

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

**MUSIC ROOM, THE ASSEMBLY HOUSE, THEATRE STREET,
NORWICH, NR2 1RQ**

ON

**THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2016
DAY ONE**

Before:

Ms Sarah Hamilton, the Lead Assistant Commissioner

**Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
83 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0HW
Telephone Number: 020 3585 4721/22**

Time noted: 10 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to this public hearing on the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the Eastern region. My name is Sarah Hamilton and I am an Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission to assist it in its task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the Eastern region. I am responsible for chairing the hearing today and we are also back here tomorrow. I am also responsible, with my fellow Assistant Commissioner Laura Smallwood, for analysing all the representations received about the initial proposals for this region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff led by Tim Bowden, who is sitting beside me. Tim will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for new constituencies in this region. He will tell you how you can make written representations and will deal with one or two other administrative matters.

The hearing today is scheduled to run from 10 am to 8 pm and tomorrow is scheduled to run from 9 am until 5 pm. I can vary that timetable and I will take into account the attendance and the demand for opportunities to speak.

I should point out that under the legislation that governs the Commission's reviews each public hearing must be held over two days and cannot be extended into a third.

The purpose of this public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the Eastern region. A number of people have today registered to speak and have been given a time slot, and I will invite them to speak at the appropriate time. If there is any free time during the day or at the end of the day, then I will invite anyone who has not registered but who would like to speak to do so.

I would stress that the purpose of this public hearing is for people to make oral representations about the initial proposals. The purpose is not to engage in a debate with the Commission about the proposals, nor is this hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine other speakers during their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to the speakers but they should do so through me as the Chair.

I will now hand over to Tim, who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the Eastern region.

MR BOWDEN: Thank you very much and good morning. As Sarah has mentioned, my name is Tim Bowden. I am Head of Reviews at the Commission and a member of the Commission's secretariat. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners

in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly.

As Sarah has already stated, she will chair the hearing itself and it is her responsibility to run the hearing at her discretion and take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support Sarah in carrying out her role, so please do ask one of us or one of the members of the team outside the hearing if you require any help or assistance.

We use the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, thus not including the two allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counterproposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the European regions, but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional-based approach we have adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

I would now like to talk about the Commission's initial proposals for the Eastern region. The region has been allocated 57 constituencies, a reduction of one from the current number. Our proposals leave six of the 58 existing constituencies unchanged. As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties in the Eastern region, we have grouped some county and local authority areas into subregions. The number of constituencies allocated to each subregion is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities. Consequently, it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or, in some cases, unitary authority boundaries.

In Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Norfolk, it has been necessary to propose two constituencies that cross county boundaries. We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, which combines the village of Littleport and the town of Downham Market. We have also proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, which combines three wards from the district of South Cambridgeshire and a constituency with the towns of Letchworth and Royston.

In Bedfordshire, Essex and Suffolk it has been possible to propose a pattern of constituencies that is within the boundaries of each of those counties.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local authorities and their internal boundaries, known as "wards" or in some cases "electoral divisions". We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units, which are generally indicative of areas that have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local

ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and returning officers who are responsible for the running of elections. It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of such ward-splitting should be kept to a minimum.

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

Finally, I would remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see over the back of your left shoulder or right shoulder, we are taking a video recording, from which we will create a verbatim transcript.

The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing along with all written representations for a four-week period during which members of the public have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations include certain personal data of those who have made representations. We therefore invite all those contributing to read the Commission's data protection and privacy policy, copies of which we have with us today and, again, which is available on our website.

Before handing back to Sarah to chair the hearing, there are just a few administrative matters. We are not expecting a fire alarm today, so if one does go off it is real. The nearest exit is to your immediate left or back through the entrance we came in, and out into the main forecourt of the Assembly House. If you are looking for a toilet during the day, it is out through the main double doors, basically keep going left. If you go left and left again, it is down the end of a long corridor.

Finally, for those who have mobile phones, which is probably most of us in the room, we ask you to put it on to vibrate or silent. If you do want to take a call during the hearing, we would ask if you could take it outside the room, please.

Thank you very much for your attendance today and I now pass back to Sarah, who will be chairing today's hearing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Tim. We ask our first speaker to come up, Mr Martin Schmierer. Mr Schmierer, if you would like to come up and stand there and, as Tim said, if you could please start by giving your name and address.

CLLR SCHMIERER: (Green Party, Norwich City Council) My name is Martin Schmierer and I live at 9 West Parade, Norwich NR2 3DN. I would like to thank you very much for allowing me to make this talk, and I understand the difficulty of having to draw up these proposals – especially, as Tim mentioned, the fact that some of these constituencies will have to go across county lines.

I would like to make three key points about the proposals as they stand, one of which is that they should be based on population rather than on electoral rolls. I understand that is difficult, of course, given the fact that in 2015 the electoral rolls are very different to what they are now. Also if fairness is our agenda then I would like to put on record my concerns about the need for electoral reform.

Now down to the specifics: the specifics for Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and the entire region. I would focus particularly on Norwich North and Norwich South and would like to make the point that the constituencies should be based on communities and natural boundaries wherever possible, to avoid the same streets, for instance, having MPs. I would like to ensure that those natural boundaries or communities are the basis on which I would make my counterproposals.

Here are the specifics that I would make for Norwich South and Norwich North. In Norwich, I do not believe that Earlham should be divided into two constituencies, as it currently is under these current proposals. To enable this I would move Wensum ward back into the Norwich South constituency, as it has been previously, so that it does not separate itself from Bowthorpe, which is the rest of the Earlham area of the city. In addition, the fact that to get to Bowthorpe people would still have to be going through Wensum I do not think makes much sense; and when I talk about trying to keep communities together I think that would be absolutely essential.

By doing so, that actually makes the constituency considerably larger, of course, because it adds on about 7,700 electors. So what I would suggest is that the Old Costessey ward to the west of the city, which has now been moved into the Norwich South constituency, returns back to the Mid Norfolk constituency – I am sorry, moves back into the Norfolk South constituency. I think that would basically allow the Mid Norfolk constituency – it has a sort of knock-on effect there, making sure that that allows it to keep more to its existing boundaries and better reflect the communities that exist there.

