

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

**ALDERSGATE ROOM, CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER,
STOREY'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1H 9NH**

ON

MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2016
DAY ONE

Before:

Mr Howard Simmons, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
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At 10.00 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to this public hearing, the Boundary Commission for England considering proposals for the new parliamentary constituencies for the London Region. My name is Howard Simmons; I am one of the Assistant Commissioners appointed to assist the Boundary Commission in this review and I have my two colleagues present as well who will be working on London, Emma Davey and Richard Wold, in the audience.

Essentially, our job is to consider the representations made by the public and we welcome representations and proposals for how the initial proposals put forward by the Commission can be amended, improved and developed and, in the light of that, then make recommendations on how the constituencies should in fact be drafted for London region.

I am assisted by a team of staff from the Boundary Commission and they are led by Sam Hartley who is sitting on my left. Sam will shortly provide an explanation of the Commission's initial proposals for the constituencies for the London Region. He will run through how you can make representations and some other administrative matters. The hearing today is scheduled to run from now, 10.00 am, until 8.00 pm this evening. We are taking some comfort breaks during the course of that. Tomorrow, from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm. I will be chairing both of those sessions.

A number of people have already booked in to make their representations at particular times. We welcome others who have not yet booked in to come forward and I will make sure that they have the opportunity to speak and to put forward their views.

It is important to underline that the purpose of today is to allow people to make representations on the initial proposals; it is not to debate those initial proposals as such but to make representations about how they can be improved. It is not an opportunity for cross-examination of people's views; it is to listen and hear those proposals. There will be an opportunity later at the next stage of consultation when challenges can be made to suggestions or further thoughts can be considered for proposals that have been made.

If there are any questions arising for points of clarification, then I am happy to take those but they should be addressed to me as the Chairman, not to the individual who has made the actual proposals or representations.

I am going to hand over to Sam now who will run through the administrative points and actually set out the original proposals for London from the Commission.

MR HARTLEY: Thank you, Howard. Good morning, everyone. As Howard mentioned, my name is Sam Hartley and I am Secretary to the Boundary Commission for England.

I am responsible for supporting the Commissioners in their role to recommend new parliamentary constituency boundaries and at this hearing I lead the team of staff responsible for ensuring that the hearing runs smoothly. As Howard has already stated, he will chair the hearing itself and it is his responsibility to run the hearing at his discretion and to take decisions about speakers, questioners and timings. My team and I are here today to support Howard in carrying out his role. Please, ask one of us outside of the hearing if you need any help or assistance.

I would like to talk now about the Commission's initial proposals for the London Region which were published on 13 September 2016. The Commission's proposals for this region are for 68 constituencies, a reduction of five. Our proposals leave four of the existing constituencies unchanged. We used the European electoral regions as a template for the allocation of the 499 constituencies to which England is entitled, not including the two constituencies to be allocated to the Isle of Wight. This approach is permitted by the legislation and has been supported by previous public consultation. This approach does not prevent anyone from putting forward counterproposals that include one or more constituencies being split between the regions but it is likely that compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade us to depart from the regional base approach we adopted in formulating our initial proposals.

In considering the composition of each electoral region, we noted that it might not be possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties or local authority areas. The London region has been allocated 68 constituencies, as I said, a reduction of five from the current number. Our proposals leave four of the existing constituencies unchanged. As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual London boroughs, we have grouped them into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined boroughs. Substantial change is required throughout London in order to comply with the electoral quota. Consequently, it has been necessary to propose 38 constituencies that cross London borough boundaries. Of these, 36 contain parts of two London boroughs and two contain parts of three or more London boroughs. In order to create 68 constituencies wholly within London, we have proposed one constituency that crosses the River Lea. We have not proposed any constituencies that cross the River Thames.

The statutory rules allow us to take into account local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015. These include both the external boundaries of local councils and their internal boundaries known as wards. We seek to avoid dividing wards between constituencies wherever possible. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. We consider that any division of these units between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for electoral registration and the returning officers who are responsible for running elections. It is our view that only in exceptional and compelling circumstances will

splitting a ward between constituencies be justified and our initial proposals do not do so. If an alternative scheme proposes to split wards, strong evidence and justification will need to be provided and the extent of such ward splitting should be kept to a minimum.

The scale of change in this review is significant and we look forward to hearing the views of people at this hearing and throughout the rest of the consultation period. We are consulting on our proposals until Monday 5 December; thus there is still time after this hearing for people to contribute in writing. There are also reference copies of the proposals present at this hearing and they are available on our website and in a number of places of deposit around the region. You can make written representations to us through our consultation website at BCE2018.org.uk. I do urge everyone to submit written representations to us before the deadline of 5 December.

Finally, I would like to remind all participants that this hearing is part of a public consultation and you will be asked to provide us with your name and address if you make an oral representation. The Commission is legally obliged to take a record of the public hearings and, as you can see from the back, we are taking a video recording today from which we will create a verbatim transcript. The Commission is required to publish the record of the public hearing along with all written representations for a four-week period during which other members of the public will have an opportunity to comment on those representations. We expect this period to occur during the spring of next year.

The publication of the hearing, records and written representations include certain personal data of those who have made representations. I therefore invite all those contributing to read the Commission's Data Protection and Privacy Policy, a copy of which we have with us today and which is also available on our website.

There are just a few matters of housekeeping before we start. There is no fire alarm due today; if the alarm goes off, please use the door at the front on the left or the door at the back. The toilets are outside across the hall past the stairs. I remind everybody to switch off their mobile phones or put them to silent, please.

I will now hand back to Howard to begin the public hearing and I thank you all for your attendance today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Sam. We will start the proceedings and the proposal is this morning to hear from the main political parties and the first party to make representations is the Green Party. Is the representative of the Green Party here? Welcome. Would you come up to the lectern and introduce yourself, please, with your name, address, so on and so forth.

MR HAMDACHE: (Green Party) My name is Benali Hamdache; I am the London Green Party's Election Co-ordinator. Thank you for giving me the dubious honour of going first today. I want to start by thanking the hard work that has been done by the Boundary Commission; I think this is a sometimes rather thankless task and I dare say that there will be many demonstrations against some of the proposals that we make today but I do want to start by saying that it is not an easy task and I want to thank all the hours that have gone into the proposals that have been made today.

I am going to start by talking about the process here. I am afraid, as the Green, I am going to have to argue against meddling with what is a broken system of first past the post. I know the arguments for equal sized constituencies goes back to the Chartists but I do think if the Chartists were around today, they would be arguing for proportional representation instead of the rather flawed process that only exacerbates the existing problems with our broken democracy and, indeed, if we were looking to take back control after a very famous referendum we have just had, proportional representation would certainly be my remedy. Equally, I have to argue against the process for removing 50 MPs at a time when the House of Lords is ever expanding. We are at our biggest population size ever. To scrap another 50 MPs is empty populism when we are actually going to be reducing the amount of representation per person when our population size is increasing equally at a time when we are expanding ever our House of Lords to a point where there are not enough seats for all the Lords to sit. Unfortunately, I do think the guidelines given to the Boundary Commission are slightly unworkable.

I go to the next slide. I want to start by talking about the Electoral Roll. We have just had the EU Referendum that has had a huge spike in the amount of registered voters. Actually, we have over one million missing voters from the Roll. It is the firm view of the Green Party that we should be seeing the boundary reviews being based on this most up-to-date Electoral Roll rather than the boundary review being done on an older version. There is a link to the *BBC's* articles; I had suggested that if we did do this, there would be two extra MPs in London from the review being done on a more up-to-date basis. That diminishment of voting power of London is not a great step forward and we are arguing that the boundary review should look at the new Electoral Roll and make that the basis.

I also want to make the argument that there are 1.3 million more voting aged adults in London than are on the Electoral Roll. Many of those are people who have not registered, many of those are people who are perhaps not eligible to register, but it does mean that their voice in Westminster is diminished and I do argue that equally not registering to vote is, in its way, a demonstration of dissatisfaction with the political system, but people who are adults still have casework and still need representation in Parliament. The argument for basing these boundaries solely on registered voters rather than population I think is a flawed one.

I also want to make the point that, on that basis, London MPs will face far more casework than MPs in the other regions, particularly when the fact that many of those citizens do bring concerns around dealing with visas and dealing with citizenship and do in themselves sometimes bring more casework for MPs to deal with, and what we are actually heading towards is London MPs being unable to deal with the amount of casework that they are dealing with effectively, so there is that concern there. We are also, with recent figures, seeing that London's growth rate is two times more than anywhere else in the country. Thus, what we are seeing if these boundary reviews are being made on this basis is that, very quickly, the voting power of London will be diminished and this casework will ever grow faster.

It was mentioned earlier as well about the proliferation of two borough seats and the complications for that. We have seen already that London's electoral system has some issues. Barnet very famously with the Mayoral Election very much struggled to deal with the Mayoral Election and Tower Hamlets of course famously before struggled with elections as well. The increased burden of constituencies being split between two or, indeed, three boroughs is perhaps a worrying amount of burden upon councils being able to deliver quick and effective election counts, and that is also a concern. Equally, lots of these boroughs, rather than covering multiple wards, cover the majority of one borough with an added-on ward. I can think of one example of Bowes Park being added to Hornsey and Wood Green; that is one Enfield ward being added to the rest of Haringey. The actual split of labour, whether or not MPs will fully pay attention to orphan wards in this way and whether or not there is an arbitrary community split is a concern.

I also want to talk about some of the issues around the naming of the constituencies, my biggest example being Finsbury Park and Stoke Newington. An example of that would be surely it should be called Highbury as that represents the majority of the Islington seat. Also, the fact that Holborn and St Pancras, the Holborn ward is being taken out of that seat, so why is it still being called Holborn? I do think there are some issues around that.

I am going to make some specific points about some of the communities, some of them I have already raised, and particularly what I wanted to focus on was Holborn and St Pancras. What we are seeing here with Holborn and St Pancras is Highgate being taken out of Holborn and St Pancras and moved into the Hampstead and Golders Green seat. I think in particular there is a strong argument for it to stay in the Holborn and St Pancras seat. What we are seeing with the new seat that is being redrawn is the addition of Junction and St. George's from Islington into Holborn and St Pancras. I think there is a strong argument for Junction and St. George's to be in the same part of the constituency as Holborn and St Pancras partly because these three wards share transport links; they all particularly commute from Tufnell Park; they are all areas that have an association with Tufnell Park, particularly the south part around Dartmouth Park, and my suggestion here is a straight swap from Gospel Oak to

Highgate. Gospel Oak has a much longer history with Hampstead. Gospel Oak has had an association with Hampstead since 974. Meanwhile Highgate was always a slightly more separate town or village compared to Hampstead. What would actually happen here if we did do a straight swap for that is that I believe it is still within the recommended boundary sets and it actually makes a more continuous seat and keeps wards that are continuous and associated with each other together.

I have mentioned already about Finsbury Park potentially being renamed as Highbury and Stoke Newington. Finsbury Park represents one ward; Highbury represents two wards that are within the Islington part and particularly is something that people have a stronger association with living nearby and being part and potentially that is one suggestion around changing the name.

It is not on this slide but I also wanted to talk about what my colleagues in Bromley at the public hearing there will be talking more about, which is the swap with Croydon North and Croydon North now getting Crystal Palace (indicating). I think there is an issue around Crystal Palace being swapped with Shirley with the neighbouring Bromley seat. I know it is not easy to do a straight swap as that actually makes one of the seats bigger, but I think there is a strong argument for Crystal Palace remaining part of Bromley as what we are seeing under the Boundary Review is the area associated with Crystal Palace is being split amongst multiple constituencies and therefore creating more work and splitting communities aside and that is something that the Boundary Review particularly seeks to avoid.

I have kept this quite brief because I dare say the other parties have many more concerns and issues about the actual containments of the wards and those are just a few of the representations that I wanted to make today. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any questions or points of clarification? If not, thank you very much indeed for your submission.

The next party to present will be the Labour Party. Would you come forward and introduce yourself, please.

MR COOK: (Labour Party) My name is Greg Cook and I am an official of the National Labour Party based at our head office just down the road in Victoria Street and I am making this statement on behalf of the Labour Party and the London region of the Labour Party. It is being presented as an overall response to the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission; it follows a detailed consultation process within the Labour Party which involved all Members of Parliament, constituency, Labour Party and others, in the region.

The rough order of business of what I will be talking about is, firstly, the review process itself; secondly, something on the statutory criteria; thirdly, some comments on the

policies of the Commission; and, finally, to look at the initial proposals and a number of counterproposals which we would intend to make.

First, to move on to the review process itself. The Party welcomes the initial proposals of the Commission and the clear and comprehensive way in which they have set their proposals out. While the Labour Party disagrees with some of them and will be setting out alternatives which we believe better fit the statutory criteria, we accept that in all cases they fully considered the different options and explained the decisions which they have made and we also welcome the Commission's efforts to stimulate and encourage public participation in the process and to consult with political parties on their policies and procedures and we are grateful in particular for the opportunity at this hearing to set out the views of the Party on the Commission's initial proposals.

We note that under the terms of the Act the Commission may, in choosing between different schemes, take into account special geographical circumstances including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency, local government boundaries, the boundaries of existing constituencies and any local ties that will be broken by changes to constituencies. It is self-evident that the Commission may not be able to respect all of these criteria or, indeed, in some cases any of them in every part of the region while keeping the electorates of the constituencies within the permissible range and we accept that, in some areas, the disruption to existing seats is likely to be substantial, that it may be difficult to respect local authority boundaries and that local ties may be broken. Where the Labour Party puts forward alternative proposals to those of the Commission, we do it on the basis that we believe them to be, on balance, more consistent with those statutory criteria. We note and accept that the electoral quota for this review is 74,769 and that all seats in the London region must therefore have electorates of between 71,031 and 78,507.

To turn now to some observations on the policies of the Commission, firstly on the use of regions, we welcome the Commission's decision to use the European electoral regions as the sub-national review areas for the purposes of these initial proposals. Were they not to do so, the review of constituencies in England would become much more complex with almost limitless options and the result would be that meaningful consultation and public participation would be much harder to achieve. We note that the electorate of the London region at 5,118,884 gives an entitlement under the Sainte-Laguë allocation to 68 seats with an average electorate of 75,278 which is 509 above the electoral quota.

Secondly on the issue of wards and divisions, in this case London Borough wards, we note the Commission's policy of using London Borough wards as the smallest unit with which to build constituencies. We also note the Commission's policy on this issue set out in their guide to the review which states that the Commission recognises there may be exceptional and compelling circumstances that make it appropriate to divide a ward but that no such proposal has been made in the London region or indeed anywhere

else. The Labour Party supports the policy of the Commission and believes that any such proposal should be treated on its merits but within an assumption that whole wards and divisions should remain intact in the absence of compelling and exceptional circumstances such as are described. We do not intend in our counterproposal to make any such proposals ourselves.

Thirdly on the concept of so-called orphan wards, the Labour Party notes the concept of the orphan ward where one ward of a local authority is added to a constituency wholly or partly in another local authority and that this is regarded by definition as undesirable. We accept that such arrangements are often anomalous and they are clearly at odds with the respect for local authority boundaries. However, we believe that a dogmatic policy which would consider that such arrangements are always undesirable is not appropriate and that the addition of other wards just for the sake of not having a single ward in such a scenario is not by itself necessarily to be preferred if it means that ties are broken and electors moved in that ward. In this region, the Commission have proposed eight such arrangements and while we will make counterproposals to seven of these, we accept that in some circumstances the electorates of the boroughs concerned make an orphan ward proposal inevitable, indeed we make some ourselves. Again, the Labour Party will consider and make proposals on all of these areas on their merits.

Fourthly on the issue of sub-regional review areas, the Labour Party notes that there is no requirement on the Commission to avoid the crossing of London borough boundaries as there previously was under the old legislation and that this would anyway be impossible to achieve as the electorates of most boroughs mean they are incapable of comprising a whole number of constituencies all with electorates within five per cent of the electoral quote. There is though a strong identification with London boroughs, all of which have now in place for over 50 years, and it remains the case that many of them contain a whole number of constituencies. There are currently just eleven in London which include parts of more than one local authority. We do believe therefore that the practice of seeking to group a number of boroughs into a review area is one that is worthwhile on the basis that it is likely to reduce the number of seats containing parts of more than one borough and also potentially to maintain more consistency with existing constituencies. We note that the Commission have decided against using any such areas other than the division of London North and South of the River Thames. The Labour Party believes there are groupings of boroughs which could be used as review areas and while they obviously would have no status as such in the rules, their use does have the benefits described.

Finally, on the names of constituencies we note and support the Commission's policy on the names of constituencies. We are aware however that there is a tendency for names to become more complex and unwieldy, particularly as constituencies expand in size. We would, as a matter of principle, resist that if possible. Also, where a constituency is largely unchanged we would normally support the retention of the existing name. We

would however consider all such proposals on their merits and obviously taking into account local opinion. Within our own counterproposal, we have provided some suggested names but also suggest some alternatives for consideration where that is appropriate.

We turn now to the initial proposals of the Commission and we set out our views here on those initial proposals and an outline of some alternatives. We will refer to the proposals in terms of the statutory criteria but I do not intend, for time and other reasons, to include all the details of the community ties issues which are relevant, most of which will be amplified in the statements of individuals who will speak at these hearings and make written representations from the areas affected.

We note the Commission do not propose any constituency crossing the River Thames and that therefore London is divided under the initial proposals between North London, including that part of the Borough of Richmond upon Thames which comprises the Twickenham constituency, and South London including the remainder of the Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the electorate's theoretical entitlements are as set out on the screen. We also note that while the Commission have not identified any further sub-regional review areas in North London, they have adopted a policy of not having any constituency containing parts of boroughs on both sides of the River Lea north of Tower Hamlets, a policy which we believe is sensible as any such constituency would be made up of disparate parts. We also note however that there are groupings of councils in North London which can sustain whole numbers of constituencies and which currently do so. Were they to be used as sub-regional review areas therefore, the very fact of their being within a group and not having constituencies shared with other groups may well tend to reduce the number of multi-borough constituencies and also, as the changes would be self-contained within the group, produce more adherence to existing constituencies and we therefore make counterproposals which use the following sub-regional review areas: Central London comprising the City of London and the Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster; North-East London comprising the Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, and North and West London comprising the Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Islington, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and the current Twickenham constituency and the electorate's theoretical entitlements of the review areas are set out on the screen.

We support the initial proposals of the Commission for eleven constituencies across London which are Barking, Bromley and Chislehurst, Dagenham and Rainham, Eltham, Hornchurch and Upminster, Kingston and Surbiton, Orpington, Richmond Park, Romford, Tooting and Twickenham, and we make counterproposals for the remaining 57 constituencies.

To start with Central London, we propose that there should be four seats wholly contained within the City of London, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster, which would be a reduction of one on the current allocation. The initial proposals of the Commission are that there should be six seats within these authorities with one ward of Hammersmith and Fulham in the Willesden constituency, three in Ealing Central and Shepherd's Bush, and two wards of Brent in the Queens Park and Regent's Park constituency. We believe this is a well-defined grouping of councils which does not currently share any constituency with a neighbouring borough and that the allocation of four seats which absolutely matches its theoretical entitlement to precisely four seats thereby reduces the level of disruption and enables four of the existing seats to remain largely intact, and we therefore propose that the Cities of London and Westminster constituency should be enlarged by the addition of the Lancaster Gate ward and also Brompton & Hans Town and Royal Hospital wards of Kensington and Chelsea, that the Westminster North constituency should include five wards of the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea broadly recreating the former Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency, another possible name being Westminster and Kensington North. The Hammersmith constituency should be retained intact but should also include the Fulham Broadway ward, and the Chelsea and Fulham should include the whole of the Redcliffe and Stanley wards and eight others which are currently in the Kensington constituency and may potentially be renamed Chelsea, Fulham and South Kensington. Under this proposal, two seats are retained intact while the Westminster North constituency keeps 91.5 per cent of its electorate, Chelsea and Fulham 76.2 and an additional 10,404 electors remain in their main successor seat compared with the initial proposals.

We turn now to North-East London and we propose that the nine boroughs in this sector be allocated 19 constituencies against their theoretical entitlement to 19.06 which is one fewer than they have currently. We support the proposed Barking constituency and we believe there are ties between the Mayfield and Goodmayes wards in the rest of this seat, and we also support the proposed Dagenham and Rainham constituency including the Alibon ward although we do note that the absence of the Eastbrook ward limits the internal access to the constituency and though Eastbrook does have ties to Romford, we believe that the same is true of the Chadwell Heath ward. With that possible alternative, we also accept the proposed Romford constituency and the proposal that Hornchurch and Upminster be unchanged. We are neutral on the Chadwell Heath and Eastbrook issue. The eagle eye may have noticed that the map on the screen actually shows Chadwell Heath as a ward in Romford and we are open to arguments on both of those issues but we broadly support the proposals of the Commission in that area.

We propose that the Ilford North constituency should, rather than include the Newbury ward, retain the Roding ward and whilst Seven Kings and Chadwell wards appear rather isolated in this constituency under either proposal, in fact there is good road access to them and we believe they will fit easily into it. We believe that the Newbury ward has strong ties to Valentines and other wards in Ilford South and we propose therefore

an Ilford South and Wanstead constituency comprising five wards of the current Ilford South constituency plus Snaresbrook and Wanstead and the Newham wards of Little Ilford and Manor Park. We propose that the Chingford and Woodford Green constituency should be retained intact but also include the Redbridge ward of Bridge with the name possibly changed to Chingford and Woodford. Within Waltham Forest the only change to Walthamstow constituency will be the addition of the ward of Forest while the other five wards which are currently in the Leyton and Wanstead constituency should be included with four wards of Newham including the two which comprise Forest Gate in a Leyton and Stratford constituency and these changes mean that just one ward in Waltham Forest would change constituency and that Leyton and Leytonstone would be kept together. In Newham we propose an East Ham constituency made up of six wards of the current seat and three wards of West Ham which include both Green Street wards and both Plaistow wards and the remaining wards of New Ham including most of its riverside would be included in a Poplar and Canning Town seat which six wards of Tower Hamlets including Lansbury and Limehouse. We then propose that there should be a Bethnal Green and Stepney constituency entirely within Tower Hamlets including the wards of Shadwell, St. Katharine's & Wapping and the whole of the divided ward of Whitechapel with five wards of Tower Hamlets being in a Hackney East and Bow constituency, the Hackney wards being Hackney Wick, Homerton, King's Park and Victoria. Within Hackney we propose a Hackney Central and Stoke Newington constituency which would include the wards of Clissold and Stoke Newington and all those proposed to be in the Hackney West and Bethnal Green constituency under the initial proposals plus Hackney Central, Hackney Downs and Shacklewell. The remaining wards of Hackney including Lea Bridge, Cazenove and Springfield we propose should be in a seat with five wards of the Borough of Haringey which might be called Hackney North and Haringey, three of those wards currently in Hornsey and Wood Green and two in Tottenham. We then propose that the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency should include Palmers Green ward of Enfield in addition to Bowes, as proposed under the initial proposals, while the remaining wards of Tottenham would be in Tottenham and Edmonton constituency which would include three wards of Enfield borough and there then would be an Enfield Southgate constituency which would include Bush Hill Park, Highlands and Town, and Enfield North which would include Jubilee, Ponders End and Lower Edmonton wards, those constituencies.

