

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

**PROCEEDINGS**

AT THE

**2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND**

HELD AT

**RNLI COLLEGE, WEST QUAY ROAD, POOLE BH15 1HZ**

ON

**MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2016**

**DAY ONE**

Before:

**Ms Anita Bickerdike, the Lead Assistant Commissioner**

---

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP  
83 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HW  
Telephone Number: 0203 585 4721/22

---

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 the new parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South West region. My name is Anita Bickerdike and I am the Assistant Commissioner of the Boundary Commission for England. I was appointed by the Commission but I am independent from them. I was appointed to assist them in their task of making recommendations for new constituencies in the South West region. I am responsible for chairing this hearing today and tomorrow, and I am also responsible, with my colleague Catherine Elliott, who is also an Assistant Commissioner, for analysing all of the representations received about these initial proposals for this region and then presenting recommendations to the Commission as to whether or not those initial proposals should be revised in any way.

I am assisted here today by members of the Commission staff led by Gerald Tessier who is sitting beside me. Gerald is the Review Manager with the Commission and he will be dealing with some administrative matters shortly. He will tell you about the Commission's initial proposals for the new constituencies in this region and he will also tell you how to make written representations, if you choose to, and anyone can make written representations until the closing date which is 5 December.

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

The purpose of the public hearing is to allow people to make oral representations about the initial proposals for the South West region. A number of people have already registered to speak and have been given a time slot, and in order to demonstrate fairness to everybody I will try and make sure that everybody is able to speak as close as possible to their time slot. Time slots are allocated on a ten-minute basis but we do have some capacity later in the day so I may be able to flex those time slots if necessary but I want to avoid inconveniencing later speakers. There is some free time later in the day and if there is free time at the end of the day I can invite speakers who have not booked in just to come and speak.

I am interested in knowing what people want to tell me about the initial proposals for this area and in particular any alternative schemes that you think may be viable, bearing in mind the restrictions within which we have to work. I would like to also just remind everybody that the purpose of this hearing is for people to make oral representations and it is not to engage in debate with the Commission about the proposals, nor is the hearing an opportunity for people to cross-examine speakers on their presentation. People may seek to put questions for clarification to speakers but I would ask that they do that through me as the Chair.

I will now hand over to Gerald who will provide a brief explanation of the Commission's proposals for the South West region.

MR TESSIER: Yes. Thank you very much and good morning. As Anita has mentioned, my name is Gerald Tessier and I am a member of the Commission's staff. I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries, and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Anita 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, questions and timings. My team and I are here today to support Anita in carrying out her role. Please ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for the region which were published on 13 September 2016. In considering the composition of each electoral region we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, therefore we have grouped some local authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined local authorities. The Commission's proposals for the South West region are for 53 constituencies, a reduction of two. Our proposals leave nine of the existing constituencies unchanged.

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

In North Somerset both the existing constituencies are unchanged. In Bristol, two of the four existing constituencies are unaltered, while the remaining two are changed only by the transfer of one ward. In Swindon we have made changes to realign constituency boundaries with the new ward boundaries. More substantial change is required, however, in other parts of the region. Consequently, it has been necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries. We have proposed one constituency that contains electors from both Cornwall and Devon. It crosses a boundary in the north of the two counties, combining the towns of Bude, Bideford and Launceston. Another proposed constituency contains electors from both Dorset and Wiltshire and combines the towns of Shaftesbury and Warminster. Additionally, we propose that some electors from the north-east of the county of Somerset are combined with electors from Bath and North East Somerset in one constituency. We also propose that some electors from the south of the county of Gloucestershire are combined with electors from South Gloucestershire.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries (known as "wards" or "electoral divisions"). We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which

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

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

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation where 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. As you can see, we are taking a video recording from which we will create a verbatim transcript. The Commission is required to publish a 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 these representations. We expect this period to occur during the spring of next year. The publication of the hearing records and written representations include certain personal data of those who have made representations. I will therefore invite all of those contributing to read the Commission's data protection privacy policy, a copy of which we have with us - it should be on the board down there - and which is also available on our website. (indicating)

A couple of matters of housekeeping: ladies' toilets are just through those doors and on the left; gents' toilets are down into reception, turn right, down towards the canteen. There is a canteen there if anyone needs refreshment. There is no planned fire alarm today so if you hear a fire alarm it is real. There is a fire exit there, there and behind us there, and you need to sort of assemble in the car park I believe.

If you are speaking, there is a laser pointer on the desk. If you wish to point out any particular area which will be showing via the computer here, you can do so.

At this stage, I will now hand you back to the Chair to begin the public hearing and thank you for your attendance here today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If I call the first speaker, please, Mr Simon Hoare. Would you like to come to the lectern, please? Mr Hoare, if you give your name and address, please.

MR SIMON HOARE: (MP for North Dorset) Thank you, Madam. My name is Simon Hoare. I am the Member of Parliament for the North Dorset constituency. Do you want my home address?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: An official address would suffice.

MR SIMON HOARE: If an official address suffices, it is the House of Commons then.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR SIMON HOARE: Thank you very much indeed, Madam, and thank you for the opportunity that the Commission has presented this morning.

Could I just start, whilst I understand entirely the need for, and the rationale of, the Commission and its proposals and the reduction of parliamentary seats from 650 to 600, given the fact that the North Dorset constituency is the most perfect constituency in England both in terms of geography, electorate and topography, I would be very sorry to see it bisected if the plans as proposed go ahead.

Could I just say as a matter of record that the counter-proposals, Madam, to your initial proposals which have been submitted officially by the Conservative Party, I endorse fully. I would draw in particular attention and pray in aid the fact that if you look at the four wards which are proposed to be relocated from North Dorset into what we will still call the West Dorset constituency (ie Blackmore, Bulbarrow, Lydden Vale and Sturminster Newton), from a shopping and a social point of view, apart from looking automatically to their own local hinterland, are increasingly looking to Sherborne and Dorchester for other requirements, both of which are clearly within the West Dorset constituency.

I would also draw your attention as well to the very successful tri-council tripartite relationship which now exists between North, West and Weymouth & Portland. Again there is that concentration of service provision within that part of the county which I would suggest to you underscores and underpins the counter-proposals submitted by the Conservative Party.

If I might make a suggestion on the current proposals in terms of name, I believe I am correct to say that most parliamentary constituencies when named follow alphabetical order in terms of settlement. Now whilst I understand that, as you call it, the Warminster and Shaftesbury seat could not contain the largest town within that North Dorset conurbation, namely Gillingham, because of the Gillingham in Kent and therefore the potential for confusion there, I would suggest that in terms of neatness and conformity the new constituency, were it to go ahead, should be named Shaftesbury and Warminster (ie in alphabetical order), and maybe for a nod to history, Shaftesbury and Westbury might be a better name for it given the fact that there was a parliamentary constituency of Westbury.

Might I just make a few observations/questions? I am uncertain as to why, given the fact that we have effectively dismantled regional boundaries of government in England, the Commission is unable, if it seeks to respond fully to responses, to be able to look to

Hampshire, whilst notably in the South East, to solve any potential problems coming from the Christchurch and the Bournemouth side, particularly of course given their historical links with the county of Hampshire hitherto.

I am also uncertain, Madam, as to why we need to rely upon, given the results of the referendum on 23 June, why we need to rest our case on the European electoral regions given that by the time these new boundaries come into force, we will be outwith the European Union and therefore European electoral regions will have little or no relevance to us.

Whilst I appreciate you have to take into account the current local government arrangements, I do want to ensure that you are clear and are aware of the very radical proposals for local government reform within the county of Dorset, which hopefully will be going ahead, which would certainly see a current North, West and Weymouth & Portland constituencies all combined under one district unitary council.

I appreciate the fact that your instruction as a Commission is to provide effectively the fruition of the Chartists' campaign, namely of equal constituencies; they started it in the late 1830s and were making some progress towards it in the early part of this century. I appreciate that the Commission is restricted to effectively looking at a numbers game when it comes to this to try to get that equality, or as near to equality as possible, with regards to elector numbers. I just have some questions, as albeit a new Member of Parliament, which possibly is outwith the purview of the Commission but nevertheless I think are germane to both all of us who are elected and would be seeking re-election and to our constituents and our partner organisations who clearly look for a close and collaborative working relationship with their Members of Parliament. I am not certain that the cross-county idea, whilst I understand how it works in numbers terms, is particularly helpful if you pause to consider that increasingly a Member of Parliament is having a close working relationship with their local enterprise partnerships, with their CCGs, with local government, with their PCCs, with LEAs and others. In the proposal for - and I am going to use my terminology if I may - the Shaftesbury and Warminster seat (we will 50/50 it, I will delete the Westbury part), there will be some challenges there for whoever is elected as its Member of Parliament, not so when everybody is working in the same direction. But as or when - and I have no doubt that this will occur - a LEP or a CCG or indeed the Police and Crime Commissioner is seeking to do something in one jurisdiction which could ultimately be to the negative impact of the other side of the county boundary, it requires either the Member of Parliament to sit taking no view for fear of offending one side of the coin or the other or to try to replicate the Judgment of Solomon, neither of which I think are beyond the wit of man but they are I think particular practical challenges to discharging the duty of a Member of Parliament which I hope has not been lost in the Commission's thinking dictated, as clearly it must be, by the numbers of electorates at the particular time.

Madam, I close by thanking you for the opportunity to address you this morning, to re-underscore, if I may, the counter-proposals which I hope will be given serious consideration and acted on which have been submitted on all of our behalfs by the Conservative Party, draw attention again to the fact of the existing close working relationships between three councils at the moment and the evolving situation there, the fact that those of us who live on the western side of the North Dorset constituency look

into West Dorset, whether it is to Dorchester or to Sherborne, for other needs which cannot be met locally (and those include health, they very often include education). I hope that those will all help to underpin the points which are made, which is the relocation of those four electoral areas into the West Dorset constituency as proposed to be called. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Hoare, if you will remain there for a moment. Are there any questions for clarification from the floor, please? (None) Thank you very much for attending and for giving your representations.

MR SIMON HOARE: I am grateful. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Patrick Canavan, please, if you would like to come to the lectern. Thank you. Mr Canavan, if you will give your name and address, please.

MR CANAVAN: (Labour Party) Yes. I am Patrick Canavan. My address is 29 Green Park, Manor Road, Bournemouth, which is BH1 3HR.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations, please.

MR CANAVAN: Yes. Good morning, Madam. My name, as I say, is Patrick Canavan and I am the Chairman of Bournemouth Labour Party. This is an organisational unit which spans the two parliamentary constituencies of Bournemouth East and Bournemouth West, and I am aware that at the Commission's hearing in Exeter on 7 November you received a submission from Greg Cook on behalf of the Labour Party nationally which set out our counter-proposals for the South West region. My wish this morning is to reinforce those proposals and to emphasise our local opposition to the Commission's proposals in relation to Dorset which we consider to be very disruptive.