By doing so – and as I said about moving Wensum into Norwich South – that makes Norwich North considerably smaller. So what I would suggest is that we move Drayton North and South – which are part of the greater Norwich area certainly – and they should be returned to Norwich North, as they were prior to 2010. To ensure that Norwich North is large enough, I think it is preferable that Taverham

North and Taverham South also move back into the constituency. I know that, as I said, this obviously has knock-on effects; so I suggest, as Tim mentioned already about Littleport and Downham Market, that will probably have an impact and there might have to be some rejigging there.

The other thing I would like to make a point on is that at the moment I think that Norwich South might be somewhat under-represented. I mentioned about taking into account the population rather than electoral rolls. In 2015, for instance, University ward in the local elections had an electorate of 6,826 whereas, according to the Commission's figures, there is an electoral count of only 5,100 there. I think that, because of Norwich's young, transient population, which is often unfairly represented, it is something we do also need to take account of.

Basically, under my proposals it would mean that the constituency of Norwich South would have a total population of 73,411; Norwich North would have a constituency population of 74,948 – well within the remit of the government's proposals, and I would like to suggest that as an alternative.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Do we have any questions from the audience for clarification? In which case, thank you for your time and for coming today.

Now I will ask Mr Richard Bearman to come up. Again, Mr Bearman, if you could start by just stating your full name and address for the record?

CLLR BEARMAN: (Green Party, Norfolk County Council) I am Cllr Richard Bearman. I live at 17 Constable Road, Norwich NR4 6RW. I am the Green Party county councillor for Mancroft ward in Norwich and I have been representing this area continuously from 2009. I am currently the Green Group leader on Norfolk County Council.

I know Norwich well, having lived in Catton Grove in Norwich North for 19 years and I have now lived in Eaton ward in Norwich South for the last 10 years. I am speaking on behalf of the Norwich Green Party, who support the proposals for the whole Eastern region, written proposals which will be submitted by Ben Foley, the election agent for the Green parties for the Eastern region.

My specific observations today concern the constituencies of Norwich South and Norwich North, but we are also mindful that changes to one constituency may have a knock-on effect in others in affecting overall voter numbers.

The Boundary Commission initial proposals placed Cringleford and Old Costessey wards in Norwich South and proposed moving Wensum ward to Norwich North. We disagree with this proposal, particularly regarding Wensum ward, because the boundary between Bowthorpe and Wensum wards in the west of the ward lies right through the middle of West Earlham housing estate. This area between Earlham Green Lane and Dereham Road, for those with local knowledge, is an area of

considerable social deprivation but one which retains a strong community spirit and identity. It would not be beneficial to have this estate in two different parliamentary constituencies.

Regarding Cringleford, we think that the villages of Little Melton, Bawburgh and Keswick that reside in that ward have little in common with the urban areas which make up University ward, Eaton ward and the rest of Norwich South.

Thus we propose keeping the southern boundary of Norwich South constituency along the River Yare valley, where it is currently. This is a natural boundary. Also we propose keeping Wensum ward in Norwich South. However, to add sufficient voter numbers we would add Sewell ward to Norwich South. Sewell ward is immediately north of my own ward in Mancroft and the type of terraced housing and urban population of Sewell ward is very similar to polling district MA2, which is the northern part of Mancroft. In fact, part of this area is known locally as "Norwich Over the Water," so regards itself as central Norwich despite being north of the River Wensum.

Wensum ward on its north side is mostly bounded by the River Wensum, which forms a natural divide to the communities in the west of Norwich. Parts of Mancroft and Sewell are also north of the Wensum, which then continues through the city centre part of Thorpe Hamlet to join the River Yare at Trowse. This part is more frequently bridged in the city centre than to the west, so does not form a barrier to movement as it does further west.

However, to bring Norwich North back up to sufficient numbers we would then add Drayton North and South and Taverham North and South, which are also extended urban areas and include the Thorpe Marriott housing estate. People living there consider themselves to be part of greater Norwich, despite being in South Norfolk District Council area.

In your plans you move Old Costessey ward into Norwich South, whereas New Costessey, to the east of that, is originally in Norwich South. We would suggest keeping Old Costessey in Norwich North, which I think still fits with the numbers. Clearly you can check those numbers when you receive our written submission with all the constituencies for the Eastern region.

To summarise, our proposal keeps Norwich South all in urban, built-up areas north of the River Yare, mainly bounded by the River Wensum to the north-west, adding the suburban areas of Drayton and Taverham. This allows the villages currently south of the River Yare in South Norfolk constituency to remain where they are and naturally belong. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Do we have any questions from the audience for clarification? We do. Just wait for the microphone, and if you could please state your name?

MR PAWSEY: Alan Pawsey. It was mentioned that Old Costessey would remain part of Norwich North. It is not part of Norwich North; it is South Norfolk.

MR BEARMAN: I think the intention was to keep Old Costessey in the current constituency, which is, for clarification, South Norfolk.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. Thank you very much. Thank you for your time. I think we have another member who has just arrived, Ms Pollok.

Ms Pollok, if you would like to step forward. Could we ask you to give your full name and address for the record, and just to let you know that all proceedings are being filmed today.

MS POLLOK: My name is Susan Pollok. I actually happen to be President of Norwich North and Norwich South Conservative Association, but I am here today on behalf of Norwich South.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could we have your address, please?

MS POLLOK: I happen to live in South Norfolk now – 6a Gurney Lane, Cringleford, NR4 7SB.

I did not realise that I was going to be able to speak as quickly as I came in today, but I would like to say that, as far as Norwich South is concerned, we are very keen to keep what the Boundary Commission have come up with.

Also, Richard Bacon, MP for South Norfolk, has also been represented as saying that he would be very happy to have Cringleford put into Norwich South, because that is almost its natural home and he does not want to continue with having Cringleford; so he has already made that representation.

Norwich South has traditionally gone from Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Labour and backwards and forwards, but it is something that we would like very much to keep the way it has come up, as far as the Boundary Commission has looked at it. We are wanting that very much to happen.

That is basically all I have to say because I did not know I was going to be able to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am sorry to put you on the spot like that!

MS POLLOK: That is fine. I just wanted to make that representation: that we are very keen to keep it as the Commission has already suggested.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We do like to hear when people agree with our proposals as well as disagree with them.

Does anybody have any questions of clarification? Thank you very much for your time.