We do recognise that these proposals divide communities in Edmonton and in Tottenham as well as dividing Crouch End from Hornsey and Highgate. On balance however, we believe that the consequence of the Commission's proposal to include part of Hackney in a seat with part of Islington is that much more disruptive proposals are made in the rest of North London which break ties more seriously. We will however in this area consider all proposals which may restore some of those ties. Across North-East London, the Labour Party counterproposal results in the Boroughs of Enfield and Redbridge being divided between four constituencies each rather than five under the initial proposals.

We turn now to North-West London where we propose that the eight boroughs in this sector plus that part of Richmond upon Thames which is north of the river should be allocated 19 seats against their theoretical entitlement to 19.35. Firstly, we propose that there should be three seats within the Borough of Barnet with one of them, Hendon and Edgware, including the Canons and Edgware wards of Harrow Borough and the Mill Hill ward of Barnet, will be included in Chipping Barnet as under the initial proposals and Coppetts in Finchley and Golders Green. Within Islington, the Islington North constituency would include Canonbury ward and an Islington South and Holborn constituency three wards of the Borough of Camden including Holborn itself. The remainder of Holborn and St Pancras, the existing constituency, would be in a Camden Town and Hampstead seat which also included Belsize and Hampstead Town wards and the remainder of the existing Hampstead and Kilburn constituency would be in a West Hampstead and Kilburn seat which also include Kensal Green and Mapesbury wards of Brent Borough. The constituency of Brent Central would then include the wards of Alperton and Wembley Central while the Commission's proposed Kenton would be amended to include the Brent ward of Preston rather than the Harrow ward of Edgware and might be renamed Kenton and Harrow East. The wards of Northwick Park and Sudbury in Brent would then be in a Sudbury and Harrow South constituency with eight wards of the Borough of Harrow and we propose that the remaining seven wards of the Borough of Harrow should be in a Harrow West and Northwood constituency with three wards of the Borough of Hillingdon. While this would be a geographically large constituency, it has main roads running throughout its length and it unites similar communities on the edge of London including Northwood, Pinner and Harrow Weald.

In the rest of this review area, we propose there should be successors to all of the existing seats. In Hillingdon we propose an Uxbridge and Ruislip constituency including the wards of Charville, Eastcote and East Ruislip, Ickenham and West Ruislip, while Hayes and Harlington will include Brunel, Uxbridge South and Yiewsley. In Ealing, the Ealing Central and Acton seat will include the South Acton wards of Elthorne and Northfield and also the Hounslow ward of Turnham Green while Ealing Broadway and Hanger Hill would be included in Ealing North. The Ealing Southall constituency would include Greenford Broadway and Northolt West End and also the Hounslow ward of Osterley and Spring Grove.

These proposals would, unlike the initial proposals, retain Southall in one constituency while we believe the two Hounslow wards both have good road access into their new constituencies and, in the case of Turnham Green, very strong ties to South Acton with the A4 being the southern boundary of the constituency as we would propose it and, in contrast, we believe that the initial proposals would break ties within Acton and also between Northfield and Elthorne wards. We suggest that the Ealing Central and Acton seat could be renamed Ealing Acton or Ealing South and Acton. We then propose that in the Brentford and Isleworth constituency the remaining wards should be retained

together with the addition of the ward and there is an error here and this ward should be Hounslow West rather than Hounslow Heath, Hounslow West which is currently in Feltham and Heston constituency, thereby uniting all of the Hounslow wards which may justify the name Brentford and Hounslow constituency, while Feltham and Heston should include the Hillingdon ward of Heathrow Villages which we believe has ties to surrounding wards in the seat (indicating). We support the retention of the Twickenham constituency unchanged.

Our counterproposals in this sector mean that 89,216 more electors remain in their successor seat compared with the initial proposals, while the Borough of Ealing is divided between three constituencies rather than five, the Borough of Islington two rather than three, and while nine seats are entirely within one council compared with six under the initial proposals, three seats are retained intact or unchanged.

I turn now to South London and we note here that the electorate of the Borough of Bromley at 226,093 gives it a theoretical entitlement to 3.02 constituencies which makes it one of the few which can sustain a whole number of seats. The Commission however propose that the ward of Crystal Palace should be included in the Croydon North constituency and the Croydon ward of Shirley in the Beckenham constituency and we believe that both of these are unnecessary orphan ward proposals and that Crystal Palace ward should be included in the Beckenham constituency rather than Shirley and we support the Bromley and Chislehurst and Orpington constituencies as proposed and therefore there would be three seats entirely within the Borough of Bromley.

We believe instead that the Shirley ward should remain in the Croydon Central constituency which would also include the Croydon wards of Selhurst and Waddon while Croham and Purley would remain in the Croydon South seat. Croydon North would also retain the Norbury ward and include the Beddington North ward of the Borough of Sutton which we believe has ties to the Waddon ward. Carshalton and Wallington would then include the Coulsdon East and Coulsdon West wards of Croydon and could be renamed Carshalton, Wallington and Coulsdon whilst Sutton and Cheam would remain intact and include the St. Helier ward of Sutton borough and would be entirely within that Sutton borough.

We support the proposals to retain the Kingston and Surbiton constituency and the Richmond Park seat unchanged and we support the proposal to include the Wimbledon Park ward of Merton borough in the Putney constituency which lies along the route of the A218 and the District Line and has strong ties to the Southfields ward, but rather than the Village ward of Merton, we would also include the Fairfield ward of Wandsworth which takes in much of the centre of Wandsworth itself and is the meeting point for most of the main road routes running through the Putney constituency and we would retain the Village ward in a Wimbledon constituency which would also include Lower Morden, Ravensbury and St. Helier wards of Merton and would be called

Wimbledon and Morden constituency and this seat would unite Morden in one constituency including the town centre which currently lies outside the Mitcham and Morden constituency while the St. Helier Estate, which partly lies in the Ravensbury ward and partly in the Borough of Sutton, would be divided between this constituency and Sutton and Cheam rather than three seats as under the initial proposals.

We support the initial proposals for the Tooting constituency which retains that seat intact while the northern part of the Merton ward of Graveney we believe does have strong ties to Tooting and therefore could be included in that seat. We do note however that the Streatham and Mitcham constituency as proposed by the Commission would include parts of three boroughs which is an arrangement that would be new for London and would cause the centre of Mitcham to be divided and also break ties between Knight's Hill and Gipsy Hill wards which together comprise much of West Norwood. We propose that that seat be amended to include the Merton borough wards of Colliers Wood, Cricket Green and Lavender Fields, thereby uniting most of Mitcham in one seat with Norbury retained in Croydon North and the Knight's Hill ward in a Brixton and West Norwood seat which would be entirely within the Borough of Lambeth and would include all those wards currently in Dulwich and West Norwood plus Brixton Hill, Thornton and Tulse Hill. We believe that the addition of the Thornton ward to Battersea as under the initial proposals makes that seat an awkward shape and instead would propose that it should include the Clapham Common and Clapham Town wards and be renamed Battersea and Clapham constituency.

The remainder of the Vauxhall constituency without Clapham Town would be retained with the addition of the Southwark ward of Newington and we then propose that the only other change to Bermondsey and Old Southwark would be the inclusion of the Faraday ward. The transfer of that ward brings the electorate of Camberwell and Peckham also within five per cent of the electoral quota.

The three Southwark borough wards in the Dulwich and West Norwood constituency we propose should be in a Lewisham West and Dulwich seat which would also include the Lewisham ward of Crofton Park while the rest of the Lewisham Deptford constituency would be retained together with the addition of Catford South and Rushey Green in a Lewisham, Deptford and Catford constituency, and the remainder of the Lewisham East seat would then be included with three wards of the Borough of Greenwich which would include the whole of the Blackheath area and would be called Lewisham East and Greenwich.

We support the retention of the Eltham constituency intact as under the initial proposals and believe that the addition of the Woolwich Common ward is the most appropriate way of enlarging it. We also support the proposed Woolwich constituency but we believe that ties are broken between the Bexley wards of St. Michael's and East Wickham through having them in different constituencies and we therefore propose that this proposal be amended to include the East Wickham ward in the

Woolwich seat while the ward of Lesnes Abbey should be in an Erith and Crayford constituency. We do regret that one result of the initial proposal is that Thamesmead is once again divided, but this does mean that the Erith and Crayford seat can be in one borough with the Christchurch ward included in Old Bexley and Sidcup rather than East Wickham.

These changes across South London mean that 1,547,213 electors would remain in their main successor constituency compared with 1,449,811 under the initial proposals, which is a significant difference of almost 100,000. No seat would contain parts of more than two boroughs. While no borough, apart from Sutton, would contain more parts with more constituencies than under the initial proposals. The Borough of Lambeth, which under the initial proposals would have parts of six constituencies, would instead have parts of four as would the Borough of Merton which is one less in that case than under the initial proposals.

Sir, the details of all the constituencies where we make an alternative proposal are set out in the appendices and I will briefly describe those appendices. Appendix A simply lists the ward and the electorates of our proposed constituencies in the four sections of Central London, North-East London, North-West London and South London. Appendix B identifies the number of electors moving from existing constituencies to a main successor constituency, in other words the largest group of electors moving to a new constituency from the old one and compares that arrangement under the initial proposals and our counterproposals. The result is that while indeed there are more constituencies, 20 under the initial proposals which are kept intact rather than compared with 16 under the Labour counterproposals, overall there is a much higher level of continuity with 44 seats compared with 33, 44 under the Labour counterproposal, retaining over 75 per cent of their electorate compared with 33 under the initial proposals and 67 out of the 73 retaining more than 50 per cent of their electorates compared with 61 per cent under the initial proposals. Appendix C sets out some statistics in relation to local authorities and the numbers of constituencies within each local authority under each proposal and indeed the number of whole seats within each borough under each of those proposals. Under the Labour Party counterproposal, no council contains parts of more than four constituencies and there are 34 seats which are entirely contained within one council area compared with 30 under the initial proposals. We do have one seat which technically includes parts of three local authorities but one of those local authorities is the City of London and we believe that is rather different to the arrangement which the Commission propose.

Just to summarise some of the benefits we believe of our proposals, 77.4 per cent of electors in London compared with 73.5 under the initial proposals remain in the main successor constituency. We believe that is quite a significant difference overall; 44 out of the 73 seats retain more than 75 per cent of their electors compared with 33, and 67 more than 50 per cent compared with 61. No borough has more than four constituencies compared with six which do under the initial proposals and 34 out of the

68 seats are wholly contained within a single borough compared with 33 under the initial proposals.

Sir, the Labour Party will be making a detailed written representation before 5 December which sets out our position in the region and in other regions. We will reserve our position. We will comment on all those proposals which may be made by others during the secondary consultation period. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. There is a lot to absorb. I have no particular questions to ask. Are there any questions or points of clarification?

MR DRAY: (Liberal Democrat Party) Simon Dray from the Liberal Democrats. I have just a few clarification questions. It is noted that the Beddington North ward has ties with the Waddon ward. Could we get clarification on whether the Waddon ward will move into the Croydon North seat because, under the Labour scheme, it looks like it is remaining in Croydon Central whereas Beddington North is in fact being proposed to move into the Croydon North seat? Thus, even if it has links, they are still not ending up in the same seat.

Also, could we have a bit of clarification on Hounslow West and Hounslow Heath because you do have both of those listed. If it is just Hounslow West and not Hounslow Heath, do the figures still add up for that seat?

MR COOK: On the Waddon issue, I do confess that looks like a typo and I need to check if there is another ward which we meant there. I suspect I may have meant Broad Green ward rather than Waddon there. The issue on Hounslow Heath and Hounslow West is that the ward is mentioned in the text because it is the one that is moving and it should be Hounslow West rather than Hounslow Heath.

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

MR PRATT: (Conservative Party) Roger Pratt from the Conservative Party. Two points of clarification. The Boundary Commission have Kensington and Chelsea co-terminus with the local authority. I wonder if you could confirm how many constituencies Kensington and Chelsea is divided into amongst your proposals.

MR COOK: That is set out in Appendix C and it is three.

MR PRATT: That is very helpful. Secondly, could you confirm – it is probably in the same appendix – how many constituencies Hillingdon is divided into.

MR COOK: It is divided into four under our counterproposal.

MR PRATT: I am very grateful.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other questions? In which case, thank you very much indeed for your submission.

We will move on now to the next presentation which is by the Liberal Democrat Party, please. Again, would you introduce yourselves when you make the submission.

BARONESS HAMWEE: (Liberal Democrat Party) I am Sally Hamwee; I am a member of the House of Lords. I was a member of the London Assembly, part of the Greater London Authority, and I chaired it for four of my eight years there and I was a London Borough Councillor in Richmond upon Thames. Roger Guys is doing the technology with the slides. Like others, we will be submitting final views in writing but this is where we are at the moment. We have not been able to undertake all the consultation we want at the local level yet. May I also echo thanks to the Boundary Commission for England. I began to understand the references to dominoes when I was going through the proposals.

First of all, you have asked us to indicate what we support and I will start with that. Treating the Greater London Region as a region, the European electoral boundaries and recognising the external boundaries of the boroughs, we would be opposed to crossing that boundary.

We agree with dividing London into the two sub-regions. With regard to the River Lea, we would like to respect this division. If a cross-Lea constituency is unavoidable, there should be just one and we will come to that.

We agree with the use of council wards as the building blocks and we do not believe that anywhere in London the advantages of splitting a ward would be so strong that it would justify the inconvenience. We have tried to take as our starting point these issues and minimum change.

Starting with South London where we have really rather more comments than North London, South London including the whole of Richmond borough we support the no change to the three constituencies of Richmond Park, Twickenham, and Kingston and Surbiton. In Sutton, a minimum change approach is adopted by us by the transfer of a ward from Sutton and Cheam to Carshalton and Wallington to bring the matter up to size. The last review suggested Carshalton and Wallington should be split and each part combined with wards from Croydon which caused considerable objection at the time. Carshalton, Wallington and Beddington have strong ties to each other and thus there was a strong objection to Sutton wards being combined with Croydon.

Sutton and Cheam brought up to size by taking the Merton wards of Lower Morden and St. Helier, this area has a very permeable border with Sutton and there are easy transport links between the two and the town centre at Sutton, so we endorse both these proposed constituencies, but we do have three major concerns regarding the rest of South London. Firstly, expanding each of the current Wandsworth constituencies to include wards from outside the borough; secondly, two constituencies straddling the boundary between Croydon and Bromley, we do not think this is desirable and we think it can be avoided; and thirdly, several constituencies straddling Southwark and Lambeth and a Streatham and Mitcham proposal with wards from three boroughs but containing only a fraction of the area that identifies as Mitcham.

The Wandsworth constituencies. We appreciate the problems of achieving constituencies within the size range. The initial proposals would transfer the Wimbledon Park and Village wards which are in Merton to the new constituency of Wimbledon Park and Putney which is otherwise comprised of wards from Wandsworth. We think Wimbledon Park and Village have strong ties to Wimbledon. They look to Wimbledon Town Centre for shopping, transport and cultural amenities and have a strong identity as part of the Wimbledon community. Instead, a seat crossing Wimbledon Common should be based on Wimbledon but include Roehampton and Putney Heath which is a Wandsworth ward. The A219 road across the common makes it easy to reach and the Roehampton community has its own high street; it has shops, pubs, a library and so on and a strong sense of its own identity.

We think it would be easier to split Roehampton from Putney than split Wimbledon Park and Village wards from Wimbledon. If Roehampton and Putney Heath goes to Wimbledon, then – this is a domino, is it not? – Putney can take the two wards to the east, Fairfield and Wandsworth Common. These wards identify as Wandsworth; the town centre is in Fairfield ward. We suggest calling the constituencies Wimbledon Common and Putney and Wandsworth.

Then having lost Wandsworth Common ward, Tooting would be brought back up to size by transferring Balham ward from Battersea. Balham ward would by this be brought together with the two other wards that meet at Balham Town Centre, that is Nightingale and Bedford, and the new seat would include all of both Tooting and Balham and that is what we would call it. There would be no need for Tooting to take the Merton Graveney ward which could be reunited with the other Mitcham wards forming a seat wholly in Wandsworth borough. I am very conscious of, as you said on the previous consultation, how much information is coming out with this and I am talking reasonably fast, but we will obviously produce a written version of this as well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please take your time.

BARONESS HAMWEE: Battersea requires a cross-borough seat; we cannot see a combination to get within the statutory range without including at least one Lambeth

ward. Thus, the choices are north around Vauxhall or south around Clapham. In our view, the Lambeth wards around Vauxhall have ties to the rest of Kennington and these would be broken by placing them with Battersea. We prefer a Clapham option. Amending the Commission's draft Battersea constituency by losing Fairfield, which I have mentioned, to the Putney seat and Balham to Tooting but replacing them with the Clapham Town and Clapham Common wards from Lambeth alongside Thornton ward because much of the Battersea constituency is now characterised by families in rather suburban Victorian housing around Clapham and Wandsworth Commons and Lambeth's Clapham wards fit with this neatly. There is a good deal of demographic change reflected in a number of our constituency proposals. Our proposal would unite the two Clapham wards which are currently split between constituencies and keep Clapham Common and Thornton together. There is a current major development at the Clapham Park Estate and our solution would keep them together instead of straddling a boundary.

Moving on to Croydon and Bromley, Croydon has too many electors, three seats and too few for four and we recognise that there is a need for at least one cross-borough seat. We think the Commission is right to say that the cross-borough seat should be in the north of the borough but not Bromley which can stand by itself with three seats. There is no obvious way to us to divide the north borough into whole ward constituency. Any sensible combination of seven wards is always too few; eight is always too many. That is not the case in the south of the borough where two constituencies wholly within the borough can be assembled fairly comfortably.

The initial proposals split Purley ward from Coulsdon East and Coulsdon West and Kenley and we do not support this split for the following reasons. Coulsdon West runs right into Purley Town Centre including the new fire station and we believe that residents there identify as living in Purley. Purley and Coulsdon have always been together right back to the creation of the urban district council a century ago. They sit together on the main road corridor of the A23 and the mainline train from London to Brighton.

Access between the Croydon South wards, there is no road access from the Coulsdon wards and Kenley east to Sanderstead without going into Purley, the Purley ward, that is through the Croydon Central constituency and then going out again. The geography of the areas means that the main road and rail links are rather compressed and the natural ties for the Coulsdon wards and Kenley are up the A23 into Croydon Town Centre. We would make a new Croydon South West seat by adding to those three, that is the two Coulsdon ones and Kenley, the wards of Purley, Waddon, Fairfield and Croham. The rest of the Croydon South seat in the Commission's proposals is combined with Shirley in Croydon which is recovered from the Bromley seat of Beckenham and Ashburton and Addiscombe to make a new Croydon South East. These two seats would represent less change to the existing Croydon South and Croydon Central than the initial proposals.

Removing Shirley from the Beckenham seat gives the space to restore Crystal Palace to it – that ward had been put into Croydon North – and therefore Bromley can simply be divided into three seats wholly within the borough and comprising the whole borough.

This leaves nine Croydon wards, eight from the current Croydon North constituency plus Woodside. We think the most natural place to build a cross-borough constituency in Croydon is in the north-east corner at Crystal Palace. Croydon's Upper Norwood ward and Lambeth's Gipsy Hill ward each contain part of the district centre of Upper Norwood. This is where the major shopping, leisure and commercial centre for the area is located including Upper Norwood joint library which is the only library funded by two borough councils to serve residents of both and it reflects the fact that the Upper Norwood Town Centre has a reach into both Croydon and Lambeth. Gipsy Hill ward also contains the eastern parts of West Norwood, so we would not want to split it from the western parts in Knight's Hill.

Combine these two with the South Norwood Town Centre area near Norwood Junction Station which straddles South Norwood and Woodside wards and also with the Thornton Heath and Selhurst areas, to bring together the various Norwoods, Upper, South and West, into a Norwood and Thornton Heath constituency.

That leaves Norbury West and Broad Green. We do not support the three borough constituency of Streatham and Mitcham but we can link just the Croydon and Merton wards included in that proposal. Thus, we propose combining the Merton wards not already allocated to the Wimbledon Common constituency which we have suggested or an enlarged Sutton and Cheam to this seat with the Croydon wards to their east. This would be our Mitcham and Norbury constituency which would have Merton borough divided only between three constituencies not five and have Croydon split only between four constituencies, the smallest possible number.

Then the Southwark and Lambeth constituencies. We would not propose retaining a seat based on Dulwich and West Norwood. If this constituency is abolished, the present other constituencies can be retained with only modest amendment. We have used up, as it were, two wards from Dulwich and West Norwood in our proposed Norwood and Thornton Heath. Two others, Thurlow Park and Herne Hill, we would transfer to the Streatham constituency to replace two Lambeth wards, Clapham Common to go to Clapham North and Stockwell, and Thornton to go to Battersea, and we would place them in Battersea and Clapham. These two wards include the southern and northern parts of Herne Hill Town Centre respectively and this would also bring together all the areas around Tulse Hill which includes parts of Streatham Hill and Herne Hill wards. This would mean a constituency wholly within Lambeth which we would call Streatham and Brixton South.

Finally, Coldharbour ward in Central Brixton we think could be added to Vauxhall so that all the northern half of Brixton is in this constituency. That would replace Clapham Town which we would also put into a Battersea and Clapham constituency.

Moving east, to bring Bermondsey and Old Southwark within range, we would swap Newington ward in Borough of Southwark and Bishop's in Lambeth and this would mean we propose the same Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency as currently consisting entirely of Southwark wards. The links between the South Bank area and the riverside through Southwark to Tower Bridge and beyond it are very strong. There is a South Bank identity for local businesses stretching along the riverside and the residents there are living in a Zone 1 area of what is really the city centre of London now in a mix of established social housing blocks and new apartments which have often been chiselled out of old commercial buildings. This is a sort of south of the river equivalent to the Cities of London and Westminster constituency to the north.

Putting Newington ward from Southwark, Prince's from Lambeth and Oval from Lambeth together would unite the Kennington area which has always been divided between constituencies but residents from both sides of Kennington Park Road commute from Kennington Tube Station and they use Kennington Park.

Finally in this section, Camberwell and Peckham can then be retained with simply the loss of South Camberwell which is added to a new seat also containing the three Dulwich wards. Despite the ward name, we do not think residents in South Camberwell have particularly strong associations to Camberwell and they identify as much with Herne Hill or Dulwich. There is a division from Camberwell proper by the railway line, East Dulwich Station is on the border of the ward and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has in fact already decided to transfer a substantial part of this ward to an East Dulwich based ward.

