

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE ROYAL PUMP ROOMS, THE PARADE, LEAMINGTON SPA

ON

FRIDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2016

DAY TWO

Before:

Ms Margaret Gilmore, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

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At 9.10 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to this two-day hearing for the Boundary Commission for England. We have initial proposals on the table for boundaries and we are now getting the community input on the effect it will have on communities, and this is where communities can come and influence those plans and change them. This first consultation period ends on 5 December, so written submissions should be in by then.

My name is Margaret Gilmore. I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner and I am working with another Assistant Commissioner, who is not here today, and will be analysing with our staff the submissions that are made both orally and in a written form. I am helped here by our staff, led by Gerald Tessier, and he knows every little detail about the process, so he is here to help us, if we need him or as we will.

The other thing to note is that we will observe the two-minute silence at 11 o'clock. Otherwise, let's start with our first speaker, who is Professor Rebecca Earle. Professor Earle, would you take to the podium, please. To remind you, you are going to be filmed. This is just to put it on the record and it will not be published, except on our website at some point. We need your name and address, please.

PROFESSOR EARLE: (Warwick University) My name is Rebecca Earle and my address is 19 Plymouth Place, Leamington Spa, CV31 1HN.

I moved to Leamington, to Warwickshire and, indeed, to the UK in 1986. Since I moved here 30 years ago, my parents have visited me regularly from the USA and, although they are seasoned travellers, there are many features of British reality and the local landscape that struck them as notable or indeed, at times, confusing. One confusing local feature was the relationship between Leamington and Warwick. They would often say, "Where does Leamington end and Warwick begin? Are we in Leamington? Are we in Warwick?" as I drove them down the Emscote Road or any of the other arteries that connect these two towns. I never developed a good answer to this question because the truth is that there is not a good answer to that question.

Leamington and Warwick share much more than the Emscote Road. It is not simply that it is hard to say precisely where the boundary is between one or the other or where Leamington, in reality, ends and Warwick, in reality, begins. Really, it is that the histories of the two towns are deeply entwined. I am particularly interested in this because I am a historian. I teach at the University of Warwick, which of course is definitely not in either Leamington or Warwick, although there are plenty of students and staff from the university who live in both towns.

I want to say a little bit about the history of these two towns. Warwick is, of course, as I am sure you all know, much older than Leamington, and the earliest accounts of the

hamlet of Leamington Priors stressed precisely its proximity to Warwick. Leamington, in fact, was part of the territory of the Earl of Warwick during much of the Elizabethan period, so it is perhaps not surprising that it was associated with some of the earliest accounts in the history of Warwickshire with Warwick. The intertwined histories of these two towns were constantly noted by subsequent historians of the region. For example, a history of Leamington Priors, from the earliest records to the year 1842, records that Leamington is described as being “near the ancient town of Warwick”. In this little text about Leamington, it notes that “Leamington has long been mixed up with the eventful history of its sister town, Warwick”, so these two towns were seen as being interconnected and entwined.

I would remind you that we do not need to go back to the Victorians to find evidence that the histories of Leamington and Warwick are bound up with each other. To give you another example from more recent history, after the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, urban planning for the two towns was undertaken in tandem and planners, indeed, worried that the two towns had, if anything, merged too much; they were concerned in their planning about whether the two spaces had really become one so that, in fact, far from them being separate, they were really seen in the post-war years as being part of a common urban settlement.

Today, I think the evidence of this intertwined history is all around us. Buses, cycles and cars zip up and down Myton Road, Emscote Road and all the other routes that connect the two towns. Parents drop off their children at primary school, shoppers travel between shops and home, music lovers from the Leamington Music Society attend concerts that they have organised in Warwick at St Mary’s Church, fitness fanatics from Leamington attend Zumba classes and health clubs in Warwick, Leamington’s children are born in the Warwick Hospital, Leamington Quakers worship at the Quaker Meeting House on Warwick High Street, Sikhs from both towns gather at the Gurdwara, which itself straddles the official border, and lovers of sag paneer in Warwick queue up outside the iconic Millennium Sweet House on Leamington High Street. I will not go on because I think you get the drift.

I want to conclude by saying that I understand that the Boundary Commission is concerned particularly “to identify any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituency”, so I hope that I have pointed to some of the very ancient, longstanding and enduring local ties that connect Leamington and Warwick and which continue to shape the everyday lived experiences of ordinary people every day in these two adjacent and interconnected towns. The proposed boundary changes, in my view, fly in the face of history and of the daily experience of the residents of Leamington and Warwick. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed; that was a fascinating bit of history. Are there any questions or any points of clarification from the floor? (No response) Clearly not, and I do not. I think that was very clear and

interesting to get that historic aspect on it, so I really appreciate your coming today. It was fascinating, thank you.

PROFESSOR EARLE: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are a little bit ahead of schedule. I do not know if Mr Dennis McWilliams is happy to come and speak now. He must be still signing in, so we will move on to the next person, Mrs Clare Sawdon.

MRS SAWDON: (Warwick and Leamington Conservatives) Good morning, and thank you very much, Commissioner Gilmore, for your introductions. I am 25 minutes early, so I may have a bit of extra time maybe, or not?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, that is not a problem.

MRS SAWDON: I may not need it. Firstly, my name is Clare Sawdon and my address is Pump Cottage, 2 The Green, Hatton, Warwick. I speak as a past Chairman of Warwick District Council from May 2014 to May 2015. I served as a district councillor for Budbrooke ward from May 2003 to May 2014. Previously, I was a parish councillor for Stoneleigh and Ashow Parish Council between 1984 and 2001 where I was Chairman for four years. I have also served as a non-executive director of South Warwickshire Healthcare Trust and South Warwickshire Combined Healthcare Trust between 1992 and 2002. I have been a local magistrate within Warwickshire and Coventry since 1986, some 30 years, and I am currently Deputy Chairman of the Coventry and Warwickshire Family Panel.

I have lived in Warwickshire for most of my life, apart from a few years when I was studying for my degree and working as a researcher for the National Federation of Women's Institutes in London. My family have actually lived in Warwickshire since 1240.

I would like to speak against the proposed separation of the town of Warwick from Leamington and Whitnash, as suggested by the Boundary Commission in their latest proposals, for many reasons, supported by my local knowledge of the area and the need to preserve local ties.

Firstly, during my year as Chairman of Warwick District Council, I had the privilege of representing that council at many events across the district council area, which covers the four towns of Warwick, Leamington, Kenilworth and Whitnash, together with the rural wards of Arden, Bishops Tachbrook, Budbrooke, Radford Semele and Stoneleigh and Cubbington. I attended over 250 events within the district together with others beyond our boundaries. Of those 250, 222 were within Warwick, Whitnash, Leamington or in the rural areas of Arden, Bishops Tachbrook, Budbrooke, Cubbington, Stoneleigh and Radford Semele. Only 27 were within the Kenilworth town. I think this helps to

show the strong community links between the three towns and the lack of cohesion with Kenilworth. The civil heart of Warwick district is between Warwick and Leamington with a strong history of Warwick as a county town with the district council offices, which bear its name, in Leamington Spa.

Secondly, I move on to the Cubbington and Stoneleigh ward, which has a close proximity to North Leamington. In fact, the Cubbington area is currently split, being part of the Kenilworth and Southam parliamentary seat and with the other part being in Warwick and Leamington. This has caused a lot of confusion for local people, and this boundary review would allow the problem to be corrected. North Leamington School is currently outside of Leamington, but its children come from within Leamington town. The boundary of the two seats is a hedge right next to the school. If the ward were moved into Warwick and Leamington, the geographic, social and economic links would sit very well together. Leamington Rugby Club, the Old Leamingtonians Rugby Club, have their pitches within the Cubbington ward, but most of their players come from the local towns. Helen Ley Care Centre, which has a national reputation for people with muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis, is in Cubbington and is part of the Castel Froma Nursing Home, which is in Cubbington. The residents of Cubbington village and the rural areas around Leamington and Warwick use it for shopping, education and leisure. The natural drift is to the south rather than towards Coventry and Kenilworth.

I will mention now the strong link of Warwick University with Kenilworth and the south of Coventry. The wards of Abbey, Westwood and Wainbody all have parts of the university campus within their area and many of the students live in Earlsdon ward within the city, so they would benefit from being together. In fact, I would argue that they would be stronger together and the university would have a stronger position.

I will then move on to the Radford Semele ward to the east of Leamington town, and again this village and its environs have close links with the towns, and the population look this way for shopping and employment.

I will now move on to Arden ward, and I would suggest that this moves back into Warwick and Leamington where it was until the last boundary review. This area has always had a long association with the towns; local residents look to Warwick for shopping, employment, education and medical facilities. The Birmingham Road, which I live adjacent to, passes through the ward and is a major artery between Warwick and Solihull. Many of the youngsters attend schools in Warwick and they either travel by car or train into the town. In fact, I lived in this area before I moved to Stoneleigh in 1980 and attended Warwick schools for my primary and secondary education.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mrs Sawdon, can I interrupt you there, very rudely? You are going so fast, which is brilliant, but would you feel comfortable occasionally pointing at our map and showing us. There is a pointer in front of you. It

would help me massively. If it is difficult for you, we can do it afterwards, but, if occasionally you can point to these things, it would be really helpful.

MRS SAWDON: Do you want me to go back to some of the wards?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, I have sort of kept up. I have one question which I will ask you later, but no, carry on from where you are. The one you are talking about now is Arden ward, which is up a bit?

MRS SAWDON: Yes, this is Arden ward (indicating), which includes the villages of Lapworth and Rowington and comes down to the south. This area was all within the Warwick and Leamington constituency. In fact, it extended further out this way (indicating) to include Henley- and Tanworth-in-Arden, but a natural alignment would be bringing it back into the Warwick and Leamington area.

I live in Hatton, which is in the Budbrooke ward, which is just on the edge, so I live there (indicating), and I represented Budbrooke ward, which is this area here (indicating) for 13 years, and the county council boundary actually includes Bishops Tachbrook, Budbrooke and then it comes into part of Arden ward and the rest of Arden ward goes into the Cubbington ward, so, as I say, there is a strong local link within those areas. Having represented Budbrooke ward for 13 years, I am well aware of the links with Warwick and Leamington for many reasons. The natural migration for work, shopping, education and leisure is to the two main towns. Few people travel south to Stratford for these purposes, so the proposed revision sending these wards south to the new Warwick and Stratford seat are totally out of sync with people's lives. This morning, coming in, it took me 40 minutes to travel from Hatton into the centre of Leamington, so it just shows the cross-fertilisation of the two areas. That journey is only actually seven miles.

I will turn now to the main towns of Warwick and Leamington. Geographically, as has already been said this morning, it is hard to find the border as they merge into one and, unless you look very closely, you would not know that the River Avon at Portobello is one crossing point on the Emscote Road. The other is even more difficult to separate. Is the retail park in Warwick? It is actually in Heathcote ward, which is there (indicating). Is the retail park in Warwick or Leamington? Is the rehabilitation hospital in Warwick, Whitnash or even Leamington? In which town is the Gurdwara? They all merge together around three roads. In fact, all of these landmarks are actually within Warwick and the business rates and council tax precepts are paid to the town of Warwick, and it is very dependent on those precepts for its sustainability. Under the present proposal, it is suggested that Warwick School, which is in Myton and Heathcote ward, would be moved out of Warwick and into Leamington. Surely, this does not make sense. The students from this school, together with its sister school in the town centre of Warwick, are, in large numbers, from the two towns. I am sure that the historic link between the two towns has been highlighted by a great many people before me. There

is no cohesive argument to separate the towns at this time, particularly with the anticipated growth which will hit the area in the next few years. I would say: if it ain't broke, why fix it? Local people shop in both the towns and look to these areas for their social life. The restaurants and pubs of the towns are used by residents from both towns, who tend not to look to Kenilworth or Stratford for recreation.

I know the aim is to have constituencies with no fewer than 71,031 residents and no more than 78,507. By using the Boundary Commission's figures, on my own calculations, we will have two constituencies within these parameters of Warwick and Leamington with Whitnash and the surrounding wards, which I have mentioned, Arden, Budbrooke, Bishops Tachbrook and Radford Semele. It would make up 76,136 electors. The new Kenilworth and South Coventry constituency would have 77,272 electors. I have attached these to an appendix for your use later.

If I can mention the Coventry wards, we have Abbey ward here (indicating) and, if we go north, we have the University of Warwick, which I said earlier is shared with Westwood ward, Wainbody ward and Woodlands ward, and an awful lot of the students live in Earlsdon, so there is a huge link between that area. The road which splits the university campus, to the south, it is currently in Abbey ward and, to the north, it is in Wainbody ward, and I would argue very strongly that that link of the university needs to be brought closer together within a parliamentary seat. If I can help you with any questions, I am more than happy to do so.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: For me, that was very useful and actually --

MRS SAWDON: It is a shame that the map does not go a bit north.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It does; we can make it go anywhere. We can even put in existing constituencies.

MRS SAWDON: Abbey ward is here (indicating). This road (indicating) cuts the university campus right in half. Here (indicating), you have Wainbody ward and here (indicating), you have Westwood ward and Earlsdon ward, and I would even suggest that we move Cheylesmore ward into that. You have a very good, strong south Coventry hub which comes naturally in with the three Kenilworth wards.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This is our second day and obviously we have had a lot of people coming and saying, "Please keep these two towns together", but what we have not seen is a consensus on how it should then expand. I think almost every single ward surrounding the current constituency has been mentioned as a possibility, and you have actually given yet another set of different ones. Some are the same, but some that you have suggested are different. I just wondered how strongly you felt about the ones that you have mentioned.

MRS SAWDON: With this historic linkage and people working, a lot of people live in the very affluent villages of Lapworth and Rowington and travel into Warwick. Some of them have their children at Warwick School and King's High School for Girls in Warwick and Warwick Prep, so there is a great link, as I say, going back to this Arden ward area. It is such a strong link into Warwick and, before the current boundary review or in the last constituency until 2005, the constituency actually went much further that way (indicating), the Warwick and Leamington constituency, and included Radford Semele to the east, so it is bringing those wards back in. I know that quite a lot of the local residents were happy to be within the Kenilworth patch, but their natural allegiance is to the town of Warwick, and they shop in Leamington.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have not mentioned Manor or Milverton wards, but they are split at the moment. I am assuming, because you have mentioned Stoneleigh, Cubbington and Arden, that they would come in back in as well?

MRS SAWDON: Yes, Stoneleigh and Cubbington would come in and, as I said earlier, the Manor ward here (indicating) and Milverton ward, the outlying villages there, is all naturally sucked into Leamington. They shop in Leamington. The A46 road, which is here (indicating), is a boundary, but they come this way, they shop this way, they live this way, their children are at school this way (indicating). The other crazy thing is the fact that North Leamington School is in Cubbington and Stoneleigh ward in the Kenilworth and Southam constituency, yet all the children come from Leamington, so it just does not make any sense. I would welcome the opportunity to drive you around the patch. I do know it quite well. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any points of clarification from the floor? (No response) Otherwise, thank you very much. It is fascinating how all these different people, talking about the same issue, bring a different aspect to it, which is very useful to us. Our next speaker is Mr Dennis McWilliams, please. Mr McWilliams, could you give us your name and address, please.

MR McWILLIAMS: My name is Dennis McWilliams, and my address is 1 Clapham Square, Leamington Spa, CV31 1JH.

I am going to be relatively brief because some of the points I would have made have been made by other speakers, including the last speaker actually.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is not a problem.

MR McWILLIAMS: I am a member of the Labour Party. I have had no input into the Labour Party's submissions, but I have read the regional Labour Party's submission and I am in favour of their proposals.

I am here as a local resident. I came to Leamington Spa in 1970 from elsewhere. I had never been to this neck of the woods before. I have lived briefly in Kenilworth in digs and then came here with my wife. I joined the Post Office straightaway because I was unemployed. They had a flu epidemic at the time, so they did not give you any training and I was sent out on delivery. The first delivery I was sent out on was down Old Warwick Road and Myton Road. I took the bag of letters, followed my nose straight down the road and then I got lost. I asked a lady where I was going and she said, "Well, you're in the wrong town; you're in Warwick", and I said, "Well, I thought I was in Leamington". She said, "Well, actually, they are really one big town, so don't worry about it". Frankly, that is the situation. I do not think it is relevant to your findings, but I also delivered the mail to this place, and I am one of the few people that the Pump Rooms cat used to deign to acknowledge, but that was in 1970.

If I go back in history, in 1885, this was one constituency with two MPs. I was a union rep in the Post Office, the Communication Workers Union, and I used to look at old papers. We had a district council which met in Leicester, and the Warwick and Leamington branch, as it was one branch, had two delegates to the district council. That was based on the idea that, as in the old days it had two MPs, so they should have two delegates, that nobody could represent both towns, that no one person, man or woman, could represent Warwick and Leamington at the same time. That argument did not run much further than 1885 and, shortly after 1920, our branch lost its two delegates because it was felt, sensibly, that one person could represent both.