On behalf of the Bournemouth Labour Party I have already submitted a written statement setting out our concerns and seeking to maintain what we have described as the east/west split in Bournemouth, and it is not just about an approach of minimum change, it is also about ensuring that our boundaries are logical and that they maintain local links. From our perspective a proposed constituency which seeks to combine north Bournemouth with Christchurch makes no sense at all. There is not just a clear geographical division between Bournemouth and Christchurch but also the two towns have developed their own very distinct identity. The same applies to the Commission's initial proposals in relation to Kinson. This is very much part of Bournemouth and, indeed, Bournemouth's history, and all the local connections in that area of Bournemouth are with the rest of the town. To separate it off as the Commission's initial proposals suggest and group it with Broadstone, which is part of Poole, and Ferndown, which is currently within Christchurch constituency, makes no local sense and would in our view be very disruptive to local ties.

We do recognise that in maintaining what we have described as the east/west split in Bournemouth, that that does have consequences elsewhere, and I just wanted to set out some brief views about the neighbouring areas.

The existing boundaries between Bournemouth and Poole where we have split wards are very unsatisfactory and I think it is absolutely right that the Commission addresses tidying those boundaries up. It is for that very reason that we have ensured that in our counter-proposals the whole wards of Branksome East, Branksome West and Alderney are embraced within the Bournemouth West constituency.

I should perhaps add at this point that we have no objection from a local point of view to a suggested name change if that is what the Commission feels would reflect or better reflect the new boundary.

We would - and I would personally - like to just express support for the maintenance of a separate Christchurch constituency. We also strongly support the maintenance of Ferndown within that Christchurch constituency because, as I have already mentioned, there are very strong links between those two locations and we think it is important that they are maintained. It is accepted that the electoral arithmetic is such that the existing boundaries of Christchurch would need to be extended and it is for that reason that we have proposed the extension to include Verwood which hitherto has actually been part of the Christchurch constituency.

With some degree of trepidation, because the Member of Parliament is in the room, I just wanted to say some comments about our proposals in relation to Mid Dorset or Mid Dorset and North Poole as it is sometimes described. I was the Labour Party candidate in that constituency in the general election, and whilst the boundaries, I think it would be fair to say, are challenging, I have been able now to see the counter-proposals from both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats and we all appear to be suggesting a broadly similar boundary as has already been referred to by the Member of Parliament for North Dorset. There is a very radical change in relation to the local government structure within Dorset on the horizon and I think that will change the landscape considerably.

I just wanted to make a very small point, if I may, in relation to the ward of Hill Forts, which is probably surprising for somebody from Bournemouth, but we have argued in our written proposals the importance from our local perspective of trying to ensure that that ward is retained with the other wards in Blandford because of the existing local links.

It is not my intention here, Madam, to comment on the proposals for South Dorset or West Dorset as I am aware that they are likely to be the subject of separate written representations from my colleagues in that part of the county.

In summary, I just wanted to stress our view which is that we maintain the east/west split so that Bournemouth East retains the existing boundaries of the ten Bournemouth unitary authority wards, that Bournemouth West retains the existing eight Bournemouth unitary authority wards, plus the whole of the three wards from the Poole unitary authority, and that Christchurch retains the existing 11 Christchurch District Council wards, plus the suggested additional wards, eight additional wards in fact, from East Dorset, and that Poole should be reconfigured to include the nine wards from the Poole unitary authority, including the two wards of Canford Heath and Canford West



which are currently in the Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency. We have suggested a rather different proposal in relation to Mid Dorset or Mid Dorset and North Poole, and we would argue in strong support of that counter-proposal which includes much of what is currently in the Mid Dorset and North Poole constituency with the addition of Blandford.

Madam, thank you very much indeed for this opportunity to put those views.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Canavan. If you would like to stay there for a moment. Are there any questions for clarification? (None) Thank you for attending and for your representations.

MR CANAVAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Michael Tomlinson, if you would like to come to the lectern, please. Mr Tomlinson, if you would like to give your name and address, please.

MR MICHAEL TOMLINSON: (MP for Mid Dorset & North Poole) Yes, Michael Tomlinson and House of Commons.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations.

MR MICHAEL TOMLINSON: Thank you very much and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning.

In an ideal world I would not want to change or lose any of the constituency of Mid Dorset and North Poole but I accept the case for equalisation of constituency boundaries and that means that change is inevitable.

I speak in favour of the Conservative Party counter-proposals and would like to adopt those proposals as my own, and in my view that counter-proposal offers less change compared to the Commission's proposal and respects more local ties. Further, in my view the Commission's proposals bear little resemblance to existing constituencies and it is more disruptive than necessary. In contrast, the Conservative Party's counter-proposals which I support are less disruptive and respect more the existing constituency boundaries. In particular, Madam Chairman, I would like to make detailed representations on those wards that would affect the seat of Mid Dorset and North Poole but also the knock-on effect for the rest of Dorset that that inevitably has.

In respect of the proposed constituencies within Dorset, I cannot support large parts of the Commission's proposals, they are more radical than necessary and in my view create more change than necessary, and I feel partly to blame, Madam Chairman, because the reason stated for making much of the changes is to avoid the seat of Mid Dorset and North Poole having four different local authorities - that is the stated reason within the Commission's proposal. But in order to avoid this, the Commission has set in train significant, and in my view unnecessary, changes to the electorates across the rest of the county and these electorates have been largely settled within

a long-standing pattern of constituencies. In an attempt to solve a problem in Mid Dorset, which in my view does not exist, inadvertently the Commission has caused more wider, and in my view unnecessary, problems throughout the rest of Dorset. Let me explain what I mean.

As the Commission noted, no changes need to be made to Bournemouth East, only minimal changes need to be made to Bournemouth West, Christchurch and Poole constituencies. My strong view is that it would be preferable to have no and minimal change in these four constituencies and for Mid Dorset to contain four districts rather than the significant and unnecessary changes to five constituencies within Dorset.

First and foremost, being a Member of Parliament for more than one local authority can actually have a number of advantages; for example, I am able to bring local authorities together on a variety of different issues, and people living in these areas often lead, almost invariably lead, across authority lives, living and working in different local government areas, and the local Member of Parliament having an overview of more than one authority can be advantageous for local residents. In any event there are proposals to change the local authority structure and this move towards two large authorities across Dorset, rather than the current nine, means that there need be less concern about the constituency of Mid Dorset having four districts. Even if those changes do not happen, do not materialise, there is increasingly a practical convergence between, for example, the Christchurch and East Dorset authorities which have the same chief executive and share council services.

A move in the opposite direction, such as a combined Bournemouth and Christchurch constituency seat as proposed by the Commission, in my view has little to recommend it. The two have been separate in parliamentary terms for over 40 years, and in my view there is little benefit in splitting Bournemouth on a north/south axis compared to the existing east/west split which dates back even longer.

Further, I remind the Commission of their comments in the 2013 revised proposals. Of course those comments are not binding but in my view they are highly persuasive and indicative of good practice. The 2013 report by the Assistant Commissioners on the South West concluded at paragraph AC130 that, although undesirable, they would rather see a constituency split between four local authorities than see the borough of Bournemouth split between three constituencies. With respect, I entirely agree with that view. In the current proposal the Commission has done the opposite and in my view has created unnecessary additional changes which have significant and far-reaching implications and which could all be solved simply by allowing Mid Dorset to have four or to cover four local authorities.

Let me turn to the detail. The south-east of the constituency of Mid Dorset, the south-east of Dorset has increasingly developed as a conurbation with a mixed pattern of rural, semi-rural and small market town settlements. The latter in particular act as a focal point for populations of surrounding wards. This is particularly the case in Mid Dorset and North Poole which has existed in broadly its present form since 1997.

The proposed Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson seat has the effect of dividing several of these local centres from their hinterlands. Let me turn to some specific examples

within Mid Dorset. I am going to start with Broadstone and Corfe Mullen. I would not support placing Broadstone in a different constituency from Corfe Mullen. There are particularly strong local ties between the two and a number of residential areas are shared between them, for example - I give three roads - Springdale Road, Roman Road and Gladelands Way are both in Corfe Mullen and Broadstone. Further, Roman Road itself has one side which is in Corfe Mullen, the west side, and the other which is in Broadstone. With all these roads and surrounding roads the only distinguishing feature is the different coloured bins that they have. Further, many residents of Corfe Mullen have a Broadstone address and postcode. In short, Broadstone is indistinguishable from Corfe Mullen along much of the length of the boundary between Poole and East Dorset. Both areas also share common schooling pyramids centred on Corfe Hills School which itself physically straddles the border between the two. There are also strong links between Wimborne and Corfe Mullen as was recognised since the fifth review.

Let me turn to Merley & Bearwood and to Wimborne. Similarly, Merley & Bearwood, though a ward in Poole, is separated from Wimborne at its closest by only a short pedestrian and road bridge. The majority of Merley has a Wimborne postcode and address, and the town is for many residents the focus of shopping for goods and services, community activities and the like. Further, there are numerous school links. Merley First School, for example, is part of the Wimborne Academy Trust as well as being a feeder school for Corfe Hills which is technically in Broadstone as I mentioned but in fact serves both communities of Broadstone and Corfe Mullen.

Let me turn to Wareham, Wareham in the south. The retention of Wareham and St Martin within the same seat as Lytchett Matravers and Lytchett Minster & Upton would continue the synergy between these communities that already exists. For example, the school catchment areas for Lytchett Matravers Primary School also includes Morden. Under the current proposals these two villages would fall into two different constituencies. Further, the catchment area for Lytchett Minster School includes Bere Regis, Bloxworth and St Martin, again under the Commission's proposals these communities would fall into different constituencies, and from those wards children go to both the Purbeck School in Wareham and also Lytchett Minster School. Both are currently in my constituency of Mid Dorset and North Poole and both in my view should remain there. Further, there are transport links, and from that Wareham looks to Poole for shopping and also for services.

The River Frome itself constitutes a clear southern boundary between Wareham and the wards to the south and therefore there are also good geographical reasons, too, for retaining Wareham within the seat of Mid Dorset as proposed by the Conservative Party's counter-proposal. This would also preserve the existing constituency boundary in the south. I just touch on bus transport links and road links: the A351, the A35 and the A350 are all strong links between Upton, Poole, Blandford and Wareham.

Let me touch very briefly, Madam Chairman, on other constituencies in Dorset. In addition, the Commission's scheme divides clearly more densely built up areas, urban areas, such as Creekmoor, Canford Heath and Kinson, from their closely neighbouring parts of inner Poole and Bournemouth with which they can be said to look

towards. Instead, they are placed within the more rural areas of East Dorset and small towns such as Ferndown with which they have few meaningful links and even less affinity.

In conclusion my view is the Conservative Party's counter-proposal is a fair compromise between minimal change, electoral equality, local geography and community ties. It is also very similar, as has already been noted earlier on this morning, to the unimplemented revised 2013 scheme, and this achieves the requirements of the legislation which I support with the exchange of a far smaller number of wards. I believe, Madam Chairman, that more than 142,000 electors would be involved in moving constituencies if the Commission's current plan goes ahead. So I strongly support the revision of the initial proposals and I would like to thank you and the Commission for the opportunity for making these submissions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Tomlinson. Are there any questions for clarification? Thank you. If you would like to state your name, please.