Our next speaker is not booked in until 11.10, so, unless there is anybody else in the room who would like to speak who has not booked in, I will now adjourn until 11.10 am

Time noted: 11.10 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Norwich on day one of the public hearing for the Boundary Commission for England. We are continuing this morning with hearing from members of the public and I understand we have Mr Stewart Jackson who will be speaking to us. Mr Jackson, you are welcome to come up and speak to us. If you could please state for the record your full name and address, and just to let you know that all proceedings are being filmed today.

MR STEWART JACKSON: (Conservative MP for Peterborough) Thank you, Ms Hamilton. My name is Stewart Jackson. I am the Member of Parliament for the Peterborough constituency and have been since May 2005. For the purposes of this inquiry my address is House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1.

I must admit I have played to more popular houses than today, but I suppose it is quality rather than quantity.

I am here today to support the Conservative Party's counterproposal in respect of the East of England, as you would expect, in its entirety, but specifically to strongly support the proposals for the enlarged Peterborough borough constituency and, by implication, the North West Cambridgeshire county constituency and the other constituencies in the Cambridgeshire county area.

I would just make two initial points before I develop my arguments. I am just going to talk about three particular issues, which is the inclusion of the Fletton and Woodston ward, which is proposed in the initial proposals; the non-inclusion of the putative Stanground Central ward, which was mentioned in the initial proposals, with which I wholeheartedly agree; and the importance to me of respecting the integrity of the current Peterborough borough constituency as a mixed urban and rural seat, and I will develop that theme shortly.

Can I just make two observations? One is that there is a deal of confusion in these proposals because of the restrictive nature of the legislation, in that the Commission can only look at the wards as they were obtaining in May 2015. I think perhaps people above my pay grade might need to look at how restrictive that is, because actually the movements – even the limited movements – proposed by the Boundary Commission on this occasion are still confusing because it is using old ward

boundaries which existed between 2004 and May this year, rather than the new boundaries.

If I were a gifted lawyer, I believe I could argue that there is discretion to use new boundaries, if it is clearer; but you will understand that in respect of, say, Fletton and Woodston you are looking at the old Fletton and Woodston ward, which is confusing for the residents of the new Fletton and Woodston ward, who are split between the Peterborough borough and North West Cambridgeshire county constituencies. I think that is a point worth raising because it does cause some confusion amongst not just people whose business is politics but also those who are ordinary members of the public who do not take that much interest in the issue.

Can I also say that I would deprecate the breach of the River Nene as a clear and well-understood natural boundary. It has been a natural boundary in this area since the 1995 review, which gave rise to the creation of the North West Cambridgeshire county constituency. It is easily understood and people, although they of course are residents of the City of Peterborough, know they are not in the Peterborough constituency; they are in North West Cambridgeshire. I hope that the Commission may correct that in future reviews and restore the two clear, natural boundaries in the Peterborough area, which are the railway line and the River Nene.

Having put that on the record, I will develop my argument with respect to the particular issues raised. I understand that the Commission has some key rules to which it must adhere, and I think the proposals put forward initially and published in September are the right ones, in that there is minimum disruption; there is the minimal movement of electors between constituencies; and quite obviously, because of its minimalist nature, these proposals do not really break any strong local and community links.

In respect of Fletton and Woodston, although I did oppose the inclusion of the Fletton and Woodston ward in the last boundary review in 2011 – the aborted sixth Boundary Commission review – I do nevertheless believe it is the least worst option, in that clearly Fletton and Woodston is a city centre, urban ward and it is closely connected, via the town bridge in central Peterborough, the A15 London road and, off it, the A605 Oundle road to central Peterborough, the residential areas in the city centre north of the River Nene, Cathedral Square, the town hall, the railway station and other key buildings; so it is very much a city centre ward. Again, I make the point that it is a different ward now to that which the three councillors for the Fletton and Woodston ward represent on the city council now – because of this confusion over the different boundaries.

As you will know, the new ward actually does cross the river as well, into the former West ward in the Thorpe Meadows residential area. In that respect, there is a close correlation between two parts north and south of the river, as a result of local government boundary changes. Of course, Fletton and Woodston could be argued to be integral to Peterborough as a city centre ward because it contains the football ground. I have never commented on the football club over the years – which is

always wise for any local Member of Parliament I would say – but I was always able to use the excuse that it was not in my constituency; and it is not indeed. It is in London Road in the North West Cambridgeshire constituency at the present time. But we have a new business centre there and we have relatively new housing at the Carbon Challenge site at Hawksbill Way in the Fletton and Woodston ward, in the environs of the football club. It is now also a very important part of Peterborough City Council's City Centre Area Action Plan and the development of a mixed residential and commercial project called Fletton Quays on the south bank of the Nene.

In those key respects, Fletton and Woodston is and can be argued to be a ward which is very much part of the city centre, albeit with the important caveat that I do not think we should have crossed the river to the south. It will effectively be an orphan ward on the south; there are no other south Peterborough wards. Of the nine wards in the North West Cambridgeshire constituency and the Peterborough unitary authority, Fletton and Woodston will be the only one in the Peterborough "boroughcy"; so there is bound to be some confusion even now. So that is Fletton and Woodston.

My second point is around the, in my opinion, absolutely right decision contained in the initial proposals for the Commission to reject the rather curious option of putting Stanground Central – which is that rather oddly shaped ward to the east of Fletton and Woodston – into the Peterborough borough constituency, for a number of reasons. One is it quite simply is not a city centre ward. You will see in the north of that ward that most of it is semi-rural, as it moves towards the south river bank of the River Nene and across the River Nene it is adjacent not to Central ward but to East ward, and it has virtually nothing in common with East ward – which in that particular south part of East ward is very densely populated, terraced houses, and quite a poor demographic area.

The idea that Stanground Central is somehow an urban Peterborough ward is simply not the case and it is a perverse suggestion that it should be put in the city centre seat with Fletton and Woodston. But, more importantly of course, were you to do that, as the Commission make clear in their remarks, you would break very strong community links between the old Stanground Central and Stanground East. You would have Stanground East separated and the Park Farm and Cardea estate areas in Stanground East would be separated from Stanground Village. It would be exceptionally confusing and it would also be, frankly, unnecessary. Because if you were to do that you would move Stanground Central into Peterborough, Fletton and Woodston into Peterborough and, presumably, in order to adhere to the electoral quota, you would have to move Eye, Thorney and Newborough out to a fenland seat to the east, probably North East Cambridgeshire. That would necessitate the movement of over 20,000 electors. That is a non-starter because it would breach the Commission's own rules on limiting movement of electors and not breaking local ties.