In fact, by the time I joined the Post Office in 1970, the Post Office, as it was then, had head offices and it was one joint head office. One of the unique elements of this, and very rare around the country, was that Warwick and Leamington was classed as a joint head office by the Post Office, still involving separate head offices, as they did in Nuneaton, Rugby, Kenilworth and other places. People who joined the Post Office had a liability to work in both towns, so, if you signed on as a postman or postwoman, you could be sent to work out of Warwick and out of Leamington. Nobody objected to that because that was the community; there was a sense of togetherness. That is the history.

Looking at the next part of my submission, I would just like to say generally that I would endorse anything that anybody has said about the vibrancy and the connectedness of the community here. How much of that is relevant to what you decide is for you to imagine, but it is a real thing and, as the last speaker said, that is the way people live their lives; they live on the basis of being part of Warwick and Leamington as a community. I heard an eloquent speaker yesterday who had a disabled child who had to go to Ridgeway School in Warwick and who lived in Leamington Spa. He told you that he had had assistance from the MP, which he needed, to be able to manage access to the school. That, I think, is a symptom of the problems that would occur if there were two constituencies and two Members of Parliament.

I would like to look at one particular area actually, the Heathcote area, which is in Myton. I do not want to bore you with the Post Office too much, but in about 1975 to 1980 they were doing the postcoding. This area's postcode is CV34, which is Warwick. As you can see, there is Whitnash and Brunswick ward and Leam ward, Leamington Spa town centre, is here (indicating). Where I got lost was somewhere around here (indicating) and I went into Warwick and turned back. Around there, there is nothing. There was farmland and a few farms back in the 1970s. Now, it is a big development area. You will see in the handout, which you have either got or you will get, that there is Heathcote Industrial Estate, there is Tachbrook Park, a 400-acre business park, there is the Shires Retail Park, which the last speaker referred to, in and around the Shires, there is the Sikh Gurdwara, and there is also the Warwick Technology Park, which is a bit closer over this way (indicating), a place unfortunately called 'Gallows Hill'. These are areas of huge development and there will be continued development in this area. Now, a lot of the places there, if not all of them, have Warwick postcodes, but they are industries, they have employment and they generate work and business for the whole of the area. A lot of them actually consider themselves to be in Leamington, mistakenly but understandably, because they do not discriminate between the two. They see themselves as part of an economic development or, if you want to use the word 'powerhouse', it is a sort of small powerhouse, but a big part, industrially and commercially, of the constituency. Under the proposals for the split constituency, that would stay with Leamington because this is the Myton ward and the proposals say that the Myton ward should stay with Leamington. Therefore, the whole of these Warwick business parks and the Warwick Technology Park would actually be part of a Leamington and Kenilworth constituency. Now, that might not be an insurmountable problem, but it is no wiser to do that as the identity is a common identity.

We would also have two MPs. At the moment, we have one Member of Parliament who can do his or her best to generate development, enterprise and growth. They have done in the past and we expect that to happen in the future. Split this way, then you have two MPs; you would have the Warwick and Stratford MP, who does not actually represent the Warwick business parks, does not represent the Warwick Technology Park, does not represent the Shires Park, and you would have a Leamington and Kenilworth MP who represents both. In simple terms, I am suggesting that, however it is constructed, the constituency that covers Warwick and Leamington would also cover this, and that is in the economic and social interests of the people; a lot of employment takes place there.

Looking at names, names are important to businesses and names attract identity, so any confusion about whether the Warwick business parks actually belong to a Stratford constituency and not to a Warwick, a Leamington or a Kenilworth constituency is unhelpful to an MP. If you have two MPs who are trying to generate business and enterprise in that area, then there also is a danger actually that they may end up feeling that they have conflicting interests and they may want to attract business to their own constituency. It is far better to have what we have at the moment, which is one MP,

who, including past MPs and the present one, has been successful in bringing work into this area. I am not suggesting, by the way, that the answer to this is just to say, "Well, actually, let's just shift that into a Warwick constituency" because that would not solve the problem. The problem is that the identity is a common one and the industrial, the enterprise, the social and even the trade union links are common ones.

It has just been mentioned that, bizarrely, Warwick School would not actually be in the Warwick constituency. The people I represented probably did not go to Warwick School, I have to say, but, that said, it is slightly odd actually. I will leave it there. I just wanted to focus in on the detail of the larger situation. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That detail was very useful and thank you very much indeed. Are there any points of clarification? (No response) In which case, thank you very much; very useful. Can I call Jim Cooper to speak next, please. Mr Cooper, we will need your name and address, please.

MR COOPER: I am Jim Cooper of Deers Leap, Hampton Lane, Meriden. I have lived in the Meriden constituency all my life. I have actually lived for the last 35 years in Meriden village, which, as I am sure everyone knows, is the centre of England, although there are a few other places that claim that title.

When I first moved to Meriden, our organisational structure was quite a mess. We used to get West Midlands gas, East Midlands electricity, Severn Trent water from the Trent division, parts of the village came under Solihull Council and parts of it came under Coventry Council. Fortunately, over the years, most of these anomalies have actually been sorted out, but I have noticed the tendency when things are being reorganised, and this does not just apply to Meriden but to the whole of the Solihull borough, where, because we are in the middle, if people are short of a bit, they say, "Oh, we'll grab that from Solihull borough and we'll put it into Birmingham or add it into Coventry". I think the proposals to, effectively, split Solihull borough into three constituencies are quite wrong and I think that it will lead to a lot of difficulties for the MPs and also some organisational problems, so I would certainly be against the idea of splitting things up again. As the Boundary Commission report says, they do not actually have to split Solihull borough up, but we could still exist quite well with the two current constituencies of Solihull and Meriden, but just swapping Elmdon ward and Blythe ward.

I think the proposed constituency of Coventry West and Meriden is just arbitrary. It has no identity and, particularly through my business links, I actually run a business from Coventry Airport and I know that Coventry is very closely linked with Warwickshire. We have things, such as the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the Coventry and Warwickshire growth hub. There is never anything which is 'Coventry and Solihull'.

Under the current proposals, the Solihull borough will have a little bit of Birmingham added into it, there will be a little bit of Coventry added into it and there will be a bit of Stratford added into it. I know there are always knock-on effects across the region, but I think it is just quite an unnecessary disruption. I would certainly support the idea of a Coventry South and Kenilworth constituency which, remembering the last time the Boundary Commission looked at these boundaries, was, essentially, what the proposal was. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points of clarification from the floor? (No response) There were just a couple of things there. You mentioned Coventry South and Kenilworth, but you also mentioned another counter-proposal that you support, which I do not think does the same thing, though I might be wrong. The counter-proposal that you would suggest in that area would be that one, would it?

MR COOPER: It would, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That was really useful, thank you very much indeed, because it is a difficult area that one.

As often happens with these things, our speakers come in a different order and some people arrive a little bit early or a little bit late, so the order is changing a little bit. Is Ms Anne-Marie Campion happy to talk now? We need your name and address, please.

MS CAMPION: My name is Anne-Marie Campion. My address is 5 The Mews, Milverton Crescent West, CV32 5NX, which is in the Milverton area of north Leamington.

I would like to say a few words, if I may. I do not have the granular historical knowledge of our first speaker or the political knowledge of other speakers, but I am speaking as a resident. I grew up in Leamington and, apart from work periods, I have lived here all my life. I went to school in Lillington and North Leamington, and probably when North Leamington was actually in Leamington because it has moved location from when I was there, which I guess just emphasises the point that other speakers have made.

My perspective coming at this is that I can completely see the project that needs to be done, the equalisation of voters and the redrawing of constituencies in order to reduce the number of members. I completely see all the rationale that is behind that project, but my perspective, which will reiterate the comments that other people have made, is that the severing of Warwick and Leamington into two different constituency areas is the illogical and inappropriate one for the impact that it will have on the communities and the bonds between those communities.

As I say, I have grown up here, been to school here, been involved in things growing up, Girl Guides, et cetera, charities, and there has always been that total intrinsic interlinking, that you live in Leamington, but you are doing stuff in Warwick and vice versa, and friends are always mixing and matching between those two areas. That interlinking has always been there. I would argue that it has got evermore apparent over the years. I think the whole boundary that was mentioned earlier is pretty invisible and it always has been, but it has become more and more invisible. Ahead of speaking at this meeting today, I went out and said to myself, "Well, where are the boundaries?" because, although I grew up here, I could not, off the top of my head, have told anybody where they were. If you had asked me that question two weeks ago, I would not have known. Yes, I did notice that the boundary on Emscote Road is on the Portobello Bridge. I would not have known that before, and I still have no idea where the Myton Road boundary is. I think the invisibility of the two areas is very pertinent. It is not two towns; it is one town and one area where everything works cohesively together.

The point that a number of speakers have made, Clare Sawdon made and Dennis McWilliams made, about Myton and Heathcote, I think, epitomises, if you like, the illogicality of the split. We have a district which, to all intents and purposes, feels like it sits in Warwick, but will be sort of taken out and lifted into Kenilworth and Leamington. I absolutely reiterate the points that Dennis was making around the whole business cohesion, the Warwick Business Park, the Shires Retail Park and all of that is very much relevant to that ward and where that ward would subsequently sit.

I guess my argument is going to always be about the cohesiveness of the communities, the way the communities work together, have always worked together and continue to work together and the way that business sees Warwick and Leamington as the focal point. The point that Dennis made is really valid, as well as everyone I have heard speak, that Warwick and Leamington is the focal point. I think the benefit for Warwick and Leamington staying together is that, as a focal point having one Member of Parliament, it means that he or she then has oversight of that focal point, that focus for the whole constituency, as opposed to the focus being split, as other speakers have mentioned, with one person having a focus on a bit of it and another person having another. It just does not make any sense when those two areas are so interlinked.

I guess that is the summary really of what I would argue, that the premise of redrawing boundaries is there and it has to be done, but not in this way because of the impact on the communities and the lack of focus that this decision would have on our area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. The whole point of this process is to hear, in particular, what local people feel about what might happen to their community and the effect that a boundary change might make, so it is really important and I really appreciate that you have come to speak today. Is there anything from the floor, any questions or points of clarification? (No response) In which case, thank you very much indeed for your time.

If Mrs Barker is here, are you happy to speak a little bit early, now? Please come up. We need you to begin with your name and address, please.

CLLR BARKER: (Shipston South ward) My name is Jo Barker. I am a district councillor for Shipston South. I live actually in Shipston North, and my address is Greystones, Stratford Road, Shipston-on-Stour. Not only am I a local district councillor, but I am also the Chair of Governors, which, essentially, these days is the chair of a MAT, a multi-academy trust, which covers Shipston and Long Compton, and also in a consultative capacity with Brailes, so I cover, from that point of view, quite a large area and have spoken to a lot of people about this.

First of all, I just want to talk about the educational links within Warwickshire. The only difference we get is when children move in terms of secondary school, in particular, out of Warwickshire, occasionally into Oxfordshire and some into Gloucestershire; there is absolutely no link with Worcestershire at all. I understand that the potential historical link with Worcestershire, and the parish clerk told me this this morning actually in the playground, was a historical anomaly where Shipston, in the 1950s, was still part of Worcestershire simply because it was part of the bishopric of Worcester at the time, and that anomaly was cleared up in the 1970s with the massive changes that there were to local government boundaries.

I am sure you will either have heard or be hearing a lot more detail about the transport links, but we could not find a bus or any form of public transport that went to Evesham, and the car journey itself from Shipston does not look that bad, but it is an absolute nightmare because it goes right up over the escarpment and drops down into the Evesham valley. In the winter, there are two very steep hills, one is Fish Hill, both of which can be closed because they are so steep and they get so icy. This, added to the complete lack of natural transport links, means that the number of people I have spoken to who actually ever go to Evesham from Shipston, of the 20 or 30 people I have spoken to specifically about that issue, there is one who goes to visit a grave once a year and that was it. There just is no perceptual link or actual transport link.

The geographical integrity I do not think works at all, as I say, because of crossing the escarpment. The perception of people in Shipston is that they just cannot understand why anybody would want to (a) put us in Worcestershire or (b), more specifically, with Evesham; the link is just not there.

Furthermore, splitting the constituency more broadly into the four parts will mean that actually, within districts and then across counties, we will be competing with each other for resources, which really makes no sense at all, particularly when Stratford district, of which I am a councillor, is in the process of joining the West Midlands Combined Authority, and that is the way that we look and we face.

In summary, I would ask that the two-seat solution is the one that we come up with rather than the massive splitting, which puts Shipston into a constituency with Evesham with which it has no links. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do you want to just outline very, very briefly your two-seat solution, your counter-proposal?

CLLR BARKER: The counter-proposal is to go back to a Stratford, which has the extra bit in it, and the Warwick and Leamington, both of which, on the numbers, work. I must say, speaking as someone who is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, I was quite amused this time because, of course, the geographical physical centre of the UK is within this. It almost looked to me as though someone had taken the map of England and put it on a pin, which is what we used to do, to work out the geographical centre of places, and actually that is where we are working from, but I understand that normally we work from the ends of the country.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have also heard it somewhere else, have we not, this morning?

CLLR BARKER: Are we all being spotty geographers!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, sort of vaguely in the same area! Thank you very much indeed. That has been very, very useful. Does anyone have any questions or points of clarification?

MR COOPER: Whatever Jo might say, Meriden is still the centre of England!

CLLR BARKER: You always argue about that, Jim!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Our next speaker is Mr Colin Quinney, please. Mr Quinney, we need your name and your address, please.

CLLR QUINNEY: (Leam ward) My name is Colin Quinney. I live at 12 Quarry Street in Leamington Spa. I have lived in Leamington Spa for almost 30 years and I am a district councillor in south Leamington, although I live in north Leamington.

I am going to speak briefly in favour of keeping the Warwick and Leamington constituency with its core towns, however configured, around it. I shall not go through all the arguments that I have submitted because I think that would take too long or all the arguments that I hope have already been presented to you, but I will just pick out some perhaps pertinent points that may not have been stressed quite as strongly.

Clearly, you have heard that Leamington and Warwick was formed as a constituency in 1885 because, even then, they were recognised as an integrated community, who live, work and socialise together. At that time, and you may not be aware of this, there was even a tram between the two towns, which perhaps, with current traffic congestion, should be brought back. It is an integrated community, and I think that perhaps what you are looking for is evidence.

The first bit of evidence that I looked for was how the citizens of these two towns define themselves, and one of the best ways of determining that is by how all the clubs and societies in the areas are organised, and I do not think many of us in this room would be surprised to learn that the overwhelming majority of clubs and societies that you could find in the records are termed 'Warwick and Leamington' societies or 'Warwick and Leamington' clubs. I have submitted a list. There are 20 of them that are easy to find, and there are probably more. There are a few that are in Warwick, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa, three that I could find, and, even there, the emphasis was on Leamington, in fact, in two out of three cases. There are a few, I found three, which define themselves as south Warwickshire, which means the Warwick, Leamington, Stratford and Kenilworth areas. For the two proposed constituencies of Kenilworth and Leamington and Warwick and Stratford, I found none, no clubs, no societies, with those titles and that self-organising approach. That is the first bit of evidence that I would bring to you that Warwick and Leamington is, as many of us are alleging, a highly integrated community.

The fact that it happens to be two towns, for historical reasons, and is organised in local government in that way is irrelevant; we are an interpenetrating community, both socially, as I have tried to describe, and of course physically. They touched even in 1885 and they are now an interpenetrating complex of roads, rivers, walking, cycling, clubs, as we have said, and, increasingly, particularly south of the river as the Local Plan is implemented, housing and all other services. In fact, one of the things that is quite remarkable is how many times you have a conversation with residents and friends and they have no idea whether they are in Warwick or Leamington, particularly south of the river; the boundary is entirely arbitrary.

Clearly, there is no gap between them. There is a three-mile distance between Leamington town centre and Warwick town centre, whereas there are nine miles between Warwick and Stratford, nine miles of open countryside and a major motorway in the way. There are at least three to four miles between Leamington and Kenilworth town centres, and virtually all of that three to four miles is open countryside and very high-quality Green Belt, so is very unlikely to link them physically at any time, and a dual carriageway, effectively a motorway, which is the Coventry to Stratford main drag. It is extraordinary to think that Warwick would be separated from Leamington. Physically, it is very hard to understand why Warwick should link with Stratford or Leamington should link with Kenilworth, and that is true in terms of community as well.

The other question I wanted to raise was why this should be regarded as the right time, after 130/140 years, to split up such a constituency when it has been growing in population, and I know this is partly a numbers game, and it has now reached a level where certainly we could see within the next five years, maybe ten, that the tight urban community is going to represent a very high percentage of what would be a sensibly sized constituency, okay, with some rural additions around. At the moment, it is something like a 75,000 total population within Warwick, Leamington and Whitnash, at least those are the figures I have picked up, and within five or ten years it is going to be something like 85,000 or 90,000, which is approaching a constituency size.