The four remaining Southwark wards, South Camberwell, Village, College and East Dulwich, with the Lewisham wards, Forest Hill, Crofton Park, Perivale and Sydenham, would form a new Dulwich and Forest Hill constituency and we believe this would have substantial advantages over the proposed Peckham and Lewisham West. That proposal does include Peckham Rye but it actually leaves out Peckham Ward despite the name. It would mean Peckham Town Centre being divided along Peckham High Street; it would split Telegraph Hill from New Cross and Brockley. The northern parts of Telegraph Hill ward include areas that identify as New Cross around the bus garage and the station. The southern parts around Brockley Railway Station identify as part of Brockley. All three wards should be kept together with Evelyn ward as they comprise Deptford. Dulwich should go into the cross-borough constituency with Lewisham as it is already separated from the rest of the borough as Southwark and this would enable the least change to the current Southwark borough constituencies. Dulwich works well with Forest Hill; both are Victorian railway suburbs with strong culture of a picture gallery and the Horniman museum.

Overall, the advantages of our scheme in South-West London would mean there would be no three borough seat, two seats wholly within Wandsworth where the Commission had none to make up for the borough being split between four rather than three seats, a seat wholly within Southwark, three seats wholly within Bromley rather than spread over four, Croydon split only between four seats not five, Merton split between three seats not five, Lambeth split between five not six seats. Abolishing Dulwich and West Norwood but all the other seats having a clear successor where at least 60 per cent of each old seat is retained together in a new seat. We think that forcing local ties to be broken would be the result of any further adherence to local government boundaries.

You will be relieved, Mr Chairman, to know that that is a very large part of our submission and I hope I can be quicker with the rest.

South-East London. We recognise the awkwardness of ward sizes and boundaries, so we have not been able to identify a seat to abolish to let the others survive. We have tried to balance the other statutory factors. In Lewisham, we support Lewisham and Catford which we think unites communities well. A reworked Deptford loses Crofton Park. This is a ward which runs right to Forest Hill Town Centre and is best placed with the other Forest Hill wards in a Dulwich and Forest Hill seat, gaining Blackheath and Lee Green from Lewisham and Greenwich West and Peninsula from Greenwich to form a new Deptford and Greenwich seat which is slightly different from the Commission's seat. Ladywell residents look to Lewisham Town Centre, so we support keeping it with Lewisham Central ward. We want to keep Blackheath and Lee Green wards together as they focus on Lee High Street. Any alternatives would split Lee. It would be less disruptive to existing communities if Lee Green and Ladywell were swapped. This is our preliminary view; we may be dissuaded by the next stages of the consultation process. The initial proposals in the remainder of Greenwich and Bexley do concern us, particularly the Woolwich seat. That as proposed does not contain all of Woolwich Town Centre. The southern part of the commercial heart of Woolwich is the Woolwich Common Ward which is proposed to go to Eltham. The major regeneration of Woolwich Town Centre which is going on now and is going to have the DLR and so on is going to make the draw of the town centre even greater. The proposal crosses the border into Bexley but not in a way which would unite the Thamesmead Estate. There are strong local ties in this area, so we would be prepared to accept a second seat crossing the Bexley/Greenwich boundary and we would amend the proposed Woolwich constituency to include the Greenwich wards of Woolwich Common, Kidbrooke with Hornfair and Shooters Hill and remove Thamesmead Moorings and the Bexley wards of St. Michael's and Lesnes Abbey. The wards removed we would add to the proposed Erith and Crayford constituency and that would be all the London Borough of Bexley and, to accommodate this, we would transfer the Bexley wards of Christchurch, Barnehurst and Crayford to Old Bexley and Sidcup and, to accommodate that, transfer the three wards at Welling north of the A2 to Eltham

which would, taken together, ensure that the two Thamesmead wards remained together, there would be a single constituency including all of Woolwich Town Centre and it does this without any further division of Bexleyheath or Welling.

North London. We believe that the proposed constituencies wholly within Hounslow, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent are to be supported with one proviso which is that the two Ealing wards of Lady Margaret and Dormers Wells should swap places with Walpole and Elthorne, the first two are proposed to go to Ealing North and the second two to Southall and Heston. Ealing Hospital site marks a very clear divide between Southall to the west and Ealing to the east. The Uxbridge Road is the only road between the two parts. Lady Margaret and Dormers Wells ward are associated with Southall and indeed parts of Southall Town Centre are in Dormers Wells. With that swap we could unite Elthorne with Hobbayne so that the two wards covering Hanwell can be united and we would rename this constituency Greenford and Hanwell. We have strong reservations about splitting College Park and Old Oak, proposed to go to Willesden, from the rest of Shepherd's Bush, which is proposed to Ealing Central and Shepherd's Bush, but we cannot see a way to do it without creating weaker seats elsewhere and on balance we would support this because of the overall benefits of the proposal.

In Central North London, the pattern of seats in Camden, Westminster and City of London, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey is, in our view, broadly right but subject to some minor changes which are moving Lancaster Gate ward to the Queen's Park and Regent's Park seat. The Lancaster Gate ward contains the heart of Bayswater along Queensway and it has strong ties to the Bayswater ward to the north. The wards are together in the current Westminster North seat; there is no reason to move it out. This would give us the scope to move Camden's King's Cross ward with the other Holborn wards in the Cities of London and Westminster. The Euston Road would be a strong constituency border here. We would swap the Gospel Oak ward and Highgate wards between the proposed Hampstead and Golders Green and Holborn and St Pancras seats. We think that the Camden Highgate ward is really, in practical terms, divided from Hampstead by Parliament Hill and Gospel Oak is a stronger fit with Hampstead. Also, the majority of residents of the Highgate ward are in the south eastern part of the ward and use transport and amenities at Archway and Camden Town and so should be in a constituency with them. With regard to constituency names, the Holborn and St Pancras constituency no longer contains Holborn and the proposed Queen's Park and Regent's Park constituency contains only parts of Regent's Park and not the Camden ward caked Regent's Park, so we would suggest for one Camden Town and Tufnell Park and for the other either Queen's Park and St John's Wood or Queen's Park and Maida Vale.

To the north of the area on Barnet, Enfield and Haringey, we have the following concerns. Hornsey Vale is split by the suggestion to move Stroud Green to Tottenham. This was consulted on last time round and caused strong objections and projection.

Finchley is divided; Finchley Church End ward which has large parts of the commercial high street would be split from the rest of Finchley. Mill Hill in Barnet is placed awkwardly with Chipping Barnet with which it has almost no easy road connection. Mill Hill ward is divided between a north western part which looks to Edgware and a south eastern part looking to Finchley, but none of it has meaningful ties to Chipping Barnet. Enfield is divided between five different seats with two of them straddling Enfield and Barnet.

Hornsey Vale, transferring the two Wood Green wards, that is Woodside and Noel Park, from Hornsey and Wood Green to Tottenham, if we keep them together that avoids splitting Wood Green and ensures there is still a constituency wholly within Haringey.

Transferring Stroud Green and Haringey wards to Hornsey and Wood Green, Haringey Ward has few transport or community links to Tottenham which is centred further east on the A10.

Barnet and Enfield, we would switch the four Barnet wards of Hendon, West Hendon, Golders Green and Finchley Church End from Hendon to the Finchley and Southgate seat and, to accommodate this, move the three Enfield wards of Southgate, Southgate Green and Winchmore Hill and the Barnet ward of Brunswick Park from Finchley and Southgate to the Chipping Barnet and Mill Hill seat and, to accommodate this, move High Barnet, Underhill and Mill Hill from Chipping Barnet and Mill Hill to Hendon. This would have the result of Finchley being brought back together in a new Finchley and Hendon seat, only one seat straddling the Enfield/Barnet boundary, a new Southgate and East Barnet constituency, and Mill Hill remaining with Barnet's other Edgware wards in a new Edgware and Chipping Barnet constituency.

Finally, the constituencies east of the River Lea. We want to record our support for the proposals for the constituencies of Upminster and Romford which represent minimum change. We are not yet ready – those words have been chosen quite carefully – to support any of the other constituencies east of the Lea including Bow and Canning Town. We regret that the Commission have not been able to restore a Wanstead and Woodford constituency and that the area remains split between three constituencies. We do not support the new Leytonstone and Wanstead because it excludes large parts of Leytonstone High Road which are in Cann Hall and Cathall wards and includes electors who are right at the Ilford Town Centre and that in turn is divided between constituencies. Walthamstow had been redrawn so that large numbers of electors associating with Walthamstow in the Wood Street and Chapel End wards have been left out. I end with confession time because we can see the problems but we are not at this moment coming up, I am afraid, with any better alternative arrangements and we want to listen to the responses to the consultation and formally at this point are neither endorsing nor objecting to the proposed constituencies.

Thank you for your time, Mr Chairman. Obviously I am not going to rush away instantly but I apologise for leaving before subsequent presentations. I am afraid I have to get back elsewhere.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is understood. Thank you very much. That has been most helpful. If I may just clarify, we received the breakdown of the new proposed constituencies but is there a copy of the actual presentation as well?

BARONESS HAMWEE: There will be.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It would have been helpful to have it to look at but thank you very much. I have no points for clarification. Are there any other matters for clarification? Would you address the point to me, please.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: (MP for Mitcham and Morden) My name is Siobhain McDonagh and I am the MP for Mitcham and Morden. I wondered what the wards were that made up the proposed new constituency of Mitcham and Norbury.

BARONESS HAMWEE: I am going to turn to Roger, if I may, who will find it more quickly than I will.

MR GUYS: I will not do it from memory because I will miss one out and it will be embarrassing. We have the Croydon wards of Norbury, West Thornton and Broad Green and the Merton wards of Ravensbury, Cricket Green, Lavender Fields, Graveney, Figges Marsh, Longthornton and Pollards Hill and I think that as we were drawing this up there is one ward from the current Mitcham and Morden, as I am sure you are aware, which we would be transferring over to a Wimbledon seat and we ummed and ahd for a long time over whether to go with Colliers Wood or Ravensbury. It is six-of-one and half-a-dozen of the other, easily persuadable either way if we have that wrong. That is what we plan for now.

BARONESS HAMWEE: I can give you the list afterwards, Siobhain, if that would help.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any other points of clarification? Would you introduce yourself by giving your name and address, please.

MR DAVID LAMMY: (MP for Tottenham) David Lammy, MP for Tottenham. I am not sure I heard correctly but did I hear Haringey ward and Stroud Green ward described as not being part of Tottenham historically when in fact they have been part of Tottenham since 1691?

MR GUYS: No. The transport links were not strong between Haringey ward and Tottenham, Tottenham being based some way to the east on the A10 and that the Wood Green wards have stronger links to Tottenham than those two wards.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other points? In which case, thank you very much indeed for that. I would suggest that we now take the opportunity to have a morning break/comfort break. We shall assemble again at 11.50 back in the room.

Time Noted: 11.29 am

After a short break

Time Noted: 11.50 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, if we can reconvene and I will ask the Conservative Party to make their submission, please.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much indeed and I thank the Commission for all their work. This is a representation on behalf of the Conservative Party and the Greater London Region Conservatives. My name is Roger Pratt; I am the Boundary Review Director for the Conservative Party and my office address is in Matthew Parker Street nearby.

We support the allocation of 68 seats to London and we support the Commission's groupings and their allocations for sub-regions as follows. As the Commission say, it is a practical approach and we believe that is the right approach for London. All our proposals are based on the four key rules that the Commission can take into account once they have the quotas right: special geographical considerations, local government boundaries, boundaries of existing constituencies and any ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies. In addition to that, we will look at the aborted review last time; there are a number of similarities and I will quote therefore from the Report of the Assistant Commissioners on the last occasion when there was the aborted review.

In the North of the Thames, we support the Commission's proposals in their entirety for the following seats. For Barking, for Brentford and Chiswick which we think is a very robust constituency not including Hounslow Ward, so that Hounslow can be united, Brentford and Isleworth is currently too big and we think the arrangement that the Commission have come up with is a very sensible approach. The Cities of London and Westminster, we appreciate that this includes two wards from Camden but we do believe that the two Camden wards are very sensible and link in well with the two cities. The Dagenham and Rainham is similar to the existing constituency. Feltham and Hounslow again enables the four Hounslow wards to be kept together and we think that

is a sensible solution/sensible way of looking at the Hounslow problem of constituencies being too large. We support Finsbury Park and Stoke Newington, and we support Hackney Central, which are entirely happy wards. We support the Hammersmith and Fulham constituency which is entirely within Hammersmith and recreates a constituency from the past. We believe the Hampstead and Golders Green constituency is again a robust constituency not including any Brent wards from the Hampstead and Kilburn but instead including all the Hampstead wards and we think Highgate does go well with that. The local paper is called the *Ham & High*, Hampstead and Highgate are linked together and we do believe that is a robust constituency. We think Hayes and Harlington is sensible being its existing constituency plus one ward. We believe that Hendon is a sensible constituency totally within Barnet. We support the Holborn and St Pancras seat, eight wards from the existing seat plus two Islington wards. We support Hornchurch and Upminster which is no change. We strongly support the Kensington and Chelsea proposal because this is co-terminus with the local authority; it is the only local authority that could be co-terminus with a constituency and we therefore strongly support that; I think it is clearly the smallest borough in London and it is right, if the numbers are right, that it should have a constituency on its own. We support Poplar and Limehouse totally within Tower Hamlets. We support Queen's Park and Regent's Park linking together the Queens Park ward of Brent with the Queen's Park ward of Westminster. We support Romford as it is the existing constituency plus one and we support Southall and Heston, so again all the communities in Hounslow can be kept together in three separate seats which is very sensible and Twickenham is no change.

We support the Commission's proposal for these seats but disagree with the names of the seats, that is Hackney West and Bethnal Green, and Islington. We instead propose that these seats should be named Bethnal Green and Shoreditch to respect the fact that there is more of Shoreditch in that particular seat and we believe that the Islington seat should actually be called Islington South and Finsbury; it is the current seat plus one ward and we think retaining the same name makes sense.

North of the Thames there are 21 constituencies where we do not support the Commission's proposals and I list them there for the sake of brevity; I will not go through them individually.

In North-East London we propose the following seats. The Chingford and Woodford; our proposal is exactly the same as the Labour Party interestingly here; we believe that Bridge ward should come in and Chapel End should come out. We propose an Ilford North minus Bridge plus Valentines, a Leytonstone and Wanstead minus Valentines plus Cann Hall and a Walthamstow plus Chapel End minus Cann Hall. That is a summary of what we do in terms of those wards and that is it in terms of a picture of

exactly what happens in North-East London (indicating). The advantages of this scheme is that we restore close local ties between Chapel End and the rest of Walthamstow, we restore ties between Cann Hall which was historically separate from Leyton and the eastern wards of Waltham Forest and Wanstead; we reflect local ties between the Bridge ward, which is historically part of Woodford, and the Church End and Monkams ward and 7,068 fewer electors move from their existing constituency.

In East London we propose the following seats: Bow and Stratford, East Ham, and Forest Gate and Ilford Town. That is what happens in terms of the change of wards, just a swapping of the three wards that are mentioned there: Canning Town South, East Ham North and Plaistow North. That is how it looks; we believe that looks neater on a map and it reflects modern-day communications (indicating). The advantages of our East London scheme will reflect obvious dividing lines in New Ham, particularly the District Line between West Ham and Barking and the A13, New Ham Way. We respect the Docklands Light Railway as a line of communication through the south of the New Ham borough.

If we look at North London we are proposing the following seats. The Chipping Barnet and Mill Hill which becomes totally within Barnet; we think it is odd that one ward, Cockfosters, is taken into a Chipping Barnet seat and it enables us to bring Brunswick Park back into Chipping Barnet. Interestingly, that is exactly the same proposal as the Labour Party on this occasion as well. We have Edmonton and Tottenham Hale which is the remaining ward of Enfield plus four Haringey wards. The Enfield North and Enfield Southgate constituencies are both the existing constituency plus 1 ward; so the minimum possible change you can make for those constituencies. We have Finchley and Muswell Hill, again a link between Barnet and Haringey, and a Hornsey and Wood Green seat which is entirely within Haringey. That is what the Boundary Commission do and this is what we do and what we assure is that there are two seats totally within Enfield and instead of Enfield being divided into five under the Commission's proposals, it is only divided by three and Barnet has two seats totally within the Borough of Barnet (indicating). I would like to quote, sir, from the Assistant Commissioners' Report last time when they discussed the whole question of Enfield and I would refer you to paragraphs AC83, 84 and 85 on page 25 of the Commission's proposals and they said:

"We recommend an Enfield Southgate constituency containing all seven wards of the existing constituency with the addition of one ward, Bush Hill Park, from Edmonton. This reflects the boundary of the existing constituency more closely. All the wards are in Enfield. The Commission proposed an Enfield North constituency containing all the wards of the existing constituency of that name with the addition of Ponders End from the existing Edmonton constituency. There was support for the Commission's proposals. We do not consider that any counterproposals containing different configurations of Enfield wards better reflect the statutory factors. We recommend the

Commission's proposal and recommend the constituency has the name Ealing North as the existing constituency would be largely unchanged. Then in order to meet the electoral criteria, the five remaining Enfield wards, Edmonton Green, Haselbury, Jubilee, Lower Edmonton and Upper Edmonton, should be placed with the four Tottenham wards, Bruce Grove, Northumberland Park, Tottenham Hale and White Hart Lane which are in Haringey. We note that a number of respondents commented on local ties between Edmonton and Tottenham"

and we have gone exactly for that solution in this part of London.

The advantages, the generally north/south lines of communication in Enfield and in Barnet are respected; local ties between Brunswick Park and East Barnet which are divided by the Commission are restored; local ties between Cockfosters and Southgate divided by the Commission are restored; both the existing Enfield North and Enfield Southgate constituencies are retained intact with the addition of one Enfield ward; we reduce the number of constituencies in Enfield Local Authority by two; and Chipping Barnet is contained entirely within the Barnet Local Authority.

If we move to West London, we propose the following seats. An Ealing Central and Acton seat and an Ealing North seat, both entirely within Ealing; a Harrow and Stanmore seat totally within Harrow; a Kenton seat, not the same as but similar to the Boundary Commission's proposals where we combine Brent and Harrow; a Northwood and West Harrow seat which combines partly Hillingdon, partly Harrow, a similar arrangement to the Labour Party but different from the Labour Party and we think more coherent; an Uxbridge and Ruislip seat totally within the Hillingdon Local Authority and a Wembley and Neasden constituency totally within Brent and a Willesden and Hammersmith North seat importantly keeping those four wards of Hammersmith together, so that the wards not in Hammersmith and Fulham can be in a Willesden and Hammersmith North so that you only divide Hammersmith by two. This is the Commission's West London and this is our alternative: two seats totally within Hillingdon as opposed to one under the Commission, three seats within Harrow as opposed to four under the Commission, two seats totally within Ealing as opposed to one under the Commission (indicating).

The advantages of our West London scheme are that we avoid the Commission's division of the northern part of Hammersmith uniting the four wards north of the Goldhawk Road which the Commission divide; we restore local ties between South Ruislip and Cavendish, Manor and West Ruislip wards, thereby uniting most of Ruislip which the Commission divide; we restore ties between Rayners Lane, Roxbourne and Roxeth wards thereby uniting the South Harrow community which the Commission divide; we restore more closely the existing Ealing Central and Acton and Ealing North constituencies, both of which we propose are contained entirely within the Ealing Local Authority; we reduce by one the number of constituencies contained in the Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham and Harrow Local Authorities; five of the

eight constituencies are contained within one local authority rather than two under the Commission's proposals. We would maintain, sir, that in West London our proposals are very considerably better in terms of local authority links than the Commission's proposals.

I move to south of the Thames. We support the Commission's proposals in their entirety for the following seats. We support the proposed Battersea constituency which is the existing seat plus one ward. That is minimum change for the Battersea constituency and we strongly support the proposal of the Commission on Battersea. We support the Beckenham constituency which is a logical constituency that manages to ensure continuity in the rest of South London. We support the Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency with eight wards from the existing constituency. We support the Bromley and Chislehurst constituency totally within the Borough of Bromley. We support the Camberwell and Vauxhall Bridge constituency and the Clapham North and Stockwell constituency totally within Lambeth. Croydon Central, Croydon North and Croydon South we support. The Croydon Central and Croydon South are actually much closer to Central and South than the current constituencies; they are a truer reflection of the compass points and we believe the Commission has that right. We support the Dulwich and West Norwood seat with Lambeth; Eltham which is totally within Greenwich we support; we support no change to Kingston and Surbiton; we support Old Bexley and Sidcup totally within Bexley; Orpington totally within Bromley; Peckham and Lewisham West with Lewisham and Southwark; and Streatham and Mitcham we also support. In this region, we would make one name change. We believe that the Richmond Park seat should reflect the wards that it has from Kingston upon Thames and therefore we would not name this Richmond Park and North Kensington, but as it is a no change constituency we obviously support its composition. We do not support the Commission's proposals for nine of the seats south of the Thames, so we are making some adjustments. In Merton and Wandsworth, we propose a Merton and Wimbledon Central seat plus the Village ward; Putney and Wimbledon Park seat plus the Earlsfield ward and a Tooting constituency plus the Colliers Wood ward and that just shows you the three seats as we propose, so just three ward swaps in Merton and Wandsworth.

I would quote again the Assistant Commissioner's Report, that is our proposal with the three ward swaps, and AC168 and AC169 in the Assistant Commissioner's report last time and that is on page 44:

"The Commission's proposals for Putney was generally supported with few objections. Nevertheless, Cllr Oonagh Moulton submitted on behalf of the local councils who represented the Wimbledon Park Ward that that it had much in common with Putney. She noted that councillors had no objection to the proposal and could see merits. We also note the continuous residential development between Wimbledon Park ward and the Southfields ward in Wandsworth."

I just want to make the point with regard to that that it is the Wimbledon Park ward. There was no suggestion then that the Village ward should be included within a Putney seat. That is the proposal of the Commission this time. We note that it is opposed by the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats and is opposed by ourselves, so the Village ward should, we believe, much better fit within a Wimbledon constituency with which it has strong ties. We move the Earlsfield ward and we note in place of Fairfield Ward which was proposed originally, we would include Earlsfield ward from Wandsworth noting the continuous residential development between here and the Southfields ward in Putney. The Commission last time considered the Fairfield ward and they decided that the Earlsfield ward was the better one and that is the ward that we are suggesting goes into the Putney constituency.

The advantages of our scheme. We disagree with the Commission's assertion in the London report that Wimbledon Common should be reunited in one constituency; it is a clear divider of communities in the Commission's proposed constituency. We separate the areas to the north and south of Wimbledon Common into separate constituencies centred on Wimbledon and Putney. Wimbledon High Street, which is a focal point of the area and contained in the Village ward, is returned to the Wimbledon seat restoring local ties. There are very strong ties between the Village ward of Wimbledon, the Hillside ward and the Raynes Park ward and we restore those ties. We reflect links between the Earlsfield and Wimbledon Park where there is continuous development. We reflect ties between Collier's Wood and Tooting reflected in tube and road links.