I hope I am clear in that. I may be tilting at windmills because it is not a proposal, but it might be a counterproposal in the course of your deliberations. I think it is a non-starter, frankly.

My third and final important point to make about this is the fact that Peterborough is a mixed urban and rural seat and that the Eye, Thorney and Newborough wards to the east of the city are an integral part of it. It is a strangely shaped ward in that 89 per cent of my constituents live in the urban area, jammed into the south-west of the rectangle, and the rest is sparsely populated, with only four villages: being Peakirk, Eye, Thorney and Newborough. However, in terms of electoral numbers it is imperative to keep them in the Peterborough seat, for the following reasons. They are de facto suburbs of Peterborough; many people commute from these villages into Peterborough; they look west to Peterborough for, for instance, their shopping, their leisure, policing, their hospital – their nearest acute district hospital is Peterborough City Hospital in the west of the city. They are in fact allocated in the refreshed Peterborough City Council Local Plan as “large villages” – that is, Eye and Thorney. They were hitherto known as key service centres and they are the area where strategic housing targets have been allocated; for instance, in Eye another 250 homes to meet the council’s housebuilding targets – which, as a side issue, I think are completely barmy, but that is outside your bailiwick.

They are within the Peterborough diocese, so all the local churches, such as St Matthew’s Church in Eye, are within the Peterborough diocese. They are, of course, Peterborough City Council wards. There were two old wards; the new ward is called Eye, Thorney and Newborough – so a three-member ward. They have strong transport links. That green line going east to west, or left to right, is the A47, which is a very strong link between the villages and the city. You have the A16 as well, which goes north to Crowland in South Lincolnshire.

They are part of the council’s Rural Scrutiny Commission area. In fact, part of the existing Parnwell seat – so if you look at the East ward there, right at the top is the area of Parnwell – hitherto traditionally a tiny part of it (and I know this because my parents live on that estate at Finchfield) was in the Eye parish.

The point is that where the urban area of Peterborough ends and the village of Eye begins is a very small area of maybe half a mile around a big roundabout called the Eye Roundabout at the top there, and a shopping centre called the Peterborough Garden Park; so they are very, very closely linked. By contrast, the eastbound transport links are very, very poor. If you want to reach even Whittlesey, it is very difficult, particularly in the winter. The road network is not good; there are not such good bus routes as there are between Eye and Thorney, Newborough and Peterborough; and if you want to go further, to somewhere like Chatteris and March, again there are bad links or relatively poor links in terms of both public transport and road links.

For those reasons, I think it is enormously important that the Commission respects the fact that these two wards have been part of the Peterborough constituency since

2010. It was, in my opinion, pretty incongruous that they were ever in a North East Cambridgeshire seat, because North East Cambridgeshire is essentially a very rural fenland seat going east towards Norfolk, whereas these communities and settlements are very clearly suburbs of Peterborough and should always be included in a Peterborough parliamentary constituency.

Without further ado, I thank you for your time and obviously I am happy to take questions. I think that is how we do things. I do not know. This is my third parliamentary Boundary Commission, but I am of course more than happy to take questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Do we have any questions from the audience? Thank you very much for your time, Mr Jackson.

As we do not have any other speakers booked in for the rest of the morning, I am going to adjourn now until 12.25 and we will come back then to see if anyone has arrived.

Time noted: 12.25 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Norwich on day one. It is now 12.25. We do not have any speakers booked in at the moment, so I will adjourn until 1.15 pm.

Time noted: 1.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to day one of Norwich. It is now 1.15 pm. As we do not have any speakers booked in, we will adjourn until 2.30 pm, after lunch.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted 3 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to day one of the public hearing in Norwich. We are continuing this afternoon with hearing from members of the public regarding the Commission's initial proposals. I understand we have Dr Christopher Kemp to speak to us.

Dr Kemp, perhaps you would like to come to the front. When you start, if you could give your full name and address, and just to let you know that all proceedings are being filmed today.

CLLR KEMP: (South Norfolk Council) I have handed in to you and I think you have a copy of what I am going to say.

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

CLLR KEMP: There will only be changes of emphasis from what is written down.

I am Christopher John Kemp. My address is 4 Drovers Rest, Kirstead, Norwich NR15 1EW. I have lived in Norfolk since 1994. I am a retired solicitor and my academic qualifications are BSc (Economics and Government), London School of Economics in 1965; MA in Local and Regional History, University of East Anglia in 1998; PhD in Legal and Constitutional History, University of East Anglia in 2009; and a Postgraduate Certificate in Community Governance, which was granted with Merit by the University of Birmingham Institute of Local Government Studies in 2009.

I continue as an associate in the School of History at the University of East Anglia, in connection with my continuing research to develop part of my doctoral thesis for publication.

I have been an active member of the Conservative Party since 1965. I served as a councillor from 1968 to 1994 on Havering London Borough Council and, since 2003, on South Norfolk District Council. Nevertheless, I am making this representation not as a spokesman for the Conservative Party nor any part of it but as an interested individual.

I am in broad support of the Commission's initial proposal for the counties of Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire – which in this representation I will call for short the Commission's proposal – subject to the modifications put forward by the Conservative Party's counterproposals, which I will call the Conservative counterproposals. For clarity, those are the ones that have been promulgated by Mr Roger Pratt on behalf of the Conservative Party – so we are clear what we are talking about. The focus of this representation is to support the latter, particularly as they affect Norfolk and in particular South Norfolk district.

In every election since 2005 I have acted as agent or deputy agent for the Conservative candidate or candidates in South Norfolk. Earlier this year I was the Conservative agent for the county-wide election of the Police and Crime Commissioner. I therefore have some experience in electoral organisation across the county and in South Norfolk in particular. That experience informs the observations that follow. But let me first say that, once again, the Commission has applied itself to the difficult task set it by Parliament with imagination and sensitivity. That my focus is on where I prefer the Conservative Party's counterproposals does not detract from my recognition of the Commission's care and attention.

The Commission's proposals would split South Norfolk district among four constituencies, whereas under the Conservative counterproposals the present split between three constituencies would continue. I calculate that under the Commission's proposals 24,320 electors – that is 24.7 per cent of South Norfolk district's electorate – would change constituency. In contrast, under the Conservative counterproposals only 6,098 electors – 6.2 per cent of the district's electorate – would change.