Finally, the other question which I guess you will be addressing, and I ask myself, is what actually the negative outcomes will be which would be associated with splitting the two towns' parliamentary representation in the way that is proposed. Well, I will just run through it quickly, and I think it has probably been said before. There will certainly be greater confusion amongst residents and local organisations and, indeed, the MPs themselves as to which of the two will represent this community's interests and activities. There will be more confusion and inefficiency for the residents and MPs as the government boundaries become less coterminous, which I am sure is an argument you have also heard. There will also be potential inefficiency and less coherent handling by the Members of Parliament concerned on public service issues which straddle the two towns of Warwick and Leamington. In particular, and I am thinking of housing, where most of the stock of public housing, and there is a lot of it still in this area, is managed and handled in constituency terms is on very much a cross-border approach; it is the two towns' stock together and people do not really think of themselves as Warwick or Leamington, but it is a single stock. Also, schools, as I am sure you have heard from previous speakers, health, fire and police, they are all very much focused on this community as a single entity.

Finally, my final, final point, if we talk about MPs' offices, in the current configuration, you have got a major urban centre in Stratford, a major urban centre in Kenilworth and an even more major urban centre in Warwick and Leamington, and each one of those has an MP based there. In each one of those, the population of these major urban centres, or reasonably major urban centres, have quick and easy access, particularly those who do not have transport and those who are not very mobile, who are the very people who almost certainly need the help and support of their MP. In the current configuration, it works. In the new configuration, where are the MPs going to sit? In each case, it will be one of those two urban centres and the MP will sit either in Stratford or in Warwick, either in Kenilworth or in Leamington and, in each case, in the town where the MP does not sit, particularly those poor and vulnerable within those towns will feel they have, and actually have, less good access to their MP, particularly as, which is a point made by others, I am sure, the transport links between those two twin urban centres in the two constituencies are poor. Between Leamington and Kenilworth, they are not good. Between Warwick and Stratford, they are appalling. That would really be

a discriminatory feeling by one of the two towns in terms of access to MPs. On that point, I am sure my time is up.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Do not worry at all. Are there any questions from the floor? (No response) You talked a little bit about population. The figures we use are dictated by the law, and the data are our electorate figures, so they are slightly different from the ones that you used. The current constituency at the moment is too small, so we need to add. If we just look at the existing constituency and took away the initial proposals, so the existing wards, we need to add. Do you, because you have lived here a long time and you have been involved in various things, have a view on which of the surrounding wards would most comfortably come into the existing constituency, if we were to look at it that way, because we are obviously considering all options?

CLLR QUINNEY: No, I have not really looked at that. The instinct would be, and I cannot even remember where the boundary exactly lies on this one, but the instinct would be to go out east almost certainly. The population figures I was using were total population figures, obviously not the electorate.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, I understand.

CLLR QUINNEY: And the main point is the growth, both recent and, above all, future. I think that should be taken into consideration because you are trying to set boundaries for a future and, hopefully, for at least ten years before we need to do it again, so I think that is the point. Certainly, if you go east, there is more building there and there is a closer link to this community than if you go in other directions, but I am relatively agnostic about how you add up the numbers.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed; that was really useful, and thank you for coming in because the more we hear the more we can understand the area.

Now, we are going to take our mid-morning break now for just over half an hour. I would suggest that we gather back in here just after five to and we will reconvene the meeting at about one minute to, we will open the meeting and then immediately observe the two-minute silence and then continue with the meeting. Excuse me a second. (The Lead Assistant Commissioner had a short conversation with Boundary Commission staff off the record)

Mr Zahawi, would you prefer to speak now? It is entirely up to you and it makes no difference to us. We can slot you in now, which probably makes more sense for you. Let's do that and then we should be fairly good on time. We will need your name and address officially and then the floor is yours. We have a pointer if you want anything up on the screen. Otherwise, fire away with your address.

MR ZAHAWI: (MP for Stratford-on-Avon) Thank you very much, madam. My name is Nadhim Zahawi. My home is Open Stables, Shipston Road, Upper Tysoe, Warwickshire, CV35 0TR.

Whilst I am the Member of Parliament for the Stratford-on-Avon constituency, I wish to make a personal representation because I too, like many of my friends and neighbours, am deeply disturbed by the parliamentary Boundary Commission for England's draft proposals for an Evesham and South Warwickshire parliamentary constituency.

The proposal will remove seven Stratford-on-Avon district wards from the Stratford-on-Avon parliamentary constituency. The seven wards are made up of villages in a large, rural setting and the town of Shipston-on-Stour. To help you with the geographical perspective, the proposed Evesham and South Warwickshire parliamentary constituency would be bounded in the east by the M40 which, working westwards, will cross the historic boundary of Warwickshire and Worcestershire and then would be bounded on the west side by the M5 and Worcester city. In the north, the constituency would border Shakespeare's town of Stratford-upon-Avon. The villages south of Stratford-upon-Avon town gravitate, their natural centre of gravity, with good roads and bus services, towards Stratford for shopping, their public services and, of course, for entertainment in one of the most recognised theatres in the world. We entertain our weekend guests in Stratford-upon-Avon to the theatre, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust properties and the restaurants galore. There is a social cohesion with the villages and Shipston-on-Stour looking towards Stratford-upon-Avon.

Let me give you an example on healthcare. We have a brand-new hospital for cancer and eye treatment in Stratford being built for tens of millions of pounds. As a community, we chose to fundraise an additional £1 million from the community to be able to enhance the facilities of that hospital. Much of the fundraising is being conducted in those precise villages in the south. We had a bonfire where many residents of Shipston and those villages, which are proposed to be taken away, have supported this because they genuinely feel that that is their hospital.

We respect, of course, Worcestershire and, with no undue reflection upon Evesham, it is a town that is quite detached and apart from south Warwickshire. There is no common purpose for visiting Evesham. The trunk road network from the east to the west is non-existent. To drive to Evesham, you have to go through Stratford-upon-Avon or, if travelling from Shipston-on-Stour, drive further south into Gloucestershire via Stow-on-the-Wold.

I now turn to the Tamworth-in-Arden district ward. This large, rural ward has two villages, Tamworth-in-Arden and Earlswood. Residents have good communications and a direct rail link gravitating again towards Stratford-upon-Avon for their services. The proposal is to remove the two villages from the Stratford-on-Avon constituency by

crossing the Warwickshire county boundary to include them with a metropolitan area and is, I believe, a disservice to the residents of those two villages, who have no social cohesion or community ties with the proposed constituency.

I would invite the parliamentary Boundary Commission to reflect upon the proposed constituency of Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon. I do not believe that this is a solution to equalising the size of each constituency. It will not work, it will cause resentment by the residents, and I fully support the representations made supporting the retention of Warwick and Leamington as the basis for a constituency.

In conclusion, I would invite the parliamentary Boundary Commission to reflect upon the proposed constituency of Evesham and South Warwickshire. Together with a huge number of residents, I find the proposed constituency unpalatable and suggest that the parliamentary constituency of Stratford-on-Avon is retained in its present form with numbers made up to equalise by transferring from the existing constituency of Kenilworth and Southam to Stratford-on-Avon the district wards of Wellsbourne East, Wellsbourne West and Cubbington. A reflection would keep the Stratford-on-Avon constituency whole within Stratford-on-Avon District Council and continue those community ties and social cohesion.

I would just end by saying that, when we looked at the local enterprise partnerships back in 2010, one of the best presentations was made for the local enterprise partnership to be the 'Coventry and Warwickshire LEP', the reason being that something like 80 per cent of people in that geography worked and lived in Coventry and Warwickshire, something like 800,000 people off memory, which made it very compelling and, therefore, it got the backing from the Government and has been a very successful local enterprise partnership. You have heard, of course, from other submissions from South Warwickshire Conservatives that we have a chamber of commerce, but most important is that local enterprise and business link as well as the transport, bus and rail link into Coventry and Warwickshire. I genuinely feel that we can still deliver what the Boundary Commission is looking for by, essentially, maintaining the Stratford-on-Avon constituency.

My presentation, quite rightly, is all about my residents and locally, but words matter as well. Internationally, one of the greatest brands globally is, of course, the great bard, William Shakespeare, and, of course, the proposals currently split that wonderful parish, where he and his wife reputedly met, in half. Also, I travel around the world as I sit on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, and all I need to say is that I am the Member for Shakespeare and they know it is the Stratford-on-Avon constituency. It would be a crying shame if we lost that constituency to the world. We truly represent the brand of the West Midlands and, of course, of the whole of our country. I have been with, what was called UKTI, now the World Trade Investment Department, and in this year of the 400th anniversary, around the world, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the US, they were selling

the brand of Shakespeare. Imagine if there were no longer a constituency called 'Stratford-on-Avon'. Thank you very much indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Does anyone have any points of clarification? (No response) I have a couple of things from absolutely listening to everything you were saying, and I appreciate your coming here today; we are very grateful.

As far as boundaries go, is it correct to say that the people who may be separated from Stratford-on-Avon would still be able to cross the parliamentary boundary to go to the cancer hospital, for example?

MR ZAHAWI: Yes, they would, clearly, but it is that, I think, intrinsic link, that they feel that it is in their constituency, that they are part of it. They will, absolutely, still be able to do that, but, if they are then sort of lumped together with Evesham where they literally have to illogically travel through Stratford to get to their constituency I do not think makes sense. In many ways, I think you can achieve what you have been tasked to achieve in a much more elegant way as well as in a way that will not build that resentment at being taken out of the constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Also, am I to take from what you said there that you are very keen to keep the 'Stratford-on-Avon' name as one, singular?

MR ZAHAWI: Absolutely. I think it is great for our whole country, not just the constituents whom I represent.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your time; it is much appreciated.

That brings to an end a fascinating morning session with a huge diversity of views and opinions, and we will now convene again at just after five to, and then we will sit quietly, call the meeting again and observe the two-minute silence. Thank you.

After a short break

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back. I am formally reopening this hearing and I would like to invite you to join us and communities across the UK in observing a two-minute silence in remembrance of those who have lost their lives fighting for our country.

The hearing observed a two-minute silence

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Our hearing will now resume. I have been asked to remind you that there will be a Remembrance Sunday Service at

the War Memorial in Euston Place, here in Leamington, at 10.50 this Sunday, preceded by a military march.

Resuming the hearing, our next speaker is James Mackay. As ever, Mr Mackay, we need your name and your address, please.

MR MACKAY: (Warwick Society) My name is James Mackay, and my address is 4 St John's, Warwick, and I am speaking on behalf of the Warwick Society.

Warwick's Civic Society was founded in 1950 when its vice-presidents included both the Earl of Warwick and the then MP for Warwick and Leamington, Sir Anthony Eden, who was then the Foreign Secretary. Everything is politics, but the society is very strictly non-party-political. I myself have never belonged to any political party.

The society's first object was, and is, conserving historic buildings. This leads directly to its seeking to influence new development for the better and to more general issues of the quality of life of the people of the town and its surrounding area. Important in that quality of life is a sense of place and a sense of community and belonging, having a recognisable link between one's own activities and the things that one cannot control, but which, through feeling part of political life, one can be interested in and have a sense of having some measure of influence over. In fact, our present MP and our previous MP from opposite parties have both been extremely good constituency MPs in serving the needs of the people and making us feel part of national decisions as well as playing their part in local decisions. Without this sense of place and involvement, mental and social well-being are threatened, so the connection between place and our parliamentary representation is vital.

Warwick and Leamington are quite different places, different towns. Each has its own strong and distinct identity as well as existing in close physical and practical proximity with the other. The towns' better-established parts, largely immediately north of the Avon and the Leam, are historically, visibly and often socially different and complementary. Inevitably, recent developments in the west, north and south-east of Warwick and on the north-east and south-east of Leamington and Whitnash are more homogenous. That is what gives rise to the perception, often repeated yesterday, that the boundary on the south of the river is unclear and that people do not know or care whether they belong to Warwick or Leamington or Whitnash. This is a mis-perception. It is ironic that postcodes, a 1960s invention of the GPO, have given new life by their misuse as geographical locational references in the satnav age and have become quite a strong identifier of the Warwick-Leamington boundary. CV34 is a badge in the modern areas to the south of 'Warwickness'.

Our first and strongest concern is at the destructive suggestion that Warwick south of the river would have a different MP from the other half of the town. This would attack that sense of belonging just where it is at its most fragile, leaving people who have

bought houses in Warwick finding themselves outsiders in their own postcode in a suburban no man's land. Avoiding this split was, as you will remember, the first priority expressed by Jayne Topham on behalf of Warwick Town Council yesterday evening, and we strongly support it. So Warwick is a place, people belong to it and splitting it between two constituencies would be much more damaging than splitting wards elsewhere to eliminate the need to do this. I will come back to that.

You also heard many times yesterday of the strong connections that Leamington and Warwick have with each other, and I will not repeat all of the detail that I am sure you have already appreciated. Their close physical and practical proximity inevitably means that the economy and the society of both towns is quite closely integrated. They are complementary, Warwick as the seat of the County Council and Leamington of Warwick District Council. Leamington has the police and the fire stations, Warwick has the hospital. Warwick has most of the modern employment development and Leamington has much of the 20th-Century housing stock which accommodates its employees. Leamington has the main in-town retail centre and Warwick has the out-of-town one, though with the wrong name. Each has half of the main campus of Warwickshire College. Very importantly, secondary schools are spread unevenly between the two, with many children of one town going to school in the other, especially from Leamington to Warwick. The housing stock, mainly because of uneven development in the 19th and 20th Centuries, is also unevenly divided, and the residential areas of the two towns complement each other in meeting the needs of families, students and elderly people, the whole mix of society. These connections and interdependencies all give rise to the kind of issue which forms the constituency work of an MP. If resolving problems in them often involved two MPs, each seeking scarce resources from the same local authority, school governors or major employer, they would repeatedly find themselves tripping over each other or, worse, contradicting each other or being divided and ruled. The towns are distinct, but their lives are integrated and their parliamentary representation must be too.

The other side of that coin is that, as many others again described yesterday, the links are much slighter between either Leamington and Kenilworth or Warwick and Stratford. There are two examples. In education, each of the other two towns is self-sufficient in schools. In employment, Kenilworth has very strong connections with Coventry and with the two universities to its north, and Stratford's economy is partly self-contained in, partly, the international tourist market and, partly, oriented towards Birmingham. Both are quite different compared with the separate critical mass of Warwick and Leamington.

Cases were made yesterday, first, for Warwick not being split between two constituencies and, second, for Leamington and Warwick not being split from each other. I hope that the Commission recognises not just a strength of feeling, but the powerful, rational arguments for one of Warwickshire's five and a half constituencies to be centred on Warwick and Leamington together, and for the other half to be combined

with half a constituency in Coventry to meet the numeric requirement for both the city and the county zones.

The question, which I recognise is difficult, is how you can achieve this. The Warwick Society will, before 5 December, make a suggestion, if not a counter-proposal. I noted with pleasure the heavy hint yesterday that opponents of the present proposal would be more valued if they could reach a consensus on what to do instead, and I think that such a consensus begins to emerge from the smoke and we will try to contribute to clarifying it.

One can but regret the narrowness of the legal requirement that each constituency should contain between 71,000 and 78,500 electors. The statistical fairness of this decision is, lamentably, not matched either by fairness in the structure of voting; single member, first-past-the-post divisions almost always result in a Parliament which does not, in a phrase we hear too often in the context of that disastrous June opinion poll, reflect the will of the people, nor by the reduction of the House of Commons to 600 members while the Lords are bloated by Prime Ministers' exercise of patronage to an entirely undemocratic 800. I, of course, do not need reminding that remedying these failings is not within the gift of the Boundary Commission.

What is within its power to do is to alter its self-imposed rule that wards should not be split in order to achieve closely balanced numbers for each constituency. Your task of meeting mutually impossible objectives is badly hampered by this decision, which appears to an outsider to exist only for the convenience of returning officers and their staff. The use of local government ward boundaries as a rigid framework for parliamentary ones, when the local ones were not designed with that in mind and have widely varying sizes, hobbles your choices. Achieving all of the other objectives that are set for or by the Commission is almost impossible if this single objective is allowed overriding power. Making constituencies which match, as far as possible, local authority, though not ward, boundaries and match the real pattern of life in our towns, counties, cities and region requires smaller units of the electorate than the big wards to be moved between several of the constituencies in your initial proposals. Departing from its narrow statistical correctness and taking properly into account the other factors, which paragraph 7 of the introduction to your report makes clear may also be taken into account by the Commission, requires you to consider some measure of such splitting. In a metaphor, your building blocks are too uneven in size and, in many cases, much too large to allow the completed structure to have any elegance; it is a mess. The largest ward that you are handling contains ten times as many electors as the smallest, and it is not reasonable that local administrative decisions, taking account of whatever is required in, say, Coventry or Birmingham, which are quite different places in many characteristics from other parts of the region, are, by bundling voters in large blocks, given great weight in your recommendations at the expense of places not like Warwick and Leamington, but other places, about which you listened to carefully yesterday.

Much more important is the effectiveness of representation in towns like Warwick and Leamington, their identification with each other with a shared MP and the sense of belonging both to place and to the political process which this can give. We hope that you will be able to reach this conclusion too. Best wishes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Are there any points of clarification or questions from the floor? (No response) I would like to say thank you. We like to hear from groups like the Warwick Society, and you again have given us a new dimension, some different statistics, and have spoken with strength of feeling there, so we really appreciate it, and we will take that back. We do look forward to getting your written submission, which we will look at very carefully, so thank you very much indeed.

MR MACKAY: Thank you for listening.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is Alan Heap. We would like to have your name and address, please.