CLLR GRANT: (Liberal Democrat Party) Thank you very much. Cllr Gavin Grant. Forgive me, I am a Wiltshire interloper. My address is 16 Gloucester Street, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 0AA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR GRANT: I also should just note in passing that the Conservative proposals, the original Boundary Commission proposals and the Liberal Democrat counter-proposals are precisely the same, and I also speak in the capacity as the Chair of the Western Counties Liberal Democrats.

My question in echoing the comments that you made about the various linkages in the constituency, I believe your proposal also places Ferndown Central in with Verwood, do I understand that correctly? Perhaps it would be helpful just to comment on why that is the case.

MR MICHAEL TOMLINSON: I do not speak directly towards that, you will have to ask others that. I speak more generally in relation to Mid Dorset and North Poole.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any other questions for clarification from the floor? (None) Thank you very much for attending.

MR MICHAEL TOMLINSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for your representations. Mr Andrew Morgan, if you would like to come to the lectern, please. Would you state your name and address?

MR MORGAN: My name is Andrew Morgan. My address is 9 Beverley Gardens, Bournemouth BH10 5EF.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations.

MR MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I very much welcome the opportunity to make this representation.

Given the scale of the proposed changes suggested by the Boundary Commission, I am pleased to set out the views of a resident of Redhill & Northbourne who happens also to be an elected Bournemouth Borough Councillor since May 2007.

I believe that your current proposals are not the right ones and urge you to support an alternative that is better for the people of Bournemouth and the rest of Dorset. I plan to outline a number of factors which suggest strongly that there is a better way to achieve the equalisation of constituency sizes and so protect our democracy.

You do not really need me to tell you that one of the key aims of the changes to constituencies is to ensure that every constituency contains between 71,031 and 78,507 electors. In doing so the Boundary Commission must take into account any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. I plan to argue that, on balance, the Commission has failed to take into account how it will affect those strong local ties that exist in Bournemouth and that for this reason its proposals should not be accepted.

The proposal is that the long-standing parliamentary seat structure of Bournemouth East and Bournemouth West along an established east/west divide would instead be turned into a north/south divide by putting Christchurch into a constituency with five wards from the north of Bournemouth - this would be called Bournemouth North and Christchurch. The shape of this proposed constituency, Madam Chairman, is I believe somewhat bizarre, leaving Wallisdown & Winton West ward like a narrow finger of land trapped between three constituencies and isolated from its neighbours. There will then be an all new Bournemouth South constituency with ten wards from the southern section of the borough.

Our neighbours in the Poole constituency would retain Branksome West but also take back Alderney and Branksome East from Bournemouth West. Once again, Madam Chairman, the residents of Alderney would be treated like a political football as they switch constituency and lose the continuity of service from their established MP.

The proposal for the north-west of the borough of Bournemouth is in my view quite extraordinary. There would be a new seat called Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson which would include both Kinson North and Kinson South and also incorporate Redhill & Northbourne where I live. It immediately sounds more than just a little strange to have a constituency with three names and no obvious local connection. As at May 2015, in the whole of England there were only two seats with three names, these are Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford in Yorkshire, and Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner in Greater London. In the first of these the county towns are three distinct communities but which fall well short of the numbers needed for a sole parliamentary seat. They are also isolated from any larger neighbour with which they could form part of another constituency. In the London example the three named areas are already effectively

joined together within the built-up urban sprawl of north-west London. The proposed Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson seat has no central focal point, nor a sense of community among its constituent parts. It is divided not only by a river but by acres of green belt and woodland which form a natural boundary.

Bournemouth has always had two MPs who have been able to give their maximum effort to looking after the people that they represent. The new structure would effectively smash this continuity of service and sense of identity, and I wonder how passionate a Christchurch-based MP would be about the issues of identification miles away in Winton East or illegal traveller encampments way over the horizon at Slades Farm. Will they really care about Throop & Muscliff given that they are far away across the fields? What interest will they have in speaking out for the concerns of people living on the Townsend Estate? Will an MP drawing most of their support from affluent Broadstone and Ferndown really want to bother with making Kinson South a better place to live? With the exception of Bournemouth South, would MPs from these new seats actually want to work closely with Bournemouth Council? With the seats effectively in bits, I believe that the voice of the residents of Bournemouth becomes, sadly, weaker.

These are serious questions and expose the fundamental risks associated with the reworking of the boundaries. I believe, Madam Chairman, that this is not just fiddling around the edges, it is indeed a radical change to the seat structure that our residents are all familiar with. The overall impact is particularly marked in Bournemouth West which will be absorbed by four new proposed constituencies, Bournemouth East and Christchurch will split into three. These proposals not only represent an aberration to the historical state of affairs but they are also a massive disruption to the lives of the people of Bournemouth. In a sense they are an arbitrary movement of people into areas into constituencies with which they have no affiliation. As I outlined, the areas of Kinson and Redhill & Northbourne have no connection at all to Broadstone and Ferndown. Winton East, Wallisdown & Winton West, Throop & Muscliff, Moordown and Strouden Park have no connection whatsoever to Christchurch. I believe - and I want to argue this point strongly - that these proposals ignore the lives of the people actually living in Bournemouth. They do not take account of where they work, where they shop, where their kids go to school, how they travel around, where they relax and how they feel about the town that they are happy to call home.

The initial proposal from the Boundary Commission stated clearly that only minor changes were required to the existing Bournemouth West, Christchurch and Poole constituencies to bring the electorates within 5 per cent of the electoral quota. With that in mind I am just surprised that the proposal is for something much more radical and, I believe, fundamentally dangerous.

I believe, Madam Chairman, that there is an acceptable alternative and I urge you and the Commission to give careful consideration to the alternative proposals put forward by the Conservative Party. These necessitate no change at all to Bournemouth East, with Bournemouth West taking in Branksome West of the constituency, meaning it would have 77,012 electors, well within the desired spread. To reflect the geography and sense of identity, this constituency would then be called Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley. Pursuing this minor tweaks approach would be preferable to the

massive disruption that is on the table now. In addition, it would have only a minor impact on the rest of Dorset whilst still reaching the target of equal constituencies. It is interesting to note that in the representation made by the Labour Party this morning there seems to be broad agreement that what is proposed is simply too radical.

I believe, Madam Chairman, that Bournemouth and its residents will be ill-served by the proposed Boundary Commission changes. To protect local democracy and reflect the very real communities that exist, I urge you please to amend your plans. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Morgan. Are there any questions? Mr Morgan, would you just wait for just a moment? Are there any questions from the floor? (None) Thank you very much for attending and for your representations.

MR MORGAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Johann Edward, would you like to come to the lectern, please? Thank you, Mr Edward, if you would give your name and address, please.

MR EDWARD: My name is Johann Edward and my address is 25 Sandbourne Road and the postcode is DH4 8JH. Do you mind zooming in on that for me, please?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. (After a pause) There is a laser printer (*sic*) on the lectern should you wish to use it. Let's just get the map up first.

MR EDWARD: You can see that is where I live, just there. Okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR EDWARD: Good morning. My name is Johann Edward and I am a resident in Poole with a business in Bournemouth and until recently I was an elected councillor, so I have an interest in political boundaries for a range of reasons.

My personal situation is a good example of the problems created by poor boundaries. My life is centred on Bournemouth because of the layout of the roads, the location of local facilities and the flow of life around me. All mean that it is easier to travel to Bournemouth to do shopping, go to the cinema, eat out, travel to work and so on. Technically, however, I live in Poole at the end of this cul-de-sac here, in a road where everyone lives in Bournemouth apart from me and three or four of my neighbours. This is such an awkward arrangement that my local council services, such as bin collection, are actually performed by Bournemouth Council even though I pay my tax to Poole.

Technically, my MP is Robert Syms but Robert is difficult to get to and not really concerned with the same things as me - no offence, Robert. Most matters that concern me are better dealt with by the MPs for Bournemouth, Conor and Tobias, both of whom

are more accessible to me. I care about political representation and the difference it can make and so for a long time I have been a member of a political party. However, the association I am allowed to join is dictated by the constituency in which I live. When I moved to Bournemouth I wanted to join the Bournemouth association but was told I had to join Poole because technically I live in Poole. I did not want to join the Poole association because it is far away from me both in a geographical and political sense. This was frustrating for me because I wanted to be politically active where it could make a difference to the area in which I live. Fortunately, I got round this problem because I own a business in Bournemouth which entitles me to join the Bournemouth association. Interestingly, my business employs many people who will be in a similar situation to me if these boundary changes go ahead: they will live in a different constituency to that in which they work and their MP will not be concerned with the same things they are. Of course some endure that situation now but it is less of an issue today than it will be if these changes go ahead.

Today the two Bournemouth MPs work closely together. Recent examples include supporting local language schools against visa proposals and fighting the proposed Navitus wind farm to protect the local economy. The same applies at council level, for example, when I was a councillor the council won grants to improve the infrastructure for the town and the roads, and under the proposed boundary changes the number of interested parties required to coordinate those bids for those grants would have mushroomed. So achieving improvements for the town would have been more difficult, if not impossible, for all practical purposes because of the extra time and effort required to coordinate and gain consensus.

It is hard to imagine all four MPs of the proposed constituencies working together effectively to represent the needs of Bournemouth and its citizens. More MPs means more people to coordinate in order to address the issues that are important to the town. This is a strange outcome for an exercise that is supposed to be reducing the number of MPs.

For many who consider themselves to live and work in Bournemouth their new MP will have a centre of gravity outside Bournemouth and a set of interests divorced from their own. Even if the MPs were superhuman (and they are not), and even if they could juggle all the additional interest groups that these boundaries create (and they cannot), the geographical distances and differences in the nature of the constituencies will mitigate against the sort of coordination which is needed to create effective representation on local issues. For example, I used to be councillor for Winton and I can tell you that the lives of most Winton residents centre on Bournemouth or Poole and the university. Under the new proposals residents of Winton will be represented by the MP for Christchurch whose world view and interests will be largely divorced from the residents of Winton. Thus, the people of Bournemouth will be poorly served by these proposed boundary changes.

These proposals split Bournemouth and Poole between town and country when the towns themselves want to move in the opposite direction. In order to better serve the conurbation we expect to create an authority where the administration for Bournemouth and Poole is centralised around a common set of interests and services, in order to



create efficiencies, increase effectiveness and improve the relevance of local representation.

As we move towards this new conurbation-focused paradigm for council representation it seems silly to move parliamentary representation in the opposite direction. Theoretically, MPs of the proposed constituencies might be better balanced because they will have to weigh a wider range of interests. In practice, I believe it will create conflicts of interest that will make MPs less effective. From a mind-share perspective it will create schisms within our MPs such that they will not be able to fight effectively for our conurbation's best interests with wholehearted passion. From a practical perspective it will mean our MPs will have to represent an increased variety of interests, so they will be less able to focus on a few key issues, which will make them less effective representatives.

Personally, I will not be adversely affected by the changes because I already live with many of the problems created by inappropriate boundaries and because the location of my business gives me a voice in the right constituency and helps me get the right representation. However, if these changes go ahead it will adversely affect many thousands of citizens who will find it more difficult to get the right political representation because their representative will be far away both geographically and intellectually. Unless they have a business in Bournemouth like me, they will not have a "get out of jail free" card to work around these issues and so they will be poorly served.