In terms of Sutton, we would make just one ward swap between the two in terms of Carshalton and Wallington and Sutton and Cheam. We would put the Belmont ward into Sutton and Cheam rather than Carshalton and Wallington and the Merton ward of St. Helier into Carshalton and Wallington rather than Sutton and Cheam. That is a straight ward swap and we think it looks neater on a map; we do not have the ward of Belmont protruding right into Sutton. We believe our shape is better. We restore Belmont, which is part of Sutton, to the Sutton and Cheam constituency. Ties between the Merton ward of St. Helier and the Sutton ward of St. Helier are reflected and we move 7,275 fewer electors.

We are also doing a swap of wards in South London, in this case it is a swap of four wards in Greenwich and Deptford and Lewisham East and this shows what we would change: the Blackheath and Lee Green wards would go to Lewisham East and the Ladywell and Lewisham Central wards would go to Greenwich and Deptford and that is the map of that (indicating). Our advantages: we far more closely respect the boundaries of the existing constituencies. The present Lewisham East constituency is entirely contained within our proposed constituency, so that strong ties between the central areas of Greenwich and Lewisham which are connected by the Docklands Light Railway are reflected and 34,949 fewer electors move from their existing constituency,

just moving four wards and you get nearly half-a-constituency better. That is a very considerable improvement.

In South-East London, we propose a change with regard to Erith and Crayford and Woolwich in order to unite the Thamesmead ward. In Erith and Crayford, we link St. Michael's and most of Lesnes Abbey and in Woolwich we add Belvedere and Thamesmead East. These are the proposals we have, which polling districts we have of Lesnes Abbey in the proposed Erith and Crayford seat.

It is right, sir, that I should talk about dividing wards as in this one case and only this one case we are suggesting dividing a ward between constituencies. In the Commission's guidance, the Guide to the 2018 Review, they say wards can be divided if there are "exceptional and compelling circumstances – having regard to the specific factors in Rule 5 ..." and they then go on to actually qualify what they might consider in terms of an exceptional and compelling circumstance and they say:

"Examples of circumstances in which the [Boundary Commission for England] might propose splitting a ward could include: (a) where all the possible 'whole ward' options in an area would significantly cut across local ties"

and we believe it is very significant to keep the Thamesmead wards together and, again, I would quote from the report last time, AC25 which is on page 13 of the Commission's proposals, and the Commission talks about a large number of contentious issues and significant effects on the London electorate, "amongst the most significant" and they only cite six items which are the most significant and the final one is:

"The division of Thamesmead by putting Thamesmead East and Thamesmead Moorings wards into two separate constituencies."

That is described as "most significant". We believe that it is a significant breaking of local ties and we do think that there are circumstances where you can divide a ward on this occasion. The difference from last time when clearly no wards were divided is that both the Commission have given reasons, as the one I have quoted, and also have supplied polling district numbers for every polling district in the country and they have done that on the basis that they think there is a possibility that people will, in certain cases, divide wards between constituencies. If the Commission or if you, sir, and your fellow Assistant Commissioners are not prepared to divide wards, we will give evidence of an alternative scheme which does not divide wards. We do not think it is as good but we accept that if you will not divide wards, there is an alternative scheme which does keep Thamesmead together.

This is our proposal and that is the alternative proposal for South-East London (indicating). This has a number of advantages. We divide the Lesnes Abbey ward. We

have referenced to the current Local Government Ward Boundary Review which places the LA1E polling district in an enlarged Thamesmead East ward. That is the current Local Government Boundary Review and I appreciate you take them in terms of 2015 but you can take into account changes that are going to come. That comes into the Thamesmead East ward and we therefore think it would make sense on this occasion to split the ward and it reflects the polling district ties and its position north of the North Kent line. We restore ties in the Thamesmead Estate which is presently entirely in the Erith and Thamesmead constituency and which is divided by the Commission's proposals and again I would quote, sir, from the Commission report last time, AC147 which is on pages 39 and 40:

"The initial proposals place Thameside Moorings ward in a Woolwich constituency and Thameside East ward in an Erith constituency by observing the borough boundary between Bexley and Greenwich. Many respondents objected to this division of the Thamesmead wards, both of which are in the existing Erith and Thamesmead constituency. The Labour Party, Teresa Pearce, Member of Parliament, the Board of Trust Thamesmead and a number of local councillors considered that dividing these two wards would break important local ties"

and we certainly agree with that.

The reuniting of the Thamesmead Estate confirms Woolwich as a Thameside constituency into which St. Michael's ward does not fit. We restore ties between the Brampton and St. Michael's ward which are both part of Bexleyheath and which are divided by the Commission's proposals and we move 16,985 fewer electors, and that is also a very significant factor.

Those are our proposals, Sir, for London. Again, just a reminder of the rules that have governed our deliberations on these proposals in terms of the rules that the Boundary Commission have to take into effect. In summary in London, we propose better local authority links particularly in North London and West London; therefore, we are more compliant with Rule 5(b). We move over 20,000 fewer electors than the Commission and restore many wards back to their existing constituencies, thus being more compliant with Rule 5(c). We break fewer local ties restoring ties for example in Woodford, Walthamstow, Enfield, Ealing, Uxbridge and Ruislip, Hammersmith, Wimbledon, Sutton, Thamesmead and Welling, thus being more compliant with Rule 5(d).

In conclusion, we support the allocation of 68 constituencies but believe there is a better scheme available. We will submit to the Commission before 5 December a comprehensive document outlining our rationale, either whether we support the Commission or where we propose alternatives. We will take into account the representations made at the five hearings in London and may, in the light of these, amend our submission from that which we have outlined today.

That is the submission, sir, of the Conservative Party. I am very grateful to everyone for listening and we look forward in due course to reading your report on London. Thank you very much, indeed.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. You made reference to a whole ward, not a solution but an alternative. Is it possible to have details of that?

MR PRATT: In terms of Bexley we believe that Mr Evennett, the Member of Parliament for Bexley Heath and Crayford, will present that at one of the hearings.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there are matters for clarification?

MR DAVID LAMMY: I am sorry, I was not clear. You explained your Edmonton and Tottenham Hale seat and the four wards in the north of Tottenham that would be part of that seat. Can you explain where the rest of Tottenham goes in your configuration? The remaining four wards in Tottenham would have to go somewhere.

MR PRATT: Of course, Mr Lammy. I will pass one of these to you so that you are aware. As I say, we have Finchley and Muswell Hill which has five wards from Haringey; Hornsey and Wood Green which includes Bounds Green, Haringey, Hornsey, Noel Park, Seven Sisters, St. Ann's, Stroud Green, Tottenham Green, West Green and Woodside, and I think I explained, as you say, the other ones that went into the Edmonton and Tottenham Hale constituency which was, as the revised proposals last time, Bruce Grove, Northumberland Park, Tottenham Hale and White Hart Lane.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: The Boundary Commission propose moving Graveney which is currently in Mitcham into Tooting. Are the Conservative proposals to also in addition move Colliers Wood into the Tooting constituency?

MR PRATT: That is correct. There are those two wards from Merton. Thus, there is not an orphan ward, there are two wards instead.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: There are no other matters. Thank you very much indeed for that presentation.

We now have some timed presentation and I think we will take Mr Mark Field, MP, if you are ready to come forward. If you could state who you are for the record, please.

MR MARK FIELD: (MP for the Cities of London and Westminster) I am Mark Field, the Conservative Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster. I am a fourth-term Member of Parliament for this constituency, first elected in June 2001 in a seat that has been subjected to minor boundary changes since 2010. Whilst I am a Vice Chairman for International Affairs for the Conservative Party, I speak today in a personal capacity.

The Boundary Commission for England have faced an unenviable task not least in view of Parliament's decision to reduce from 650 to 600 the size of the House of Commons whilst also adopting a strict five per cent numerical leeway without needing to split wards anywhere in the country except, of course, in Bexley as we have just heard. I should have preferred the BCE to have approached this task in London by dividing the metropolitan area not into the two sub-regions but into a larger number of borough clusters. However, I also recognise that it would now be intensely disruptive to recommence this process and, accordingly, my submission will assume that a single North Thames sub-region is the only game in town.

Notwithstanding the very large number of non-UK or commonwealth citizens living in Central London, all of whom, as was pointed out by the representative from the Green Party earlier, require representation without their presence counting towards the total electorate, I also appreciate that my current seat is significantly undersized by the rules that govern your deliberations. I am pleased that the BCE's proposal keeps my current constituency intact and that all 58,071 of my current electors are allocated to the revised Cities of London and Westminster seat and, in particular, I welcome the maintaining of the link between the City of London and Westminster which has remained intact since the first review in 1948 and I note that each of the other parties, my own Conservative Party to the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats and the Greens, also are in support of keeping that connection intact. This link is historical, economic and cultural. However, with the emergence of the increasingly commercial financial districts in Mayfair and St James's, this connection has, if anything, strengthened over recent years in which I have represented both areas in Parliament.

The economic distinctiveness of the City of Westminster extends beyond financial services to tourism, entertainment and links over high-profile, national civic events. In addition, there understandably has to be strong co-operation over security and intelligence issues between the two districts extending to close interconnections in all aspects of public life from the work of local authorities, the police and the emergency services. Indeed, maintaining that connection between the City of London and the City of Westminster was almost universally supported by public authorities, political parties and local residents alike during the course of representations in 2011/12. The Commission may recall the initial proposal actually for the first time talked about breaking that link and I very much hope and trust that this universal support for the maintenance of a link between the City of London and of Westminster will be borne in

mind if there is any suggestion in the course of a public consultation that that long-standing link be broken.

Ideally, I would prefer it and I think it would be desirable for no seat in London to contain wards from more than two boroughs. Maintaining close connections with departmental council officers for three local authorities puts an additional burden upon MPs and their staff as we try to represent constituents to the best of our abilities. It also presents added ceremonial duties especially here in Central London. If it were possible to expand my current Cities of London and Westminster seats by adding further territory from the City of Westminster alone rather than the London Borough of Camden, I think that would be a more agreeable outcome. However, I recognise that to do so might prove disruptive to the wider plan set out for the North Thames sub-region. I do understand, of course, that the BCE have created another proposed seat in Streatham and Mitcham in the South Thames sub-region which also contains wards from three local authorities, in that case Lambeth, Merton and Croydon. Whilst this is a precedent that I believe would be best not set, I also appreciate that the regularity of future reviews as now set out in legislation will, if the disruption to the pattern of constituencies created by reducing the Commons from 650 to 600 at this review, require three borough seats to become more common.

Let me tell you how I make the specific proposals. I represented Lancaster Gate Ward between 2001 and 2010 and, naturally, whilst I cannot vouch for the opinions of my former and hopefully soon to be future constituents, I am very pleased that it returns. There are great connections with that ward and Hyde Park, both look towards the park and obviously are adjacent to Hyde Park itself, and in shopping terms, although the Liberal Democrat Party's proposal suggested something a little different, I think that many people in Bayswater would look upon Westbourne Grove, much of which of course is not even in Westminster but in Kensington and Chelsea, as being a closer connection. There is a strong connection I think and some logic in bringing that single ward back into the constituency north of the park alongside Hyde Park ward.

As for the two Camden wards that the Commission now wish to add to the Cities of London and Westminster, I do accept that bringing together both Covent Garden and Fitzrovia districts within a single parliamentary constituency has some significant logic to it. Holborn and Bloomsbury, in addition to their thriving residential population, contain the increasingly high-profile mid-town business district, University College Hospital and Great Ormond Street teaching hospitals and University College London. As a result, its profile has much in common with my existing seat which contains St Mary's Paddington, St Bartholomew's Hospital and Imperial and KCL and, of course, most of the LSE which would also be united under a single constituency if these proposals were finalised. For the legally minded amongst us, the proposed change would also bring all of the Inns of Court under the boundary of a single constituency. Naturally, I would be very happy to represent such a diverse and important part of Central London and just hope that some

of my local residents and not simply the Conservative inclined voters are as excited at the potential prospect of having me as their MP.

The two wards of Bloomsbury and Holborn and Covent Garden include virtually all of the former Borough of Holborn which existed as a constituency in its own right between 1885 and 1950. In my submission to the Commission in 2011, I mistakenly stated the old Holborn Borough constituency extended right the way up to the Euston Road. In fact, it was even more close-knit than that. Accordingly, detaching these two southern most wards of Camden alone does enjoy great historical precedent.

Finally, if these proposals are approved, I think the Commission will need to give some further thought to the naming of the constituencies in Central London as has been pointed out before. The current name of my constituency I know is already a bit of a mouthful and never ceases to confuse some of my colleagues in the House but if the new territory is to be recognised, then perhaps the name the City of London, Holborn and the City of Westminster would be an accurate if even more longwinded description. As none of the historical Holborn is retained in the successor proposed seat of Holborn and St Pancras, I will perhaps for the first and only time say that I agree with the Green Party in what they have said in their proposal earlier on. Perhaps the words and the name of Camden Town and Tufnell Park would better reflect its boundaries. Thank you so much for listening to my submission.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any points of clarification? In which case, thank you very much for that submission. I call Mr Ian Potts.

MR POTTS: (Ealing Conservative Associations) My name is Ian Potts and I am a retired councillor for the Ealing Broadway ward in the London Borough of Ealing and was a member of the committee in the London Borough which set up the current ward boundaries in Ealing, so I proposed the current ward boundaries to the Local Government Boundary Commission. I also spoke on behalf of the Ealing Conservative Council Group at the Boundary Commission hearings that produced the present Ealing constituencies. Thus, I have a pretty good idea of what happens there.

I wish to speak today on behalf of the Ealing Conservative Associations, all three of them. Currently, Ealing has three constituencies entirely within the borough. Incidentally, the Boundary Commission's proposals never dealt with Ealing; they dealt with most boroughs bit by bit but they did not deal with Ealing as one but they spread it across everywhere which was reflected in it because it proposes giving one constituency solely within the borough and four others which we would share with three other London boroughs, so splaying us all over the place. The alternative proposals put forward by the Conservative Party are a vast improvement on this because they will provide two constituencies entirely within the borough and two constituencies shared

with only one other borough, the London Borough of Hounslow, which indeed are what the Boundary Commission are proposing anyhow.

I will look at the wards that are affected. First, I will deal with those which it is proposed we share with the London Borough of Hounslow. The first of these is Southfield ward. Southfield ward is in the extreme eastern end of the constituency and very much part of Chiswick and, indeed, I suspect that very many of the residents of Southfield ward would be very happy to be put into a Chiswick constituency. They share their postal code with Chiswick, they basically look to Chiswick High Street as their shopping centre and, indeed, the local Anglican and Catholic churches are actually in Chiswick; so very much a community that is linked with Chiswick. With regard to Northfield ward, which is also being proposed to be put in with this new Brentford and Chiswick constituency, this has a rather nebulous border with the Hounslow ward of Brentford which in fact wraps round it in the south and, indeed, they share Boston Manor Tube Station as their local station and, indeed, the local catholic boys' school, Gunnersbury School, is just in the Brentford constituency but largely takes students from South Ealing. Again, Gunnersbury Park, which is in Hounslow officially but is very much run jointly with Ealing, in fact joins those two wards together almost. That is in Hounslow and we have the two Northfield and Southfield coming down to it. Those two wards, we accept – we would like to keep everything in Ealing if we could – have strong links with Brentford and Chiswick and therefore we accept the Boundary Commission's proposals for those.

The other proposal that they move out from the existing Ealing Central and Acton Constituency is Walpole. This is an awkward ward in many ways; at the Local Boundary Commission, we had difficulty agreeing the boundaries of it. To the north it divides the West Ealing shopping area with Elthorne, which is in the proposed Southall Constituency. The residents of both wards would attend the local primary school, Oaklands Primary School, which again is in the Elthorne ward, and the local Catholic Church in Hanwell probably is what the people in the north of that ward would attend. It fits in with the southern parts of the current Ealing Southall to which the Commission proposes moving it by extending southwards to join with Heston in Southall and Heston. Again, it is one which we accept.

To turn to the alternative proposals which the Conservative Party is making, the effect is to provide two constituencies entirely within the London Borough of Ealing. As an Ealing representative and ex-Ealing councillor, that is something I strongly support. The first one will be made by taking Cleveland ward, which is currently in Ealing North but wrapped around the current Ealing Central Constituency and indeed around the Ealing Broadway ward, which I used to represent, and is basically part of Ealing; it does not really think of itself as part of the north of Ealing, the old Central Ealing, and, indeed, at the southern end it meets Ealing Broadway ward at West Ealing Station, again a local area which we would go to, and the local shopping centre in the south which is called The Avenue is an Ealing Broadway ward; it is my local shopping centre; I happen to live in the southern part of Cleveland ward. I should explain that Cleveland ward is an L-

shape and the northern bit includes Pitshanger Lane which is the main shopping centre for people who live in that northern part of the borough, whether they are in Hanger Hill ward or in Cleveland ward. Indeed, the other interesting thing here is the number of local places of worship that the two wards share: the local Anglican Churches, St Barnabas and Saint Stephen's which are separate in two wards but their membership will go across both. Ealing Abbey represents both and that is the local Catholic Church. We have the Ealing Liberal Synagogue down in Cleveland ward and the Ealing Gurdwara as well. Very much Cleveland is an Ealing area.

The other ward we propose to move into this new district is Perivale. Perivale ward sits to the north on top of the Cleveland and Hanger Hill wards which are, we are proposing, in this new constituency. It is a very self-contained ward and it very much resists being part of Greenford. That is a reason why it is acceptable to add it to the Ealing wards. It shares a number of facilities with those North Ealing wards, primarily of Cleveland. The Ealing and Perivale golf courses are there; the Gurnell Swimming Pool, which originally was called the Perivale Pool but is actually in Cleveland ward; the Ealing Athletics track, St Mary's cultural centre which is actually in Perivale ward but largely accessed from the Ealing wards; and the Tesco supermarket which is my local supermarket which again people from North Ealing and Perivale would use. Very much those two wards have strong links with the Central Ealing bit.

On the other hand, the wards which you propose to be added on to that area from Hammersmith and Fulham have absolutely no link with certainly the western end of the ward. West Ealing, which is part of Ealing Broadway ward, is miles from Shepherd's Bush and has varied links with it and, indeed, if you go back a couple of Boundary Commission reviews when the old Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush constituency was created, it was accepted by that Commission that there was a lack of link between the old Hanger Lane ward, that is Ealing Broadway Station, and Shepherd's Bush although they in fact still pushed it through. Effectively, they are trying to recreate this old Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush constituency which was very much objected to at the time and the return to three Ealing constituencies was gratefully approved at the last Boundary Commission review.

So what we are proposing, to take those two wards, the Shepherd's Bush wards and add to the north creates a strong constituency in the eastern half of the London Borough of Ealing. That leaves eight other wards in the north part of the north-west borough which is similar to the existing Ealing North constituency. We have taken off two wards, that is to say Cleveland and Perivale, but we need to add two on. The Boundary Commission are proposing to add on two wards in the north of Southall and we would support that as creating a constituency in Ealing North, the north-west of the borough, which is not that distinct ... The two wards that are moving up from North Southall move up towards Greenford and, again, it is a nebulous boundary between Greenford and Southall in the north there and some of them will certainly use Greenford Broadway as their main shopping area.

The other thing is to bring back in the two wards from Northolt which the Boundary Commission are proposing to give on to Hammersmith and Fulham and every representation so far has supported that. Northolt and Greenford have been united in the same constituency since the war, they very much link together and so one would support the return to that. It provides a revised constituency completely within the London Borough of Ealing North.

Thank you, sir. That is all I wanted to say and I can give you a copy of this or my original draft anyhow.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you would, that would be most helpful. Thank you very much indeed. I have no questions. Are there any points of clarification?

MR PRATT: I want to clarify because I think it was probably a slip of the tongue. The two Northolt wards are proposed by the Commission in a Hillingdon seat, not Hammersmith and Fulham.

MR POTTS: My apologies, yes, Hillingdon, the wrong side. I am dyslexic; I moved my east and west across!

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other points? In which case, thank you very much indeed. That was most helpful. I now call Victoria Borwick, MP. You need to make a formal introduction as part of the process.

MRS VICTORIA BORWICK: (MP for Kensington) My name is Victoria Borwick, I am the MP for the Kensington constituency which, if the Boundary Review's current plans/proposals go ahead, would become the Kensington and Chelsea constituency. The current electorate for Kensington is 55,432 people, one of the smallest, which, as you know, is far below the requirements of the 71,000 to 78,500 voters. However, the Boundary Commission are currently proposing that Kensington become Kensington and Chelsea to include the extra 21,000 electors from Chelsea. This would then meet the criteria as Kensington and Chelsea would be reunited and would then have the 76,454 voters. For the record, the borough does have a larger population but I think we have a lot of overseas people who live here; in fact, the last Census figures showed a population of about 150,000, but of course we have significant numbers in our borough who are not eligible to vote; we are home to 30 diplomatic residences and embassies and thus we attract a large number of citizens from all over the world including a number who obviously are therefore ineligible to vote. The important thing about today is looking beyond the numbers because there are many other practical and sensible benefits to having a reunified Kensington and Chelsea constituency.

Since the seat was abolished in time for the 2010 Election, Kensington and Chelsea have been split in two: Kensington to the north and Chelsea subsumed into the Chelsea and Fulham constituency in the south. One of our wards, Brompton & Hans Town, is even split in two: half to Kensington and half to Chelsea and Fulham. Obviously, the administrative complications that result from this reflect the difficulties of the current boundary. This leads me to the main benefit of the Boundary Commission's proposal. Kensington and Chelsea would be reunited as a single constituency, so the boundaries of the local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, become the same of those as the Kensington and Chelsea parliamentary constituency. There are obviously many other advantages to this proposal. The local government boundaries form the default building blocks for many services and organisations and RBKC as a London borough, is a well-defined and well-understood unit. There are several services organised borough wide, for example housing, schools, community groups, and it would be much more straightforward and easier for these groups and organisations to liaise with just one MP who can represent the area as a whole.

When I speak in the House on education or GP services, housing, air quality, local transport or other matters, it is difficult to separate just those that are provided in Kensington when the Council is the provider for both Kensington and Chelsea residents. Obviously, I am speaking for all our children or all our residents but, actually, of course I only represent half of them. Education is a case in point. Residents in the south of the constituency can send their children to schools in Chelsea and vice-versa within one council borough but, inconveniently, in another parliamentary constituency. Obviously, when I speak on funding for education, I am speaking for all our children but I only represent half of them. This weekend while at a church service just off the Harrow Road, I met a governor of one of our schools in Chelsea who asked me to get involved with the work of the school but, sadly, I had to explain that it was another parliamentary constituency which, I have to say, he thought was most odd. On health, I am on the Local NHS Patient Liaison Committee as a patient representative and we are doing battle with the NHS at the moment about the district nursing teams and where they should be located in the borough and I undertook to write on behalf of the committee in residence but, of course, theoretically, I can only represent Kensington residents rather than all the patients affected.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has historically united these two areas of London since 1965. The intention then as now was to create boroughs large enough to be efficient but also accessible and accountable with a strong sense of local identity. The boundary review in London has a particularly difficult job to reduce the number of constituencies in this fast-growing area but reuniting Kensington and Chelsea is one of the most effective ways of achieving this and, going forward, will further reinforce residents' identification with what I believe – I have lived there all my life – is a very special area.