MR HEAP: My name is Alan Heap, and my address is 82 Leam Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV31 1DE.

I cannot possibly follow the previous articulate speaker, who so fabulously well argued, so I will not try to, but I will present my objection to the proposed boundary changes in a slightly different way.

First of all, I would like to quote from the song *Imagine*: "Imagine there are no countries. It isn't hard to do, nothing to kill or die for and no religion too". Now, I am not going to continue down that path because I am sure it will not really be helpful, but what we understand, of course, is that borders and boundaries are just constructions, just things that we make up for convenience in some way, shape or form. We could divide the country in all sorts of ways. We could just take some straight lines and have done with it. As we heard the previous speaker say, it is really about maths and numbers, and I am not really that strong and firm a believer in that being the right way necessarily.

There is another quote here from the musical *Chess*, which says: "Let's man's petty nations tear themselves apart. My land's only borders lie around my heart". You can probably tell from my accent that I am not a Leamington man born and bred. I am from Yorkshire, and I am still trying to get over the change in the Ridings, which was a long time ago, but that was it.

Why have I bothered to turn up today? I think, more than anything, it is just to say in the strongest way possible, "Don't do it. Just don't do it. Don't make this split between two towns that, essentially, belong together, live together, eat together, play together". They are together, so it is not a great idea. I know that you have heard all the things about

Warwick School moving to Leamington and so on, so we do not need to do that, but I thought a quick glimpse into a simple little bit of life of somebody living here might be worth it.

I eat and drink in Leamington and Warwick regularly, I play golf in Leamington and Warwick, I play tennis in Warwick and I attend church services in Warwick and Leamington. My daughter went to school in Leamington, my son in Warwick. I attend talks at the Leamington Society and the Warwick Society, which I am very pleased to hear from. I go to the Warwick Rocks Festival and I attend the Leamington Peace Festival. You can see that there is a pattern emerging here pretty much about where my life is, although for business I travel around the world. This is where I belong. My heart belongs here. This is where I live and I will never leave it now; it is terrific.

Here is what I do in Kenilworth: ... Yes, that was it, that was the whole list, absolutely nothing. I have driven through it to get to the airport, and I know that that is a slightly flippant thing to say because the good burghers of Kenilworth, I am sure, are fabulous, as indeed they are at Stratford, but it certainly does not seem to me to belong together.

I think my biggest appeal for keeping this in the same place is as follows: that we have gone through the most incredibly turbulent time recently and various people on my behalf have decided that I am not European and various other things, so I would really dearly love it if you really did not take away the identity that I feel in belonging to Leamington and Warwick. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you; that was amazing, and just the type of thing we come here to listen to. Thank you.

(After a pause) Mr Naylor, we are in the middle of a little break here and would love to hear from you, if you are happy to talk straightaway. If you are happy to take the floor, that would be great. Please do fire away. [The speaker was not asked for his name and address]

MR NAYLOR: I have been a resident of Leamington since 1978 and, in that time, I have been politically active, but the party allegiance has got nothing to do with this. I am aware that the Boundary Commission's brief is partly numerically based, but I have come to really appeal to you to pay particular attention to the other factors which you are obliged to take into consideration, which, to my mind, are more important than the arbitrary numerical value which has been assigned in the latest Act. For one thing, numerical equality would be very hard to achieve, even in the short term, given the pressures on housebuilding that we are all aware of. To tie it within 5 per cent of the national norm is, I think, foolish, to say the least, and is likely, even if you achieve it, to become obsolete in a very short time.

The purpose of the boundaries is for political representation of the people, and that is best achieved when the nature of communities is fully recognised, which means schools, transport and all the other things which I am sure you have heard many, many times in other submissions. Really, it is my appeal to the humanity of it not to split up a community for purely numerical reasons. That is probably the nub of it really. I could sort of elaborate on points, but there is one other point.

To merely mix communities without regard to other things does not pay attention to the issues which their MP will have to face. Urban issues are of a different nature and priority from those in the rural communities. Whilst I would not wish to see a rigid divide between rural, urban and suburban, it should be borne in mind that their concerns are different, and also that communities with the most needs put the most pressure on the MP, which is another reason not to have purely numerical equality. In deprived areas, the pressures and workload on the MP are considerably greater than in more affluent and so-forth areas. Again, that would be an argument against putting too much stress on your numerical brief. That will do.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. There are a couple of points and questions. One is that obviously, as you know, we have a remit and it is enshrined in law and we have to stick by that remit, but you have put on the public record your comments on that.

Secondly, how much in a given day, week or month do you cross over between Warwick and Leamington?

MR NAYLOR: How much crossover is there?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In your life, for example.

MR NAYLOR: Enormous: school catchments, parents, relatives, even the transport system, the local buses which run, the shopping centres, the transport. Kenilworth does not have a station, but Warwick and Leamington are on the same line. Doh!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I beg your pardon!

MR NAYLOR: You have seen them. I am sure that the learned submissions cross-party have all made the same points: education, economic, civic, cultural, the river is a boundary, the A46 is a boundary, the transport links. Kenilworth is in the same district, but there is no more reason to twin us with Kenilworth than there is with Stockport or Solihull purely for numerical reasons. I know it was really hard. I did have a look and you have kind of made not a bad stab at it, but at what cost? That would be my point.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Also, one other thing, because it is useful to have your viewpoint, and we have obviously had a lot of people from political parties

and what-have-you and we have had some local residents and academics, the lot, a big wide range of views, but how big an issue is this locally? Does everyone know about it? Do they care about it?

MR NAYLOR: Well, we get good turnouts, so people are aware of their constituency. I think people are possibly more aware of their constituency than they are sometimes with the local, you know, and the turnouts in the mid-1970s and 1980s for national, canvassing door to door, people do know who their MP is. Although I worked more closely with James Plaskitt than I have with Chris White, I get on well with Chris and I know that, from knocking on doors, the local MP was widely known to many, many people and regarded, and I am sure that Chris is as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you aware of any local campaigns on this particular issue involving residents?

MR NAYLOR: Well, some. I get emails from the Labour Party, so to speak, on this, but it has not been high-profile in these terms.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I was thinking more of the local paper, that sort of thing.

MR NAYLOR: It has been a bit low-key, but I would not be here today if I had not seen an article in *The Courier* which reminded me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any questions from the floor? (No response) In which case, thank you very much indeed.

MR NAYLOR: Could I just say that, next time around, and there will be one, could you try to ensure that the local council know on their front desks where the meeting is? I went to the Town Hall and then Riverside House and then here. I could have guessed it would be here in the first place.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you, and I am sorry about that. They certainly knew about it because we have had representations.

MR NAYLOR: I know, but it just gets lost in the system. Thank you all very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Gentlemen, just to let you know, we now actually have a gap in our schedule, and then we have a bunch of speakers from quarter past 12 and a pretty busy afternoon. Mr Phillips, we will now take a break, unless you would like to speak now, or would you like to wait for your slot? It is entirely up to you.

MR PHILLIPS: [Inaudible].

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No problem at all. In that case, I am going to adjourn until 12.15, so a 45-minute adjournment. Thank you.

After a short adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back to our hearing. We have had a very busy two days listening to what the people locally have to say about the initial proposals. Obviously, we take into account what everyone says, and communities can absolutely influence what happens in the future.

My name is Margaret Gilmore, I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner, and we will be analysing what you say today and any written submissions that you may submit. Written submissions have to be in by 5 December for this initial consultation and then the process goes on and there is further consultation next year. We film this for the public record, but it is not something that we give out to people, and we need, by law, to ask you to give your name and address when you come up to the podium and speak. I think we can call our first speaker this afternoon, and that is Diane Woodward, please. Please could you give your name and address.

MS WOODWARD: Good afternoon. My name is Diane Woodward. I am a resident of Warwick and I live at 13 Woodcote Road in Warwick.

Since the news came up of these proposed boundary changes, I have been studying the two maps, the existing boundaries and the proposed ones, and, as a Warwick resident of some 40 years, I was just appalled at what, to me, immediately smacked of a total de-functioning of Warwick itself as our county town. Warwick, the town, the environs and the population, has a historic, active and very effective constituency surrounding it; the Warwick and Leamington constituency is amazing. The constituency has been in existence since 1885 and, whilst I appreciate the principle behind the revamping of the boundaries re the numbers and fairer representation, it seems to me, as a member of the public, that it has been done in a very unthinking way for the reasons I have mentioned before and will after. To me, it is reprehensible that so little weight seems to be put on the county town status and scant regard taken for the historic value of this seat. I wonder how many other county towns that are not large cities are being cut in half like Warwick in this procedure.

Looking at the map of the proposed boundaries, surely, adjustments can be made, for example, adding part of Redditch into the Stratford area or extending Stratford southwards to include parts of the Blockley or Winchcombe constituencies, or leaving Warwick and Leamington alone, increasing it in some way, and changing the Kenilworth boundary by including parts of North Banbury or West Daventry into that area. What about splitting the Evesham area to facilitate the areas north of it? Whatever is decided,

I feel very strongly that any necessary boundary that includes Warwick town should retain the name 'Warwick' overall as this is the county town. We have already been de-functioned horribly in the town with our police, courts, fire station and library gone, the trains do not all stop at Warwick town and all this sort of thing, and I just feel that this is just a further cause for distress really, that this historic area is being just wiped out on the map as far as voting is concerned.

There simply has to be another way, looking at the map, possibly looking at the surrounding constituencies in a more north-south linear way rather than an east-west linear way, which would keep Warwick and Leamington intact and, possibly, add on some bits south of it to make the numbers match up. Most of all, I feel that, whatever proposals are made, the Warwick and Leamington constituency should be kept with a wider boundary or, if there are some adjustments to be made, any new constituency that includes Warwick should be named 'Warwick', not 'Kenilworth' or 'Stratford-upon-Avon'. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Are there any points of clarification that anyone wants to make? (No response) That was really useful and, clearly, you feel very strongly about this and every single presentation we get we listen to and take into account, and it is important that we do hear the views of local residents, so thank you very much.

MS WOODWARD: Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We really appreciate it, and thank you for coming. Can I call Malcolm Laydon, please. Again, start with your name and address, please.

MR LAYDON: (Labour Party) My name is Malcolm Laydon. My address is 31 Diamond Road, Coventry, CV6 4LA.

I was considering presenting a submission, but I have brought a plan, which is of two Coventry MPs. I had no hand in this, but I am supporting this plan for Coventry and I will give my reasons why. What I like about the plan is that it is not just making objections, but it is actually giving a comprehensive reconstruction, and we are trying to give the Boundary Commission feedback on how they might do it differently. That is one reason why I accept the plan.

Coventry, in the changes, has been given the Meriden ward of Solihull. Now, the objection to this is that Coventry is a very urban centre, and we have alternatively suggested that we should take the whole town of Bedworth and bring it into Coventry. This makes a lot of sense because Meriden is sparsely populated and it is a kind of green desert of small towns and villages, and the wards in Bedworth are close to Coventry, and I live in Coventry North-West, and they are seamless. There are good

transport links through the Longford ward which, put together, would fit this. These wards have historic, economic and family links. There are buses each day from the Holbrook ward, which bounds this, and there are six buses to Bedworth every day going to Ash Green and all the local communities. In the Longford ward, there are 12 buses going to Bedworth every day, so we are very busy, and we are connected communities. The north of Coventry has a history of coalmining and manufacturing. Again, this is mirrored here, so what we are saying is that Coventry has, historically, been a very compact city and putting an urban thing on it is not really very helpful. There are no transport links there, so you cannot get a bus or a train there. To Bedworth, you can get a train and you can get several buses, so it makes a lot of sense. There are family links, people go to Coventry and Bedworth for shopping, people go to work all day, people on short time, people on shifts, so they are quite closely knit urban areas in this part of north Warwickshire, very much so.

Now, this plan offers the boundaries to create a new Coventry Central, and some of the wards it puts in there, like the Radford and Foleshill wards boundary, so most of those new wards' boundaries are the city centre. They are proposing to take the Wainbody ward to the Kenilworth constituency, and all the details are there. I support this; it is really nearly there. Wainbody ward in Coventry is nearer to Kenilworth than Kenilworth is to Leamington, so it makes sense in geographic terms. There are transport links coming down from Coventry on the Kenilworth Road, which is just opposite the University of Warwick, going into Kenilworth. It is quite a prosperous area with a high level of car ownership and a high level of owner-occupation, very much similar to Kenilworth, so again what we are proposing is not to put something in which does not fit in.

As for the Longford ward, it is now in Coventry North-East, but there are parts of the Longford ward, which came into the new proposed Coventry and Bedworth constituency, which were once part of the Holbrook ward, so there are links all over the place. What I am trying to say to you is that these are complementary in terms of population and the kind of population. Now, I suspect, though I cannot speak for them, that the people in the Meriden ward probably do not identify with Coventry and they probably feel that they would rather go to Solihull; more rural there. The housing mix in the area we are bringing in is similar to that of Coventry in the mix of owner-occupier and social housing, and probably relative, but not so much. There is a big industrial estate by Holbrook, which is actually in the borough, which is in Bedworth and the local authority is there. There used to be a coalmine there, there used to be a fire plant ever since the war, so people from north Coventry and Bedworth have worked there. Now, it is a business park, which includes British Gas, Halfords, a major distribution point, and at one point it used to house the whole transport arm of Peugeot, ie GEFCO, there. What I am saying is that it is a major employer now of both blue-collar and white-collar workers from both communities. There is, on the far side from the Longford side, a huge industrial estate and warehousing complex, so you get the same working in urban

areas, industry, transport, and we have got the links, so it makes a sensible, complementary thing there.

Now, we are going over county boundaries, but I feel that the reasons are compelling that we should do this. Can I just say, from a historic point of view, that Coventry has always been in Warwickshire, so let's say the county of Warwickshire is an administrative county, but Coventry is in the historic county of Warwickshire, so we are in Warwickshire county and we are not foreign coming from a different historic county, if you understand me.

I will put this in now. I have covered most of the Coventry one. I feel that I support the plan as a whole, and, as you can see, it does ask for a lot of alterations. We are hoping that this will better streamline the plan, which is what I am really hoping to do, to get the right thing, so, when you report in 2018, that is really the idea and that is why I am supporting this plan, and I cannot see a better alternative.

I feel also that the proposed Kenilworth South, which is 65,000, when you look at Rugby, which is 79,000 and another seat is just 77,000, it seems to be a bit light. It could be a speck of rural weighting, but I am not sure that that is how it could be seen as.

Also, we are trying to get, from Coventry's point of view, minimum disruption. The plan we give you is minimum disruption there, and this is an alternative. It has a lot of implications for other areas around there, but I am happy with the plan myself, which is why I have spoken here. I have made my basic case, but I am also open to any questions on it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed for that. Are there any questions from the floor or points of clarification? (No response) I think I am fairly clear, and this is something we have seen before. We have a number of what I would call 'counter-proposals' and this is one that we are going to look at just as seriously as all the other ones, so thank you very much indeed, and it is good to hear from somebody talking about Coventry.

Could I call Mr Gus Lock, please, the Head of Warwick School. We will need your name and address, please, before you start.

MR LOCK: (Warwick Independent Schools Foundation) My full name is Augustus Lock. My address is Warwick School, Myton Road, Warwick, CV34 6PP.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR LOCK: Good afternoon. I come here today representing both Warwick School and the Warwick Independent Schools Foundation. Warwick School is a large, independent

day and boarding school for boys. It is situated on Myton Road, just on the banks of the River Avon, in Warwick. The Warwick Independent Schools Foundation as a whole contains three schools, King's High School for Girls, which is in the centre of Warwick, and Warwick Prep School, which is adjacent to us on Myton Road. Together, we educate over 2,300 pupils and we employ over 600 members of staff. I know that the Chairman of our foundation has sent a written submission to the Commission and that they, as a board of governors, oppose the proposal to divide Warwick from Leamington, and I would like to make four points this afternoon.

First, from the very selfish point of view of the foundation, this would split us into two separate constituencies. King's High School is located largely in the centre of Warwick, although it does have some facilities down on the Myton Road, so King's High School itself would, at the moment, be split into two different constituencies, whereas Warwick School and Warwick Prep School are already situated down on Myton Road and would become part of the Leamington and Kenilworth constituency. This is slightly complicated in that we recently announced plans for King's High actually to move down onto the Myton Road site to be next to Warwick School, releasing a really very desirable town centre site for whatever purposes best suit Warwick District Council in the future. At this point, in 2020, the whole foundation would be outside the Warwick constituency in a constituency comprised primarily of Leamington and Kenilworth, and we feel that this would be illogical.

The second point is that the history of our schools, and Warwick School in particular, is intrinsically linked with the history of the town; they are very closely connected. Over its lifespan, the school has occupied various sites in the town centre and, throughout its history, it has been very closely connected with all that has happened in the town. Indeed, in 2014, Warwick School shared its 1,100th anniversary with the town and with the castle and celebrated that through various events, not least a visit from Prince Charles. In 2015, we hosted the Japanese Rugby World Cup team as part of Rugby World Cup, and the town and the castle played a very central role in that. This is really one community. Many of our alumni have gone on to be civic leaders in Warwick, both past and present. Only this morning, one of our buglers played up at the War Memorial in Warwick. On Sunday, our CCF buglers will take part in the Remembrance Day events there. It has become traditional in political terms for the very last hustings in this constituency to take place at Warwick School and, in recent elections, that has happened with very large and enthusiastic audiences, and indeed we held the last hustings ahead of the Brexit election only recently. Therefore, we are keen to stay part of this constituency and to stay closely connected to Warwick.