Please redraw these boundaries so that more people have an MP whose interests are aligned with their own. As an alternative, I suggest the same as Andrew, which is to move Branksome Park into Bournemouth West. This would create roughly the right number of constituents with minimal disruption. As a former Branksome Park resident myself, I am confident that Branksome Park residents would feel more appropriately represented.

One final suggestion: move me and my four neighbours into Bournemouth. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Edward, thank you for your representations. Are there any questions for clarification to Mr Edward? Thank you. If you would like to wait for the roving mike and then state your name, please, before you state your question.

MR MORGAN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just for clarification, when, Johann Edward, you referred to Branksome Park, I think the Conservative Party suggestion is that Branksome ---

MR EDWARD: Branksome East.

MR MORGAN: Branksome East would stay in Bournemouth West, and Branksome West would come in from Poole into Bournemouth West. I just want to clarify that for the record, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could I just ask you to give your name first of all?

MR MORGAN: Yes. Andrew Morgan.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are you able to answer that question for clarification, Mr Edward?

MR EDWARD: I agree, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR ROBERT SYMS: (MP for Poole) Robert Syms, Member of Parliament for Poole.

You talk about moving Branksome Park, Branksome Park is one part of the Canford Cliffs ward. Are you suggesting splitting the ward between Sandbanks, Branksome Park and Canford Cliffs, because the Boundary Commission so far have not split any wards, and of course the numbers for Bournemouth West would then be over?

MR EDWARD: Yes. No, I am agreeing with Andrew's suggestion.

MR ROBERT SYMS: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any other questions for clarification? (None) Thank you very much, Mr Edward, for attending.

MR EDWARD: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our speaker scheduled for 11 o'clock is not yet here. Mr James Gray, would you like to come and speak early?

MR JAMES GRAY: (MP for North Wiltshire) Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to come to the lectern, please. Mr Gray, if you will give your name and address, please.

MR JAMES GRAY: Madam Chairman, thank you for seeing me. I am James Gray. I am a Member of Parliament for North Wiltshire. My address would be the House of Commons, or do you want my home address?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Your official address will suffice. Thank you.

MR JAMES GRAY: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to give your representations, please.

MR JAMES GRAY: Thank you very much indeed first of all for seeing me here in Dorset being a Wiltshire MP, but I know the two are together and I could not attend the more local events in the north.

Can I first of all say that I am broadly not at all unhappy with what the Commission proposed. It would take my constituency back to something very similar to the constituency which I represented for 13 years from 1997 until 2010, and therefore, if it were to happen, I would be more than content. The main point with regard to my constituency is it would bring the town of Chippenham back into the constituency of North Wiltshire and that is something that prevailed for 13 years and I would be perfectly content with it. However, I very strongly support the alternative proposal produced by the Conservative Party both for Wiltshire and Dorset which seems to me to build on what you proposed but to improve it in some significant details.

First, the proposal entirely fulfils your statutory obligations with regard to numbers and I think all of the constituencies are within the figures required.

Second, what the Conservative Party are proposing minimises change, it builds on the existing constituencies, makes very minor changes, but really no significant changes in the way that you have proposed in your original proposals. With regard to my own constituency our proposal is the town of Corsham should come back into North Wiltshire but that otherwise the constituency should remain identical to what it is now. It is a very, very small change, just bringing the extra 10,000 voters from Corsham into North Wiltshire thereby achieving the numbers that we require. Similar points can be made with regard to the other constituencies. The town of Chippenham remains with the mid-Wiltshire constituency which you called Trowbridge, thereby again maintaining something that currently exists because Chippenham is in with Bradford-on-Avon and it is very much a mid-Wiltshire constituency so it works rather neatly we think.

Third, what we are proposing reduces what you might call "churn". The people of Chippenham, for example, were represented by me from 1997 to 2010, by Duncan Hames MP from 2010 to 2015 and by Michelle Donelan from 2015 until now. So, as I say, while I am perfectly content to have Chippenham coming back into my constituency, it would mean the people of Chippenham have been changed backwards and forwards on a regular basis over the last two or three boundary changes. The same would apply to the town of Calne, which was for a while in the Devizes constituency, came back to me with the last changes, now will go back to Devizes if your proposals were to become law. What we are proposing minimises the degree of change for the electorate which we think must be very good for democracy. If people are constantly changing backwards and forwards from one constituency to the other it is probably not a healthy thing to occur.

Third (*sic*), there are a number of detailed points. Your proposals link Calne, the town of Calne but also Calne Without, Calne Rural, into Devizes. There is virtually no connection at all between, particularly Calne Rural, in particular the top part of Calne Rural. Calne Rural goes as far up as Foxham at the top. It has really no connection at all with the town of Devizes. There is no communication. There are no roads that go from Foxham, for example, to Devizes. There is absolutely no linkage of any kind at all between Calne Rural, the top end of Calne Rural, and Devizes. Even Calne itself tends to look north rather than south in its connections.

Similarly, on the west you propose that Box and Colerne (or col-lern as the army call it, cul-lern is the correct Wiltshire pronunciation) should go into the new Trowbridge seat. There is absolutely no connection at all with Trowbridge, again there is virtually no communications between the two, and Box and Colerne very much look to Corsham and to North Wiltshire, they being connected very closely with Corsham. Under our proposals Corsham will become part of North Wiltshire. It is very logical that Box and Colerne should remain in North Wiltshire.

All I am proposing is that my seat should remain Box and Colerne, should retain Calne town, retain Calne Without, and allow Chippenham Town to become part of the mid-Wiltshire constituency.

The party has I think produced detailed proposals for you together with maps to clarify what we are proposing. I will happily answer questions if there are any.

I think what we are proposing also helps the changes that are proposed elsewhere in Wiltshire and Dorset and therefore equally have a marriage for that particular reason.

Madam Chairman, I very much hope you will give serious consideration to what we are proposing. As I say, it fulfils your statutory obligations in terms of numbers, it reduces the amount of change, it will reduce the amount of churn between boundary changes, it takes away some very unfortunate, very uncomfortable local links which are broken by what you propose, and seems to us to have a great deal of merit. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Gray. If you would like to remain there for a moment. Are there any questions for clarification? Thank you. If you just wait for the mike, please, and then again state your name, please.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you. Good morning, James. Pleasure to see you. We missed you in Malmesbury Abbey. James is my Member of Parliament I should say and I am Cllr Gavin Grant from 16 Gloucester Street, Malmesbury SN16 0AA. We missed you yesterday, James, and I was fearful that that might be a health challenge, but I am delighted to see you in robust form this morning.

I have three specific points for clarification, if I may. Could you kindly just put the ward maps on here if that is possible?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There is a laser pointer if you want to use it, Mr Gray, just on the lectern there.

CLLR GRANT: Just stay where you were if you would be kind enough. The first one relates specifically to the ward that is referred to here as Corsham Without & Box Hill. The Boundary Commission's proposal, as you rightly say, James, is to divide that from Corsham Pickwick and Corsham Town wards, and we see the villages of Neston and Gastard are very, very close, almost touching Corsham. Am I correct in my understanding that the Conservative proposal, and the one you have just spoken to, similarly retains that division? I then want to move to Melksham, but perhaps if I may ask these questions in sequence, it may be less confusing.

MR JAMES GRAY: With regards to the first two points you made, first of all I am very glad that you missed me in Malmesbury yesterday - I am glad to be missed. As has been the case for the last 20 years, I alternate my appearance between Malmesbury at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and Royal Wootton Bassett - I was yesterday in Royal Wootton Bassett - and the morning in Calne, but I can reassure you that this time next year you will be able to welcome me back to Malmesbury for the Remembrance Sunday service in the abbey.

CLLR GRANT: We look forward to it.

MR JAMES GRAY: Secondly, you are quite correct that we equally propose that the Corsham Without & Box Hill ward should become part of the new mid-Wiltshire constituency not least because, if that were not the case, there would be no linkage between the town of Chippenham and Trowbridge.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you. If we could just draw this up slightly, please - that is it - because the area where your arrow is I believe - it is not labelled as such - the Melksham Without North division, that sort of ---

MR JAMES GRAY: There?

CLLR GRANT: Yes, that sort of whole piece there. Thank you, James, that is right. The Boundary Commission's proposal I believe is that that should remain united with Melksham North, which is the urban piece there which has Melksham Without North labelled across it, Melksham Central, Melksham South - sorry, it probably was not very helpful to do that, if you do not mind - and the Melksham South Without ward, that is it. So that piece where your indicator is is Melksham North Without, then we have Melksham North, Melksham Central, Melksham South, which is the urban part of the town, then Melksham South Without. As I understand it, James, the proposal from the Conservative Party is that Melksham Without North should not be in the same parliamentary division as Melksham North, Melksham Central, Melksham South and Melksham Without South, do I understand that correctly?

MR JAMES GRAY: Yes. I am only actually responsible for the North Wiltshire bits, I am not absolutely clear. I think the whole of Melksham town goes into Devizes.

CLLR GRANT: It does. The four wards, I had the pleasure of being with Mr Pratt in the session we had in Exeter, so as I understand it - forgive us those colleagues from Dorset who are here for this Wiltshire discussion - Melksham North, Central, South and Without South are in the Devizes division, and I believe Melksham Without North is in fact, under the Conservative proposal, in the mid-Wiltshire division.

MR JAMES GRAY: Yes. From memory I think that is correct, yes.

CLLR GRANT: Fine, thank you. The last one, which you may or may not, James, be able to help with, if we can come down to Trowbridge, please, which is ---

MR JAMES GRAY: I fear the likelihood of my helping with Trowbridge is extremely remote, nevertheless I will try.

CLLR GRANT: Yes, because, as I understand it, the Boundary Commission proposal takes the ward of Southwick into their proposed Trowbridge seat. As I understand it, the Conservative Party proposal takes it into the Warminster and Shaftesbury division, but as one notes here, which are not very easy to see, but the villages of Southwick, of North Bradley, West Bradley and so on, West Ashton, all link with Trowbridge but have very little connection with Warminster or, indeed, let alone Shaftesbury. I believe that is the case but, James, it may be that you do not know about that.

MR JAMES GRAY: I am glad to claim to be a huge expert on the constituency of North Wiltshire, which I know every lane, every inch and every field, and I really know very little indeed about South Wiltshire, so I am afraid to say I cannot comment, but your understanding is no doubt correct.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Gray, for attending and for your representations.

MR JAMES GRAY: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Matt Pitcher. Mr Pitcher? You do have a speaking slot that is a little bit later, in fact it is at 11.50 am. I understand you also have a presentation that we need to load up.

MR PITCHER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: First of all, do you want to speak earlier? Are you happy to speak now?

MR PITCHER: I can speak now, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: All right, okay. It may take a couple of minutes for us to load the presentation up but we will get that going so that you can speak early. Thank you. (After a pause) Mr Pitcher, could you give your full name and address, please?

