things that was up for option, as opposed to acquiring Bisley and Send. We would like to retain the status quo rather than lose some and gain others. I do not know whether that is sufficient for you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine for us.

CLLR WHITEHAND: I was trying to go for brevity.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The written consultation goes on until 5 December, so do feel free to put in a written representation as well. If there are any other thoughts or analyses that you want to share with us, then we will happily look at those.

CLLR WHITEHAND: Thank you very much for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is our pleasure, thank you. We are going to adjourn until 4.00 pm. If there is nobody highlighted at 4.00 then we will call it a day.

The hearing concluded at 4.00 pm

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