My third point is that this is about support for children who might not otherwise be able to attend a fee-paying school. We are very proud of the work that we do in offering bursary support to children of families who might not otherwise be able to pay the fees so that they too can benefit from the great educational opportunities that we offer. This is something that we believe very, very strongly in and work very hard to do all we can

to fulfil and extend. A proportion of the charitable funds that we have come to us through local charities on the basis of arrangements that are enshrined in their legal deeds, some of which date back to the time of King Henry VIII. A proportion of those funds are designated, by mutual agreement and as part of those deeds, to assist families who live in CV34, the old borough of Warwick. We are concerned that this would become anomalous if we were no longer part of the constituency of Warwick.

My fourth and final point, and probably the most important one, and obviously I speak very selfishly from the point of view of a headmaster of a school on the edge of the town of Warwick, but I think that what applies to us applies to many others. If one looks at the map, there is a clear sense that Warwick and Leamington are one conurbation, and the same is very much true on the ground. I have lived in Warwick and I have lived in Leamington; they are, literally, physically connected. It seems only logical that they should be in the same constituency. There is a very strong sense of community between the two towns, which reflects this physical connection. Many local businesses operate within and between these two towns and the economies are very closely connected. For example, we regularly host meetings of the Leamington Business Forum at Warwick School, which is a thriving organisation, and it represents businesses not only from Leamington but from Warwick as well, which does not have an equivalent organisation on this scale. This proposal would, of course, draw a divide and separate these two. A sizeable proportion of our pupil base and our commercial customers come from this area as well, and we feel that, as an important local business and important local education provider, we would very much wish to continue to fall under the same jurisdiction as the community to which we are most closely aligned, and we feel strongly that it would be illogical to divide us. We think that it will have a detrimental impact on the community and on local business. Therefore, we would urge strongly that the existing boundaries are maintained and that Warwick and Leamington continue to be one entity.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Does anyone have any points of clarification they want to raise? (No response) I have a couple of questions, if that is okay with you. Can you give us an idea of how many pupils you have, and is it a day school or a boarding school, across the three in the foundation?

MR LOCK: In total, there are about 2,300 pupils. At Warwick School, there are just over 1,200, so that is down on Myton Road. At Warwick Prep School, there are some 550 and – these are rough guesstimates – at King’s High School, about 650.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And are they day or boarding?

MR LOCK: Largely, day. There is a handful of boarders at Warwick School.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You talked about these local bursaries. Can you give me a vague percentage of how many of the bursaries would be to local families?

MR LOCK: About 10 per cent of pupils in the senior, so 11-plus, receive some form of bursarial support.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Finally, it would be great if we could see from you, on the map, exactly what is going to be happening. What we will do is zoom in. Which ward are we in so that we can zoom into the absolute area where we will see this crossover? Can you show us exactly what is planned and where the two different sites are?

MR LOCK: This is the area here (indicating) where Warwick School currently is. This is the proposed boundary line (indicating) and King's High School is up here (indicating). Currently, this is one constituency and our foundation straddles two sides of this line (indicating). After 2020, King's High will be moving down onto this site (indicating) and, therefore, the whole of our foundation will actually be outside the Warwick and Stratford constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And you will be retaining the 'Warwick' name? That is the plan?

MR LOCK: Absolutely. We would hope to, but we will be Warwick School, technically, in Leamington.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is this walkable? How much do you share facilities between, for example, the girls' school, which we are talking about really, and the boys' school?

MR LOCK: From 2020, obviously we will be on one campus, so everything will be shared. In the meantime, we share a significant number of facilities. The girls' school sports centre and sports pitches are down on this site already (indicating), so they are already coming down, but we share some music facilities, we do lots of joint activities and we share support services, so the whole bursarial side, and I do not mean that in terms of bursarial support, but the administration and business side of the school is jointly run in any case, as far as the operations department is concerned, as one entity. It is split currently across two sites, but soon to be split across two constituencies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Finally, just to give me an idea of scale, when, say, the girls come down to the sports field, do they come in a bus or do they walk?

MR LOCK: It depends upon the age of the child. The older ones will walk. It might take you or me ten minutes and it might take a teenage boy 25 minutes! Obviously, younger children are not able to walk, both because of the distance and because we are talking about some quite main roads with heavy congestion on them, so there is a health and safety aspect to that. That is one of the drivers for bringing us onto one campus actually, that we want to be collaborating between the two schools, but we do not want people using up their time, and with the risk, crossing several major roads several times a day.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much; that was fascinating.

MR LOCK: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Could we have our next speaker, please, Liz Drake. I may have called you a little early and I hope that is okay. Again, could we have your name and address, first of all, please.

MS DRAKE: My name is Liz Drake and I live at 6 Emerson Close, Chase Meadow, Warwick. I apologise if I repeat some of the points which have already been made.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is not a problem for us.

MS DRAKE: The Boundary Commission's proposals to separate the towns of Warwick and Leamington will, I believe, have a detrimental and divisive impact on the physical, economic, social, psychological and community well-being of both towns. For 131 years, the towns of Warwick and Leamington have existed and thrived within and as one constituency. This mutually supportive, symbiotic relationship between the two towns has, I believe, been an important factor in the growth, development and confidence of both towns, which have evolved together and have merged into one urban form. It would, therefore, be completely illogical to split Warwick and Leamington into two separate parliamentary constituencies.

There are many schools, hospitals, health centres and community buildings serving the residents of both Warwick and Leamington, all formed as a result of the close physical and psychological links of Warwick and Leamington communities. We exist as one entity, and to divide the towns into two separate constituencies would, I believe, significantly damage the community spirit of our towns, it would damage the shared culture of our towns, it would damage the shared history of our towns and it would weaken and erode the shared economic base that has built up over the century.

I will give you an example of one of the problems and how the proposals would personally affect me and my family. I am fortunate to be a mother of two children who attend school in Warwick, one at primary level and one at secondary level. If I need to discuss matters relating to the schools, currently there is one single MP point of contact

who will give consistent help, consistent advice and be readily accessible and based locally. The proposed changes would put my children's schools into two separate constituencies. How can it be right that I and other parents would have to travel to see two separate MPs who may give different advice, different guidance and different assistance for my two children? How can it be right that I and other parents have to make two journeys that could, potentially, mean me and other parents travelling to Stratford-upon-Avon or to Kenilworth where the new MPs may be based?

Of course, these changes do not just pose me difficulties, but also difficulties, I assume, for our MPs. Currently, our MP's area is covered solely by Warwick District Council. He is able to forge close working relationships with the district council and will be fully aware of their policies and proposals. The new Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon constituency will straddle both Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick district councils, so our MP will have to forge links and become aware of two sets of policies and proposals and may be faced with having to deal with political administrations which are at odds with each other. These changes would result in inconvenience, confusion and inconsistencies, they are inefficient and would lead to a loss of accessible contact that is essential for members of the public to have. The Boundary Commission, in my opinion, should be seeking to make MPs more accessible to more people, not less accessible to more people.

I am also fearful of the consequence for the economic future of Warwick and Leamington should both towns be represented by two different MPs. In the event of having two MPs, who may be from the same party but with different views, or from different parties with antagonism between them, the outcome for Warwick and Leamington would be a loss of a single vision and support replaced with, potentially, divisive negativity and political game-playing. I do not want the Boundary Commission to take that risk with the future of our towns.

To sum up, the proposals reduce public accessibility to MPs and lead to MPs being less in touch with the people in the communities they serve. Warwick and Leamington are one geographical entity, they have a shared history, a shared culture and community spirit and they rely on each other for support in creating a strong, shared economic base. The proposals would split this entity, fracturing community cohesion, weakening the local economy, dividing public services and support systems and result in a lack of a cohesive, long-term vision that is needed for our community to thrive. I would, therefore, ask the Boundary Commission not to go ahead with the proposals. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for talking to us; it is really important that we hear the views of residents and how passionately they feel about it. I think you have been very clear in some new points there and some points which, as you said, have already been made, but we need to hear them each time. Thank you very much indeed for your time.

Is there anyone else who wishes to speak in this session? In that case, our next speaker we have down for two o'clock, so we will now adjourn and meet again at 2.00 pm this afternoon. Thank you.

After the luncheon adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are becoming increasingly exclusive in this room. Thank you very much for joining us. We have had a really interesting two days here in Royal Leamington Spa, and we look forward to hearing more from all of you. My name is Margaret Gilmore, I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner, and we are here to input the views and thoughts of communities into our initial proposals, and a reminder that the close date for written submissions is 5 December. Let us start with our first speaker this afternoon. It is Mr Thomas Raynor, please. Mr Raynor, if you could give us your name and address, please.

MR RAYNOR: (Warwick and Leamington Conservatives) My name is Thomas Raynor and my address is 11 Prince's Street, Leamington Spa.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Fire away.

MR RAYNOR: Apologies for the voice; getting over a chest infection, so a trusty bottle of water there and hopefully I will be able to get through it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is not a problem. Try and speak as much as can close to the microphone.

MR RAYNOR: (Warwick and Leamington Conservatives) I will do my best. I would like to talk a little bit about reputation, the reputation that Warwick and Leamington benefit from by being together. I have the advantage of working all over the country and, whether I am working in London, Newcastle, Lincoln or Cardiff, people seem to know Warwick and Leamington, which is quite remarkable really when you think about what we are; we are two fairly small towns in the centre of the country, we do not have any ports, we do not have any major rivers, and yet somehow people know about us. The reason they know about us is because of the strength we gain from being together.

It is one of the reasons why businesses keep on coming here, it is one of the reasons why Vicks are opening a new factory just by the Morrison's, it is why Tata opened their European headquarters in Warwick and it is why we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country because businesses are opening here and expanding here. They are not doing that because of the strength of Leamington or the strength of Warwick, but of the strength of the two towns put together. This comes from having representation that works across both of those areas. When we have a district

councillor, when we have a county councillor, when we have a Member of Parliament, they are not the Member of Parliament or councillor for Warwick or for Leamington but for Warwick and Leamington. They are representing this unified voice of an area that, actually, geographically, is together; you can walk from one side of Leamington to the other side of Warwick and there is not that gap.

The history of the two towns is interlinked; their culture is interlinked. The two towns function together because, over the last few hundred years, they have demonstrated that, by working together, they can punch above their weight; they can build a reputation that spans far further than it should naturally do so. By splitting that up, by sending Leamington to Kenilworth and by putting Warwick with Stratford, you weaken the reputation of these two towns, you weaken the identity that helps make this such a wonderful place to live and to work. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. That is an interesting new line for us, after two days, and we really appreciate your coming along. Every single bit of evidence we have before us is very, very useful and goes into consideration, so thanks.

Our next speaker is Louise Richards, please. If you could give us your name and address, please.

MS RICHARDS: My name is Louise Richards, and my address is 8 Gaveston Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 6EU.

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

MS RICHARDS: I am speaking today in my capacity as a resident of Leamington Spa and also director of a thriving arts business, working across the two towns of Warwick and Leamington. I oppose the proposed boundary changes with regard to Warwick and Leamington Spa and would like to speak, particularly, about community, culture and identity, not dissimilar to the speaker before me.

I moved to Leamington in 1985 and, in 1988, established my company, Motion House, here. Motion House is a thriving, touring dance company. We are split-site with an office and studio in Leamington's old town and a creation centre in Warwick. As a non-profit organisation and business with interests and activities in both towns, we see the company's identity as firmly rooted in both, not one. We move between each part of our split site organically and easily, as do our colleagues, our partners and the participants in our education programme.

As a cultural organisation based here for almost 30 years, we offer a broad range of social, cultural and educational opportunities that we deliver across the two towns, making no differentiation between the two. We see our home town as being Warwick

and Leamington, and deliver work accordingly. There is no artificial division in our provision, which draws audiences, participants and partners from across the two towns equally, nor is there in the reaction and response to, or participation in, that activity.

We have always been committed to working closely with our MP to respond to opportunities and to deliver strategic, targeted activity throughout our home constituency, advocating for and raising awareness of our home throughout this country and, indeed, across the globe. We deliver against a broad range of cultural, educational and social strategic aims, often in close dialogue with partners in both towns and, of course, our MP. It would be challenging, if not impossible, to work so constructively with two MPs with perhaps differing agendas.

We work with schools in both towns, organisations in both towns, councillors in both towns, and we work with the district council to deliver their arts and cultural strategy throughout both towns. We are concerned that working with two different constituencies may make this work certainly far less joined up and, potentially, far less impactful. Additionally, with premises and activities in both Warwick and Leamington, should a dispute or problem arise, we are concerned that we would have to resolve these with two MPs.

There is no physical boundary between Warwick and Leamington, as I know others have talked about. Together they create a coherent and cohesive community as well as being physically linked. Many people refer to the two towns as “Warwick and Leamington” when making reference to us. The two towns, quite literally, merge into one another with no easily identifiable boundary, and the community works together as one within this geographical area on the many cultural, community and business activities that the two towns have to offer. The effect of this is that the two towns have organically and effectively absorbed into one.

An important result of this is that there is no competition in provision; rather, that Warwick and Leamington complement each other to achieve a greater whole. I feel that separating the two towns would be very divisive to the sense of community cohesion. It would divide an existing community in order to create two new artificial communities. These artificial divisions would, potentially, create competition between the two towns, as well as social, political and community division.

The bonds with Stratford-upon-Avon and Kenilworth, which Warwick and Leamington would respectively be linked with under the new proposal, do not actually exist in the same way. At the very least, these would be artificial unions, but, at worst, these weaker bonds could destroy the existing sense of community in Warwick and Leamington, upsetting a deep-seated and indeed historical local identity.

It is a 25-minute drive through countryside to Stratford from Warwick, and a 20-minute drive to Kenilworth from the centre of Leamington. In contrast, many people easily

walk, cycle or take the bus between Warwick and Leamington. By car, even in traffic, the journey between the two town centres usually takes less than ten minutes, without ever leaving what actually feels like the same town.

In addition to the conurbation, there is a visual and natural representation of this cohesion with the towns being linked by parks offering a green ribbon from Newbold Comyn in Leamington to the castle in Warwick, which is frequented by dog-walkers, runners and many others. Residents in the conurbation do not see themselves as belonging to one or the other town, with many living in one and working, or their children attending school, in the other. I have lived in Leamington for 31 years and my children grew up moving easily between Warwick and Leamington for sporting and cultural activities, healthcare and friendships, as indeed did their peers.

There is no acknowledgement of the difference between the two towns with regard to social and cultural activities. Many people do not actually know where the official boundary is, where one town begins and the other ends. The two towns share a hospital in Warwick and a fire service, in Leamington, an ambulance service with a depot in Warwick, and a police station and justice centre in Leamington. The two towns complement each other, offering an integrated offer for the local community. They share a unified, cultural heart, with numerous community events that are accessed by residents of both towns, with good examples, perhaps, being the Christmas carols at Warwick Castle, the Warwick Mop, the Leamington Peace and Food Festivals, Leamington's Art in the Park, the Warwick Folk Festival and events at the Gurdwara Temple in Leamington.

There is very much a sense of ownership of all of these and many more events by residents of both towns. These are examples of Warwick and Leamington operating cohesively as one, and they simply do not exist in the same way with Stratford and Kenilworth. Residents in Warwick and Leamington do not consider the cultural provision in those towns to be 'theirs' in the same way; they are distant, more difficult to access and not considered local.

In summation, I feel that the so-called boundary between the towns is invisible and non-existent, and that to create an artificial one would amount to destroying the fundamental identity of the Warwick and Leamington conurbation. Residents would have much to lose and little to gain by the creation of the artificial political boundary proposed, running the risk of dividing these historical communities and, potentially, creating a political divide where, at present, none exists.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any questions or points of clarification? (No response) That was very, very clear to me. We really appreciate what you had to say, and found it fascinating. Certainly we will be taking it into account. Thank you.

MS RICHARDS: Thanks.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Our next speaker is Marcus Jones, the MP for Nuneaton. Again, Mr Jones, if we could have an address, and the House of Commons is fine if you prefer, and your name.

MR JONES: (MP for Nuneaton) Yes, if I may give my constituency office, it is Hollybush House, Bondgate, Nuneaton, CV11 4AR.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Mr Jones.

MR JONES: Thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak at the hearing today in Leamington Spa. I would just like to generally talk about the proposed changes to the Nuneaton constituency. In doing that, I would firstly like to broadly welcome the proposals that the Boundary Commission have made for the Nuneaton constituency. I very much enjoy representing the people of the current constituency and, in an ideal world, I would not wish that to change, but I understand that we are moving from 650 to 600 constituencies and trying to equalise the size of the constituencies. With the way in which the Nuneaton constituency within Warwickshire is bounded by the A5 and the division of the East and West Midlands, I think it is inevitable that the Nuneaton constituency within this review will need to change.