Importantly, this proposal meets all the definitions of local ties and we keep our current geographical borders with the Thames in the south and the canal forming the northern boundary, the West Cross route and the railways lines forming the western boundary which obviously you are unable to cross on foot. The recommendation that constituency matches the borough boundaries is a sensible and practical solution.

The local RBKC motto roughly translates as “How good to dwell in unity” and the unity of Kensington and Chelsea again would be very prescient. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much and is it possible to have a copy of your statement ...?

MRS VICTORIA BORWICK: Of course. Thank you, sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Nicholas Paget-Brown, I see you have just come into the room and I hope you are ready to speak. Would you come forward and, by way of introduction, can you say who you are and give your address for the record.

CLLR PAGET-BROWN: (Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) Cllr Nicholas Paget-Brown; I am Leader of the Council of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Town Hall, Hornton Street, London, W8 7NX. Thank you very much for inviting me.

The borough was created 51 years ago and I have been a councillor in it for 30 of those years. During that time, I have seen a number of configurations of the parliamentary constituencies covered by our borough. It is a diverse borough but one in which a large range of residents identify with it rather than with the parliamentary constituencies. There is a strong sense of place in and across Kensington and Chelsea.

Since the last boundary review in the early part of this century, the borough has contained two parliamentary constituencies. The bulk of the borough has been in the Kensington constituency but four wards in the south containing somewhere in excess of 20,000 voters have been within the Chelsea and Fulham constituency. One of the wards, Brompton & Hans Town, which I actually represent, is split between the two constituencies. Under the present proposals aiming at equalising the number of voters in every constituency, the Commission is proposing a new constituency which will be contiguous with the borough boundary. The Council welcomes this. We have partnerships with organisations such as the police, the tenant management organisation and a large number of voluntary organisations who deliver their services according to the borough boundary. When they or the Council wish to lobby Parliament for legislative changes, there is a need to brief both Members of Parliament but to ensure that examples and case studies come from only the Chelsea part of the Chelsea and Fulham seat. This also makes it difficult for residents to know which Member of

Parliament they should contact. In addition, the Member for Chelsea and Fulham has to deal with two different councils with different policies on different matters. We also have many residents from overseas not eligible to vote in either some or all elections but who nonetheless expect the Council to deal with their problems. Many of those residents assume that the Member of Parliament they have contacted is also contiguous with the Council's area.

The proposed Kensington and Chelsea seat would have a distinctive geographical locus. There are actually sensible north/south boundaries from the Thames in the south to the Harrow Road in the north and to the west a railway line which separates Chelsea from Fulham physically. These are substantial barriers and the communities of Fulham and Chelsea are made distinctive and kept separate by them. To the east, the boundary is reinforced by Kensington Gardens and continues down Exhibition Road, through Belgravia and to the immediate east of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. This boundary is understood by those who live on either side of it and is permeable. However, the current boundaries dividing the two parliamentary constituencies north and southern boundaries are more arbitrary and they do not particularly reflect the actual communities of Kensington and Chelsea. Some people within the technical parliamentary constituency of Kensington actually consider themselves to be residents of Chelsea and the same is true for self-styled Chelsea residents who find themselves voting for a Kensington parliamentary candidate.

This proposal will remove all of these nuances and complexities and for that reason the Council welcomes it. The borough was one of 33 created 51 years ago and it has worked hard to build a sense of community, neighbourliness and place. It therefore makes logical sense to have a single Member of Parliament representing all of it. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any matters of clarification?

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Through you, Mr Simmons, can I ask the Leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council how would he feel if his borough were split up between five different constituencies and he had to deal with five MPs and not his current two or his future one.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: An interesting point but I do not think it is entirely valid for the current proceedings. Thank you for that. I think you have made a point.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Surely it is entirely valid if it is what you are planning to do in another part of London.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I suspect we are going to come to this later today. Thank you very much indeed, sir.

There is no one booked currently. Is there anyone in the room who has not booked but would like to speak? I see Mr Jarrett has arrived and you are the last booked one for this morning. I ask you to come forward and introduce yourself with your name and address as part of the introduction.

MR JARRETT: Hello, everybody. My name is Charley Jarrett and my address is 35 Babington Road, London, SW16 6AP. I presently live in the Streatham constituency and am here to give some counterproposals numbering eight constituencies in the three boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth on the grounds that I think three inner London boroughs are better grouped together for these purposes. I think the straddling of inner and outer London is not useful for statistical purposes. Inner London boroughs have culturally more in common with each other and in these three instances of Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark, they share long borders with each other leading to a lot of cross-border commutes, school attendance and hospital and other public service use. They also have more recent and contemporary local links. Streatham and Clapham were part of Wandsworth just 50 years ago and Lambeth and Southwark share a London Assembly constituency. Conversely, Wandsworth and Lambeth were separated from Surrey – I am talking here about Merton – almost 130 years ago, which is a further reason why I do not think that Merton should be paired with Lambeth or with Wandsworth constituency-wise.

I also have objections to orphaned wards in general. I think few anoraks – people not in this room – know that they live in a ward at all let alone can name their ward. Thus, other than a little bit of technocracy behind the scenes, the splitting of wards is not that bad; I am sure it is not beyond the capabilities of electoral administrators to deal with that. Conversely, if you have orphaned wards, MPs' offices then have to build up relationships with council officers from many, many local authorities and constituents living in orphaned wards – I am thinking in this instance of Norbury and Croydon which is part of the proposed Streatham and Mitcham constituency and of Thornton which is going to be paired with an almost entirely Wandsworth constituency – being such a small minority are less likely to benefit from an MP who has been able to build up strong relationships with the officers from that council.

I have not generated constituencies for the entirety of London or South London, which I am sure would have been more helpful for the Commissioner, and that is because I do not pretend to know other neighbourhoods well enough to suggest what would make good, natural constituencies for them.

My main gripe here, rather than the eight specific constituencies I have, is that I do not think the pairing of Inner London boroughs and outer London boroughs is a good thing and I think that orphaned wards are a bad thing and that splitting wards in order to

achieve compliant constituencies is better and thus my eight proposals have, as I say, made eight compliant constituencies for Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any points for clarification?

MR PRATT: I do not know whether you have it on a piece of paper or what your proposals are but, clearly, it would be helpful to know what the proposals are and how do you deal with the knock-on effects? You say you can create eight constituencies within Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth and that obviously has knock-on effects in places like Merton. How have you managed to deal with the knock-on effects further down?

MR JARRETT: I suppose I would say that I would leave that to the Commissioners with the input of people who live in those constituencies once they have aired their various thoughts or grievances.

MR PRATT: Do we have the eight?

MR JARRETT: Yes. I unfortunately did not submit them beforehand but I can read out all eight and I have some maps here but I do not know if those can be made available at such short notice.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think it would be helpful to have it in a written format in order that people can actually study it.

MR JARRETT: I can submit these for inclusion at whatever point you see as best. I have here a Battersea and Putney constituency, a Vauxhall and South Bank, a Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, a Norwood and Nunhead, a Southfields and Tooting, a Clapham and Streatham, a Brixton and Camberwell, and a Dulwich, Newington and Peckham.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: The Streatham and Tooting constituency that Mr Jarrett is suggesting, would he be able to tell us what wards that includes.

MR JARRETT: It is Streatham and Clapham and I have St. Leonard's, Streatham Hill, Bedford, Balham, Wandsworth Common, Northcote and Shaftesbury.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Could I ask what Tooting looks like under his plans.

MR JARRETT: I have a Southfields and Tooting constituency which includes the wards of West Hill, Southfields, Earlsfield, Tooting, Nightingale and Graveney.

MR KINGSWOOD: My name is Kingswood and I am a member of the public from outside London, the Royal County of Berkshire. Out in the sticks, we often have local authorities who adhere to the 2009 Act and have retiring by thirds, so it is therefore a ward with three members. Whilst appreciating that often wards are not desirable, surely to split a ward is to open Pandora's box and is also to fly against the guidance notes from the Commission because imagine that you split a ward and it has three councillors, a job for both the councillors and for the two Members of Parliament or at its ultimate lunacy would be if you split the ward in three.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are absolutely right, it is one of our fundamental principles that we try to avoid the splitting of wards where we possibly can and we covered that a little earlier this morning. Thank you for your contribution.

MR DRAGE: (Liberal Democrat Party) Simon Drage from the Liberal Democrats. I may have misheard you but did your Streatham and Clapham constituency not include the Streatham Wells ward, so split the Streatham wards of Wells and St. Leonard's and Hill and Streatham South which have usually been kept together?

MR JARRETT: That is correct.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I would most grateful if you could give us full details and then they can be made available. Thank you very much, indeed. That is the last of our booked speakers for this morning and I would suggest that we now adjourn for lunch and reconvene at 2.30.

Time Noted: 1:05 pm

After the luncheon adjournment

Time Noted: 2.35 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we have reconvened and we have a speaker. When you are ready, would you like to come forward. Would you introduce yourself and give your name and address before you start, please.

MR TOM BRAKE: (MP for Carshalton and Wallington) Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Tom Brake and I am the Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington and the address is Kennedy House, 5 Nightingale Road, Carshalton, SM5 2DN.

First of all, I should say that I object to the principle of the Boundary Commission Review because this should have been part of a package of reforms including reform of the House of Lords, but I know that is not the subject for today. I regret the fact that the Government have pushed ahead with this; however it is clear that, barring a rebellion in

Parliament, the boundary changes will proceed and therefore that is what I am now going to briefly address.

In which case, if these Boundary Commission proposals do proceed, what the Boundary Commission for England have proposed for my seat, Carshalton and Wallington, specifically and for the London Borough of Sutton generally does have some merit. Firstly, one of the two parliamentary seats in the borough, my seat, Carshalton and Wallington, is still contained exclusively within the Borough of Sutton and this is, in my view, an important principle to observe and one which I understand the Boundary Commission rightly put emphasis on and I commend the Boundary Commission for this and also, as an aside, for the initial draft which is infinitely preferable to the draft that was produced five years ago by the Boundary Commission which in effect demolished the two parliamentary seats of Carshalton and Wallington and Sutton and Cheam.

First of all, I think it is very important that at least one of the parliamentary seats is contained within the borough. Given the way the boundaries have to be changed and the adjustments being made for the number of electors per constituency, I think it is inevitable that one or other of the parliamentary seats would have to be changed. I think there is a certain logic to what is being proposed in that, for instance, the area west of Banstead Road South and south of Carshalton Road, given the links they have to the Carshalton South ward in Carshalton and Wallington, should be incorporated within that constituency. There is also the question of the S4 bus route which runs through Wallington to Belmont providing a local route that many people do use from Belmont for instance and from other parts of Carshalton Beeches and Wallington. It is also the case that there is a connection in relation to children. There will be many children who live in the Belmont area who go to schools such as Stanley Park High School and Barrow Hedges Primary School in Carshalton South ward in the Carshalton and Wallington Constituency. Finally, I suppose there is the St. Helier Hospital, Sutton Hospital, Royal Marsden axis or the line that runs between those hospitals. For instance, there is a shuttle bus that runs between the two which provides some continuity in terms of healthcare provision within the constituency.

There have of course been alternative suggestions made such as, for instance, moving one of the Carshalton Wallington wards, Beddington North, into Croydon. This makes no sense geographically. If you look at the natural boundary that is provided, it is not a natural boundary but a boundary provided by Purley Way – Purley Way is anything but a natural boundary; it is a dual carriageway – it makes no sense geographically to include Beddington North in Croydon because the Purley Way provides a boundary as does the Beddington Lane industrial area which provides a barrier between the Carshalton and Wallington constituency and Croydon. Also, at least some of the key radial transport links from Carshalton do not go via Croydon, they go via Mitcham Junction. I would point out that when five years ago the Boundary Commission proposed creating two completely new constituencies, one which ran from St. Helier through to West Croydon and beyond in North Croydon and proposed a constituency

that ran from Carshalton South or Carshalton Beeches right through to Sanderstead, certainly residents in Carshalton and Wallington were very unhappy at the prospect of joining forces with residents in Croydon. If the proposal to take Beddington North into Croydon were to come forward, I suspect there would be very strong resistance from many residents and residents' associations about that.

Other alternative suggestions have included including St. Helier in Merton, with Carshalton and Wallington although, if you have a cursory glance at the ward maps, this would suggest that it is much more logical for St. Helier to be aligned with. Stonecot ward geographically. If you look at it on the map, it is very clear.

I would like to conclude by saying that this is the Boundary Commission for England's first pass. I have already taken soundings locally but I will be consulting further in the next few weeks to hear more views before finalising my position, but I think this is a good starting point on which to work and I thank you again for the chance to contribute to this consultation.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Do you have a copy of what you have just said?

MR TOM BRAKE: Yes. (Same handed) Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you. That was most helpful.

None of the other booked speakers have as yet arrived and I suggest that we adjourn and sit and wait for someone to turn up.

Time Noted: 2.36 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 2.50 pm

MR KNIGHT: (Conservative Party, London Borough of Newham) My name is Gareth Knight and I am speaking on behalf of the Conservative Party in the London Borough of Newham which covers both the West Ham and East Ham Conservative Associations and I speak with the authority of both associations.

I am going to be speaking specifically about the effect of the Boundary Commission's proposals on the London Borough of Newham and suggesting some very minor amendments.

First of all, the proposed Bow and Canning Town constituency of which there will be a map appearing in a second – it seems to be taking a little bit of time coming. The fundamental error with this constituency as far as we can see is that it is actually

omitting Stratford and Stratford, although when the wards of Newham were drawn up some 15 to 20-odd years ago now was a relatively minor high street and shopping centre, Stratford is now, without any question, internationally recognised as one of the principal town centres in East London. Therefore, we think that rather than a Bow and Canning Town constituency, we should look much more at Stratford as the centre of that area. My map still has not loaded! One of the things, when the map does load, that is quite misleading at the moment about the shape of the overall constituency is that there are vast areas of industrial land and marshland in between the Bow areas and the Canning Town and West Ham areas. In some cases, this is about three times the width of the Thames and yet on the map it actually looks all very neat. In reality, the Bow and Canning Town constituency that is currently proposed is more of a horseshoe shape than a normal shape. Again, you can all look at the shape for Bow and Canning Town in the various documents you have – I suspect that is probably going to be easier.

My map is not going to come, so we will just have headings. Please, imagine the diagrams of each of these constituencies. The proposed East Ham constituency is quite different to the current existing East Ham with several wards leaving and several wards coming in and, most important of all, it actually breaks up the four wards that constitute the Royal Docks. I will come back on to that in a moment but it is fairly fundamental in our view that the four Royal Docks wards which are Canning Town South, Custom House, Beckton and Royal Docks, remain in the same parliamentary constituency.

The next one – one of these might pop up in a moment – is the proposed Forest Gate and Loxford constituency and the visual image of this constituency has very, very clear flaws. It is a very strange shape; it crosses the North Circular which is perfectly understandable given the need for similar numbers, but there are quite clear flaws in that and I will come on to the detail of that in a moment.

Overall – you are going to have to forgive the slight stutter on this because I was expecting to be pointing at things – one of the key principles behind everything in Newham is the changing landscape of the borough now compared to when the wards were originally drawn up. The first area where this is most noticeable is Stratford as I have already mentioned and the second one is the Royal Docks. The Royal Docks form a significant development area. The area of growth is very visual and very clear to see. If any of you have been over in the cable car, you will have a very clear indication of just how much growth is going on in that area. The Royal Docks are now a focus for the London Borough of Newham rather than just a bit of wasteland that is not really necessary. You can actually see the maps now. As you can see, the four wards surrounding the docks all intersect with the actual dock itself and, when these wards were created, everything pretty much south of the docks was wasteland. Now you have the airport and you have huge development areas and you have the Excel Centre as well. With Crossrail and with the DLR, the clear transport links are going in east to west direction across the docks. Therefore, notwithstanding any other changes anywhere

else, we believe that the four wards of the Royal Docks should be kept in the same parliamentary constituency and it is quite easy to do this; in fact, I think it is extraordinarily easy to do this.

What we would like to propose is an amended Bow and Stratford constituency. In effect, we take Canning Town South out and we put Plaistow North in, which creates a wider Stratford centre. In other words, people in Plaistow North look towards Stratford as the principal town in the area. That is a very minor change and it also makes logical sense given that the crossing at Bow going into Stratford is the most obvious way to cross the River Lea.

The knock-on effect of this is an amended Royal Docks and Boleyn and I will come on to the name in a second. In effect, what we do here is we put Canning Town South into the East Ham constituency in effect and take East Ham North out. The result of that is that all four wards of the Royal Docks are together and East Ham, everything south of the district line is in the same area as well. This is a very, very minor proposal and we think there is no reason at all why there would be many objections to this. After that, the knock-on effect of that is Forest Gate and Ilford Town and again I will come on to the name in a second, but you can clearly see just how much more logical this constituency is compared to the proposed Forest Gate and Loxford just in a visual sense certainly making the Manor Park area the centre of that constituency which is already a difficult one because it crosses a borough boundary.

Looking specifically towards the Canning Town South ward, as you can see, this is a rather strange ward comprising parts of Plaistow and going down into what used to be marshland but which is now a very built-up area with a relatively large and growing population. The Royal Victoria area in particular in the south of this area will be familiar to any of you who have been to the Excel Centre. These are all of the apartment blocks; there are building sites all around here; and the cable car lands here (indicating). This has a very clear relationship with the Royal Docks ward to the south represented by what we call the Britannia Village area and the dock in this area is the focus of the area rather than a divider.

Going down a little further, you can see in Canning town in between Canning Town South and Custom House wards, which is represented by this yellow line – those at the back will not be able to see – that is one continuous area without any question. There are schools that cross over this area. It is one of those boundaries that the Local Government Boundary Committee back in the 1990s very much drew up because they had to draw a line somewhere to create three member wards and this is very much one of those lines. This is one continuous area with thousands of people on either side who do not recognise the boundary whatsoever.

Going down one more, the new Barnes Street area at the top and I do not really know how to describe this as an area because it was just cobbled together but, to give you

an idea, Canning Town Station is down in the bottom left-hand corner and Plaistow is very much in the top right-hand corner. Everything to the east of New Barnes Street is effectively Plaistow. They consider themselves to be Plaistow in everything but name and, in some cases, there are actual cul-de-sacs where the block on the end is in Canning Town South and the rest of the streets either side of it are in Plaistow South. It is quite clear that that is a very, very unnatural boundary.

The area slightly to the south of that, which is one of the few areas of the East End that the Luftwaffe did not hit, so it is quite noticeable in that sense, definitely sees itself as Canning Town. However, the Barking Road is a major divider. Therefore, our proposals are not going to have a massive knock-on effect to any residents really at all.

Going down just to cover off East Ham North – this laser pen is working but does not seem to be pointing – there are three crossings between East Ham North ward and Little Ilford ward which is the ward just above the railway line going up. Three different crossings. Between East Ham North and East Ham Central there is one which is the High Street. These are both very clear boundaries and we could easily make an argument for East Ham North being just as strongly kept with Little Ilford as with East Ham Central, but the boundary between East Ham North and Manor Park and going down into Green Street East is very clearly a continual residential area. To give you an idea, if you count just roads coming off the boundary road, there are two roads going into the proposed East Ham constituency and there are around 20 roads going into the proposed Forest Gate and Loxford constituency. Therefore, we think it makes perfect sense for the East Ham North in an amended Forest Gate and Ilford Town and that covers pretty much every criteria you can imagine from catchment areas to doctors' surgeries. That railway line at the bottom is the District Line and that is a very solid boundary that you cannot cross except for right on the edge and in the middle of the High Street and I should also add that the High Street is not like the thriving shopping area that you would necessarily see further down East Ham High Street.

Quickly covering Plaistow North, Plaistow North is one of those wards that for those of you who will be here for the full duration are going to become familiar with; it is one of those wards that was created because they had to create a ward somewhere and nothing else really fitted. There are four different distinct communities here: one area that is pushing towards the Green Street area towards Queen's Market, one area that is pushing towards the Green Street area going north, one that is pushing towards Stratford and West Ham Park and then one that is questionably actually in Plaistow. Plaistow North is an area that is genuinely divided. Under the Commission's current proposals, we would estimate that only about 21 per cent of the population of Plaistow North would actually be satisfied being part of the Forest Gate area because of geography of Green Street West. We do not actually think that the effect on Plaistow North is that significant.

To look more closely at that, you can see there the yellow line and everything in the top right-hand corner is effectively looking towards Green Street West, everything in the top left-hand corner is looking towards Stratford and everything in the bottom right-hand corner is looking towards Boleyn or Plaistow South and the Commission's own proposals now include Boleyn or Plaistow South and, therefore, that is obviously a line that is not seen as that important. The key reason why we actually think that Plaistow North is part of the wider Stratford area is because Stratford is a growth area. There is no denying that a walk around there will show you the amount of development that is going on and it just makes sense for Plaistow North to be considered part of the wider Stratford area rather than part of Forest Gate and Loxford which it is nowhere near.

Let me quickly come on to the names. Bow and Stratford is quite obvious – I have kind of covered that a million times – and you can see there the map. It is clearly focused on Stratford and on Bow and it is much more logical than trying to focus it on Canning Town which is primarily now a residential area rather than a high street. Of course, this does fit in with all the criteria; that is the basic summary of it.

The amended Royal Docks and Boleyn, the reason why we are saying that this the name is because the Royal Docks is the biggest natural feature of the area and Boleyn is the area of East Ham close to what many of you will be familiar with in terms of West Ham United football ground, but it has a more historical meaning as well being lots of history to do with Henry VIII. I am not a historian, so I am not going to go into it, but that actually makes perfect sense both in the historical sense and in the recognisability factor as well. Thus, Royal Docks and Boleyn will be the proposed name and again you can see just from the map alone that it is a much more logical shape than the previous one.

If you want much more logical shapes, the amended Forest Gate and Ilford Town is without question the most obvious one of all. By taking Plaistow North out and putting East Ham North in, we have actually made this much of a community rather than a constituency that has been cobbled together because nothing else fitted. Therefore, we actually think that that is quite a strong case.

Overall, we did a bit of analysis as to how positively or negatively these changes would affect residents. We estimate that this minor change, literally swapping three wards and doing a switcheroo between the three proposed constituencies, has a highly positive effect on 22,301 electors, a broadly positive effect on 9,287 electors and neutral effect on 11,738 electors and a highly negative effect on just 3, 977, all of those electors being in the Plaistow North area that looks towards Green Street on the map, on that top right-hand corner of the map as it came up. Obviously, we do think that the positives massively outweigh the negatives and we do think these constituencies are much more harmonious with the nature of the borough. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any points for clarification?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER A: Is it possible to clarify, when you say “positive” and “negative”, do you mean in terms of how many people stay or move from their existing constituencies into the future ones?