MR PITCHER: Yes. I am Matt Pitcher and I am from 24 Riversdale Road, Bournemouth, and that is BH6 4LH.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Pitcher. If you would like to make your presentation, please.

MR PITCHER: Okay. I am also the head of elections and land charges for Bournemouth Borough Council and I have been asked to make representations on Bournemouth Borough Council's view and that of the electoral registration and returning officer.

This is a map of our plan. It is very similar to other representations and counter-proposals that have been submitted. I just wanted to go into a bit more detail about our feelings in Bournemouth.

Feedback on your initial proposals. It would appear that some of the proposals which now cross the authority boundaries have been done so to make up numbers as there is no real connection with other parts of the new constituencies. Some examples of this are the ward of Wallisdown & Winton West in Bournemouth which actually does share a border with the authority of Poole but has been included within a constituency with four other Bournemouth wards with Christchurch. It would be highly unlikely if residents in this ward would actually go and visit Christchurch for any regular contact with them. If they were going to go for facilities or anything, they would more likely go to Poole or Bournemouth ahead of Christchurch as they are both nearer. There is also a river slicing the new proposed constituency. Across that river there is one vehicle crossing and one footbridge crossing on this current boundary. However, along the Bournemouth and Christchurch divide there is actually five roads, three foot passengers and two ferry crossings. So if there are connections, they are greater in other parts of the town than they are for these wards which you have identified.

It is also the creation of the Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson constituency, these three towns do have a geographical connection in respect of proximity but they do have very few local ties between those three towns and communities.

On looking in detail at the proposals, the only rationale to splitting Bournemouth across three constituencies would be the electorates work better this way and the fact that the Boundary Commission did not want to have a constituency with four authorities in it in respect to Mid Dorset. However, in the initial recommendations for Central Devon in the South West initial proposals, they have in fact recommended a four-authority constituency. So I believe splitting Bournemouth across three constituencies would have a detrimental impact on the electors living within the borough due to the break-up of current groups.

The initial proposals would actually mean 49.6 per cent of electors would be changing across Dorset, which is a vast number of the electors actually changing, so the wards would be changing, albeit that, due to the reduction in the MP numbers in the county, some of this change would be impossible to stop. However, the initial proposals would be a significant change and would be harder to implement than a counter-proposal.

Many local bodies and groups which have been set up to work within the current parliamentary boundaries would have to be significantly altered to operate, and the potential initial proposals, this would have significant implications to Bournemouth University and many academy trusts, to name but a few examples.

Finally, the matter was discussed at full council and the council noted that it regrets the dilution of Bournemouth into three parliamentary constituencies, the potential negative impact this would have on the ability of the council to effectively and efficiently interact with Central Government and other agencies in pursuance of the interests of the borough's residents, and the breaking up of long and existing local community ties that

this proposal would create. It would also have the potential that parts of the borough may not be effectively represented were there to be a small part of the constituencies whose composition is overwhelmingly outside of the borough.

The counter-proposal itself, within this counter-proposal there is little change to the current constituencies, with the exception that is of the North Dorset council area and the expansion of a Mid Dorset constituency.

The current Bournemouth East constituency - light blue on here - it remains unchanged.

The Bournemouth West constituency would have the addition of Branksome East and Branksome West in their entirety. Currently, they have part of both of those since the local government boundary changes in 2015.

The Christchurch constituency would include the Verwood wards and the ward of West Moors & Holt which I believe have all previously been included in the Christchurch constituency before.

Poole would have the two wards of the Canford Heath area; they would be included in the Poole one.

South Dorset would gain the Chickerell & Chesil Bank ward, and West Dorset would include the Blackmore and Lydden Vale wards from North Dorset.

The bigger changes do occur in the new expansion of the Mid Dorset and Warminster and Shaftesbury constituencies due to the reduction of MP numbers across the county. In the Mid Dorset constituency, the four East Dorset wards of Alderholt, Crane, Handley Vale and Stour we believe should be included in the Mid Dorset constituency, along with seven wards from North Dorset, including Blandford wards, Abbey, Lower Tarrants and finally the Riversdale & Portman. The remaining ten wards for North Dorset would then be included in the Warminster and Shaftesbury constituency.

All the other wards would then stay within the current constituencies they fall within, albeit with slight amendments to those wards due to local government boundary reviews since the last parliamentary review.

The counter-proposal only requires 20.6 per cent change in the constituency wards fall within, and although neither proposal can stop the change in the current North Dorset council area, this counter-proposal does try to reduce the impact a little. In the main, many of the local ties created within the current parliamentary constituencies continue with some slight tweaks to accommodate a few wards moving between constituencies to reflect the strict electoral quota amendments required; that is allowing the little change to the constituencies and allowing networks currently in place to continue.

The basis of this counter-proposal is the current arrangements plus the outcomes of the 2013 boundary review revised proposals which we were also consulted upon. The counter-proposal has been discussed and most of the local political parties represented here earlier on today are all in general agreement that this is the sort of thing which should be the basis of a new proposal regarding the Dorset area.



I am not going to go into great detail for the Wiltshire element as that is not an area that I have an awful lot of knowledge in.

Within this counter-proposal we are acknowledging that the new reconfigured Mid Dorset constituency will consist of four local authorities: East Dorset, North Dorset, Poole and Purbeck. This point was covered in the revised proposal summary point AC130 from the previous consultation back in 2013, when it stated the Boundary Commission acknowledge that, although it is not desirable to have a constituency across four authority areas, it was preferable to do so in order to keep Bournemouth from spanning across three constituencies. Another point that may be pertinent is, if the proposed local government reorganisation goes through, this would not be four constituencies, it may only be two, although I am aware that you cannot take that into account at present.

The counter-proposal confirms the two constituencies for Bournemouth. This builds on the many years of the boundaries in Bournemouth being east and west. This actually dates back to 1949 when the first Bournemouth East and West came into existence, albeit back then when Bournemouth East was with Christchurch, part of the Christchurch constituency, which then changed in 1971 to just Bournemouth East and Bournemouth West as it is currently.

Finally, following a council motion, it resolved to express its opposition to the initial proposals that have been put forward by the Boundary Commission, which I have done so today. They wanted to communicate to the Boundary Commission to let a period of basis of its opposition, which I believe has also been done, and to mandate officers put forward a counter-proposal. This counter-proposal does form similar lines to the governing party in Bournemouth, which is the Tory Party's proposal, so the major part of this is following those lines, but we do agree with those recommendations and counter-proposal.

We would also welcome support for this counter-proposal from anyone who wishes to when the next round of consultation opens up, hopefully early next year. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Pitcher. Would you remain there, please, for the moment? Are there any questions from the floor? Thank you. Again would you state your name, please?

CLLR GRANT: Thank you. You will know it by heart soon. Cllr Gavin Grant, 16 Gloucester Street, Malmesbury SN16 0AA. Thank you very much. I just put on record that in the context of Dorset the Liberal Democrats completely support your counter-proposals. I think you were honest enough and kind enough to say that you do not have extensive knowledge of south Wiltshire. Could I just ask whether in drawing up your counter-proposal was there any consultation with Wiltshire Unitary Authority or the town council of Trowbridge or the parish councils that make up the Southwick ward, which is the ward in the counter-proposal that you propose to move away from Trowbridge and into the cross-border Warminster and Shaftesbury? I do appreciate that numerically one Wiltshire ward does need to be added but I wonder if there have

been any discussions across, between the local authorities and town councils and parish councils as to which ward it might be.

MR PITCHER: No, I have not had discussions with Wiltshire Council, but with regard to that Southwick ward, it would not necessarily have to be in that area and I do appreciate the comments that were raised when I circulated our counter-proposals. It could be slightly tweaked regarding the divide between the West Dorset and the Warminster and Shaftesbury to make it so that actually that Southwick one which you have shown interest in is not actually falling within that Warminster and Shaftesbury constituency. So I think there are some slight tweaks, as I think you will find, between the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and others who are all writing counter-proposals. There is probably some slight tweaks of wards going one way or another which would actually make it so that those could be taken in, but I think in general they are broadly the same across all the parties' proposals that are up here. I believe there was some tweaks with that Southwick ward which could easily be accommodated.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other questions for clarification? Thank you, madam. If you would like to stand, please, and would you give your name, please?

CLLR POPE: Yes. I am Cllr Marion Pope for the Merley & Bearwood ward of the borough of Poole. I did not hear us mentioned, so I really just wanted clarification that your proposals are the same as those of the Conservatives for Mid Dorset and North Poole.

MR PITCHER: Yes.

CLLR POPE: That the wards of Broadstone, Merley & Bearwood would be included in very much the same arrangement as now with an east/west constituency.

MR PITCHER: Yes. They would currently fall within the Mid Dorset proposed constituency, which is slightly larger, but they would carry on being in the Mid Dorset constituency with Merley, Broadstone and the like, so they would continue to be in a Mid Dorset constituency.

CLLR POPE: Excellent. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any more questions from the floor? (None) Thank you very much, Mr Pitcher, for your representations.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Michelle Donelan. Thank you. Would you like to come forward Ms Donelan? Thank you.

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: (MP for Chippenham) Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could I ask you to give your name and address, please?

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: Michelle Donelan, 21 The Paddocks, Chippenham.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations.

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: Yes, thank you. I think it is important that I have come here today in person to explain the counter-proposal that has been supported by the Conservative Party and also myself and other Members of Parliament for the Chippenham constituency and why I think that the initial Boundary Commission proposal would be damaging to the local ties of the Wiltshire constituencies.

There is little political, public and business support for the initial Boundary Commission proposal to move the town of Chippenham out of the current Chippenham constituency, but there is significant support, however, from a range of stakeholders, which range from business to local community members, for a counter-proposal that would involve Chippenham as a town remaining in a seat titled Mid Wiltshire. In summary our proposal is to keep Chippenham Town in the constituency which would be named Mid Wiltshire. It would reunite Melksham within the Devizes constituency, it would mirror the rest of the Boundary Commission proposal as closely as possible, including reuniting Corsham in North Wiltshire and also including Trowbridge within the Mid Wiltshire constituency, so the idea is to keep as much of that proposal as possible as well.

Our proposal achieves the objectives set by parliament but most importantly it does also reduce any inconvenience from the boundary changes on constituents, trying to reduce the number of constituents changed, keeping in mind the strong local ties with each individual area and how people identify. It is part of the overall proposal put forward for Wiltshire and Dorset constituency by the Conservative Party that I have already referenced.

I want to start first of all by focusing on the Boundary Commission proposal if I may. The Boundary Commission initial proposal would involve transferring over 25,757 electors from Chippenham to the North Wiltshire constituency. The rationale for transferring Chippenham as outlined by the Boundary Commission is "... to compensate for the transfer of Calne from the existing North Wiltshire constituency" - that is an exact quote - so there is not a strong rationale for actually giving the town of Chippenham. It is being transferred to accommodate the move of another town elsewhere to satisfy the criteria of the numbers for the electors and therefore it is not based on an argument of strong local ties. Of course you will know that one of the key factors of the Boundary Commission is that we must consider local ties and that they would not be broken by changes in the constituencies. I would argue that that is what would happen if we went along with the Boundary Commission plan.