I think it is extremely sensible for the Commission to put Hartshill and Arley and Whitacre wards from North Warwickshire back with the North Warwickshire constituency, which was the case from 1983 to 2010.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you able to point them out to us?

MR JONES: That is Hartshill ward and Arley and Whitacre ward (indicating). I think it is eminently sensible for those to go back into North Warwickshire and for North Warwickshire to remain with the town of Bedworth. There are some suggestions that Nuneaton itself should be put with Bedworth, as is the district council boundary, although this is an extremely urban area with 125,000 population and, therefore, the only way in which the criteria of the boundary review could be met in relation to joining Nuneaton and Bedworth would be for parts of Bedworth or parts of Nuneaton to be split off from that configuration. I think that would not particularly help. If you were to split Bedworth, for example, that would leave us in a position where the people in Bedworth would be very confused, because it is such an urban area, as to who was representing them as their Member of Parliament.

In terms of the proposal, I think it is extremely sensible to include the 11 Nuneaton wards in the Nuneaton constituency. I think it is also extremely sensible to include the Wolvey and Shilton ward in the constituency, which was in the Nuneaton constituency from 1983 to 2010. There is a large Army barracks called 'Gamecock Barracks' within

that ward, which very much looks towards Nuneaton. There is the Ghurkha Signals Regiment and there is a significant Ghurkha population and an ex-service population that has come from Bramcote Barracks there and, when they have retired, they have generally migrated to living in Nuneaton, so there are extremely strong links.

It is also extremely sensible to put Bulkington ward back with Nuneaton. Bulkington ward is currently in the Rugby constituency, and the people in that ward are very, very much of the opinion that they feel they are very much out on a limb, being part of the Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council area and, prior to 2010, they were part of the Nuneaton constituency. They very much feel that they look towards Nuneaton as their main town area.

Revel and Binley Woods was also with the Nuneaton constituency from 1983 to 2010. There is a significant amount of industrial development here on the edge of Coventry, and there are organisations like Rolls-Royce, a Sainsbury's HQ and an organisation called the 'Manufacturing Technology Centre', and all of those businesses do actually employ a significant number of people from Nuneaton and, therefore, very much there is a significant link between this ward and the Nuneaton constituency.

I would also like to mention the ward of Wolston and Lawford, which is the one there (indicating), which is also included in the proposal for Nuneaton. I can possibly understand why some of the electorate in that ward may be concerned with that moving into the Nuneaton constituency, but I think, in order to meet the criteria of the constituency, it is a sensible inclusion and I think it would work very well in terms of being next to Revel and Binley Woods. I think, as the constituency MP for that area, you would be able to serve that area extremely well, particularly by holding surgeries and such like at Binley Woods, where they are very used to being in the Nuneaton constituency, as was the case from 1983 to 2010.

I just want to sum up by saying that I think they are sensible changes. The changes meet the criteria in a way which brings the Nuneaton constituency together with a configuration that was very similar to the configuration for 2010. I would also like to say that I support the rest of the Conservative Party's proposals for Warwickshire and the West Midlands, which I think are extremely sensible, particularly in terms of keeping the towns of Leamington and Warwick together. On that note, I think I will finish my comments. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is really useful to us. Do we have any questions or points of clarification? (No response) It is really important to us to hear about support as well as objections because it allows us to be more objective, hopefully. We really appreciate that, and taking what you said about the wards outside. Obviously, you are the MP, so have you had much objection to the plans, or do you feel that, largely, your constituents are with you? We have not had a lot of people from Nuneaton so far.

MR JONES: I have not had any objections at all. I think the people in Hartshill and Arley and Whitacre have always very much seen themselves as part of North Warwickshire. I think there was very much a concern running up to the 2010 election that that part of North Warwickshire borough would not be with the North Warwickshire constituency. I have spoken, certainly, to one person, only one person, from Binley Woods who was pretty ambivalent over the situation and accepted that, from 1983 to 2010, that was part of Nuneaton and the area had sort of switched between Rugby and Nuneaton.

I have also spoken to a number of people from the Bulkington ward who are very enthusiastic about rejoining the Nuneaton constituency because of the closeness of the links between Nuneaton and Bulkington. I have also spoken to a number of people in the Wolvey and Shilton ward, and they are keen to return to part of the Nuneaton constituency because, again, that part of the constituency looks very much towards Nuneaton. There are many people who live in that area who originate from Nuneaton, and they very much see themselves as part of that area and closer, probably, to Nuneaton than they are to Rugby, despite the fact that they are in the Rugby Borough Council area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Mr Phillips, do you feel able, if you are ready, to come up and talk to us? It is a little bit early, but we would be grateful. As ever, we will need your name and address.

CLLR PHILLIPS: (Budbrooke ward) Good afternoon. My name is Peter Phillips. I live at 4 Farriers Court, Wasperton, just to the south of Warwick; it is a village to the south of Warwick. I am one of the Warwick district councillors for Budbrooke ward, which consists of eight villages to the south and west of Warwick. As such, I attend all four of the parish councils within the ward. That is Budbrooke ward there (indicating).

Wasperton, which you can see just down the bottom there (indicating), is the most southerly point of the existing Warwick and Leamington constituency and, therefore, closest to Stratford-Upon-Avon, as the crow flies. You might think that we would be regular visitors to Stratford. In fact, it is not just Wasperton but, following discussions at the parish councils and one-to-ones with residents and talking to quite a few residents over the last six or eight weeks, it is clear that all the villages within Budbrooke gravitate economically, historically and culturally towards Warwick and towards Leamington, not towards Stratford.

Stratford is largely an afterthought. The road system around the area makes it awkward to get to from most of the ward, so maybe we only visit to take part in a play or a show, as this is around Shakespeare's birthplace, alongside visiting Warwick Castle, of course, and indeed the Leamington Pump Rooms. Indeed, the first town that is thought of as an alternative to visiting Leamington or Warwick is Coventry rather than Stratford.

There is little empathy from within Budbrooke ward for Stratford. I would say the most common reaction to the Boundary Commission proposals to link Warwick and Stratford in one constituency is complete bemusement, and then, "What are the Boundary Commission thinking of?"

Of equal bemusement is how the proposal has included Myton and Heathcote, which is a part of Warwick, within the Kenilworth and Leamington constituency, as we have heard other people comment earlier on. Myton and Heathcote is within the CV34 postcode, here ([indicating](#)). That postcode, CV34, is the postcode for the whole of Warwick and, indeed, if you have a look at the history here, there is something called 'The King Henry VIII Foundation', which was founded in 1545. Okay, the postcodes were not around then, but it can only give grants, following changes with the Charity Commission, to those residents in CV34, ie within Warwick. That level of grants runs at something like £1.5 million a year.

Others have spoken about the cohesion of the towns of Warwick and Leamington and why they should stay together. I do not intend to repeat what you have already heard from their submissions, but I would certainly echo and support the comments of Mr Webber, Mr Weston, Cllr St John, Mrs Sawdon and Councillor Thompson, Liz Drake, among others, and, in particular, Mr Hall, as to why Warwick and Leamington should stay as one constituency.

Whilst the councils change, and we do not perhaps have the Trump/Clinton style mud-slinging, it is still very unusual to find such cross-party unanimity about an issue, and that is certainly the case in respect of keeping Warwick and Leamington together. Indeed, we have taken to full council a motion calling for the retention of the two towns in one constituency at next week's full council meeting. It is purely a matter of pre-arranged council timings that we are not able to actually present that outcome of the motion today, but I believe you will have a submission from the licensing and regulatory body later on this afternoon, which has taken a first look at it, and I will not pre-empt that particular submission.

Commissioner Gilmore, you commented yesterday morning that there was a lack of consensus about the proposals, but there is one consensus you have heard, and that is that Warwick and Leamington should stay as one constituency. Whatever versions there are around, how you curate it, I am also proposing that it should stay as one constituency, with the addition of Arden and Stoneleigh and Cubbington wards. The Arden ward is the one to the west and north, here ([indicating](#)), and Stoneleigh and Cubbington is to the east. It fits into Manor and Milverton here, where you yourself remarked earlier on this morning about the fact that part of those wards are in Kenilworth and Southam and part of them are in Warwick and Leamington. That has caused enormous confusion to residents. We have one polling booth in Manor ward where, depending on whether you are from Kenilworth and Southam or you are from

Warwick and Leamington, you have to go into different doors. It causes electors problems all the time.

I am proposing to put Arden and Stoneleigh and Cubbington into the Warwick and Leamington constituency. This does leave the issue of what happens to Kenilworth. The Boundary Commission talked in its report about creating a sub-region in the West Midlands that consisted of most of the West Midlands other than Staffordshire. It is a sub-region, but not really a refined sub-region. It has missed the smaller and much more logical sub-region of Coventry and Warwickshire. This is still a recognised entity. Of course, if you look at the wider Coventry and Warwickshire, you will see it fits in very neatly from north to south.

We have BBC Coventry and Warwickshire, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, Coventry and Warwickshire Family Panel, the Coventry and Warwickshire Tourism and Cultural Awards, and so on and so forth. There are many, many organisations that start or have in their name 'Coventry and Warwickshire'. This is not just about historical links between Coventry and Warwickshire going back many years, and they were one county, but it is now an entity or recognised sub-region today.

There is a need to achieve eight constituencies in Coventry and Warwickshire, which is about five and a half from Warwickshire and two and a half from Coventry, your eight in total. The Commission commented, "We considered whether the town of Kenilworth should be joined in a constituency with other wards from the Warwick district...We decided that Kenilworth should be part of the Warwickshire constituency". However, the consequence of this is that, rather than stay with a recognised sub-region, the Commission have proposed to split county boundaries in several ways, across Warwickshire and Worcestershire and across Coventry into Meriden, et cetera.

Instead, I will propose that Kenilworth and South Coventry should come together, so you have the wards of Abbey, Park Hill and St John's from Kenilworth together with Cheylesmore, Earlsdon, Wainbody, Westwood and Woodlands as the two halves to form the eighth constituency within Coventry and Warwickshire. That was set out by Mr Hall very clearly yesterday morning in his detailed submission.

You have heard that there are strong commuter flows between the two areas and that a lot of Coventry's housing need has spilled over into the Kenilworth wards. We have been having some significant debates about where to fit in the extra 4,000 houses in the Local Plan, and those are largely going to the north of Kenilworth to meet Coventry's excess requirements.

A further benefit to bringing Kenilworth and Coventry South together is that it will bring the whole of the University of Warwick campus together into one constituency, and we have heard this mentioned a couple of times. When I was an undergraduate there in

the late-1970s, the fact that the campus was split into two used to cause some considerable confusion among students. Today, that is still the case. For example, there is the convention that Members of Parliament can only handle matters relating to their constituents. It is quite possible to do what I did during my time, which is move across campus, and for an issue to be raised with one MP and, if I moved across campus, I had to start again and raise that with the other MP who represents the other half of the campus. Bringing the university into one constituency would end this confusion and, more importantly, enable the university, which is a very well-recognised institution in the UK, indeed across the world, to have a stronger, single, clear voice in the House of Commons.

In conclusion, therefore, I would urge the Commission to retain Warwick and Leamington as a single constituency, use Coventry and Warwickshire as a sub-region and, within that sub-region, create the constituency of Coventry South and Kenilworth. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed; very clear and interesting to hear your view on the counter-proposals, where there are quite a few on the table at the moment, around the consensus that you have identified over Warwick and Leamington. Are there any questions or points of clarification needed from anyone in the audience? (No response) I have none either, so thank you very much indeed for your time. We really appreciate it, and very interesting.

Could we now hear from Robert MacQueen, please? Mr MacQueen, could we have your name and your address, please?

MR MacQUEEN: Yes. It is Mr Robert MacQueen. The address is 90 Radford Road, Leamington Spa, CV31 1JX.

I am a long-term resident of Leamington and it just seems a very bizarre idea to split the district. There are far more connections between Leamington and Warwick than there are between Leamington and any of the points to the Lapworth sort of district. It does seem a very strange choice.

Also, I think it fails to take into account the growth that is happening in Leamington. There is an enormous amount of housing being built and proposed, and I know that numbers are based on the old electoral register anyway, but it is going to be even further distorted by the new building. I think the idea of having equal numbers of electors is going to be very far out when all these houses are occupied. It would be far more likely to hit the target by retaining more or less the existing constituency boundaries which, with the increased growth, would probably bring it somewhere near to the numbers that are being looked at, although obviously I know that you are working on an old register. Okay, that is really all I want to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are confined by the law in the figures and the data that we use, and we cannot influence that, but what can be an influence, and the point of these, is listening to people like you and how it would affect your community. Maybe you could just briefly tell me how often you move between the two constituencies.

MR MacQUEEN: I think the community effect is in having a Member of Parliament who is going to be representing a very diverse area, whereas I feel now that the present parliamentary constituency is quite harmonious and the community does stretch. I know people joke about the difference between Leamington and Warwick and things, but, in fact, there is not that much difference at all. People work and live and move around between the whole area, and obviously, as in local government, it is a district. There is a lot of connection there, and I think, as you heard from a previous speaker, dealing with different Members of Parliament would be quite difficult.

Also, the point about the university. We have a very, very large university student population in Leamington, and that is growing all the time. There are purpose-built buildings going up, and having representation of the university within the area under the same parliamentary area would be advantageous.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed; we really appreciate it. Just as a reminder, with every single person who speaks here, whoever they are, what they say is of equal importance. Also, as a reminder, written submissions to the Boundary Commission in this part of the consultation need to be in by 5 December, and then there will be some analysis of what has come in and then there will be a further consultation on what we have ended up with early next year.

I am going to check the name of the next speaker. Who wants to go first, Roger or Anne Elson? Roger Elson, fine. Again, Mr Elson, if we could have your name and address, please.

MR ELSON: Roger Elson, 58 Willow House, Lucas Court, Leamington Spa.

Really, I think I am going to reiterate what the last gentleman has already been saying. I have lived in Leamington all my life and the only difference between Warwick and Leamington is the River Avon. The parliamentary constituency has been the same all the way through my life, and I see absolutely no reason whatsoever that it should be split in the manner that is being discussed at the moment. Basically, that is as much as I need to say on top of what has already been said.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Again, going backwards and forwards, is that something you would do on a daily basis?

MR ELSON: Pardon?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is difficult to hear in here. Going backwards and forwards between the two, is it something you would do on a daily or a weekly basis, and are you conscious of the divide when you walk through?

MR ELSON: I do not think it is a matter of going backwards and forwards. Having lived in the area this amount of time, part of my family is in Warwick and part of my family is in Leamington, and it is really, basically, the fact that Warwick and Leamington are an entity. Most people have viewed it as an entity until, all of a sudden, it is proposed that it be split.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Any questions? (No response) Otherwise, we will call Mrs Anne Elson, please. Thank you. Mrs Elson, we still need your name and address as well.

MRS ELSON: Same address, different name: Anne Elson.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We need you to repeat it, as it is the form.

MRS ELSON: Absolutely. I actually was not expecting to have to speak at all; I merely came down to sign to say how upset I was at the thought that Leamington and Warwick were going to be separated in any sort of way. Ever since I have lived in Leamington, which was 1963, Leamington and Warwick, in my mind, have always just been one entity. I am not a political person at all, so I have not really got any terribly clever words to use except to say that I just think Leamington and Warwick are a togetherness. It is only split by the river. I think that, if you were to ask an awful lot of people in Leamington where the boundary for Leamington is and where the boundary for Warwick starts, they might not even know that. If you walk along the road from Leamington to Warwick, it is only the river bridge that is any dividing factor.

I go to Warwick, probably, twice a week, I have people who come from Warwick to my choir in Leamington and I have people who come from Warwick to my church in Leamington; it is a mutually inclusive society. I do not think I have anything more political to add, other than I just have this feeling about it, and thanks for the opportunity to be able to say so.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is really important to us; we really like it when people come in who are residents who just give it from the heart. Thank you very much for coming and speaking here today.

MRS ELSON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is helpful. Ladies and gentlemen, our next speaker is not due on for about 20 minutes, unless there is anybody else in the

room now who would like to speak? Yes, there is somebody who would like to speak, so we will not adjourn. Have you signed in, sir? [Inaudible comment from the room] Okay, we can sort that out. If you give us your name fairly clearly, we will get it down.

MR WEBSTER: Chris Webster. I live in Warwick, so it is 11 Drayton Court, Warwick, CV34 5RG.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have to keep a record of everyone who speaks and who does not speak. Fire away.

MR WEBSTER: I came along thinking I would be able to have a quiet chat to someone and not realising ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You can do that as well.

MR WEBSTER: --- not realising that it would be quite this formal. I am not at all prepared, but, having said that I live in Warwick, I came to Warwick in 1978 and commuted to Coventry, which I think supports an earlier comment about links between Warwick and Leamington and Coventry. You see people commuting from Coventry into Warwick and Leamington. Now that I am retired, I am in Leamington on a regular basis. I hop on the bus and come in to shop, or I just come for a walk along the river. It is a nice, pleasant, social thing to do. It never occurred to me that Warwick would ever be separated from Leamington; it is one of those strange places that is actually one place with two names.