It should be noted that across the whole of Norfolk the Commission's proposals would involve moving 51,086 electors from one constituency to another. It has to be said that these movements disproportionately affect South Norfolk district, which will provide 46.7 per cent of that total. Though some redistribution of electors is unavoidable to ensure that all constituencies have electorates within the permitted 5 per cent tolerance, it is self-evidently preferable to minimise those changes. It is also arguably unfair for South Norfolk district to be expected to accept almost half of those redistributions. In South Norfolk district the Conservative counterproposals are much less disruptive and achieve that objective – that is, the objective of the 5 per cent tolerance – without any significant adverse impact elsewhere.

I now turn to specifics. The Commission's proposals call for the transfer of Thurlton ward from the South Norfolk constituency to the Great Yarmouth constituency. The Conservative counterproposals would retain Thurlton in South Norfolk and instead would increase the electorate of Great Yarmouth constituency to within the permitted range by the transfer of the Waxham ward from North Norfolk district.

It should first be noted that what the Conservative counterproposal suggests is strikingly similar to the solution which the Commission itself proposed in October 2012. To be clear, that is in its revised proposals of 2012. At paragraphs AC105-AC115 of its report of 16 October 2012 the Commission discussed the proposal to transfer the North Norfolk wards of Stalham and Sutton, Waterside and Waxham to Great Yarmouth. The Commission gave the matter lengthy and detailed consideration, including site visits. It concluded that such a transfer could on balance be justified. However, what is now contained in the Conservative counterproposal is just for Waxham ward.

Secondly, I can speak with some knowledge of Thurlton ward as my son William has been a district councillor for that ward since 2007. I have acted as his agent in three district elections in which he has been successful and I have campaigned with him in all other elections in that area in the past 10 years.

Thurlton has no particular connection of which I am aware with Great Yarmouth. The journey requires the crossing of the River Waveney, which forms the eastern boundary of the ward and of South Norfolk district. The Waveney is a major navigable river, only crossed by one bridge on the busy A143 road. In my experience, the people of the villages which comprise Thurlton ward look to Loddon for local services and would not regard themselves as having any special affinity to Great Yarmouth.

Next I consider the Commission's proposal to transfer Old Costessey and Cringleford into Norwich South constituency, and returning the five Wymondham wards – Abbey, Cromwells, Northfields, Rustens and Town – to South Norfolk constituency. I shall compare this to the Conservative counterproposal to retain Cringleford in South Norfolk and to retain the Wymondham wards in Mid Norfolk.

Both of these proposals envisage New Costessey ward remaining in Norwich South, where it would be joined by Old Costessey ward. These wards are the two parts that comprise the present town of Costessey. It should be noted that until the local government reorganisation of 1972 the community of Bowthorpe was part of the parish of Costessey, when it was transferred into the City of Norwich. Costessey would thus be reunited with Bowthorpe under either of these proposals.

Regarding the movement of Cringleford ward into Norwich South constituency, as recommended by the Commission's proposals, I should first mention that I have been one of the two district councillors for Cringleford ward since 2003. It is an area that I thus know well.

Cringleford ward comprises five parishes: Cringleford, Colney and Keswick and Intwood – that is one parish, Keswick and Intwood – which are all south of the River Yare, and Bawburgh and Little Melton, which are both south of the Yare and on the south of the Norwich Southern Bypass, the A47 dual carriageway. Bawburgh and Little Melton do not regard themselves as part of Norwich; they are settlements in open countryside, some distance from the Norwich conurbation. Though within the line of the Southern Bypass, Cringleford, Colney and Keswick and Intwood do not regard themselves as part of the Norwich conurbation. They are distinct villages, close to but not integrated with Norwich. They are keen to maintain that separation. From conversations with constituents, I know that many residents have removed from Norwich to these parishes to move out of Norwich.

On the other hand, though well integrated into South Norfolk district, the five Wymondham wards nevertheless have significant links with other major towns in the Mid Norfolk constituency. For example, the *Wymondham and Attleborough Mercury*, a weekly local newspaper, serves both towns. Wymondham is also linked to Attleborough by the mainline railway from Norwich to Cambridge or Peterborough via Ely, which has a twice-an-hour service on weekdays. I refer there to the Greater Anglia timetable no.10 and the East Midlands trains timetable no.2, copies of which I have with me if you need to see them, madam.

Further, Wymondham is linked by rail to Dereham, another of the major towns in the Mid Norfolk constituency, by the Mid-Norfolk Railway. Though this is a heritage railway, it is well known that it has a long-term ambition to operate a weekday commuter service from Dereham to Norwich via Wymondham.

I hope that the Commission finds these observations helpful to its deliberations. I shall be happy to answer any questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Dr Kemp. Do we have any questions for clarification? No. Can I say many thanks. You have obviously put a lot of work into this and it is appreciated.

Our next speaker is booked in for 3.40 pm, so we will adjourn until 3.40.

Time noted: 3.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Norwich and day one of the public hearing. This afternoon we are going to be continuing with members of the public speaking to us regarding the Commission's initial proposals. I understand we have Professor John Greenaway here.

Professor Greenaway, perhaps you would like to make your way to the front. If you could start by giving us your full name and address for the record, and just to let you know that all proceedings are being recorded and filmed today.

PROFESSOR GREENAWAY: My name is John Robert Greenaway, 213 College Road, Norwich. I am Professor Emeritus in Politics at the University of East Anglia and, before my retirement in 2012, I taught politics there, including British politics and election politics for 37 years. I have followed Norwich electoral politics closely ever since I came to the city in 1975, for many years being a commentator for Radio Norfolk on local election issues.

My principal concern about your recommendations is that they have the disadvantage of further diluting the representation of the Norwich city as a whole. As you will be aware, Norwich is one of the great historic cities of the country, dating back to one of the largest cities in the Middle Ages.

Up to the major boundary changes of 1983, Norwich had two MPs. Since that date – because it is an awkward size really, it is too big for one MP and too little for two – it has had one MP who has represented the bulk of the city, including the historic city centre, with merely three of the more peripheral northern wards being parts of Broadland, to form the Norwich North seat.