We think there would be considerable inconvenience to the local electors by moving Chippenham. Chippenham has only limited local ties within North Wiltshire's constituency. The M4 presents a hard physical boundary that has long been established between the north and the southern parts of the Wiltshire county and is identified by local residents as such. Whilst there has been significant investment in connecting Chippenham to the south, the roads linking from Chippenham to the more rural towns and villages of North Wiltshire have been less well invested in and are used

less frequently. The socioeconomic links between Chippenham and the areas of the north are significantly less. As a result, the vast majority of Chippenham residents work either in Chippenham itself, Swindon, Bristol, or towns in the south of the constituency. Very few travel to the north, which is much more rural. The Chippenham constituency also contains significantly more urban areas than North Wiltshire and therefore its needs and priorities are very different and so are those of the constituents themselves. Chippenham constituents are concerned about housing, the vibrancy, the regeneration of town centres, transport, traffic and infrastructure, and these are the issues that I have been dealing with in the past few years and have seen that they are markedly different. The demographics of each constituency is also very different. So if we look at the towns and the areas within North Wiltshire compared to the demographics of the areas in the Chippenham constituency, notably Chippenham itself, the constituents are very different: we have an average younger age, more diverse ethnically, and different in terms of their socioeconomic group.

The Boundary Commission proposal would also inconvenience those in the existing North Wiltshire constituency. It would rename North Wiltshire as Chippenham and would mean that over 50,000 electors from the current North Wiltshire constituency becoming associated with a town that they have poor links to.

Our proposal on the other side is a positive argument. The positive argument for our proposal is the opposite of this. It would be keeping Chippenham with its maintained links and existing ties. Keeping Chippenham in its current constituency will maintain its local ties to the towns and villages of the south, like Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge, with which it has excellent transport links, are all very similar market towns, has shared in terms of their demographics, and whose electors have very similar needs and priorities as outlined before. It will maintain the links to the villages in the south, which is a particular point that is often forgotten/overlooked. Areas like Patterdown, Showell, Lacock, Gastard, all identify very closely with Chippenham and that would be their associated town. Therefore moving Chippenham out of the current constituency into North Wiltshire would be very damaging for those local ties. Chippenham is their local town centre and it is their issues that they face in that town.

However, I should be clear that we do agree with the vast majority of the Boundary Commission's proposal. It does make sense to reunite the main Corsham town wards with North Wiltshire; there are significant MOD presence and barracks in both, so electors have clear shared needs and priorities. They would reunite historic ties that the town has with North Wiltshire.

We would also argue that the wards of Box and Colerne would be retained in North Wiltshire given it covers parts of Corsham and its suburbs and facilities of adjoining villages. It makes the most sense for local residents as well.

We also agree with the Boundary Commission proposal to include the wards of Trowbridge within the existing Chippenham constituency. They would serve to reunite the suburbs of Hilperton, Staverton and Trowbridge. Combining the towns of Trowbridge and Chippenham in one constituency is entirely sensible given the similarities and issues they face as market towns, their demographics, proximity and A350 which links them both together.

To make the numbers of the electors work and the constituency boundaries coherent across the county it would be necessary to move the wards of Melksham into Devizes. However, there is a very strong rationale for doing this given the historical basis of the fact it used to be in the Devizes constituency and the local ties to Devizes constituency and the town and the association that local people feel towards that.

Overall, our proposal builds on local ties and the existing constituencies across the county rather than breaking local ties. Our proposal has strong political, public, community and business support from a range of different organisations and community leaders across the area, is part of a combined Conservative proposal for Wiltshire and Dorset, and of course it meets the criteria set out by the Boundary Commission. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Ms Donelan. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions from the floor for clarification? Thank you. If you would like to wait for the mike and then state your name, please.

MR JAMES GRAY: Thank you. Thank you, Michelle, for your excellent argument with which I entirely agree but it did remind me of one thing I forgot to say during my evidence. Would you agree with me that even if the Boundary Commission proposal were to go ahead the names of Trowbridge and indeed Chippenham would be incorrect for the two seats and probably North Wiltshire and Mid Wiltshire would be much more satisfactory whether or not the Boundary Commission proposal goes ahead or indeed the Conservative Party alternative?

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: Yes, I quite agree. We do need to take into account that these are a variety of different areas in both seats whatever proposal goes through and naming them after one specific town would not cater for all the residents to identify with those seats.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you. Cllr Gavin Grant, 16 Gloucester Street, Malmesbury SN16 0AA. Just to clarify so that I am clear in my own mind, the A350, which you have made a very strong case, acts as a very important economic and communications route, links Chippenham of course with Melksham, and as we go over the M4 it becomes the A349 up to Malmesbury and then up on to Cirencester. Am I right, my understanding of your proposal is that the town of Malmesbury, the town of Chippenham and the town of Melksham should be in three different parliamentary divisions, that is what you are setting out here?

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: I am indeed, yes.

CLLR GRANT: Thank you. Just to clarify, because you have made reference to extensive political support, I wonder if you could just clarify whether there have been resolutions in support of your proposal passed by Chippenham Town Council, Trowbridge Town Council and Melksham Town Council?

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: No, I do not think it would have been appropriate for myself, as a Member of Parliament, to try to seek such resolutions, especially from a town council in Trowbridge that is not in my seat as such. However, I have consulted widely with councillors ranging from across Wiltshire, but not just councillors, business leaders, community leaders and local residents, as we are talking about constituencies that would essentially serve constituents not just councillors.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Thank you very much, Ms Donelan, for attending and also for your representations. Thank you.

MS MICHELLE DONELAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is due to speak at 12 o'clock. We will now take a break until 12 o'clock and we will resume at 12 o'clock. Thank you.

After a short break

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen. Can we perhaps call Mr Conor Burns to the lectern? Mr Burns, if you would like to give your name and address, please.

MR CONOR BURNS: (MP Bournemouth West, Alderney and Branksome East) My name is Conor Burns. My address is 119 Alumhurst Road, Bournemouth BH4 8HS.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Burns. If you would like to give your representations, please.

MR CONOR BURNS: Thank you. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be able to come in person to speak on the proposals made by the Boundary Commission.

Can I begin by noting, as you noted at the beginning of your section related to Bournemouth West, Poole and Christchurch, that no change needed to be made to Bournemouth East and only minor changes needed to be made to Bournemouth West, Poole, Christchurch, to bring them within the 5 per cent quota. You have gone on to say that you have decided to go for more radical change to this part of Dorset in order to avoid there being four district council areas within the current Mid Dorset parliamentary constituency. I do note that on the last occasion that the Boundary Commission addressed this they looked at a proposal that involved splitting the borough of Bournemouth into three parliamentary constituencies in order to avoid there being four districts in Mid Dorset, and the conclusion last time was that that was too great a disruption to the borough of Bournemouth at too great a cost and you came down to the decision to leave Bournemouth drawn in two on an east/west basis.

Looking at the proposed constituencies, you have proposed a Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson constituency which comprises the current wards of Bournemouth West, Kinson North, Kinson South and Redhill. It would be my contention that there is little community association between these areas and Broadstone and Ferndown, weak transportation connections, and they cross the natural border of the River Stour.

As for Bournemouth North and Christchurch, this would comprise the Winton East and the Winton West and Wallisdown wards that are currently within the Bournemouth West constituency. Again I would contend that there is little community association between those areas and Christchurch, poor transportation connections, and both those wards within the borough of Bournemouth look to the town centre of Bournemouth for their identity. Both would move those wards in the Bournemouth constituencies into constituencies where the Member of Parliament would have a majority interest, a significant majority interest, that would not be Bournemouth. Both those areas of Kinson North, Kinson South and Redhill, and Winton West and Wallisdown and Winton East, would be represented by Members of Parliament where the Bournemouth parts of those new constituencies would, I contend, be peripheral.

If I could use one example to perhaps illustrate the problems that could be created, it would be to draw your attention to the representations made by Bournemouth University who are profoundly concerned about the proposed changes. Bournemouth University is a significant local employer. It is a key economic driver not just within Bournemouth, Poole and the wider conurbation, but within the county of Dorset itself. They have made the point that under the changes represented, the main campus of Bournemouth University and indeed the Arts University Bournemouth would be in a Poole constituency, the town centre campuses would be in a Bournemouth South constituency, and the student population outside halls would be in the new Winton East/Wallisdown constituency connected to Christchurch. The University's expansion plans adjoin the border of Talbot Woods, again currently within the Bournemouth West constituency. They make the point that, as things stand at the moment as the borders are currently drawn, 80 per cent of their interests plus are represented within the Bournemouth West constituency. In other words, the Member of Parliament for Bournemouth West, currently me, represents both the town centre campus, the Branksome campus, the residence of Talbot Woods where the development abuts, and the students in halls of residence in the central ward, and the students who live out of halls in the Winton West and Wallisdown and the Winton East wards. They are very concerned that, given that at the moment the Member of Parliament representing all those interests acts as a consensus-builder and a bridge-builder between the diversity of those interests where there can be conflicts, that they will be split off where Members of Parliament could potentially be taking different sides in those and impact Bournemouth University's ability to carry on contributing enormously to the local economy. In their submission they say, "Bournemouth University benefits greatly from having a single Member of Parliament representing the interests of the organisation". Given the significance of Bournemouth University to our conurbation and our county, I hope that that representation by them will be given really serious weight and consideration.

Just on the point of historic ties, if you go back to the creation of the Bournemouth West constituency in 1950, the wards of Kinson, Redhill and Winton have always been within a Bournemouth West parliamentary constituency. Indeed, my predecessor's predecessor, Lord Eden of Winton, who was first elected to parliament in February 1954, will be making a submission to you to say that in the whole time that he has been around (29 years in the House of Commons and 31 years in the House of Lords before

his retirement), Bournemouth has never been divided on a north/south basis, it has always been on an east/west basis.

Turning to the counter-proposal that the Conservative Party have tabled for which I speak firmly and vigorously in favour of, I believe this counter-proposal protects existing communities, respects natural boundaries, and secures historic ties and provides continuity to the local electorate. I would also ask you to note that at a motion passed unanimously at Bournemouth Council some weeks ago it was supported not only by Conservative councillors but by a UKIP councillor and a Green councillor. I understand that I am also able to say that I support the Labour counter-proposal and indeed the Liberal Democrat counter-proposal because they all appear to reflect exactly what the Conservative Party are proposing. There seems to be an incredible consensus around what would make a suitable alternative proposal to the ones you have come forward with in your initial one.

I would like just to conclude by turning to the Poole wards that comprise part of what is currently Bournemouth West. Currently, as the Member of Parliament for Bournemouth West, I represent Branksome East and Alderney. The proposal that we have tabled would unite Branksome West with Branksome East and Alderney in what used to be called the Bourne Valley area. I think that the name change that we have proposed from Bournemouth West to Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley would play an important part in reflecting the identity of those Poole wards that have always had strong ties in terms of transportation, employment, links with and ties to Bournemouth, although located within the borough of Poole. I know from numerous conversations over many years on doorsteps that the residents of those areas who are pleased that they are within a Bournemouth West constituency would be enormously grateful to have the name changed to Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley to reflect the unique identity of the Poole wards. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any questions for clarification? No? Okay. Thank you very much for attending and thank you for your representations.