I very much support what has been said, in general, by the councillor who was speaking about possibly Kenilworth linking into the south of Coventry, but I am horrified by the thought that we should be dumped into a Stratford constituency that has very little relevance. Yes, of course I go to Stratford a few times, but not very often; it would not apply to me. If I go anywhere, I go to Coventry, I go to Birmingham, I go to Northampton, if it is outside the immediate area. The idea that Warwick and Leamington should be separated is, well, it is outrageous. I think that is it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Again, it is very important that we hear from you. I appreciate that you have spoken to us. Do mention that you have spoken when you go out. I am going to hold on a second or two more before I adjourn as it may be that our next speaker is here. (After a pause) We will adjourn. We will gather together at 3.05, which is in 15 minutes' time. Thank you very much.

After a short adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we are ready to reconvene. Just to let you know, we have a very full end of afternoon between four and

five, it is choc-a-bloc at the moment, so we can plough on now. Our first speaker is Meg Harper, please. We would like to have your name and your address, first of all, please.

MS HARPER: I am Meg Harper, 6 Turner Close, Warwick. I am a member of the public. This is a very personal view. I have no particular expertise, but, in my view, geographically, Leamington Spa and Warwick are one. There is no significant gap between them, whereas, if we are considered geographically with Stratford, there is a big gulf between us, both in terms of the landscape and in terms of the motorway and the Longbridge Island. I think that makes a significant, psychological barrier between Warwick and Leamington and Stratford. To me, just in geographical terms, it would make sense for Warwick and Leamington to stay in the same constituency.

Secondly, we have a lot in common, Warwick and Leamington. We are an ethnically diverse community and have been for a long time. We are politically very textured, we have a very broad demographic and then we share some of the same difficulties. At the moment, a difficulty is congestion, and there is a lot of concern about the infrastructure and whether it will take the weight of the new developments, so these are difficulties that we share and that we would like to work together on, whereas Stratford has very different issues, so politically it seems wise to stay with Warwick and Leamington together.

We seem to be seen by the outside world as a unit. I actually take lodgers and I have noticed that, when I am looking for lodgers, people are looking for Warwick or Leamington; they are not looking for Warwick and Stratford. As the outside world sees us, we are together; we are a geographical unit and we are a social unit. Personally, I feel at one with Leamington, although I live in Warwick. I use Leamington a lot and I feel that Leamington citizens are part of my community. I have got nothing against the people of Stratford, but I just feel that they are quite separate from me. They have a different set of issues, a different set of concerns, and it would be quite difficult to work together politically, compared with how easy it would be, and is, to work with Leamington. When I go to Stratford, I feel like a tourist, actually. When I go to Leamington, I feel like it is home, and that is really important to me.

Finally, this is a constituency that has been a marginal for a long time, and I enjoy that because I feel that my vote is making a difference. I suspect that, if I were, being a Warwick person, put with Stratford, then my vote would have less weight because it is pretty strongly Tory, and I enjoy the fact that it feels like my vote makes more difference each time I use it. That is all I have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Any questions from the audience? (No response) I would just say that every single person, every resident, every 'walk-in', and some people just walk in and say, "Can I speak?", makes a difference. Every speaker has equal weight, and it really does make a

difference. Last time, Gerald was just telling me, after the first consultation, over 60 per cent of proposed constituencies changed in some way, big or small, so it can make a difference.

MS HARPER: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thanks for coming in. Could we have Maurice Howse now, please? Thank you. If we could have your name and address, please, Mr Howse.

CLLR HOWSE: (Avenue ward) Good afternoon. I am Cllr Maurice Howse. I live at 17 The Firs, Lower Quinton, CV37 8TJ. I am here as a councillor, but also as a very interested resident because the place that I live is not at all, we think, suitable to go into the proposed Boundary Commission changes.

What I would like to say is that the proposals from the Commission break Stratford-upon-Avon Council into four constituencies. We accept it may be too big for one constituency, but splitting it into four leaves us extremely fragmented and an afterthought in four constituencies. Stratford-upon-Avon, after all, is a world-renowned and recognised historical market town, and practically anywhere you go in the world, if you say you are from Stratford-upon-Avon, people immediately know where you are. We feel that Stratford-upon-Avon should be recognised as its own constituency and not buried in another name.

Some of the villages, such as Ettington, Shipston, Welford and many of the other surrounding villages, identify very, very closely with Stratford-upon-Avon, and they have no connections with Evesham at all. There are no main roads linking the boundaries of the proposed changes and no public transport links, but there are cultural, historical and practical links between all of these villages, but not between Evesham at all. There is no connection whatsoever.

If we look at Alcester, Bidford, Studley and Henley as well, these surrounding villages also identify very closely with Redditch, and they do not want to be linked with Redditch and Worcestershire in general. Wellesbourne and Kineton have always been linked to Stratford and belong in a Stratford-upon-Avon seat. I urge the Boundary Commission to rethink this proposed change. For example, to go from the north/north-east corner in Droitwich to the south/south-west corner in Chipping Campden is a huge journey across country, with no direct roads, no direct rail link and no direct public transport. It is just simply inconsistent with trying to run a cohesive constituency.

Quinton village itself sits naturally with Stratford-upon-Avon, it is only six miles away, and indeed it shares the same CV37 postcode. As a resident of Quinton, I would very much like to stay as Stratford-upon-Avon with its own constituency. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You mentioned there the difficulty of getting from the north-east to the south/south-west. How long would you estimate that it would take, if you were, say, driving it?

CLLR HOWSE: I am sorry; I cannot quite hear you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You mentioned the difficulties of getting from the north-east to the south/south-west.

CLLR HOWSE: Droitwich.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Droitwich right down to Chipping Campden. How long would you estimate, say, driving that would take?

CLLR HOWSE: On my best guesstimate, it would take probably two hours, because it takes me about an hour to get from Quinton to Droitwich and probably three-quarters of an hour to get to Chipping Campden, so getting on for two hours, yes. There are no public transport links at all.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you; that is useful. Any questions from the audience? Any points of clarification? (No response) Thank you very much for your time.

CLLR HOWSE: Thank you, madam.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are going to hold on a few minutes. We have somebody due in three minutes' time, John Martin. We will have a check on that. We can ask him whether he wants to speak early, when he does. Is there anyone else in the room right now who would like to speak early?

Our next speaker is going to be Mr Philip Seccombe, who is the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire. We need your name and address. If you need to point at anything, we can zoom in and what-have-you on the maps there. Thank you very much.

CLLR SECCOMBE: (Ettington ward) Thank you very much. My name is Philip Seccombe and I am the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire. I am a Stratford district councillor for the Ettington ward. I commanded what was the successor unit to the Warwickshire Yeomanry, and I am president of the Stratford-upon-Avon Conservative Association.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you able to give us an address?

CLLR SECCOMBE: My address is Sundial, Lower Tysoe, Warwick. I am going to start by saying that I fully understand that Warwickshire will get five and a half Members of Parliament, purely down to the arithmetic and the maths. There will be a question of deciding where that other half Member, if there is such a thing, will be affiliated to. I want to work from the north of the county down to the south, if I may.

The North Warwickshire proposed constituency, I think, looks sensible. It will be coterminous with the North Warwickshire Borough Council boundaries, and I know that the community there would feel that that was more logical than it is at the moment, whereas two or three wards of North Warwickshire Borough Council go into the Nuneaton parliamentary constituency. The Nuneaton constituency, which you can see there (indicating), looks sensible. Most of those communities orientate and would regard Nuneaton as their local cultural centre, amongst other things.

Rugby, which is further over to the right, is quite a long, slim constituency, as proposed, but I think that, because of the shape of the country, that is what we are probably going to have to put up with, so I seem to be reasonably happy with that.

I now move on to an area which I do not agree with, which is the proposal to split the towns of Warwick and Leamington Spa. I have been in the job of Police Commissioner now for six months, and there is no doubt, from my view, that those two communities regard themselves as a single entity for culture, education, recreation, shopping and all sorts of other reasons. I would like to see a new plan that is produced after this hearing keeping Warwick and Leamington together.

Moving on, further south is an area where I live, which is the Stratford proposed constituency. I am the district councillor for the ward of Ettington, which lies between Stratford-upon-Avon and Shipston-on-Stour, and it is proposed that that will be moved into a new constituency, which will go with Evesham. I have represented that ward now for 14 years and I do not know of many people who know where Evesham is and probably do not feel affiliated to the town of Evesham.

Another one is the ward of Tamworth-in-Arden, which is proposed under these current proposals to be joined, on its own as a ward, to the West Midlands. Tamworth-in-Arden is a strong local community which has historical links and has, for some time, orientated towards Stratford. As a district council, we would regard Tamworth as very much part of our district.

Looking generally at Stratford District Council, the proposals look at splitting a district council into four separate parliamentary constituencies. This, I think, would be difficult for both Members of Parliament and, indeed, for the district council authorities. We understand that perhaps the district may have to be split into two, but to be split into four separate constituencies seems to me to be absurd.

As I said at the beginning, we have five and a half MPs, so where is the other half going to lie? My thoughts are that it would be sensible, as on actually the first Boundary Commission proposals some two or three years ago, and you will know the exact date, to put the Kenilworth part of the current Kenilworth and Southam constituency into a full constituency with parts of southern Coventry. That, to me, sounds a more allied and sensible joining-up than it would be with parts of south Worcestershire going with a Stratford-upon-Avon constituency.

Those, in essence, are my feelings. I think they are probably somewhat akin to the Conservative Party proposals, which I am sure you have had outlined to you this last couple of days. As somebody who now represents the whole of Warwickshire, I am keen to see that the Members of Parliament are representing communities that look to be sensible, that the boundaries are sensible and tie in with some of those links that all sections and all ages of the community have. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points of clarification or questions from the audience? (No response) As ever, I have the odd little one, a couple of things. One is that there are a number of counter-proposals, and I just wondered if you had come across any and had anything to say about any of those at all. Do not worry if you have not; that is absolutely fine.

CLLR SECCOMBE: The principal one I have come across is the one as proposed, which is the allying of the many rural wards south of Stratford down to pretty close to Moreton-in-Marsh, to go into a rather strangely shaped Evesham constituency, something like a crescent, which does not end up in its far north very far away from the county town of Worcester. I do understand that any proposals will have knock-on effects, and plainly it is quite important to come to this sort of forum and suggest something positive rather than just destroy what is proposed. I would reiterate that I think it would be, and it is not ideal, more sensible that some of the southern wards of Coventry would be better allied and linked to our towns of Kenilworth and Stoneleigh - sorry, Stoneleigh is a village, but that part of the world. I am sure you are aware that Warwick University sits half in Coventry and half in Warwickshire; maybe it would be better to have a single Member of Parliament to represent it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for that. Thank you also for telling us the areas in which you are supportive of some of these proposals, because that helps us to concentrate on the areas where people may have issues. We are very, very grateful; hugely useful. Thank you for your time.

CLLR SECCOMBE: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is there a Mr Martin here? [Inaudible comment from the room] He is not going to be coming. In that case, we are going to

take a 20-minute tea break, the final of the day, and we will reconvene for a very full session starting at 3.50. Thank you very much.

After a short adjournment

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have had a really stimulating couple of days, so thank you for that. Our first speaker is Mr Chris White, who is the Warwick MP.

MR WHITE: (MP for Warwick and Leamington) Good afternoon. My name is Chris White. I am the Member of Parliament for Warwick and Leamington. I have been the Member of Parliament since 2010 and I have been a local resident since 2003. My address, rather than using the House of Commons address, I would like to use my personal address, which is 7 Mill Street, Warwick.

May I start by thanking you and your team. Bearing in mind this is the final session and bearing in mind that you have had 60 speakers, I think, in the last two days, thank you for listening very patiently to the arguments that have been put forward. I am only sorry that you have been stuck in this splendid building and you have not had the opportunity to wander outside and to speak to the wider local community.

Politicians, colleagues and I would also like to thank colleagues from across parties who have come to speak at this hearing, particularly those from Coventry, from Stratford and Nuneaton, who have all made their respective cases, bearing in mind, whatever they have spoken about, that they have all taken for granted that Warwick and Leamington should remain as one constituency. We have heard from community groups, business groups, but, most importantly, from local residents who have spoken with one voice against these proposals. I have not been able to hear everything, Ms Gilmore, but I think I would be correct in suggesting that everybody has said that Warwick and Leamington should stay together.

What have these two days been about? In my view, on the one hand, we have seen the power of the felt-tip pen, which has been to divide a community and, on the other hand, speaker after speaker saying why that community should remain together. My case is as follows:

Historically, the towns of Warwick and Leamington have formed a single constituency since 1885. Geography is about borders and, time after time, even lifelong residents do not know where these borders lie because the town boundaries have become so blurred. The separation between Kenilworth and Leamington and Stratford and Warwick can be seen from space; distinct and separated by acres of green land, motorways and dual carriageways.

In my six years as a Member of Parliament and through the thousands of pieces of correspondence that I have received, not one single resident has come to me to say, "Would it not be better if Stratford were joined with Warwick and Leamington were joined with Kenilworth?" Not one.

We have heard about transport links, the G1 bus and the train line between Leamington and Warwick, and families living in one town and their children going to school in another. Not only is our transport accessible, it is available to all. As the Member of Parliament, I need to be accessible and, whether by car, by rail or by foot, my constituents have access to me. With the Gurdwara in one town, the majority of the Sikh community in the other; the oldest school in the country, Warwick, being in the Kenilworth and Leamington constituency and the district offices, known as Warwick district, being located in Leamington, but the town it is named after being located in the Stratford and Warwick constituency: anomaly after anomaly.

Economically, I would like to tell you a story. Four years ago, I was chairing a meeting of the All-Party Manufacturing Group, and a company said to me they could not fit one more cardboard box in their office. I went to my office, I had forgotten what they were talking about and then I thought I would give them a call. I said, "Why don't you move to Leamington?" He said that they had not really thought about that. I said, "Can I give you another call in a month or so?" I did, and I welcomed them to the community, I took them up the parade, we had lunch in Wildes, we went to the castle, we saw Motion House, we had dinner in Catalan, and they fell in love with this place, and not just Leamington but they fell in love with Warwick as well, and now, if you drive past Morrison's, you see that factory building. Recently, a number of members here present were at the opening ceremony, as we saw the diggers and the JCBs go into that place, and there were people from historic societies, politicians, community groups welcoming that factory coming here. The one thing we did not agree on was whether it was in Warwick or Leamington.

I would like to talk about focus, which has been referred to in a number of speeches. As with my predecessor, James Plaskitt, who was the MP, our focus has been on this community. As its centre of gravity, Warwick is not peripheral and Leamington is not peripheral. For Warwick and Leamington to have one voice in Westminster, it is manufacturing, video games, business, health, housing, local government, devolution and the environment. Again, as my predecessor before me, I have helped to bring investment, assisted with housing, worked with social services, worked with our health services and tried my hardest to resolve cases. I have spoken to ministers and spend my time in Parliament promoting Warwick and Leamington there: a single-minded approach with a single-minded focus.

From what you have heard, you will know that our community is united, not only in its desire to stay together but at its bafflement at these proposals, whether it is the chambers, the charities, the schools, the councils, the activists, the academics or the

local resident who does not want one more challenge in his life. I know that this is one part of the process. There is still time for written submissions, but I hope that this has given you and the Commission a flavour of public feeling.

We are passionate about this community. There is a strong affinity between these two towns and a tremendous synergy based on history, culture and the economy, but it is not until you live here that you can understand the depth of that shared purpose and strength of our common ties. This, I hope, is not an experiment. I would urge the Commission to reconsider. You will, of course, be welcome back, but I hope not for 131 more years. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any questions or points of clarification from the audience? (No response) In that case, I have just a couple of things, Mr White. Firstly, I have had a good wander around, and I was lucky enough to come up here early on Wednesday, so that was very nice, and I have managed to chat to a few local people outside here, which has also been very good and very useful. We are grateful for the hospitality we have been shown, and I would point out that our closing date for written submissions is 5 December. After that, the early analysis will lead to changes in some things that have been proposed, no doubt, that always happens, so it is important that written submissions from anyone else who wants to do that go in, and yours too, if you want to.

MR WHITE: Of course.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very, very much. That was useful, interesting and we are grateful for your time.

MR WHITE: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is Chris Elliott here yet? No. Or John Barrott? In that case, Ann Morrison, are you happy to talk now? Thank you very much. That would be great. Mrs Ann Morrison, who is the Mayor of Leamington Spa, we need your name and address first. Thank you.

CLLR MORRISON: (Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa) Thank you. My name is Ann Morrison. I am a town councillor and I am Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa. Do you want my address?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, we do need it, thanks.

CLLR MORRISON: I live at 81 Leam Terrace, Leamington Spa. I worked for Warwickshire County Council for 24 years, first as a social worker and subsequently as a manager covering the whole county, so I have a reasonable knowledge of the main towns of the whole of Warwickshire; I have worked in most of them.

My submission is that Leamington and Warwick are, effectively, one community, that Leamington has little or no affinity with Kenilworth and that Warwick has even less with Stratford. The attributes, qualities and aspects of town life that Leamington and Warwick share include contemporary cultural activities with a shared use of buildings and theatres, a similar mix of manufacturing in both towns and industrial parks that border on both towns and not on Kenilworth or Stratford.