MR KNIGHT: No. It is principally in between the relationship between areas that are split on the Boundary Commission's current proposals versus this amendment. For example, in the Canning Town South area I pointed out the area that clearly looks towards Plaistow. That area is currently split and therefore people on both sides of that boundary, as a result of it being merged into the same constituency as Plaistow South, would benefit. Equally, the people in Royal Victoria would be the same. There is a big question over the Royal Docks ward because it is such a high development area. At the moment, there are about 1,200 residents in the Britannia Village area but there are thousands and I mean tens of thousands of houses going up south of the dock and it is quite clear that the dock is the centre rather than a divider and at the moment it is treated as a divider on the current boundaries, two of those wards are in the current West Ham and two of them are in the current East Ham. I hope that answered the question.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Obviously, we will obtain a copy of your presentation. We now have Mr Robert Waite who is present. Would you introduce yourself and give your name and address, please.

MR WAITE: Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Robert Waite; I am here in a private capacity; I am a former resident of Tottenham and a Haringey Council employee for 15 years. I no longer am and today I am speaking in a private capacity. I felt compelled to come along and speak today because I have certain concerns.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Boundary Commission on their proposal to keep the London Borough of Haringey largely the same; in my view, that is a good decision. I have become aware of counterproposals by both major political parties that could effectively split the constituency of Tottenham and that is what has brought me here today.

Not everybody knows Tottenham but everybody here will understand the significance of history. Tottenham has a rich history; it goes back hundreds of years. I am not going to sweep through everything but it is important to point out that we can go back a thousand years and we can look at Wartheof making friends with William the Conqueror, keeping his manor. The first mention in written history of Tottenham in the *Doomsday Book* in 1086. We see subsequent development; we see the manor of Tottenham split between different families and brought together again in the 15th century. We see development of industry in the form of market gardening which is incredibly important. We see

haymaking and timber. Tottenham Wood stretched all the way up to Muswell Hill. We see the development of Tottenham along the Roman road of Ermine Street as you will know runs from Bishopsgate up to Lincoln and York and then further up you go up to Scotland. We have to the north originally Tottenham Street, a hamlet towards Edmonton; to the east, Tottenham Hale, a hamlet towards Walthamstow, to the west Wood Green, a hamlet; and Tottenham High Cross which, as a hamlet, stretched down towards Seven Sisters. Industry built up along this area. We have development of course in the 19th century with the railways from 1840 coming along the River Lea and 1987 coming out. It was the 1872 railway that brought more people coming out of the City and changed the complexion of the community and developed it. Tottenham was very much felt to be an area within itself, a special area. Daniel Defoe did not think so because he was just riding through; he did not stop to find out what was going on.

I would say that the industries in the 19th century when they outgrew the City, we have movement to Tottenham Hale. Lebus became the largest furniture factory in the world welcoming the people who came over from Russia, the Orthodox Jews who had been persecuted by the Tsar. Tottenham has always welcomed various people from around the world. We have that industry of Gestetner there. Lebus became the largest furniture manufacturer in the world and this was Gestetner's main headquarters. The River Lea that had been navigated by Alfred the Great to ward off the Vikings, a wonderful natural boundary going down towards the City. Things changed in the 19th century of course. We have a sanitary district council from 1875 and in 1888 the residents of Wood Green decided to leave Tottenham. That was their decision; it was not imposed upon them. Tottenham carried on. As we know, the urban district councils came in and Tottenham became a municipal council in 1830 and became part of Haringey in 1965. The natural boundaries of the River Lea and hard boundaries of playing fields towards Edmonton and New River as we go down towards Hackney and the fact that Wood Green has gone to the west. We have recognised, historic boundaries of Tottenham.

What does all this necessarily mean? What it means is we have, to use a term that pops up in the 1970s, in my view an eco-museum and that largely means the cultural heritage can be appreciated holistically and that includes the boundaries. I think it is incredibly significant and important for people because what it does is give a sense of place and a sense of place is significant for a feeling of permanence to build your lives, your families and your memories.

When you are a Haringey Council officer and you are involved in community projects of all kinds and you visit people's homes in the community, I have been privy to all sorts of information. I know people from the outside of Tottenham like Daniel Defoe might consider Tottenham rather odd and you hear lots of comments about it – "it's all riots; it's all gangs". Tottenham is complex; it is difficult. It is no accident that the Member of Parliament for Tottenham grew up in Tottenham and is from Tottenham. The community of Tottenham would not accept anything else, trust me.

I suggest that Tottenham remains the same. The Commission have respected the boundaries since 1948 I believe. That is what I came to say today. To respect the history, the difficult light. Just one point, it came up the other day on the radio about wealth and Haringey, as we know, has Highgate and Muswell Hill, it is very wealthy today. Tottenham was more expensive along the High Road 140 years ago than Highgate. It is not about that. It is about a sense of place and Haringey Council has tried to unite the west and east of the borough for years. It is not a problem or a difficulty that they can solve, if it is a problem. People have a certain sense of where they are. I suggest that Tottenham remains intact and the boundaries remain as they are today. I think it would be, to put it mildly, dispiriting for the community, counterproductive and, actually, may I say – you can put this down – I think it will be potentially disastrous, really.

Thank you for listening to me today. I appreciate your time. I will be submitting that formally.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. It was spoken with passion and a great sense of history and sense of place. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you and you say that you will make a written submission?

MR WAITE: I certainly shall.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Mrs Patricia Bank?

MRS BANK: I am not down to speak.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are just observing. Mr Christopher Waller? Would you come forward and introduce yourself.

MR WALLER: Good afternoon, everyone. I am Christopher Waller and I am speaking in a personal capacity today. This is my home constituency of South-West Surrey; it is predominantly a semi-rural constituency formed in 1983, mostly out of the former Farnham constituency. It is mostly intact, actually.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am sorry to interrupt you but you are talking about a constituency in the Surrey area?

MR WALLER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: This, sadly, is to do with the London region. There is however a public hearing in Guildford I think and perhaps I could direct you there. It is on Thursday and Friday of this week, in fact. Is that okay?

MR WALLER: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed for taking the time.

MR HARTLEY: We have to have submissions just about the London region. I am terribly sorry if it was not clear. If you speak to one of my colleagues at the front desk, we can tell you when you can put your submission about Surrey.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Mr Andrew Smith. Please, introduce yourself by giving your name and address.

MR SMITH: My name is Andrew Smith and I am a resident of Hammersmith and Fulham. Just so you know, I am politically neutral; I have never been a member of any party and I have contributed to and helped out with a few different ones, so I am absolutely neutral on this.

Whilst I understand that the Boundary Commission are implementing Government legislation, I want to quickly put on record my objection to three points of the legislation. First of all the change in drawing up of constituencies to being by registered voter rather than by population; I think this is disadvantaging the poor and disadvantaging those of ethnic minorities and I think we should call this out as a racist policy. Secondly the arbitrary choice of 50 fewer constituencies; there does not seem to be any rationale for this. Finally, the strict enforcement of the five per cent rule; I do not think this makes sense. I think you need a bit more tolerance to be able to come up with sensible constituencies.

My contribution relates to Hammersmith and Fulham and my problem is that you are separating our borough into three different parliamentary constituencies. You seem to have accepted the desirability of aligning local authorities and parliamentary constituencies. Your proposal seems to start from that basis and obviously neighbouring Kensington and Chelsea is a single constituency. I will not go into detail on that; I agree with you on aligning local authorities and parliamentary constituencies.

The Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, your current proposal splits it into three different constituencies despite our registered voters resulting in an allocation of just 1.4 constituencies; a 1.4 allocation gets split out into three different constituencies. It appears that you are taking advantage of the not very populous College Park and Old Oak ward. This ward at the top, whilst it is a physically large ward, has a small number of residents or of electorate and you seem to be smuggling that out into the proposed Willesden constituency (indicating). I think it is unfair to take advantage of Hammersmith and Fulham in this way. As well as causing problems for our Council, it is easy to see the small number of residents of this ward getting a poor deal in

a proposed Willesden constituency. It would make up only a tiny part of the Willesden constituency and the rest of the constituency would all be in the Brent Council and you cannot see the rest of the Willesden constituency here but physically it almost looks like an appendix to the Willesden constituency; it is just some sort of aberration bolted on to the Willesden constituency. It is hard to see the residents of College Park and Old Oak ward not suffering.

You asked for solutions rather than just complaints and I have just attempted to show how you could achieve a better result in this local area and I have not gone much further out than in the local area. I suggest that the College Park and Old Oak ward should be combined with the three remaining Hammersmith and Fulham wards that are not in the new Hammersmith and Fulham constituency, the three other wards being Askew, Shepherd's Bush Green and Wormholt and White City and they should be joined with Ealing wards as you have already proposed.

Just a final comment on the Willesden constituency: taking this Hammersmith and Fulham ward out of the new Willesden constituency would still leave that Willesden constituency with an electorate of over 72,000. Therefore, it would still be within this five per cent rule and it does not have any knock-on effects on the Willesden constituency. If you take these four Hammersmith and Fulham wards as well as the easterly four wards from your proposed Ealing Central and Shepherd's Bush constituency, that is East Acton, South Acton, Acton Central and Hanger Hill, as well as rescuing back the Southfield ward – you can just about see that Southfield ward that is in Ealing but is being shoved into the proposed Brentford and Chiswick constituency out of Ealing – and put these nine wards together – that is four Hammersmith and Fulham wards and five Ealing wards, thus a decent balance between the two councils – this would give an electorate of over 72,000; thus again within the five per cent rule.

That leaves two remaining wards from your currently proposed Ealing Central and Shepherd's Bush constituency and that is Ealing Common and Ealing Broadway, and I suggest that they could be combined with the Northfield ward, which again you can just about see on the end there is being pushed down out of Ealing constituency as it were as well as combining that with the wards that you are currently proposing to be moved into Southall and Heston constituency, that is Walpole, Elthorne, Northwood Green, Southall Broadway and Southall Green. This would give a constituency again with an electorate of over 72,000, thus again within the five per cent rule, and this would be the only Ealing ward and you would have a constituency here just within the Ealing Council area. I am not suggesting any changes as to Ealing North – it does not really affect me and it is wholly within the Ealing Council area again. That would finally leave the two Northolt wards, that is Northolt Mandeville and Northolt West End, which you propose to move to a Hillingdon constituency.

Just to summarise, for Ealing, it has an allocation of 2.8 constituencies and I am suggesting that it should have two constituencies of its own, five wards in a constituency

with Hammersmith and Fulham and a balanced constituency with Hammersmith and Fulham and the two large Ealing wards that you propose to move out to Hillingdon. That is considerably better than the current proposals which, with Ealing with its 2.8 allocation, under your current proposals only has one wholly Ealing constituency and all sorts of mishmash into two different Hounslow constituencies, one Hillingdon constituency and one Hammersmith and Fulham constituency. It is much more integral in my view in terms of the treatment of Ealing Council as well.

Just to be clear, my primary focus as a Hammersmith and Fulham resident is Hammersmith and Fulham. I want to see my Council dealing with as few MPs as possible and with a council with an electorate of just a 1.4 constituency allocation I do not think it is unreasonable to suggest that they should only have to deal with two MPs. All I am doing here is trying to illustrate how that might be achieved. I have no strong connection to my proposal; I just want my council to deal with as few MPs as possible. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: May I clarify: essentially, I can see that you are trying to keep the coherence of the boroughs together and you have taken into account some of the knock-on implications. Are you suggesting that you have covered all of the knock-on implications and you have retained constituencies that still meet the requirement?

MR SMITH: Not all of the constituencies. There would be knock-on effects into the Chiswick and to that constituency I have not looked at and potentially further knock-on effects but, having a quick look at them, I think they should be manageable. Easily said than done but they should be.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. That is helpful. Will you be making a written submission to support what you have said?

MR SMITH: I can put this in writing if you would like.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It would be most helpful if you could. Are there any other matters for clarification?

MR PRATT: Just to clarify, you are happy with the Hammersmith and Fulham proposal in terms of one constituency totally within Hammersmith ward?

MR SMITH: Yes. As a Hammersmith resident, it is an integral one and I do not have a problem with that.

MR PRATT: The other point is that you want the other four wards to be kept together.

MR SMITH: Absolutely.

MR PRATT: I think you said to take Southfield out of Brentford and Chiswick but you have not looked at the knock-on effects of that.

MR SMITH: No.

MR PRATT: I am grateful.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In which case, thank you very much indeed. That was most helpful.

Mr David Morgan, would you like to come forward. Would you introduce yourself with your name and address at the beginning of the address, please.

MR MORGAN: Good afternoon. My name is David Morgan and my address is 30 Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4JZ. I am here to talk a little bit about the proposed changes to Mitcham and Morden.

Having never been to one of these meetings before, it was very interesting to hear the last speaker saying how terrible it would be if there were five MPs within a local London borough and he thought that that was far too many. Under the current proposals, that is exactly what will happen to the London Borough of Merton. I have recently retired having been a Head Teacher and I have worked in the London Borough of Merton since 1976 until 2002 and I have been a resident since 1991. The London Borough of Merton is one of the smallest of the London boroughs. We currently have two MPs and yet, under the proposals that are laid before us, the constituency in which I live will not exist anymore and the local authority will have to deal with five different MPs. I do not see how that can be a good use of re-planning at all. The local authority as part of the Greater London Authority will have lots of issues about housing and all those sorts of things and trying then to manage that with the input from five different MPs seems to have completely missed the point in terms of how a local authority can better work. It cannot. It must be much less efficient doing it that way. Obviously, changes are going to be made but, for the London Borough of Merton, I would suggest humbly that this is a catastrophic change. That is the nub of my statement.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is clear and I understand your concern and the strength in which you presented that. You have not had an opportunity to look at the implications if you were to reconfigure, the knock-on effects across other constituencies or anything?

MR MORGAN: Briefly, if you are going to say you have to have one solid block of whatever the number is – I am sorry, I have just forgotten off the top of my head – why not shift it across and let Mitcham and Morden be the central core of it and split up Wimbledon and the other part of it? I do not see that there is any rational decision for

choosing one or the other. Maybe somebody tossed a coin but there does not seem to be a rational decision on that. Graveney, the ward that is the north-eastern part of the constituency, is going to be the only ward that is then going to be put up into the Tooting constituency and will just be one ward that is tacked on the end of Tooting and that seems to be strange. That could come out again. The putting together of Lower Morden and the St. Helier wards into Sutton and Cheam, they are very different in their make-up and I do not see how both of those really would go in. Maybe St. Helier on its own might but I do not see that, but I have not, to be honest, gone on to really work out how it could be done better because I just see the whole thing as not working because you are going to ask five MPs to take over an area where now there are just two.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand the point you are making.

MR MORGAN: In the way that it is made up, I do not have another suggestion for you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for your suggestion. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Is Mr Okoh here? Would you like to come forward if you are ready. Would you begin by giving your name and address.

MR OKOH: My name is Afam Okoh and I live at 14 Stewart Place, Mitcham, CR4 3JF. I would like to talk specifically about the splitting up of Mitcham. Two of my main concerns are the fact that Mitcham Common is being split completely in half. You quite literally have one side of the common in the new Streatham and Mitcham ward and the other side of the common in the new Wimbledon Central and Merton ward which does not seem to make any sense. If you were, say, a golfer and you played golf on two sides of the common, you would now have to go to two different MPs with the same concern if you are still regarding Merton Council. It really does not seem to make any sense to me to split up a common between two constituencies in such a way, especially when we already have one MP dealing with it currently. It makes life a lot harder.

Another issue in the way that Mitcham has been split up is that we have Figge's Marsh which has been in Mitcham for many, many years, which is another green space, and it is just outside of Lavender Fields ward which is where I currently live. It is quite literally two minutes away from my home and for it to be now moved to another ward, it seems highly arbitrary in the way it is being divided; there does not seem to be an organised scheme for this especially because I think most people do not really understand how that could be in a different constituency when these areas are so closely linked together. Most people who, say, take the bus or work in Mitcham, you now have Mitcham Town Centre and the area of Figge's Marsh in a different area to Mitcham Cricket Green, as well as having, say, Mitcham Eastfields Station in a different area in comparison to Merton and Wimbledon or Mitcham Cricket Green and

Mitcham Central. The way in which Mitcham has been split up, you have some poor Mitcham areas being split quite unequally and seemingly without particular focus or benefit to these areas especially as most of these areas are considered under Mitcham and it makes it a lot harder for residents to have a joined-up approach to the Mitcham area. As I have already mentioned, you would have two sides of Mitcham Common in a different constituency and one resident on one side of Mitcham Common would go to a different MP to another and that makes things a lot more difficult just for the residents of Mitcham Common let alone for other people who are not very aware of how the Mitcham area works. It does not make much sense. I definitely think that the way Mitcham is being split up into Merton and Wimbledon Central appears very arbitrary.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I definitely get the message about trying to retain community links and the impact and implications. I understand your concern. Do you have any particular solutions in terms of how that might be addressed taking into account the knock-on effect in other areas?

MR OKOH: It is difficult because without coming up with a whole holistic approach, as one person I cannot just say ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You have registered your concern and you will have plenty more opportunity to submit further views should you want to. I would commend to you that, if you go on to the website for the Boundary Commission, you can actually interact if you look at the wards and the compositions and you can trial different ways of putting constituencies together and you can actually see what the implications are. If you would like to look at that, you may come back with some further proposals to us which would be welcome, of course. Thank you very much. Are there any points for clarification?

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Afam, you made a number of comments about Mitcham Common being split into two constituencies. I do not know if you have seen point 54 on page 17 of the initial proposals of new parliamentary constituency boundaries but it makes particular reference to the desire not to split Wimbledon Common between two constituencies. My question is, can you understand why Wimbledon Common would be treated different to Mitcham Common?

MR OKOH: No.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I suspect he probably does not! Again, a good rhetorical point.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Nevertheless a point.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, absolutely. Thank you very much, indeed.

I think we have Mr Nic Durston present. Would you like to come forward and introduce yourself with your name and address, please.

MR DURSTON: (SBEG and South Bank BID) Good afternoon. My name is Nic Durston. My work address because I am here representing business and employee interests is - I am the Chief Exec of South Bank Employers Group and also South Bank Business Improvement District - and the address is South Bank Employers Group, 39 York Road, London, SE1. The respective acronyms are SBEG, the South Bank Employers Group, and South Bank BID for South Bank Business Improvement District. Both of those organisations are not-for-profit organisations and represent the interests of a number of businesses and employers in the South Bank area, one that is loosely defined by South Bank Employers Group as running from Lambeth Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge and down to St George's Circus. The BID, as with all BIDs, has to operate in an area that is legally defined, has a tighter boundary and does not extend any further south than and indeed does not actually include Lower Marsh and The Cut.

SBEG was established in 1991; it has 20 members including Shell, ITV, South Bank Centre, National Theatre, British Film Institute, Guy's and St Thomas's Hospital, Ogilvy & Mather, King's College London, South Bank London University. South Bank BID was established in 2014 and its membership is larger encompassing nearly 170 businesses including most, but not all, members of SBEG, all of which pay a levy to fund additional services in the area. SBEG set up the BID and is engaged as its delivery agent although both are separate companies with their own boards and directors.

I am here to represent my members' interests and I would like to emphasise that we are currently engaged in a process of consultation with those members and we plan to submit a full response to the Commission by your required deadline. I anticipate this will be a joint response from both SBEG and South Bank Bid and both have board meetings between now and your deadline.

As you know, the Boundary Commission for England propose to relocate Bishop's ward, the most northerly part of Lambeth covering Waterloo and South Bank, to the Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency. South Bank falls within SE1 and is currently split between the Bermondsey and Old Southwark constituency held by Neil Coyle MP which covers North Southwark, and the Vauxhall constituency of Kate Hoey MP which includes the North Lambeth portion of SE1. Both MPs share South Bank Partnership and I will leave copies of this document here to which I will make reference in the rest of this presentation, a body to which, as I say, I shall refer later.

As the review does not affect local government boundaries, Waterloo and South Bank would continue to be part of the Borough of Lambeth but, if the Commission's

recommendations are accepted, would share an MP mostly concerned with Southwark matters. Under a previous proposal in 2011 which recommended a similar move, South Bank Employers Group members, the BID had not been established by then, voted unanimously to oppose the Commission's proposal to move Bishop's ward into the proposed as was Bermondsey and Waterloo constituency. Members felt strongly that the Commission's proposals would undermine years, indeed decades, of work in building networks and institutions that facilitated and indeed contributed to transformative change in the South Bank and also to ensure that these changes continued to deliver benefits for residents, business and visitors to South Bank.

For those of you who do not know South Bank, once synonymous with urban decay, entrenched social problems, a lack of investment from Government and an image problem that is scarcely credible today, London South Bank is a model of successful urban regeneration. It has been achieved by a concerted effort to transform its negative reputation and image, improve many aspects of its public realm, once seriously degraded and appallingly managed, increase visitors to its many attractions and create the right business environment for investment and growth. This neighbourhood is a vital part of Central London and is one of its most important. It is a key area of employment for Lambeth and Southwark. It is an area that is characterised by a complex and unusually broad mix of communities and uses: 12,000 residents; 50,000 jobs; an estimated 30 million annual visitors; nearly 100 million annual users of mainline services into Waterloo; two leading universities; a world-class teaching hospital; and some of the world's best-known brands and companies. It is striking just how much alignment exists between businesses, residents and other stakeholders with broad agreement on key priorities and a shared ambition for a neighbourhood that is green, clean and safe. Work being done on the Neighbourhood Plan affirms these aspirations, again being done on a geographical area that spans Lambeth and Southwark interests.

South Bank is undoubtedly under pressure: rising number of visitors, economic intensification and new socioeconomic dynamics are putting ever more pressure on its public realm and a range of related services. Business employers, visitors and residents face the challenges of rising footfall, falling public sector spending and ever-pressing infrastructure needs, all of which conspire to create a rising investment deficit. These challenges are reflected in the South Bank Partnership Manifesto of 2014 called "A neighbourhood under pressure" and these points were recently made to Jules Pipe, the new Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills under Sadiq Khan. South Bank Partnership, jointly chaired by Kate and Neil, derives its influence from the widespread agreement about the needs and future of a neighbourhood from those who are active in that neighbourhood: major South Bank organisations, members of the business and community sectors, Lambeth and Southwark Councils, the Mayor's agencies and local residents represented by their ward councillors and MPs.

This has been a turbulent few months for any business or employer in London. In a mayoral year with a new team in place at City Hall, we have now experienced Brexit,

the new Prime Minister and Cabinet and some aspects of economic uncertainty. The recent publication of the details of business rates revaluation due to come into effect in April 2017 has caused consternation in South Bank and Waterloo as well as in other parts of London. Businesses are to be hit with significant increases in their rates and large businesses will have very few options available to them in terms of the fiscal relief from transition.