MR CONOR BURNS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Christopher Chope, please. If you would like to come to the lectern, Mr Chope. Would you give your name and address, please?

MR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE: (MP for Christchurch) Yes. I am Christopher Chope, I am the MP for Christchurch, and my address is the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would like to make your representations, please.

MR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE: Yes. I think it is about three years ago that I came and gave evidence at the last public inquiry when the proposals were very similar to actually the Conservative counter-proposals this time, which are also, as I understand it,



supported by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. At that public inquiry there was almost a unanimous consensus centred around keeping Bournemouth constituencies more or less as they are and the Christchurch constituency more or less as it is, so it came as a bit of a surprise and a shock to me to see your current proposals, because they cut across what has always been the natural boundaries, particularly the natural boundary of the Stour, and they also destroy the community ties which are well-established in my constituency both within that part which is within the East Dorset District Council area and that which is in the area of Christchurch Borough Council.

I have had the privilege of representing Christchurch since 1997, and when I first became elected, Verwood was actually part of my constituency. I then experienced the ties that there are between Verwood and the rest of the East Dorset area, and many people in Verwood look to the south, to Ringwood, to Ferndown, for their shopping and for their leisure activities. Verwood fitted in very well into the constituency. It is a sort of semi-urban area, part of a commuter belt into Bournemouth, as is most of the rest of my constituency. It was a bit of a disappointment when we lost Verwood in the boundary changes that subsequently took effect I think in 2005 and that was because of numbers, so effectively a little bit of the northern part of my constituency was chopped off and we lost Verwood. Now, with the need to increase the numbers in each constituency, it seems natural that we should put Verwood back in with Christchurch because, as I think has been made clear already, Christchurch at the moment is a constituency which, with a few extra electors added, would then be able to fit the criteria which have been set out. So I am very enthusiastic in supporting the Conservative counter-proposal which is to basically extend the Christchurch constituency to the north, covering much of the area which it used to have before we had the last boundary changes.

So that is really where I am coming from on this and I cannot understand why anybody would want to complicate matters by basically splitting my constituency into three, which is what the proposal amounts to, with the Christchurch borough moving into what is proposed as a Bournemouth North and Christchurch constituency, the Ferndown area moving into a separate constituency, and the northern parts, St Leonards & St Ives and West Moors, moving into a third separate constituency. I have not met any constituents who are enthusiastic about that idea.

My understanding is that one of the main criteria should be to try and have the minimum avoidable change when you were looking at these boundary proposals. It seems to me that, instead of going for minimum avoidable change, the current proposal is sort of maximum change, for what purpose? It is almost as though somebody, when they looked at the map, had not appreciated that the River Stour is really a very significant natural boundary and there is a couple of crossings from Christchurch into the Bournemouth constituency across the Stour. When one goes further to the west, one could look at a map and say north Bournemouth and the area around the airport are very closely connected, until you start looking at it and you see the only way you can get across from Throop and Holdenhurst to Hurn is on a couple of pedestrian bridges - I think one of which is still in private ownership. There is not the linkage between the north of Bournemouth and Christchurch and Hurn which might appear at first sight from looking at the boundaries. I would ask you to take into account the significance of the Stour as a natural boundary, and obviously on the other side of my constituency I have

got the River Avon, and the constituency basically goes up between the River Avon and the River Stour.

The final point I make is that since I first became a Member of Parliament, Christchurch and East Dorset Councils have been much more united, working together in partnership. They have now got one chief executive; they are soon only going to have one civic office with a satellite office in Wimborne. The chief planning officer is for Christchurch and East Dorset and so on. At a time when those two councils are working together and my constituency comprises the whole of Christchurch and quite a large part of East Dorset, it makes sense to have one constituency, one Member of Parliament, dealing with what is effectively one chief executive. We have also at the moment got a two-tier structure which I support very much and that involves having an upper tier authority at the County Council. If we switch to including Christchurch within Bournemouth, it means we are mixing a two-tier council structure with a unitary structure. There does not seem to me that there is any reason for doing that, it would just be additionally complicated.

So that is really my view about this. I think that if you drive around the constituency and you know it pretty well, as I think I do, you can see that there is indeed a natural community of interest for the constituents as they are at the moment. Fine, we have got to increase the numbers and that can be done by bringing back into the constituency some people who were formerly in the constituency but are not currently.

So that is my proposal, to support very strongly the counter-proposals put forward by the Conservative Party and by the other political parties.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Chope. Would you remain there just for a second? Are there any questions for clarification for Mr Chope? (None) Thank you very much for attending and for your presentation.

MR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Robert Syms. Mr Syms, you were due to speak at 1 o'clock but I think you are happy to speak now.

MR ROBERT SYMS: Yes, that would be most helpful. Thank you very much. I am Robert Syms, MP for Poole, address House of Commons, London SW1 0AA, and I have an address in Poole.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR ROBERT SYMS: Thank you for calling me earlier today. I fully support the Conservative Party proposals as set out by Roger Pratt on the 7th in Exeter, at which I understand you were present, for the allocation of 53 seats and for the linking, certainly in this part of the South West, of Wiltshire and Dorset.

Having read your initial report, I strongly disagree with paragraph 45 on page 15 which uses the justification of Mid Dorset having four local authorities within it to cause massive disruption to the rest of the county's constituencies. There is currently a review

of local government arrangements which could lead to Mid Dorset having two or possibly one authority, but nevertheless the adverse effects of the Commission's views make the solution to the Mid Dorset problem worse than the actual problem because it causes that disruption.

In relation to Dorset I support the retention of the Christchurch seat, maintaining the integrity of the River Stour, with the addition of the wards from Verwood. You have heard eloquently by the member for Christchurch, Verwood was in Christchurch and has moved out and it would be logical to move it back in.

I support the retention of the division of Bournemouth on an east/west basis. The first general election in which it was split on the east/west basis was 1950 which is 66 years ago. Local people, although the make-up of each of the constituencies has changed somewhat over those years, anticipate that the town will be represented on an east/west basis and it has never been split on a north/south basis. I believe there are very good reasons for maintaining an east/west split.

Also what the Boundary Commission would do is have the borough represented by three constituencies when it is perfectly possible both to meet the numbers and indeed create reasonable shapes of constituencies by having it done on an east/west basis.

Bournemouth East remains unchanged and wholly within the borough of Bournemouth. Bournemouth West remains substantially unchanged except for the addition of Branksome West ward from Poole.

Those wards in north-east of Poole, which is Alderney, Branksome East, both of which are currently in the Bournemouth West constituency, with what we are proposing, which was the addition of Branksome West to join East, have been in Bournemouth West before. They first moved in 1983 when John Butterfill was the MP. They are a unit. They all feed off the Wallisdown Road which is a very important spine road. Indeed, when in the past I have represented these wards and I have knocked on doors, some people there think they are in Bournemouth, and indeed when they turn out of some of the roads they are in, their life is focused into Bournemouth West. So I think if any wards have to move, I think that is the most logical part of Poole.

Branksome West and Branksome East were originally one ward called Bourne Valley and, as I have said, in the past they have been in the Bournemouth West constituency. If the Member of Parliament for that constituency is happy that the constituency be called Bournemouth West and Bourne Valley, then I think those Poole residents that sit in that constituency would be terribly pleased with that as a proposal.

If Branksome West moves from the Commission's proposal into Bournemouth West, that means we would be able to retain the Creekmoor ward. Creekmoor has been in Poole prior to 1997, it moved into Mid Dorset, and in the last review it moved back into Poole, and I would like to keep the ward since it is an integral part of Poole.

The solution to making up the numbers in Poole is to move both Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West. It is important that those two wards remain together because Canford Heath is a community but a community which originally grew out of the

Oakdale & Canford Heath ward 20 years ago and they are only two or three miles from Poole town centre or so. The logical thing to do is to move those two wards into Poole.

Indeed, looking at not only the Conservative Party proposals but the proposals from the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, all have come to similar conclusions and I suspect it is because all of us took our starting point as the 2013 review which can meet both the numbers and indeed the geography which we are suggesting.

Mid Dorset of course would then have to expand a little to the north to compensate for the fact that we have a cross-border seat between Warminster and Shaftesbury.

I therefore am happy with what the Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Labour Party, and indeed most of my colleagues in the House of Commons, are proposing, which is for a Poole constituency comprising of Canford Cliffs, Canford Heath East, Canford Heath West, Creekmoor, Hamworthy East, Hamworthy West, Newtown, Oakdale, Parkstone, Penn Hill and Poole Town, which would take me up to 73,678 electors. I think the proposals being put forward by the political parties make a lot more sense than that of the Commission. I think they retain historic links, they retain the approximate shapes of the existing seats, they cause the minimum of disruption moving electors, and they still meet the very important quota target set by parliament. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Chope (*sic*). Would you remain there, please?

MR ROBERT SYMS: Mr Syms.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am sorry, Mr Syms. I do apologise, Mr Syms. Would you remain there for a moment? You took on a different identity there for a second. Are there any questions for Mr Syms? (None) Thank you. Thank you very much for attending and for your presentation.

MR ROBERT SYMS: Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next booked speaker is not booked until ten past one. Is there anybody in the room who would like to speak as we have some spare time? (None) Okay. Our next speaker has not yet arrived, so I intend to adjourn the hearing until 1 o'clock and review the situation at that point. Thank you.

#### After an adjournment

Time Noted: 1 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Cllr Laurence Fear to come up to the lectern, please. Thank you. If you would like to give your full name and address, please.

CLLR FEAR: (UKIP Party) Cllr Laurence Fear of 1088 Ringwood Road, Bournemouth.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Would you like to make your presentation, please?

CLLR FEAR: Thank you very much. Good afternoon. My name is Cllr Laurence Fear. I represent Kinson South and Bournemouth Borough Council and UKIP. I will be talking in the main about Kinson and Bournemouth and I would like to start with geography.

Kinson, while geographically close to Ferndown and Broadstone, does not share the same relationship to these areas as it does with Winton or Bournemouth whereby residents work, socialise and everything in between, all the way through to their weekly shop. Kinson depends on public transport, using important travel links like the 5B which goes through the heart of Kinson South and travels to Winton and into Bournemouth; likewise with the 4A. These links are more popular than the alternative routes that go into the proposed constituency.

As a relatively deprived area, Kinson benefits from being in a constituency with strong links to more affluent areas; for example, our local MP Conor Burns linking up McCarthy & Stone in Lansdowne to get financial support for Fernheath Play in West Howe. Kinson is a very important part of Bournemouth but there is a significant risk that the MP representing Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson could find themselves neglecting Kinson due to the different issues Kinson has compared to Broadstone and Ferndown.