I would challenge anyone who does not know the area to find the boundaries between the two towns. In fact, people who live in the towns often do not know where the boundaries are, and the postcodes do not simplify matters either. The town of Whitnash and the areas known as Heathcote and, more recently, Warwick Gates identify with Leamington or Warwick or both; it has not mattered that much. It has not mattered except to the people of Whitnash, who clearly identify themselves as separate from both towns, but still relate to both Warwick and Leamington.

The ease of transfer between locations is evident in the transport routes. Not only is it accessible to public transport, but you can actually walk or cycle between the locations in Kenilworth[sic] and Warwick. This is not true of the relationship or contact networks with Kenilworth or Stratford. The distance between the towns is important. I meet many Leamingtonians who have never travelled to Kenilworth, except on school trips as children, and, even when I am talking to groups of older people, they will say, "I haven't been into Kenilworth for 40 or 50 years".

One very important link between the towns is our ethnic make-up, and we are proud of that. There are religious and cultural organisations that cover the towns, so there is the Gurdwara, there are the Irish clubs, there are the mosques and there are the churches. Many organisations have the names 'Warwick' and 'Kenilworth'[sic] in their titles. Kenilworth and Stratford tend to be more homogenous in their populations. Many clubs, such as those for lunch clubs, day cares for older people or people with learning disabilities, cover Warwick and Leamington. I used to organise health walks for Age UK. Many people would come to those from Warwick as well as Leamington, but never from Kenilworth. I maintain that they are, effectively, one unit.

What would the effect be on local people if the current constituency were to be split, and does it matter to local people? I have four points. The first one is that there is an element of our argument about making our political system meaningful for the electorate. If commentators on recent elections are correct, the electorate feels increasingly removed from the establishment. Making an arbitrary split based solely on numbers would confirm that the notion of community, society and family friendship networks is of no interest to the Government. We believe that our link between the two towns is real and historic.

Secondly, instituting the proposed changes would result in confusion for the public. Three of the towns are in one district council, the other is in a completely different one. This would add a complexity to the district council's ability to manage the election processes, for example. The three-tier system is difficult enough for most people to manage without splitting it into two constituencies.

Thirdly, I think the proposal has absolutely no merit for local residents. I believe it would diminish the town of Warwick, to some extent, and for Leamington residents it would be an artificial link with no benefit. This is even more important if we take into account the new houses which are proposed in the Local Plan, which is now under inspection. The new developments will actually link the towns of Leamington, Warwick and Whitnash, and we anticipate that people living in those new communities will relate to both of our towns, but certainly not to Kenilworth or Stratford.

Lastly, I think the proposals would make two constituencies very difficult for the two Members of Parliament. For example, where would they hold surgeries? Would they need to double-up on everything? Would they have to attend double the amount of ceremonies and civic events? Could one person represent such different communities? They would have to learn the names and contacts, et cetera, of two different and complex organisations, and I think that is particularly true of linking Warwick and Stratford.

I would submit that these proposals have no merit other than evening up numbers. Surely, in the modern world, we can live with some irregularities in the size of constituencies. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Do we have any questions? We need your name, please.

CLLR PHILLIPS: Peter Phillips from Wasperton. Just a clarification. When you were talking about the names of societies, et cetera, in the area, I think you inadvertently said "Warwick and Kenilworth". I presume you meant Warwick and Leamington.

CLLR MORRISON: I did, indeed. That was my mistake. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, we had spotted it up here as well, so we made that assumption as well. You do not have to answer this if you do not feel it is appropriate for you. We are obliged by the law to deal with numbers. Are there any particular wards outside the constituency at the moment that you feel would have particular affinities if they were brought in?

CLLR MORRISON: Brought into where?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Into the existing constituency. Again, you do not have to answer that; we have had lots of submissions on it.

CLLR MORRISON: I do not think I will add anything. People do make all sorts of comments about what their wishes might be, but I would not want to say that they had any particular weight for me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is fine. Thank you very much for your time; it is really important that you came here. We are very grateful.

CLLR MORRISON: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am just checking. We do not seem to have any of our next speakers, and we have quite a few. I will ask again: Chris Elliot, is he here? (No response) I think we are expecting him. John Barrott? (No response) Is Mr Western here? I think you are. You are down to speak. How do you feel about coming up and speaking now, or do you want to stick with your slot? [Inaudible comment from the room] That would be great, thank you. As ever, we are looking for your name and your address, please.

CLLR WESTERN: (Leamington Willes) Sure. Good afternoon. My name is Matt Western, and my address is 19 Plymouth Place, Leamington Spa, CV31 1HN. Over the past two days, you have heard from dozens of Warwick and Leamington residents, community leaders, organisations and business people. Without exception, everyone has spoken about the entity that is Warwick and Leamington and the two towns' symbiotic relationship. Ordinarily, it would, therefore, be hard for me to say anything that you have not heard before, but I will try and sum up what I think everyone feels across our two towns. They are Warwick and Leamington, not Leamington and Warwick, as indeed we never speak of chips and fish. That is the virtue of history.

This morning, you heard from Rebecca Earle, a professor of history, who cited some detail of our shared past, of our two towns and how, indeed, Leamington grew alongside Warwick to such an extent that, in the post-war period, the town and country planners recognised even then how intertwined and interdependent the towns had already become. Indeed, history has much to teach us. You will have heard repeatedly about the formation of this constituency back in Victorian times and the foresight they had in creating a single political entity.

Interestingly, Warwick and Leamington share their history with the beautiful city of Budapest. Just 12 years earlier, in 1873, Budapest became a single city occupying both banks of the River Danube, with the unification of Buda, on the west bank, and Pest on the east bank. Likewise, in 1885, Warwick, on the west bank, and Leamington, on the east bank, became one parliamentary constituency. Like Budapest, Warwick and Leamington have developed over the years, growing ever closer. We have

become, and I hope you will forgive the term but it best describes them, conjoined. As conjoined towns, we are mutually dependent, socially, economically and politically. To separate the two of us would likely damage both towns.

The community links are legion. You have heard that more Leamington residents use Warwick Hospital than residents of any other community. You will have heard how the Sikh temple sits in Warwick while the Sikh community centre, which is right behind it, lies in Leamington. Likewise, many residents shop in the Leamington retail park, which is actually in Warwick, but on the boundary, and there are the residents who live in Warwick Gates, half of whom live in Whitnash and the other half in Warwick. Then there is Leamington Football Club, whose stadium is in Whitnash, but who will soon be playing their home games in Warwick. You have heard all about the schoolchildren from one town being schooled in the other.

Elsewhere, village wards such as Cubbington sit cheek-by-jowl with Leamington. They look to Leamington for all their utility. By example, 93 per cent of local children attend school in Cubbington, Leamington or Warwick as residents of Cubbington. This union, this interdependence is fundamental to our future. In developing the Local Plan, officers from both district and county councils have strived to build on this mutual advantage. Much of the housing built to the south is in Warwick or Whitnash, but will, in fact, look towards Leamington for employment, education and many public services. In that respect, the infrastructure, whether it be health or transport provision, builds on that interconnectedness. As a small example, the only Park-and-Ride envisaged for Warwick and Leamington will sit south of Warwick but mostly serve Leamington.

In arriving at a decision for constituency boundaries, it is important not just to think about the community as it stands today, but also the primary challenges of the 21st Century. The solutions for Warwick will impact on Leamington, and vice versa. In this regard, Stratford is almost irrelevant. In fact, the solutions will be common to both our towns, given that symbiotic relationship I described earlier. Health provision in the 21st Century is going to be a major challenge for society, and it is, therefore, highly concerning that a proposed constituency of Stratford and Warwick would comprise two sub-regional hospitals, while Leamington and Kenilworth would have none. What would a local MP in Leamington say to any hospital funding cuts in Warwick? That is what they are there to do: to provide a voice for their community and to ensure its health and prosperity.

In summary, this relationship has not just endured, it has blossomed. I have tried to illustrate how this interdependency gives a strong sense of community such that we do not recognise any boundary between us. The two towns are so interlinked through business, transport, schooling, clubs and religious associations, no better illustrated than through the Sikh community, a community equally at home in Warwick as it is in Leamington. As the town and country planning people said post-war, the towns were

then inextricably linked and they are more so now. Sometimes, things are better left as they are. Lennon and McCartney, for example, better together, as some would say.

Finally, I described us as conjoined towns, as I think this best describes our joint livelihood. You may prefer to describe us as living in a successful civil partnership, one that has prospered for over 130 years. We are one community, and that community wants to remain as one. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any points of clarification from the audience? (No response) That was very, very clear and very, very helpful. Thank you very much indeed for giving us your time.

Our next speaker is Chris Elliott, the Chief Executive from Warwick District Council. Mr Elliott, we need your name and your address first, please.

MR ELLIOTT: My name is Chris Elliott. I am the Chief Executive of Warwick District Council. I am going to give you my work address rather than my home address, which is Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. If you are going to test me on the precise postcode, I will probably fail, but you know where we are. Do I have a set amount of time?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are fairly flexible at the moment.

MR ELLIOTT: Not that you are encouraging me to speak for an awfully long time!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you are still here in an hour, we might ---

MR ELLIOTT: Part of my role is, obviously, as the Returning Officer, in all of its various guises and all of the different types of elections. This has come from the District Council, it has been through its Licensing and Regulatory Committee, which is a cross-party committee, and indeed the comments that the Council have made to you have cross-party support. From that point of view, the comments are not made from, shall we say, any political partiality.

We have a number of concerns with the proposals. Let me deal with them in priority order, as the Council as agreed. First of all, it is about the position of Myton and Heathcote ward, and it probably would help perhaps if I could show the Myton and Heathcote ward.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We might even go in a little bit further on that.

MR ELLIOTT: Yes. This connects with the wider issue which you have already heard about, and I will try not to repeat what has already been said.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is not a problem.

MR ELLIOTT: In this particular case, the constituency boundary proposals not only split Warwick and Leamington apart, they actually split Warwick apart, because Myton and Heathcote is part of the ancient town and parish of Warwick. This comes back to the principle, as far as the Council and all its members see it, that we understand that you need to achieve electoral equality across all of the constituencies. However, those constituency boundaries should also have some reflection of the integrity of recognisable geographic and economically linked communities, so that, in terms of representation, whoever is elected as an MP, they are part of a coherent community rather than a very disparate one.

On this particular place, the Council strongly object to Myton and Heathcote being separated off from the rest of Warwick town; as I said, it is part of the parish. We do not quite see, other than the mathematical logic of trying to balance out numbers, why there would be any need to split apart a community. In terms of the numbers, as far as we see it, notwithstanding any other changes that we might advocate, you could still probably move Myton and Heathcote into Warwick and Stratford and the constituency numbers for each of Kenilworth and Leamington and Warwick and Stratford would still be within the tolerances of about 5,000 voters either side of an average of 75,000. It seems to us that this is a change which you could make without necessarily having a knock-on effect around the rest, if you like, of the parliamentary geography in the rest of the Midlands or indeed the rest of the country. Whilst it may allow for some unevenness, that seems to this Council a small price to pay for maintaining the coherence of a local community. That is something that we feel that you could do without having to rewrite the whole of the proposals.

Our second issue is the more major one about separating Warwick and Leamington. You have heard from Cllr Weston, and I am sure that others have said and will say it with much greater effect than I can, but again we come back to the point, as a Council, that the parliamentary constituency, as far as possible, should reflect not just electoral numbers but they should reflect recognisable communities. I might be challenged outside of this room, but, if you took away the signs saying "Welcome to Warwick" and "Welcome to Leamington", a stranger might not know that they had passed from one town to another. The local people will, no doubt, hang me afterwards for having said that.

In terms of how life works, as opposed to how administrative boundaries work, it does work very much as almost a twin-town approach. I would say "twin-town", but I am not allowed to forget that there are three towns, that the town of Whitnash is part of that communion of the communities. As has been said, they have been in the same constituency since 1885. I will leave the point at that from my point of view, not

because it is not important but because others have said it and I do not think you need me to say it again very much more.

Our third point is a more generic one. We have been struggling with the consequences of the Boundary Commission for local government with the difference of views and boundaries between county divisions, district wards and town council wards. We have started a process of reconciling all those things with a view to changing the district wards to match the county wards. We will be asking the Local Government Boundary Commission to do that, or to change some of the town council wards that the Local Government Boundary Commission had created for us, which make no sense to anything else that exists.

In addition, because the area is growing, we have been going through a process of trying to reflect the modernity of the shape of built development and where people live with the administrative and political boundaries that they have had thrust upon them. In a review we undertook two years ago, we ironed out a lot of those, and the Boundary Commission kindly created some more for us, but what we are saying as a general point is that, in order to avoid voter confusion, then, whatever boundaries you decide upon, the building blocks for them should be the recognisable boundaries of parish councils or, in our case, county divisions, assuming that we can get that through next year, in other words, before the next general election.

We have had a number of times when there have been multiple elections. Obviously, in May 2015, in this area, we had the General Election, we had all our district elections and we had all our town council elections, which were big enough and difficult enough as it is, but at least they had the virtue that the district and town council wards were the same. That was not quite true with the parliamentary wards, so, in the Milverton ward, which you can see there at the top (indicating), a small part of it actually lay within the Kenilworth and Southam constituency. It probably will not come up on your map. What we are seeking to avoid is where one part of a recognisable estate is in a different parliamentary constituency from another because the parish boundary, et cetera, had not changed. We are suggesting that the boundary blocks must be coterminous for the benefit of the voter and to avoid voter confusion. That is a broad point.

Our final point is a concern about electoral base.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We have the map up here of Milverton, and we have put in the current boundary.

MR ELLIOTT: That was more by way of illustration about where, if you do not have coterminosity, what you do is create odd bits and pieces which, for the voter on the ground, make absolutely no sense. Certainly from our perspective, if you believe that the electoral representation should reflect true communities, then having bits and pieces like that is a nonsense. These things may not necessarily affect great numbers, so

again this could be something that you could do without it having much effect upon the overall electoral mathematics. That was our third point.

The fourth point, and you may not be able to deal with this, is a concern about the electoral base. I know that this may be prescribed by the legislation that you have before you, but we have seen a very significant increase in the electoral base. You have accounted for almost 98,000 in December 2015, and we had, for the EU referendum, an electoral base of just over 103,000, which is, broadly speaking, about a 5,000 difference. It probably would not matter if that increase was spread evenly because then a ratio between MPs and electoral numbers you could just change. However, our concern is that it is not evenly spread and, if that was carried across the country, you may very well come up with different boundaries because, actually, the number of electors in particular places would be different. That is our broad concern, which is not just specific to Warwick and Leamington, although it obviously has an implication, but it has an implication, from our perspective, across the country.

To summarise, first of all, we believe that you could change the location of the Myton and Heathcote ward very easily, from our perspective, to the Stratford and Warwick constituency. Notwithstanding that, our view is that Warwick and Leamington as towns should stay together in the constituency. We realise that that would have a wider effect, but we believe that that will be the right thing. Thirdly, whatever precise boundaries are decided upon, the building blocks should be those of the tiers of government below to avoid voter confusion. Finally, there is a concern about the electoral base numbers and how, by there being such a difference, if carried through nationally, you might well have a very different geography for parliamentary constituencies. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. That was very clear, from my viewpoint. Any questions or points of clarification? We have one at the back there. We will need your name, first, please.

MR RAYNOR: Thomas Raynor, of 11 Prince's Street. Just a quick clarification: is this the view of the full Council or the view of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee?

MR ELLIOTT: It is the view of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, which has the full delegated powers of the Council. There is, I believe, a motion going to full Council which supplements this, but, since it has not been determined, I cannot say on behalf of the Council. It does not say anything different.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I would assume that, whatever happens after that motion, there may be a written submission to the Boundary Commission. You have that opportunity.

MR ELLIOTT: In brief, the motion, because the papers literally have just been published today, supports the letter that you have already had and which I have tried to

summarise, and it reiterates the concerns, particularly about the split of Warwick and Leamington. Yes, you may have another letter, but it will not say much different.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Fine. I am just reminding everyone that 5 December is the deadline date for this particular round of consultation, so people can still write in. They can also change their minds if they have heard things over the last two days. Of course, just to point out, we cannot deal with the data that we are obliged by law to use, as I think you appreciated. Thank you so much for your time.

MR ELLIOTT: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am assuming there are no further questions. (No response) No. Thank you very much. Our final speaker is John Barrott and he has not arrived as yet, unless he is in the room and we do not know about it. Perhaps we could give it a few minutes. [Inaudible comment from the room] Mr Barrott is not coming. We will just have a quick chat and see where we are going. (After a short pause) Is there anyone else in the room who would like to speak? (No response)

In that case, we would really like to thank Royal Leamington Spa and the Pump Rooms here for hosting us. It has been a fantastic two days. We have had, I do not know how many people, probably 70 or 80 people, at least, come and well over 60 speak. We are really grateful and, for every single person who has spoken, what they have said will be taken into account. The first consultation ends on 5 December. This will be analysed by myself, another Assistant Commissioner and with our staff. We will then publish a second version of our proposals and that will be open to consultation too. Thank you so much for your time; it has been really fascinating and illuminating. Good evening.

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