In this context, the proposed changes to the parliamentary constituency boundary must be considered. Any London MP has to manage a myriad number of relationships both with those that he or she is representing and also with those that they seek to influence if the needs and aspirations of constituencies are to be met. A good London MP will attend many meetings and events each year; they will of course know who is who in the local area; they will also need to maintain relationships with the police, local planning teams, elected council members, community leaders, business representatives and many others, all of whom recognise the benefits and advantages of a degree of political stability notwithstanding the outcome of General Elections. The benefits of further stability in such a turbulent time should not be underestimated.

There is also the issue of the relationship between constituency and local authority boundaries. In Bishop's ward Lambeth electors would make up less than ten per cent of the proposed new constituency. There is a danger that this leaves this part of Lambeth as marginal with the Council remaining responsible for aspects of public services: public realm, environmental management, traffic management, planning decisions, the provision of social services and aspects of education. Our concern is that the South Bank must secure the necessary level of resource that it needs to in order to remain economically competitive and so that it can deliver what is being asked of it in terms of growth, jobs and economic development. This could be seriously threatened if South Bank and its needs become more peripheral than ever.

As I say, we are undergoing a process of consultation with our members and will be submitting a full submission. To summarise, moving Bishop's ward into the proposed constituency could interrupt and disrupt the well-developed relationships and networks that a prolonged period of stability has allowed to develop and within which so much has been achieved. Disrupting this at such a turbulent time for businesses and employers could have profound risks. It potentially makes South Bank peripheral to Lambeth Council's considerations – this is not a political point that I am making and I should stress that – at a time when the authority is facing further reductions in its budgets and resources. This is a significant risk for South Bank and its needs. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. May I clarify? You oppose the suggestion of moving Bishop's ward into the Southwark constituency and you are proposing instead ...?

MR DURSTON: Proposing a stability but, as I say, we are undertaking full consideration and will give some consideration to what possibly may work but I think it is a very stark choice that businesses face in terms of what currently is in place and what the Boundary Commission are currently recommending.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. That was helpful. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed. We await your full submission.

MR DURSTON: May I leave this with you?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes. Is there anyone else present who has not booked in who would like to speak now? In which case, I suggest that we reconvene at 4.30 pm when the next speakers are assigned.

Time Noted: 3.47 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 4.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I believe that a number of our booked speakers are arriving which is good. Is Mr Andrew Wakefield present? Would you like to come to the lectern and would you start your presentation by giving your name and address, please.

REVEREND WAKEFIELD: (Merton Chamber of Commerce) I am Andrew Wakefield, 105 Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, SW19 3TJ. I am here speaking as the Chair of Merton Chamber of Commerce which is the umbrella organisation for business across both parliamentary constituencies which are currently covered by Stephen Hammond in Wimbledon and by Siobhain McDonagh in Mitcham and in Morden. The Chamber of Commerce is part of a range of borough-wide organisations and it is to the issue of the borough that I will mainly be speaking.

The building block of representative democracy in London is the borough and, for the last 50 years of the life of Merton, a range of organisations and structures have emerged that are borough wide: the Chamber of Commerce representing business; the Voluntary Services Council representing the voluntary and community sector; the local authority for its Leader who will speak later, the Chief Executive; public health which is now part of the local authority as a borough-wide delivery agency; the police command structure – I chair the Safer Neighbourhood Board for Community Policing and the Independent Advisory Group of the Metropolitan Police in Merton; and the Fire Brigade command. All of us cover the borough as a whole. At the moment, we are required – and it is jolly useful – to build relationships with two MPs to represent, in our case, the

needs of business in Parliament and for our MPs to bring the concerns, in the case of Siobhain the businesses of Mitcham and Morden, to the Chamber of Commerce and both MPs have done that consistently and very effectively. We have a strong working relationship with Siobhain and we have a strong working relationship with Stephen and it has been mutually beneficial to the businesses of the borough to know that the two MPs understand and know exactly what is going on and know us as we work with them. We in fact have two offices, one in the Wimbledon constituency and one in the Mitcham constituency which means that we are very well connected to the business community across the borough.

We do not believe that it is in the best interests of those umbrella organisations to have to build five working relationships. To invite five MPs to regular meetings when there is a 'gold incident' issue where the Borough Command need the MPs present, they are going to have to have a working relationship with five MPs in order to know what is going to happen in an area that is covered by one police commander and one local authority with a population of 200,000 people. We do not believe that it is in the best interests of the businesses of Merton for that to happen. We do not believe that it is the best use of public money that five MPs are having to spend their time relating to everything that is happening in the borough or indeed that stretched public sector officials like the borough commander or the chief executive of the local authority should have to be having regular meetings with five different MPs to cover the needs of the constituents.

There are some eccentric anomalies that other people will speak to: the idea that the All England Lawn Tennis Club, otherwise known as the Wimbledon Championships, will find themselves in Putney is going to come as a surprise to the *BBC*. I will leave to the Chief Executive of AFC Wimbledon to reflect upon the fact that it has taken them 14 years to get back to their ground in Wimbledon to find that is going to be in Putney, but I will leave that to other people to reflect upon.

The final thing that I want to say personally is that I have lived in Wimbledon for 30 years. I started as a clergy person which is my day job in the Pollards Hill Estate in Mitcham in 1978. I am one of the very few people who have lived in both Mitcham and Wimbledon. I own my retirement house in Morden and, interestingly, the only job that I have ever done as a clergyman outside of Merton was in Putney. I know all four places quite well and I can tell you that they are distinctive and they are different. The idea of splitting them up and merging them in new ways that might work in terms of the electoral math for needing 600 MPs does not reflect the reality of life on the ground in the four places in which I have been privileged to live and work in the last 38 years.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much and I understand the points that you are making, but have you had an opportunity to consider how the situation might be remedied from your perspective looking at how the constituency boundaries might be considered in a different format? The purpose of the consultation

is to have a response to those proposals. Clearly, you are not happy with the proposals and I understand that, but do you have some alternative proposals?

REVEREND WAKEFIELD: Clearly, those of you with the information London wide will know more about that than I will. You are working on the presumption that we need to reduce the number of MPs in South-West London. What appears to be the case is that there is a disproportionate disadvantage being paid to Merton. I am not aware, though you presumably will know the answer to this, whether any other London borough in south or South-West London is going to find itself represented by five MPs in a borough. The real question is, why is it that Merton, if it is the case that we are the only Borough that will have five MPs and it is a borough of only 210,000 people, this is not Croydon with a population of 380,000 people, we are one of the four smallest boroughs, appears to be disadvantaged in that provision.

The other thing that needs saying is that I know I am the only person to chair the Community Plan in a local authority who does not work for a local authority – it is an interesting example of partnership working in Merton – and it is well known that statistically the east of the borough represented by Siobhain is disadvantaged in a wide range of issues to do with employment prospects, housing, education, life opportunities, even length of life if you look at health statistics and for 25 years I have been involved with this. We have been working to ensure that the east of the borough, the Mitcham and Morden constituency, ceases to be as disadvantaged in comparison to Wimbledon. That is eased by having it covered by one MP and being a cohesive unit. If that is split into several places, the Community Plan delivery mechanism, which is signed up to by the voluntary sector, the business sector, the local authority, the Police, public health, the Fire Brigade, every umbrella organisation in the borough, will find itself with additional complications. It does not answer your question but what it does is show that the challenges in Merton will not be aided by having five MPs representing the needs of the constituents and the businesses in Parliament and bringing parliamentary pressure to bear in the local area. It cannot be served best in a small bowl with five MPs.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any points for clarification? Do you want to ask a question or make a point?

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: I think it is a question but you will be the determiner of that, I suppose. Given that the Reverend Andrew Wakefield has such a broad experience in living in different parts of Merton and neighbouring areas, could he say something about the differences that exist between Pollards Hill and Wimbledon.

REVEREND WAKEFIELD: If I am permitted to?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, by all means, briefly.

REVEREND WAKEFIELD: I always say to people, if you imagine Wimbledon as a leafy, safe, wealthy, pleasant place to live with job opportunities and people with disposable income and you have seen it all on television and that is your prejudice, can I just tell you, absolutely every one of your prejudice about what Wimbledon is like is entirely, count five pink elephants, true. It is exactly what it is like. Pollards Hill is slightly different. It is a large council estate, now 75 per cent privately owned. It has had historic challenges in its education system. You know that because the high school has been renamed three times in the 40 years I have been associated with Pollards Hill. Eton has never been renamed; King's College Wimbledon has never been renamed. You know if are renaming a school it is because you have had to restart it. The main high school in Pollards Hill has been renamed three times. It is an identified area with higher challenges on antisocial behaviour than where I live – I live in probably the safest ward in Merton at the moment and Pollards Hill certainly is not that. What Pollards Hill is however is an incredibly cohesive and lovely place, and I still have godchildren living there; I still visit it regularly; one of the chaps I watch football with at Crystal Palace every Saturday lives there. It is a fantastic place to be and the whole of Mitcham is. It is just that it needs strong representation in the parliamentary system in order that local organisations like mine know that I have a single point of contact. I cannot see how having several points of contact will be advantageous to either the people still living in Pollards Hill or the business people in the area, frankly.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Those points were eloquently made.

Next are Alan Barley and Christine Kelly. Are you speaking together? When you introduce yourselves, would you say your names and addresses, please.

MR BARLEY: (Royal British Legion, Mitcham) Alan Barley, Chairman of the Royal British Legion of Mitcham. I am quite astounded at the actions that are proposed in splitting Mitcham into four different parts. I think we have been here before back in the 1960s when Mitcham was split up and I did not think that in my short life of 80 years I would see it happen twice. I am quite astounded on that. As Chairman of the Royal British Legion of Mitcham, I do believe that unless changes are made, there will be serious implications for the local community and the invaluable voluntary organisations operating here.

I was born and brought up in Mitcham. My time in the Armed Forces was spent in the Air Force and I served in the Suez Crisis. Upon my return home, I joined the local branch of the Royal British Legion in the 1960s and took an active role over many years. I have been fortunate enough to become the Chairman of the Mitcham branch for the last ten years and I might add that it has been very successful. The Royal British Legion is a cornerstone of local life in Mitcham. The branch was formed in 1924 and has been based at 26 St Marks Road, Mitcham ever since. The property was bought for this purpose by a big family in Mitcham called the Mizzen family and they used to

help the branch and support local members in need. They gave the building, no expense to the Legion, to us for the good of the Mitcham people.

Our home is based in Figge's Match ward and, under the current proposal, instead of being in the current Mitcham and Morden constituency, we would transfer to Streatham and Mitcham. This may not seem important. To some it matters. To us because under your proposals, the town of Mitcham will be split into two almost directly down the middle. It will affect an annual Remembrance Day Parade. We will leave our home now located in the new Streatham and Mitcham constituency and march a few hundred yards along the road to the war memorial in Mitcham in a cricket green which was erected by Mitcham Borough Council in 1919 to honour the men of Mitcham killed in the Great War. Your proposal means that the memorial will now be sited in Wimbledon and Merton, and I might add that puts two war memorials in Wimbledon. We will be the Mitcham Royal British Legion honouring the sacrifice of Mitcham people in conflicts yet finding our Mitcham identify disregarded because our memorial is now located in Wimbledon and Merton. That is just not right for us and the people we are remembering. Our Remembrance Day Parade means so much to so many local people in Mitcham. It is incredibly well attended with hundreds of residents marching through the town centre to the sound of the Mitcham Scouts Marching Band. Every year, more and more young people attend with Mitcham's Guides, Brownies and Rainbows, the Police, Sea Cadets, Air Cadets and the Scouts taking part. The culmination is the laying of over 50 wreaths by Mitcham community groups, veterans and their families. It is a powerful, moving and wholly appropriate way to honour the people of Mitcham who gave everything for our country and community.

We also organise an Armistice Day memorial at the Clock Tower in the centre of Mitcham. Every 11 November, children from over 13 Mitcham schools come together here and pay tribute to past generations. As well as commemorating sacrifice, it is a key moment in reinforcing wider Mitcham community ties and our local identity, something that will undoubtedly be under threat if we are split up. For our branch, selling poppies from October to mid-November raises a good deal of much-needed funds. Last year because of our efforts in various Mitcham supermarkets and transport hubs, we raised just under £33,000. This is money that is used to help local ex-service people and raising it requires the co-operation of local businesses, the Council and our MP for Mitcham and Morden. If your proposals go through, we face the prospect of having to establish and maintain relationships with different MPs who will undoubtedly have to consider the big population centres of Streatham and Wimbledon in their constituencies as they make their choices about attending and supporting our Remembrance Day and Armistice Day events and the work leading up to them.

At present, we have a brilliant relationship with our local MP for Mitcham and Morden. She not only takes part in the service by reciting the *Legion of the Living salutes the Legion of the Dead* and laying a wreath, she also stands in local supermarkets and sells poppies for us and provides support all year round. A massive part of this is because

Mitcham is central to her constituency with its own identity and community. I cannot begin to imagine how this would survive the changes you are proposing. On a basic level, which MP from the two I would be dealing with will be invited or even attend in future? I urge you to support and change this current proposal. They are bad for the community of Mitcham; they are bad for the local ex-service people I represent and support in the Royal British Legion; and they are bad for the Mitcham people who went before us and gave so much. Their memory deserves better than this carving-up of the homes, ties and community that they fought so bravely for.

Also on the splitting-up of the constituencies in Mitcham, I note looking at the map and am told that the Boundary Commission were quite adamant to stick to the rule of keeping Wimbledon Common in one constituency. I wonder what happened to that rule when it came to Mitcham Common because that appears to be cut in two. Is it one rule for Wimbledon and another rule for Mitcham? I dread to think.

Mitcham also has the oldest cricket club in the world. We are proud of it. It also has the first railway station ever built in the world. Mitcham has quite a long history of these things. It seems to me that every time somebody wants to move the goalposts and boundaries, Mitcham seems to be in the firing line every time as it was back in the 1960s. Thank you. I rest my case.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. That was very helpful. Christine, are you going to speak as well?

MS KELLY: Yes. Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for letting me come. I do not know how you follow that. I am here as a member of the community from Mitcham. I have lived in Mitcham all my life. I was born there and there are three generations of our family in Mitcham. I am in my 70th year, so I have seen many, many changes and it saddens me that you are now going to change it again. We have worked very hard in building our community, thanks to our MP and the Council. We are the poor relations and always have been of our borough, but we have all worked very, very hard together and to think that you are going to tear us apart is absolutely heartbreaking for many, many people. I do not know how we will get on. Even at the thought of it now people are getting very upset. I do voluntary work for Age UK; they are appalled that they are not going to have an MP on site as such as we have, which has made us how we are, to fight for them and us and some of them are quite scared about it.

We have just rediscovered Mitcham with the community around the village and the cricket green and I just cannot see how everything is going to be split. It will make such a difference. It is going to just shatter us. I would come under Streatham and I cannot imagine a Streatham MP coming down and being at all concerned about us because we are the poor relations and that is why we so desperately need our MP for the whole community and all of us from the very young, the schoolchildren, to the elderly. We do need to have representation and splitting us and cutting us all up is going to cause more

problems than ever. We have just got ourselves on the up. We have rediscovered it, the town centre. I just wish, gentleman, if you had time, you could come to Mitcham and walk round the shops and the cafés where the community gather and talk and help each other. It is quite unique how we are now and the thought of it being cut apart, I wish you could just help and keep our community and Mitcham together. I do not know what else to say. I am sorry. I really hope that you reconsider tearing Mitcham apart because you are going to ruin a community and a lot of people's lives. It will not be the same. We need an MP and the good one that we have to represent us and help us. We are the poor relations, that is why we need our own strong MP to guide us and help us which has always happened but, if you split that, it will not happen anymore and I fear that we will go back to the old days when we were just the poor relations of outer London. I wish you could help keep our community together.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You have both spoken very clearly and very passionately. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you very much indeed.

Do we have John Edmonds? Would you introduce yourself by name and address, please.

MR EDMONDS: My name is John Edmonds and my address is 50 Graham Road, Mitcham, CR4 2HA. Thank you for giving me the opportunity of making this representation. I have lived in Mitcham for over 40 years and I value the sense of community in our small town. A significant contributor to that sense of community is that we are all represented by one MP. One MP represents the whole of our town. I was therefore extremely disappointed to find that your proposal was suggesting that our constituency should be broken into fragments and that parts of our community should be shelled out to four different constituencies and represented by four different MPs.

I have a research turn of mind and I looked up your report, *Initial Proposals for New Constituency Boundaries in London* to see how the Boundary Commission justified this proposal. You suggest in that report that you are guided by four considerations. The first concerns special geographical issues; we do not have any mountains in Mitcham and we do not have a big river, so that really does not concern us very much, but the other three, the boundaries of the local authority, the existing constituency boundaries and the ties of community, are of enormous importance in Mitcham and I must say that, on examination of your proposals, you seem to have ignored each of those, every one.

As has already been said, local government boundaries are of real importance in setting constituency boundaries. At the moment, the London Borough of Merton encompasses two constituencies. Under your proposals of course, parts of five constituencies will be included in the borough boundaries. Thus, instead of dealing with two MPs, this small council of Merton will be dealing with five. Communications will obviously be complex

and some examples have already been given about some of the problems that will take place, but the real difficulty is that most of those MPs will have the majority of their constituents in other boroughs of London.

In my earlier job, I met many MPs and I still know many MPs. By and large they are overworked and, under the reduction in number of MPs, they are going to be even more overworked; their social caseload is usually very high and they have to prioritise, and it is bound to be the case that the MPs will prioritise those parts of the constituency where most of their constituents live, which means that most of those MPs will be giving second consideration to those like me and my colleagues and local neighbours who live in Mitcham. It is unlikely that all residents in Merton will have an MP who is alert to the local council needs and will be able to bridge those necessary gaps.

Your guidelines also ask you to consider and take account of existing constituency boundaries. In all honesty, there is no sign whatsoever that this has been done. At first sight, it looks as if Mitcham and Morden has just been broken up into small parts and has then been distributed to the surrounding constituency. In honesty, the proposal looks a bit like a demolition job as if, in reducing the number of constituencies, you had to find a sacrificial area and we are it. That is not a comfortable position to be in and I do not believe that it is a reasonable way to conduct this particular proposal.

However, my greatest concern is that your proposal will do exactly what your final consideration indicates that you wish to avoid. The community of Mitcham will cease to exist in political and, as colleagues have said, in other terms. People will be encouraged to look away from Mitcham towards communities that have their centre of gravity elsewhere. Mitcham has a long and distinguished history but, under your proposals, it will be reduced to a cluster of satellites, satellites of other areas, with no core and, if I can be allowed one moment of sentimentality, no heart.

We know that this is a difficult job and we know that there is the extra difficulty of reducing the number of constituencies across the country, but I think we are entitled to expect that the Boundary Commission, having set out its considerations, will honour those considerations in drawing up your proposals and I am afraid you have not done that. I ask that you change your proposals in order that the whole community of Mitcham remains in one constituency. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, I thank you very much.

Next, Eric Samuelson, and would you begin by giving your name and address, please.

MR SAMUELSON: (AFC Wimbledon) Good afternoon, I am Eric Samuelson and my address is 33 Hendon Road, Tooting, SW1 77DH. I am here as the Chief Executive of

AFC Wimbledon, a football club, and a resident of Tooting nearby to the area in which we hope to reside soon.

As much as I love talking about AFC Wimbledon and football, I am going to assume that you do not know a lot about it and the background to its story is important to what I need to say, so if you allow me to dwell on it briefly. The old Wimbledon FC was born and bred in Wimbledon, played in Plough Lane in Wimbledon and, without getting emotional, it was usurped and moved up the motorway to Milton Keynes and we were left as a community with no football club. The community responded magnificently by gathering together and saying; "This is not acceptable. A football club should have its community at its heart. We will start again. Like the old Wimbledon did in 1889, we will build from scratch and we will, as a group of people with no football background but with a whole range of skills create a new club". In football terms, if Manchester United, Arsenal or whichever is your team are in level one, we had to start at level nine in the football pyramid. Within nine years, we had had five promotions, we had got into the Football League and we got back where we believed we belonged and indeed in the summer just gone, on a highly emotional day at Wembley, we got promotion into League 1. Indeed, only a couple of weeks ago, we actually overtook the team that stole our place in the Football League which has some supreme irony about it. I will not linger on football anymore than that other than to say that my point is, we know about community. We are community. The football club is a community and therefore I feel well versed to speak about it in the context of this Commission.

I am also the Chairman of the AFC Wimbledon Foundation, which is an independent charity but clearly using the name of the football club to attract people in a way that football has for young people in particular. We do work across Merton, Kingston and the borough in which we currently reside, Wandsworth, Sutton, Lambeth, a whole range of areas, but we focused always on our home in Merton principally. That means that we have done a lot of work in Mitcham, we have done a lot of work in Morden and, of course, we have done a fair amount of work in Wimbledon.

Our experience is that Mitcham is an extraordinarily diverse community with Tamil, Polish, Ghanaian, travellers, a whole range of different ethnic backgrounds, but somehow – it is the power of community – they have come together as one distinct area – it feels like one area when you go there – to create a genuine community and it would be divided, as I understand it, into three. As somebody else said – it is not my quote – they are going from being at the heart of the constituency to being at the periphery of three. Not a great result in any terms let alone football for the community. Morden would be split in two. Also a very cohesive community, again bringing together different people and backgrounds and faiths. The Ahmadiyya Mosque I think is the biggest mosque in Europe up near Morden Park and other local community people. Finally, Wimbledon which I think in most people's mind has a most clear and distinct image and representation as a community in its own right. Indeed, it is interesting that that is where we find our work easiest to do because that is where the majority of the wealth

exists and the middle-class influence and what we need to be doing is working in the areas where it is harder to get in because people are reluctant to come out and come to join in and it is in those areas where you rely on the local community to come forward and help you to build the sort of good works that we want to do because we are of the community.

I make the other point about Wimbledon that we are hoping to build a new stadium there. We are currently exiled, voluntarily or sort of voluntarily, from the Borough of Merton. We have been able to do that through the fantastic support of the Council itself but also because of the support of the two MPs for Merton. I have no political bias in this. We have one from the two major parties and they have been very supportive. It would have been so much harder to get five MPs lined up behind us to do what we are going to do: to go back where we came from, build a new stadium and be able to serve our community all the more strongly.

I guess your job is to sit here and have everybody tell you exactly what is wrong and maybe offer not too many solutions to the problems. Indeed, if everybody did, it probably would not help you either. My suggestion is not to offer a clear solution other than to say that there are some principles here that I think are worth following and have been expressed very well by the people before me. Let us keep, perhaps in foot-balling terms, Mitcham United, Morden United and Wimbledon United and build constituencies through each of those as separate identifiable areas. That I believe would be for the benefit of the communities, of the constituencies and for South-West London as a whole. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there any matters for clarification? In that case, thank you very much indeed.

Nigel Stone is next, please.

REVEREND STONE: Nigel Stone, currently resident at St Mark's Vicarage in Locks Lane, Mitcham, CR4 2JX. I note, sir, that I am in the middle of three clergy speaking to you this afternoon. Whether that proves to be a holy trinity or three wise monkeys or something else is for others to decide.