I think the problem is that your proposals would dilute the representation of the city with the three South Norfolk wards now included into the South seat, with Norwich wards divided 8:5 among two different seats, and I think it is important that we have one MP who can speak for the bulk of the city.

I have a further particular worry about the recommendations regarding Wensum ward, which to my mind belongs very properly, for a number of reasons, in the south. Wensum is south of the River Wensum except for a very small piece of it, which marks a significant geographical community barrier, particularly in the west of the ward. You can certainly see that from the ordinance survey map, for example.

Moreover, the boundary between Bowthorpe and Wensum wards in the west of the ward lies right through the middle of the West Earham estate. This area, going along Earham Green Lane – that is the division between Bowthorpe and Wensum wards – is an area of very considerable social deprivation, but one which retains strong community spirit, many families having lived there for several generations. There are also a number of UEA students residing in the Wensum ward under the

present proposals who would be moved into another constituency, away from the university.

Moreover, the eastern part of Wensum – Wensum is a ward that is bisected by the outer ring road – is largely made up of 19th-century terraced houses, which have very much in common with Nelson and Mancroft wards. In the area of Northumberland Street they share the same community facilities and other local infrastructure. The Dereham Road there provides a main transport communication corridor. As I say, by contrast, the northern boundary of Wensum ward forms a much more natural social and geographical barrier.

My proposals would be – because you are obviously very constrained by the mathematics under the new dispensations – to place the three South Norfolk wards of Cringleford, New Costessey and Old Costessey into the Norwich North seat, which then takes a sort of banana shape around the north of Norwich, and placing the wards of Sewell and Wensum into Norwich South.

The argument in favour is that, as I say, it strengthens the representation of the City of Norwich; only three wards are left outside, of which two have areas jutting out into the north of the outer ring road. The Wensum ward's links, which I have talked about, with south Norwich are preserved; and Sewell, although north of the river, is a ward that has very close links with the city centre. It consists largely of inner-city Victorian terraced housing; it has a lot of roads linking in; and that constituency looks into the city centre. One would see it as part of the heart of the historic city centre.

The two Costessey areas, although in South Norfolk, are actually quite far to the north and have quite a lot in common socially and geographically with the outer suburban areas of Broadland, which constitute the bulk of the Norwich North seat.

Cringleford, which it is proposed to put into the Norwich South seat, includes quite remote rural areas like Bawburgh, which do not seem to be to be appropriate. I suppose the main argument against this proposal is that my proposed Norwich North seat would administratively straddle three district councils; but then that is offset by the simplicity of my suggestions for Norwich.

Thank you, madam.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions for clarification? Thank you very much for your time.

We are due to have another speaker coming shortly, so I will adjourn for 10 minutes until 3.55 pm.

Time noted: 3.55 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen, to day one in Norwich for the public hearing.

Perhaps I could now ask Mr Simeon Jackson to come up. Mr Jackson, if you would like to come up to the front? I do not think you were in the room earlier when I explained that all proceedings are being filmed and recorded today, and if you could start by giving your name and address for the record, please?

CLLR JACKSON: (Green Party, Norwich City Council) My name is Simeon Jackson, 37 Esdelle Street, Norwich NR3 3BN.

I am a councillor here in Norwich but I am coming here on behalf of Anne Killett, who is a councillor in South Norfolk. This presentation is on behalf of 10 current and former district councillors with the Green Party there, and two county councillors in various districts in Suffolk. She apologises that she could not be here herself, which is why I am giving this. It might mean that there are some wrong pronunciations and I do not entirely know the context that I am talking about, but I hope you will bear with me.

This is part of a larger proposal that the Green Party has been proposing as an alternative for this. So, the Suffolk elements – in Suffolk we considered possible alternatives for Ipswich Central Suffolk and Suffolk Coastal, with two largely urban constituencies, and Ipswich North and Ipswich South and Felixstowe. While suitable-sized constituencies could be created, in the end we came to the conclusion that there was too much disruption to existing constituencies for too little benefit. So we have followed the BCE proposals for Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney; except, for the sake of making the Great Yarmouth constituency large enough the best available way, Lothingland ward, Waveney, would be in the Great Yarmouth constituency. This has no knock-on effects in Suffolk, since Waveney constituency would still have an electorate of 75,706.

Mendlesham ward has significantly closer links to Stowmarket than any nearby centre in Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, while Gislingham and Rickinghall and Walsham look to Eye or to Diss in Norfolk. By swapping Mendlesham and Gislingham wards between Bury St Edmunds and Central Suffolk and North Ipswich CC, we are able to move towards making a more compact and coherent Bury St Edmunds while respecting these local ties. Incorporating Rickinghall and Walsham with Central Suffolk enables the rest of the rather odd north-eastern arm of Bury St Edmunds constituency to be eliminated.

To balance Central Suffolk, the 3,406 voters in Bramford and Blakenham wards should join South Suffolk. Including Pakenham ward, St Edmundsbury borough, with West Suffolk makes the north-east of West Suffolk constituency much more a coherent part of the constituency. Fornham and Great Barton wards also moving to West Suffolk constituency further adds to that.

Chedburgh ward should join South Suffolk constituency, to eliminate the way West Suffolk constituency currently almost surrounds Bury St Edmunds.

Rattlesden and Onehouse wards in Mid Suffolk district very clearly belong better in the same constituency as Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, since the main road between the two and a straight line between the two towns passes through those wards.

Local people look far more to Bury and Stowmarket than they do to any town in South Suffolk. Indeed, even Brett Vale ward looks more to Stowmarket than to Hadleigh or Sudbury, and local ties would be better served by it being in the same constituency as Stowmarket.

To cope with these being lost from South Suffolk constituency, a ward that is truly in the south of the county, Hundon, should be moved from the West Suffolk constituency, bringing that constituency back down to size. This would also have the advantage of bringing Stoke-by-Clare in the same constituency as Clare.

The boundary changes provide an opportunity to reunite Barking and Somersham with Needham Market, since Barking and Somersham ward surrounds Needham Market town to a large extent. The link between Ringshall ward and Needham Market should also be maintained. Whichever constituency they are in, it should be the same one, but we are proposing that they should be together in Bury St Edmunds constituency.

As a result, our proposed constituencies have the following electorates. Central Suffolk and Ipswich North, 73,040; Waveney, 75,706; Bury St Edmunds, 77,623; West Suffolk, 74,710; South Suffolk, 73,421; Ipswich, 73,837; and Suffolk Coastal, 76,178.

Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Jackson. Do we have any questions for clarification?

MR COOK: (Conservative Party) I was just going to ask have you got a written copy of that available for the Commission?

CLLR JACKSON: Yes, I have handed a written copy in.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your time, Mr Jackson.

Our next speaker is due at 4.30 pm, so we will adjourn until 4.30.

Time noted: 4.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Norwich on day one of the public hearing. We are continuing with

hearing from members of the public regarding the Commission's initial proposals. Could I ask Mr James Wright to come up?

Mr Wright, if you could start by giving your name and address, please? And just to let you know that all proceedings are being recorded today.

CLLR WRIGHT: (Lib Dem, Norwich City Council) James Wright, 56 Helena Road, Norwich. I want to take the opportunity to speak very briefly in support of the Commission's initial proposals, for reasons that I will highlight.

First, to begin with Cringleford, for the purposes of the record I am a councillor in Eaton ward, which joins on to Cringleford. It is very clear in my time as being a councillor there that residents of Cringleford see the link between Eaton as being very strong and almost seamless.

There is a lot of cross-pollination between the use of services. Cringleford has the doctor's surgery and the vet's; Eaton has the supermarkets, the takeaway. It was very clear about 18 months ago, when there was a threat to close the post office in Eaton, we ran a petition locally for that in Eaton but a significant proportion of the respondents were in Cringleford. As I say, there are some clear links between those two, both in terms of using those services and things like bus links as well. People often also move from Eaton to Cringleford, and there is generally view from those residents who live in Cringleford that they see themselves as being part of Norwich rather than looking outwards to South Norfolk.

I am not sure if I am allowed to but I would like to leave you with a copy of this magazine, which is *Just Eaton and Cringleford*, and I think goes to demonstrate and reinforce those community links between those two areas.

The second thing I wanted to talk about was adding Old Costessey and Queen's Hills into Norwich South. New Costessey is already in the Norwich South constituency and it seems to me perfectly logical and sensible to include the rest of the Costessey town council area into the Norwich South parliamentary constituency. Again, having spoken with residents in Queen's Hills and Old Costessey, they view themselves as being part of urban Norwich rather than looking to South Norfolk. Again, strong bus links and, particularly in terms of retail activity, where you have the Longwater shopping centre, people in New Costessey and Bowthorpe would tend to go there. So from a community and use of services perspective, again I would support bringing Old Costessey and Queen's Hills into the Norwich South parliamentary constituency.

As I say, a brief word, and that is all I have to add. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Wright. Do we have any questions for clarification? No. Thank you very much for your time and, thank you, we will read it tonight. (Document handed)

Next we have Mr James Anthony. Mr Anthony, if you could start by giving your name and address?

MR ANTHONY: My name is James Anthony and my address is Andante, Stocks Hill, Bawburgh.

I would like to talk about Bawburgh specifically, saying that I agree with the current proposals. I have grown up in Bawburgh. I have lived there basically my whole life and I do not really connect, as many of my fellow people in Bawburgh, with South Norfolk. We consider ourselves part of Norwich. Even within Norfolk, if people ask "Where are you from?" I will often simply say "Norwich". We do not consider ourselves a separate part of it, like you might elsewhere.

I suppose the most important part is really how I am connected with Norwich and what I do in my daily life. I am a university student, so a lot of my week is spent in that area of Norwich. Whether it is on campus, whether it is around the shops, I spend a lot of my time there.

Slightly more trivial – nights out, going to the pub, anything that a typical young person can do from South Norfolk – we tend not to hang around the local establishments; we will go into the city for a drink, for a night out, things like that. Even something as simple as takeaways – rather trivial again – but my curry restaurant of choice is in Eaton. My taxi company of choice is in Bowthorpe. And this is just a consistent theme throughout my life in Bawburgh.

Almost everything I do, everything I use, is within the Norwich area. That is effectively why I think the current proposals are correct and that Bawburgh should be brought into the Norwich area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions? Thanks for your time.

Do we have anybody else in the room who would like to speak? Again, if you could start by giving your name and address?

MR WATSON: Erlend Watson, 67a Heigham Road, Norwich. I would also want to say that the proposals are generally good. I was the Lib Dem agent last year in the election. I am not hiding anything.

The boundary between Old Costessey and New Costessey is just random, in the middle of streets. For an area there, there is no logical divide. As other people have said, the transport links are definitely along from Norwich. The idea that you would go from there to council headquarters in Long Stratton or down to Diss just does not actually make any sort of real sense.

To give an example, in my capacity as having stuff delivered, the delivery company I used at one point was misdelivering leaflets into Cringleford that should have been

going out in Eaton because they had not noticed the edge of the one community and the other. There is a bridge, but they got it wrong. So there is that. The shopping, again, makes sense.

The Norwich urban area, both constituencies, is very different from the city boundary. I am going to throw in one – which no one has asked me to do – but I am going to throw in, on the other side of the city centre, Stoke Holy Cross ward, south-east of the city centre, which includes Trowse Newton and various places just east of Lakenham. Again, it is an area that would quite logically come in. I have looked at the numbers. It is 2,000-odd electors and it would quite happily even out the electorates in Norwich South, and the South Norfolk electorate would be nearer to the average; and it is an area where the villages there also, like Bawburgh and Cringleford to some extent, both look to Norwich, so they would logically come in.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Any questions for Mr Watson? Thank you very much for your time.

Do we have anybody else who would like to speak? We do not have any speakers for the next hour, so I will adjourn until 4.40 pm and we will come back then. I intend to adjourn each hour to see if there is anybody else booked and if by 7 o'clock there is nobody else I suspect I will propose that we finish then at 7 o'clock, if we do not have any other speakers.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Off microphone)

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: My apologies, 5.40 pm It may well be that some people might come after work, so we will just keep open. Thank you.

Time noted: 5.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. It is now 5.40 on day one in Norwich. We do not have any members of the public booked to speak for the next hour, so I will adjourn until 6.40.

Time noted: 6.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to day one in Norwich of the public hearing. We are continuing with members of the public on day one and I understand that we have Mr Anthony Little.

Mr Little, if you would like to come forward to the podium? When you start speaking, if you could first of all give your full name and address for the record, and just to let you know that we are filming the proceedings today.