Also, look at the physical boundary between Kinson and the rest of the proposed constituency. As a resident that lives in Kinson South, I believe Kinson should not be reduced to a junior partner; on the contrary, I consider it the grandfather of Bournemouth. Let's not forget that Kinson has been part of the Bournemouth family since its first own MP. Whenever one of my mates has asked me out for a drink downtown, the thought that they might mean Ferndown never crosses my mind.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Boundary Commission for allowing me to set out my stall today. I agree with speakers you have heard earlier and with Bournemouth Council with what they have and will lay out, which will meet the objectives of the Boundary Commission whilst retaining the benefits my residents use at the present time. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Cllr Fear. Would you remain there for a moment in case there are any questions for clarification?

CLLR FEAR: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any questions for clarification? (None)  
Thank you. Thank you very much for attending and for your representations.

CLLR FEAR: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: (After a pause) There is no one else booked in to speak. We are due to break for lunch at 1.30 pm. We have no booked speakers. Is there anybody else in the room who wants to speak? (None) On that

basis I intend to adjourn the hearing until 2.30 pm. We will come back at 2.30 pm and review the situation at that point.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. I am reopening the hearing. I do not think we have any more speakers booked in this afternoon. Our next speaker actually is not booked until 7 o'clock. I intend to adjourn the hearing now for 45 minutes until quarter past three and to review the situation at that point.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 3.15 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. It is 3.15 pm. I will resume the public hearing. We have no more speakers who have booked in since our last session. Is there anybody in the room who would like to speak? (None) On that basis I will adjourn the hearing until 4 o'clock and review the situation at that point.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is now 4 o'clock. We have no more attenders, nobody booked to speak. I intend now to adjourn until 5.30 pm, so we will recommence at 5.30 pm.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 5.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good evening. It is 5.30 pm. I am reopening the public hearing. We have no more speakers. Our next speaker is not booked until 7 o'clock, so I will adjourn the hearing until 6.45 pm.

After an adjournment

Time Noted: 6.45 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back to the hearing. It is Ms Carol Thomas?

MS THOMAS: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. If you would like to go to the lectern, please. Thank you, Ms Thomas. If you would like to give me your full name and address, please.

MS THOMAS: My name is Carol Lindsey Thomas and I live at 7 The Courtyard in Poole.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS THOMAS: I think I have got more concerns than anything else about what is happening. I can see that you are dividing by numbers, but the northern boundaries of these wards being moved into constituency 12, Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson, these are areas which have very little in common with each other, other than the fact they are north of the seashore, and they have previously belonged to a constituency which has a shoreline and it has given them a sense of identity. They do not really belong together in any way but they did form a strange sort of semi-rural part of the end of an urban connotation. I just have the feeling that they are being lumped together for reasons of numbers but they would be better off being split in a different way.

Some of these places have very strong community roots but there is nothing that would join them together in a way that say the Bournemouth Air Show joins people in and says, "We live in Bournemouth. This is our air show". Some of them have been moved out into local council AJ, so you are not only just moving their ward, you are moving their local council and I think that is going to have a hugely detrimental effect on them.

My concern in terms of what you are doing locally would always be what happens to neighbourhood plans. Poole Town and Poole Quays have a neighbourhood plan which has been very successful and is going through, I know there is another plan for Boscombe which is making progress, but what would happen to these should your boundaries split through any of these areas which are in the process of putting together a neighbourhood plan? How would it impact those?

Just moving forward, keeping communities together and not just lopping an odd road off because it now suits numbers because you have developed and got more residents in another area, I know boundaries need to be equal but there needs to be a sense of what is happening to the real communities behind these boundaries, and I think the creation of constituency 12, Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson, is not taking this into consideration.

There is also another constituency which is a little further away from Poole but I believe you are also taking a cross-county constituency. That impacts people and how they feel in terms of the belonging of their MP, this is a Dorset MP or this is a Wiltshire MP, and you have got somebody straddling both. I am not saying they are hugely different within this area, especially once you are moving out and looking at more rural concerns than urban concerns, but there is an identity crisis going on and it is this strong identity that people have as to why they decided to live in Bournemouth south rather than Bournemouth north, why they are living in Christchurch not Ferndown, or why they are living in Ferndown and not Broadstone, that actually brings together what they want politically and how they feel as political activists within their own community, and I feel some of these things have been missed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: From your local knowledge, are there any alternative schemes that you would like to put forward that would fit within the overall requirements of the legislation?

MS THOMAS: I think from what I can see, the constituencies are better off in stripes into the coast and up into the more urban rural areas, rather than cutting a swathe across the top of disparate places. They need a tie-in, I believe, to their more urban neighbours rather than their more rural neighbours because they are the end of somebody's bus route rather than a bus route going across them, so that their connections are more --- My local library or my biggest library is in Poole or Bournemouth, whereas when you put together Broadstone, Ferndown and Kinson you have got several branch libraries but nothing huge. It is services like that that people there, whilst they may not miss out on, they are not on their doorstep and they do not feel that they belong to an area then, and whatever is needed to get the services across to them becomes more difficult, especially those people who are in a different local council ward. I think it is Kinson that you are moving into AJ but I am not really sure from the map.

I just came to voice some concerns. That is probably about all I have to say really.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for coming to speak to me, it is useful to have those local concerns voiced, and thank you for your representations. Is there anything else you would like to say?

MS THOMAS: I think many of the areas have a great history that they do not want to lose. I know this has come more from Christchurch than Poole, but it is the keeping of the local mayors and the traditions that come with these offices are very special to the people who live here and the people who have taken up the office. I have spoken to several ex-mayors on all parts of the political spectrum and it has been a very special year in their lives, and how they have interacted and met people in the community has really made their local political career something very special to them, and I would hate to see that community link lost.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you for attending and for your representations.

MS THOMAS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is not booked until 7.10 pm but I will adjourn the hearing until 7 o'clock just in case that speaker arrives early. We are now adjourned until 7 o'clock.

#### After an adjournment

Time Noted: 6.55 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you confirm your name and address, please.



THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Cllr Beesley.

CLLR BEESLEY: I am Cllr John Beesley and I represent the Westbourne & West Cliff ward on Bournemouth Borough Council. I have been a Bournemouth councillor since the year 2000 and I am the Leader of the Council, a role I have held for almost five years having been the Deputy Leader of the Council for the previous five years. I am also a Bournemouth resident and my home address is as I explained just now, 7 Elm Gardens, Bournemouth, which is situated in the Bournemouth West constituency. I am also a Bournemouth hotelier in business at The Yenton Hotel, Gervis Road, Bournemouth, which is situated in the Bournemouth East constituency. I am a former Chairman of the Bournemouth West Conservative Association and over a number of years have seen many proposals for earlier changes to constituency and ward boundaries from the Boundary Commission. None of those were ever as radical or potentially divisive as these current proposals from the Boundary Commission, which I believe will do great damage to the representation of residents of Bournemouth and their communities of interest. My views are driven by these considerations rather than any potential political impacts the current proposals may have in Bournemouth.

There is a strong sense of alarm about the proposals of the boundary review in Bournemouth and the impacts these would have across the town in terms of the representation of residents and the ability of the council to work effectively with three MPs rather than the two as at present.

My principal objections to the proposals are five-fold:

Firstly, that the current east/west division of Bournemouth has managed to protect communities of interest extremely effectively, and these are recognised by residents generally and by those who represent them in the historic villages and suburbs that make up the bulk of the town today. The issue of representation applies not only to councillors but, importantly, to the various community groups and area forums who maintain these links between MPs, the council and local residents.

Secondly, that the proposed north/south division of the borough would be detrimental to these communities of interest in a number of ways. Most importantly it would make the priority representation of residents very much more difficult than the current arrangements as two of the three constituencies formed would have only a partial interest in Bournemouth as their remit would extend far beyond the current boundary of the borough. Indeed, it would be something that would extend even beyond what is likely to become the boundary of the new unitary authority in South East Dorset.

Thirdly, that the effective relationship between Bournemouth and its existing two MPs works well, although at times even this can be less than ideal when both are needed at short notice to help in matters between the local authority and Westminster. The challenge of dealing with three MPs, two of whom would have only a partial interest in Bournemouth, would present some very real difficulties in gaining the best platform for Bournemouth residents. The strength of being represented by both MPs on issues with Government as at present, of whichever party, should not be underestimated in

terms of its effectiveness. With three MPs that becomes a very much more difficult task, especially on strategic matters where representation at Westminster can be crucial to the outcome.

Fourthly, that a thorough understanding of Bournemouth and the details of the current and changing issues has been really effective for years with two MPs who represent Bournemouth as the majority part of their constituencies. Regular communication and meetings between those two MPs and the council leadership and officers to establish their respective roles over many issues has worked very effectively to the benefit of Bournemouth and its residents. This would be very much diluted by the current proposals to the severe detriment of residents.

Fifthly, that the confusion these proposals would create would not easily be remedied. The long-standing communities of interest across Bournemouth would be disturbed for no apparent gain, and the representation of residents would be undermined from the position of equality which exists at present. The disparity for those Bournemouth residents not within the Bournemouth South constituency would be a retrograde step and one about which most people would struggle to understand any logical reason for its formation. I might add to that fifth point that for those residents being represented out of the proposed Bournemouth South constituency, that is to the north of the borough, that is where most of the really important challenges socially are focused by the council and, indeed, by the Members of Parliament and the coordination between the two of us. To see that diluted in any way I think would be a very great retrograde step and one that would probably have more impact on individual residents than any other aspect of this proposal.

I ask the Boundary Commission to take stock of their proposals and understand the damage that they would do if they were adopted. The interests of residents in their respective communities are paramount and would be undermined by the current proposals. The Conservative Party counter-proposals, which suggest a smaller change from the current arrangements to the boundary of Bournemouth West and no change to that of Bournemouth East, would respect and safeguard the representation of Bournemouth residents in a similar way to the current arrangements which have served the town so well for many, many years.

That, Madam Chairman, is my submission to the Boundary Commission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Cllr Beesley, for that and thank you also for the written document, which is very useful. There is no one here so there will be no questions. You have presented it very, very well, so I have no questions for you. Thank you very much for attending and giving your presentation to me this evening.

CLLR BEESLEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to the Boundary Commission for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. (After a pause) As we have no more speakers booked for this evening and our most recent speaker prior to the two we have just had was actually at about 1 o'clock, I am actually going to close the

hearing at this point. It is 7 o'clock. I will close the hearing and we will reopen again tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Adjourned until 9.00 am on Tuesday 15 November 2016

Time Noted: 7.00 pm

**B**

CLLR BEESLEY, 41, 42  
MR CONOR BURNS MP, 30, 32

**C**

MR CANAVAN, 7, 9  
MR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE MP, 32, 34

**D**

MS MICHELLE DONELAN MP, 26, 27, 29, 30

**E**

MR EDWARD, 15, 17, 18

**F**

CLLR FEAR, 36, 37

**G**

CLLR GRANT, 12, 20, 21, 22, 25, 29  
MR JAMES GRAY MP, 18, 21, 22, 29

**H**

MR SIMON HOARE, 5, 7

**M**

MR MORGAN, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18

**P**

MR PITCHER, 22, 26  
CLLR POPE, 26

**S**

MR ROBERT SYMS MP, 18, 34, 36

**T**

MR TESSIER, 3  
THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42  
MS THOMAS, 38, 39, 40  
MR MICHAEL TOMLINSON MP, 9, 12