MR LITTLE: Thank you. This is incredibly formal. I am Anthony Little. I live at 138 Trafford Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2QS.

In terms of who I am, I was a local councillor here in Norwich some years ago; so I hope to bring a sort of semi-historical perspective to some of the boundaries. As I apologised to your colleague earlier, this is not a speech; just a collection of thoughts I wanted to put across.

I wanted to speak about Norwich North and Norwich South. In particular, I wanted to address the three boundary moves in terms of the communities; that is, Old Costessey, New Costessey, Cringleford and the Wensum ward into Norwich North. I want to make it absolutely clear that I think the Boundary Commission have done a really good job. I want to support the proposals in full. I guess, by extension, I therefore support the rest of the proposals, because if you start moving one bit you end up with another.

Let me start with Cringleford. I think that the decision to put Cringleford and Eaton together is absolutely right. They are two halves of the same community really. Anybody who knows the area, either geographically or socially demographically, will understand that. We are talking about two areas with very different housing types, very different employment rates, very different socio-demographics of the people who live there. I think that they are connected. I think that there is a history of connection. We should not forget that it was only the last Boundary Commission that, with some opposition locally, divided Cringleford. It was always in Norwich South – Cringleford and Colney – back then and it was taken and put into South Norfolk. They have a shared community centre; they have shared shopping; and, I would add, a shared identity.

A while ago – and I am talking a long while ago – the City Council attempted almost urban parishing, and Eaton was moved alongside the University ward and, I think, also Nelson ward in the city. It was interesting that at that time the public view was that Eaton and Cringleford very much sit together. They have too much in common and ought to be within the same parliamentary constituency, as they have been for many years up until this point.

The second of these, which is Old Costessey and New Costessey, is a natural and obvious pairing. Again, aside from Boundary Commission maps, I am not sure who actually refers to them as Old and New Costessey. People there refer to them as Costessey, really. In my day job as a teacher I have an awful lot of kids who come from the area and there is no distinction in terms of high school, in terms of shopping, housing and leisure facilities – all the things that you would expect to find within a community.

I forgot to say that it is also worth pointing out with regard to Cringleford that, if you look at where Cringleford children go to school – and I am talking about secondary school – a very large number, I would guess a majority actually, will go into Eaton in order to go to the CNS school; so there is an educational link as well between those two communities.

I guess the other thing about the Costessey move is that it would at least (I do not know whether you suffer OCD like I do) move the whole of a single county division into the constituency and we would not end up with this rather strange division thing, which in fact the last Boundary Commission tried to get rid of but, for reasons we could not understand, left Costessey in the way that it was.

I guess you will have heard various arguments today about the decision to move Wensum in from Norwich South into Norwich North. I want to make the point today that I think that, in terms of communities – and we are dealing with numbers essentially here, are we not, in terms of the size of parliamentary constituencies? – Costessey and Bowthorpe are more of a linked community than Wensum and Bowthorpe.

Costessey and Bowthorpe are often spoken about. They shared, for example, a Safer Neighbourhood Panel. They shared a local policing structure as well. A lot of people at Bowthorpe and Costessey use the same shopping centre. It is the same trunk road in and out of the two places. They are very much, again, two halves of the same community as far as I am concerned. I was councillor for Bowthorpe, by the way, so I speak with some knowledge of the local community there.

Wensum and Bowthorpe, much less so. Again, there was an artificial attempt. You may have heard of something called the “North Earlham, Larkman and Marlpit Partnership,” which again was a local government construct. From my knowledge of the area and the people who live there, there is not the same bond of community that you find.

If you really zoom in – I do not know whether your map does this, by the way – you will see that one of the places within Wensum is referred to as Lower Hellesdon. That is because, if you take a look (I do not know whether your map will), if you go up, you will see that all around the top of the map there is called Lower Hellesdon, on the left-hand side of where the dividing line goes down the middle – almost the community that runs along the river.

It always made sense to me that Lower Hellesdon should fit where Hellesdon fits, which is within the Norwich North parliamentary constituency. Actually, if you go to that particular area, again you find a change in terms of housing demographics and make-up, and putting those two together would make some sense.

If you are having to make choices, which I guess you are in your role, I think the community bond and the natural community of Bowthorpe and Costessey fit together better than Wensum and Bowthorpe would do, because a big part of the Wensum area fits more naturally with Hellesdon, which you can see in the Norwich North Hellesdon ward at the top there. The Wensum looks more to Mile Cross, in my view, in terms of demographics, shopping, communities, schools, than Wensum looks to Bowthorpe. Even just a look at the housing types, for example, would make that

obvious: Bowthorpe, which is a housing estate that was started in the 1970s, against the Victorian terraces, which you find predominantly in the Wensum ward.

My view is – I am really sorry, this has turned into a speech – that you have made all the right calls and have actually come up with an answer that is a good solution for all the communities in the area, and I would not change a thing that the Boundary Commission has done, to be perfectly honest with you.

The only last thing I would say, as a pedant – I was often accused of this in school – is that the names of the constituencies now do not quite match the geographical areas. Humanities teacher – I am really sorry. Perhaps we should be looking at Norwich South West and North East rather than North and South, to more properly represent it. If you zoom out of the map, you will see that they are slightly wonky – if I can describe them like that. You see that Norwich South now actually goes around the side, so would probably be better off named “Norwich South West” and “Norwich North East” to reflect that.

That is all I have to say really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions for clarification of Mr Little? No. Can I just say thank you for taking the time to come after work – much appreciated.

MR LITTLE: That is okay. My pleasure.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: As there is no one else booked in, we will now adjourn until 7 o'clock.

Time noted: 7 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, it is now 7 o'clock on day one in Norwich. As we do not have any other speakers booked, I would like to thank everyone for their participation and we will close today. We will be back tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Friday 4 November 2016

Time noted: 7 pm

A

MR ANTHONY, 22

B

CLLR BEARMAN, 6, 8
MR BOWDEN, 2

C

MR COOK, 20

G

PROFESSOR GREENAWAY, 17

J

CLLR SIMEON JACKSON, 19, 20
MR STEWART JACKSON MP, 9

K

CLLR KEMP, 13, 14

L

MR LITTLE, 23, 26

P

MR PAWSEY, 8
MS POLLOK, 8

S

CLLR SCHMIERER, 5

T

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26

U

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER, 23

W

MR WATSON, 22
CLLR WRIGHT, 21