At St Mark's Mitcham, most of our regular congregation of approximately 100 people walk to church on a Sunday. Almost all of them live in the present constituency of Mitcham and Morden and the whole of the geographical parish of St Mark's falls within that constituency. However, under the proposals currently being considered, our congregation will live in four different constituencies and even the parish itself will be spread over three different constituencies. I think this highlights the radical nature of the proposed changes. These are clearly not minor tweaks tidying up a few loose boundary edges. No, this is basically, as has been said, the doing away of an established historical constituency focused on an important distinctive, local community. Yes, there

will still be a constituency with Mitcham in its name, but the reality is a very significant part of Mitcham, including most of its historic and civic venues, will not be in that constituency that is called partly Mitcham.

One of my additional responsibilities to being Vicar of St Mark's is to act as chaplain to the Mitcham branch of the Royal British Legion and you have heard eloquently from some of my colleagues. I could be accused of repeating what they are saying; I think I am reinforcing it. Final preparations are underway for our annual remembrance events next month. As you heard, they are major civic events. I lead those services; they are attended by people of all ages including local councillors and the MP for Mitcham and Morden who lays a wreath and contributes to the service. You heard much about it just a few moments ago. What you did not hear was that one of the big discussions at the planning meeting was whether 1,800 orders of service will be enough for that event which I think puts it into context. We think it may not be but they will have to share because that is all we are going to print. The Parade, as we have heard, begins at the Legion Headquarters in St Mark's Road just along from St Mark's Church; it proceeds to the Mitcham War Memorial on Lower Green. Under the new proposals those two places, both of them in the middle of Mitcham, will be in different parliamentary constituencies. Which MP will be invited? As was hinted, quite possibly neither would attend. One may well go to the ceremony in Streatham, the other to Wimbledon.

The third hat that I want to wear this afternoon is that in my role as the current Chair of Churches Together in Mitcham, a group of churches made up of ten congregations; it includes Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and the independent churches. Those churches are actively involved working together and working collaboratively with the local authority and with other statutory and voluntary groups to maintain and also develop our local community of Mitcham and its distinctive identity. At present, all the churches in the group are based in the Mitcham and Morden constituency but, again, under the proposals currently being considered, our ten churches would be located in three different parliamentary constituencies and two of those constituencies, Tooting and Streatham and Mitcham, will be constituencies that a large part of which are in a different local authority, namely Wandsworth and Lambeth respectively.

The resulting complex web of relationships with different MPs and local councillors will very likely inhibit effective working together. Boundaries are of course not just lines on a map. Boundaries affect people's lives in a very significant way. They can help or they can hinder, to build up or to break down community groups, community relations, community life and, in an area like Mitcham, lots of vulnerable people who are struggling need those community groups and those community relationships just to survive. If Mitcham is divided up as in this Boundary Commission review, the needs and voices of many of those vulnerable people are in real danger of being lost, of being deafened in the significantly different local communities of Sutton and Wimbledon and Streatham where they will be linked in parliamentary terms. Of course, I appreciate that

you have a job to do and that is to reduce the number of parliamentary constituencies here in London and across the country. I understand that constituencies should be within prescribed population limits, but Mitcham and Morden are less than 5,000 short of those prescribed limits.

I therefore encourage you to keep Mitcham and Morden together by adding perhaps one ward from a neighbouring constituency rather than the proposed wholesale restructuring with all the resulting damage that it is likely to cause to our communal life and to the vulnerable families and individuals who live there. Thank you for listening.

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

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER B: The Vicar tells us that his parish would be split between three. I think it would help the Commission if the Vicar, maybe later in writing, identifies what wards are covered in his parish.

REVEREND STONE: There are addresses that I looked up last night. I found an address in our parish that is in Graveney ward and therefore will go into Tooting. I live in Figge's Marsh ward which will be in Streatham and Mitcham and there are homes in our parish that are in Lavender ward which therefore will be in Wimbledon and Central Morden or whatever it is called.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That is helpful. Thank you very much, indeed.

Next we have Naomi Martin. Welcome and would you introduce yourself by way of name and address when you begin.

MS MARTIN: (Commonside Community Development Trust, Mitcham) Hello. My name is Naomi Martin and I am the Director of the Commonside Trust which is based in the New Horizon Centre, South Lodge Avenue, Pollards Hill, Mitcham. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

We protect children from harm; we keep young people out of the clutches of gangs; we provide a daily link to the outside world for older people; we feed families who have nowhere else to turn and we work with young mums and young carers helping them to achieve fulfilling lives. These are some of the important activities and services provided by Mitcham's Commonside Trust and they will all be affected if the existing proposals to change parliamentary boundaries become a reality.

I have been the Director of Commonside Trust for the last 11 years. We are based in Pollards Hill in the community centre and we are one of the largest charities in the area.

We employ 19 staff and have a weekly footfall of around 2,000 people. They come to us for help, for support, for advice; they attend training programmes that we run and we run workshops right across the east of the Borough of Merton. Our purpose is to work together to improve the lives of ourselves and our families in the wider community and our name is drawn directly from Mitcham Common, which is part of our heritage, and the footprint of our organisation is the east of the London Borough of Merton. It is an area that has high levels of deprivation seeing every type of problem and dealing with multiple challenges daily. Housing in London is at crisis point at the moment and we visit families living in one room. We regularly visit families living in garages. We do home visits; we reach out to people in difficulty and we regularly go into homes where there are children and there is little food and almost zero furniture or bedding.

The people who depend on our help come from many different ethnic, religious and national backgrounds and it is this diversity that marks Mitcham out from many other places in the country. Recently, we have worked increasingly closely with the Polish Association for the Family. Poles and East Europeans make up 16 per cent of the local population and nearly 10,000 of them are on the local Electoral Register. We work with this organisation right across from their base in Colliers Wood Community Centre through to our base in Pollards Hill covering the wide population that they serve. Mitcham also has the largest Ghanaian community outside Ghana and the largest Tamil community outside Sri Lanka. In our centre alone, we host over a dozen African churches over the weekend.

In the face of many challenges and our local context, we have continued to be successful in these difficult times because we work across a large area and in a single parliamentary constituency. We are known by our MP, the Council and other stakeholders and this helps us to leverage our scale and our work. The current boundary arrangements would have a direct impact on our ability to operate. I will give you an example. Recently because of financial cuts to our services we were staring at a grim future. Our MP got to work and brought together many of our cross-borough funders to help. I am in no doubt that this would not have been done by an MP from Tooting or Wimbledon or Sutton who does not have the same connection to the work that we do and the people we help. I am not even sure that I could get them in the same room at the same time in order to put the proposal in place. Our funders do include Merton Council and the Department for Work and Pensions via Mitcham's Jobcentre Plus. We also work with the Met Police via their Mitcham sector, with Moat Housing, who are based in Pollards Hill but also with Circle Housing who cover right across the London Borough of Merton. They recognise us as one community and it makes no sense to split things up by taking three Mitcham wards and put them into Streatham, and calling it Streatham and Mitcham does not make much difference. It is not Mitcham. Under the current proposals, most of the town centre would be left behind in any other constituency, Merton and Wimbledon Central. To my mind, this is a mess that will not work.

I am also anxious because if we increase the pull factors and connections with Streatham and Lambeth, we will be reducing the chances for young people's well being. By this I mean that the gang membership and organised crime that currently pulls from those boroughs would be a more real risk to our young people in Mitcham and Colliers Wood. I cannot see a Streatham MP who is having to deal with all the complexities of Lambeth having the time to get to know us. Quite simply, we would no longer be a priority and we need Mitcham and Colliers Wood to stay together. I do appreciate that Streatham Vale is a bit like Longthornton and could be combined with us.

One particularly vital area of expertise that we have is working with families who are not coping and where there are children at risk. Child protection is a big issue for us and with it there needs to be clarity of representation especially if families that split up can also live close to each other across a small geographic area. There have been times, several times, when sensitive issues have arisen that we have had to call our MP on during her out-of-office hours and on her mobile even at weekends. She picks up and answers as she knows us and she knows our work. The current Boundary Commission proposals will shatter this tried and trusted relationship and children will be at risk. What was once a cohesive area with one MP will be carved up into four and I cannot begin to imagine being able to develop the same relationship with four MPs no matter how good they may be let alone them with us.

Sirs, the raft of support that we offer to those in crisis who are alone, violated or sick is one made up of finely aligned contacts with partners, charities, churches and agencies across the wards of Colliers Wood, Lavender, Cricket Green, Figge's March, Graveney, Pollards Hill and Longthornton. These have taken time and care to build. Spinning this support is a skilled live operation with public resources in health and social welfare stretched ever thinner and the holes in the security net gaping wider. It is organisations like Commonsides who have woven the weft of lifelines that prevent families, children and old people falling through. As you may have gathered, we are doing this by spinning on threepence halfpenny. You dissect this entity, this unity, this safe harbour of stability with these proposals and real people on and off the Electoral Register will suffer. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much, indeed.

Next, Reverend Jerry Stanton. Welcome and if you could begin by giving your name and address, please.

REVEREND STANTON: My name is Reverend Jerry Stanton. My address is 41 Rosemead Avenue, Mitcham. I am the Minister of Pollards Hill Baptist Church. I am also Secretary to the Trustees of Commonsides Community Development Trust and you just heard from our director. Like many of us in the clergy, I wear other hats supporting

the area. What we want to do is build a sense of community in Pollards Hill and increase life chances. I chair the Local Advisory Board of the South Mitcham Children's Centre which is a Sure Start cluster centre which achieved an Ofsted "outstanding" in 2014. I have mentioned Commonsides and I am also on the Wimbledon Food Bank Steering Committee which is what we call the borough-wide food bank. I have no party political membership which I think is important to say. I am not representing any political party; that is not why I am here. I am trying to speak as someone who is working with others for the common good of people in Pollards Hill, Mitcham.

Our church is a thriving multicultural church. You have already heard about some of the different nations that people come from in our area. Off the top of my head, we have people from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Sri Lanka and Estonia who worship in the church, many from Caribbean backgrounds as well as some who are Mitcham born and bred. What is really interesting with the church is it reflects the area and, in that, the area is an area of quite good peace I have to say. All of those different groups, they do not all mix, they are not all hanging out all the time in the hairdressers or wherever, but there are no real tensions there. There is no racial violence that I am aware of or that the police have told me of when we are in ward panel meetings. I think this is really unusual in London today and I think some of this is to do with the work that Commonsides have done but is also to do with the work that the Council have done and the MP has done.

We have heard that Pollards Hill is a deprived area; it is not as deprived as it used to be which is good news. It also used to be a really notorious area for crime and that is no longer true. Work by many partners particularly I think over the last ten years, Commonsides, Moat Housing we have heard of and others have really improved Pollards Hill as a place to live and I am really happy and pleased to live there. I have four daughters now and they have just come out of teen age but they have never felt threatened in the area; they have never felt at risk in the area.

The thing is that reputations last longer than reality. People outside of the Mitcham area will still think of Mitcham and Pollards Hill as a bit dodgy, a place not to go. What I see as a threat to these proposed changes is that that reputation could build again. That sense that Pollards Hill is a kind of no person zone on the edge of things would just be enhanced. If you pull Pollards Hill and the other wards away from Mitcham and it becomes part of another constituency, that sense of "we are part of Mitcham" that we have worked on for a long time and, "as that, we are part of the London Borough of Merton" would be greatly weakened. I understand the need and really support the need to modify constituencies to reduce the number of MPs in this 21st century, but I am just concerned about the changes that are proposed and I am talking particularly about Pollards Hill as part of Mitcham.

When I spoke to some of my friends in the area about this, they were really surprised and it made no sense that they would suddenly have an MP who is based in Streatham.

Nothing to do with personalities or individuals or political parties, but simply that Streatham is not Mitcham. Streatham is not Pollards Hill. People who live near me/my neighbours see themselves as Pollards Hill first, Mitcham second, and then their cultural heritage, whatever that may be, comes a distant third. This is something that is really precious. People who live in the area see themselves as Mitcham and are much more likely to catch the 118 into Mitcham to do their shopping than to head up to Streatham.

Let us be honest, constituency boundaries are not the first thing in people's minds on a day-to-day basis, but they do matter when it comes to some really important things that affect people's lives especially those who are marginalised, those who maybe are not on the Electoral Register, those who may have questionable status in the country, those who are looking for work, those who are otherwise not heard need at times their MP to be the person who speaks up for them, amongst others, and that MP needs to know the area. If you make this change tomorrow, you could have the most amazing MP in Streatham and Mitcham constituency, but they would have to be superhuman to be able to pick up the knowledge of what is involved in Pollards Hill, what it is like and what the people are like when they have their own existing constituency to work with. People who live in Pollards Hill have more in common with Mitcham they see than they do with people in Streatham or even Norbury. It is not about lines on a map; it is about where people naturally come together.

Of course, Mitcham as a whole is a less wealthy area and we see the only power we can gain here is to work together to improve our life chances, to form co-operatives between different citizens, interested parties, and work together for the common good. To be honest, we are seeing Streatham, Streatham Vale we have heard about and Norbury become increasingly affluent, gentrified, and being part of the same constituency may lead to tensions over that. That can introduce its own social tensions. That may increase Pollards Hill's sense of isolation and dismantle the recent and ongoing work to improve the facilities, the opportunities and the reputation of the area. In a nutshell, community spirit would be put at risk by these proposed changes and, in this day and age, community spirit is a rare and precious thing. Especially in outer London boroughs, we are struggling to maintain or establish a sense of community, a sense of identity, a sense of taking responsibility for our own lives. As the State is rolled back, we want to fill those gaps with normal people supporting one another.

At the moment, Mitcham is being renovated by the Council under the banner of "Rediscovering Mitcham" and it seems ironic that at that time there is a thought to dismantle Mitcham. To divide it as a political unit with a number three, four, I am not even sure, different MPs rather than the one we have at the moment. Mitcham is not perfect; Pollards Hill is close but not perfect. There is a sense of Mitcham community spirit at the moment and having one MP here in Westminster to represent that area enhances and protects that spirit.

I understand a little of how complicated it must be to re-arrange constituencies to stay within the 71,000 to 78,000 people in each constituency, but I would ask you to reconsider for Mitcham, for Pollards Hill. If there is a way that can be found to keep Mitcham together in one constituency, I think that would be best for local residents and it would be best for our democracy and our nation. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much, indeed.

Next, Stephen Alambritis. Welcome and if you could begin by way of introduction giving your name and address, please.

CLLR ALAMBRITIS: (Council Leader, London Borough of Merton) Thank you, sir, and thank you for the invitation. I am Cllr Stephen Alambritis; I live at 10 Woodland Way, Morden, Surrey, SN4 4DS and I have the privilege and the honour to be the Leader of the Council in London's smallest borough, the London Borough of Merton. I was born in Cyprus in 1957, came over to England in 1964 and have lived in Morden since 1985. Mitcham and Morden is my community and my wife's community. Our children were born there; they went to local schools; they used the local libraries and they still do; they shop in the local town centres and they both graduated from the Martial Arts Cassar Academy in Morden and they are both Black Belts, but I did prevent them from coming here, sir, to give you the chop! I have officiated as a football referee on many of Mitcham and Morden playing fields; we are blessed with 64 parks and open spaces in Merton and I will come back to the football analogy later. I know the area well and I have known it even better since being Leader of the Council here in 2010.

My plea to you as a local resident and as a councillor is to keep the constituency we have, keep Mitcham and Morden together, and keep Wimbledon together. Under the current proposals Mitcham and Morden would be split into many different constituencies. From being at the heart of one constituency, Mitcham and Morden would be at the periphery of a multiple number of constituencies. The plans would see Merton, London's smallest borough, moving from having two MPs to having five different Members of Parliament.

There are consequences of that for the Council and for its stakeholders. I will begin with the Council first. If there were to be a major incident, the Borough Commander of London's smallest borough would need to call in five Members of Parliament to a possible Gold meeting. If, God forbid, there was a serious case review, the Council would have to engage with five Members of Parliament to see a way forward on that review. If there was a major planning application – there has been one; we have heard from the Chief Executive of AFC Wimbledon and I doubt whether that would have gone as smoothly as it has engaging a 20,000 seater stadium and 602 flats if that football club had to deal with five Members of Parliament as opposed to the two who fully supported the application, both Siobhain McDonagh MP and Stephen Hammond, the

Member of Parliament for Wimbledon. God forbid, there are ministerial visits and you can end up having to police five Members of Parliament and inform five MPs and, if there is a big issue with the figuration of hospitals – God forbid that happens and we do not want it to happen – again, you would fall into the hands of the bureaucrats in the NHS and them saying that, “The five MPs are not agreed and therefore we will go ahead with what we want to do”.

In terms of stakeholders, I have talked about the NHS. The Clinical Commissioning Group regularly wants consensus on issues about health and care and I doubt whether they would reach that with five Members of Parliament and I have spoken about the Borough Commander. All this makes it very difficult for us to liaise with MPs who would primarily be based outside the borough, sir, and there is what you would get, the London Borough of Merton divided and then ruled, divided by, say, the HM Treasury if we are asking for money, divided by organisations where we are putting in applications for funds if we cannot get the agreement of not two but five Members of Parliament (indicating).

Just a bit of history. Mitcham has existed since 1200. Mitcham Golf Club was the MPs’ preferred golf club and that would now be in Wimbledon under the proposals. Wimbledon Common stays as one under the new proposals but for some reason – someone has already mentioned it – Mitcham Common would be split into two seats. Schools in Mitcham would be divided amongst three constituencies and in Morden, sir, we are lucky to have the St. Helier Estate, one of Europe’s biggest estates but no more than two floors throughout and the estate would be divided amongst two constituencies without a single voice and I would urge you to visit St. Helier Estate; it is something to behold. Finally before I play my final card, the Little League Movement was founded in Morden nearly 50 years ago and, sir, the Morden Little League would then be moving into Wimbledon.

Finally, sir, if you were to catch a 200 bus from Wimbledon Village and travel the four miles, about 20 minutes, to Mitcham, the life expectancy difference amongst females from the village in Wimbledon down to Mitcham would be 13 years. The programme of the London Borough of Merton called “Bridging the Gap” is aimed at reaching consensus and where we get any money/spare money from reward grants, we do what we can to apply to a “Bridging the Gap” programme and if I had to deal with five Members of Parliament in getting consensus on that “Bridging the Gap” programme to reduce that age expectancy, then I do believe that would be more difficult.

I do believe that, as a former football referee, I am entitled to take my cards out of my pocket and I have two here. I will not give you the cautionary card because I do think you have flown in the face of your considerations. Your considerations should be about local government boundaries, boundaries of existing constituencies, local ties and, why you are getting a red card for this application is that you do need to look at the

inconvenience that a new constituency make-up would show and so it is the red card for this particular application.

Finally, the best thing a Leader can do for his residents is to get on with their Member of Parliament. I get on with my two Members of Parliament; I doubt whether I will be able to do that with five MPs. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much, indeed.

Next, David Cowling. Welcome and if you could begin by way of introduction giving your name and address, please.

MR COWLING: My name is David Cowling and my address is 135 Graham Road, SW19 3SL. I am something of an intruder to some of the proceedings in the sense that I have lived in Wimbledon in the London Borough of Merton all of my life. For 11 years I was *ITN's* political analysis and then for 16 years editor of political research at the *BBC*. None of that makes me an expert in the work of the various Boundary Commissions but I have had to take a close professional interest in the outcomes of your Boundary Reviews because the media had to produce complete notional results for every one of the changed seats resulting from those Boundary Reviews prior to 1983, 1997 and 2010 General Elections and my former colleagues are busy now preparing to do the same in time for the 2020 Election as a consequence of this current review. That, in a sense, has always raised my interest in what you do but I am here today to express my personal concern at your initial proposals for the two Merton constituencies. I apologise if some of the territory I cover has been covered by other colleagues; I will try not to do that too often. Under your proposals, three of the four most iconic features of Wimbledon to me as a Wimbledon resident of more years than I care to recall, are despatched to become subsidiary elements of the Putney constituency which overwhelmingly comprises wards from Wandsworth Borough. Wimbledon Common, as you know, Wimbledon Tennis and the proposed home stadium of Wimbledon AFC Football Club will find themselves in a Putney seat. Only the fourth icon, Wimbledon Theatre, remains in the core Wimbledon constituency. I think, as with Wimbledon, so also with Mitcham and Streatham and Mitcham, just adding the name of Wimbledon to a Putney constituency, just adding the name of Mitcham to a Streatham constituency does not really cut the mustard, I would suggest. It is not really an answer to any of the points that have been raised by many people who have spoken before me. Names do matter but they are no substitute for what I think is the reality of what we are facing here.

If I turn to the considerations that you have to work under, one of those considerations, as I understand it, is respect for current parliamentary boundaries. Clearly, that does not work in the case of a seat such as Mitcham and Morden that you have abolished. Another consideration is respect for borough boundaries. This has already been

referred to. John Edmonds has done so and others. Currently, the 20 wards that comprise Wimbledon and Mitcham and Morden constituencies are entirely co-terminus with the boundaries of Merton Borough. Under your proposals, almost half, nine of the 20, will be scattered to seats in the boroughs of Wandsworth, Lambeth and Sutton. Once again, referring to the considerations that you have, I would suggest that is something of a serious challenge.

Another of your considerations is recognising and respecting community interests and ties and it is this that causes me the greatest concern. Ever since Merton Borough was created over 50 years ago – I can say this as an interested Wimbledon resident – Mitcham and Morden has played second fiddle to wealthy Wimbledon. It is regrettable but it is a fact and it has been there ever since we had our first election in 1964 as a borough. Mitcham and Morden has more than its fair share of problems, social and economic. We have heard references to many of them and we have also heard references – we should pay tribute to it – that these problems have been improved. Considerable improvements have been made which are important to the lives of many people, but that improvement does not allow us to relax and say, “Well, we can consider other things”, quite the opposite. I think those improvements require us to look at the systems that were in place that have created those improvements and to question whether the disintegration of those set of systems which have improved so much of the lives of people in Mitcham and Morden, whether their dissolution, so to speak, is going to allow those improvements to continue or it seems to me that it is quite reasonable to suggest that they will not. At best we might mark time and, as others have said with more experience and eloquence than I, we may even be going backwards. I think that is not just emotion, I think that is a simple fact of life. We live in a complex city with pressures that all of us are aware of and others here work within their daily lives and I give myself a proper regard to their testimony as to how their lives will be more difficult. The push and the pull to try and persuade the young men and women whom are they are trying to rescue, whether that will be improved or made more difficult and more complicated by these proposals however inadvertent they are in so doing.

It seems to me that what a Mitcham and Morden MP does is to provide solutions to those problems because they need coherence and that is what they receive and indeed are entitled to expect as citizens/as voters in Mitcham and Morden from their Member of Parliament for Mitcham and Morden. The name is on the tin. What your initial proposals will lead to, in my submission, is complete incoherence and that, I think, is something to be weighed in the balance. People who now expect to be the focus of their MP’s concern will find themselves at the back of the queue struggling for attention. Two wards out of how many in Sutton and Cheam constituency, one ward out of how many in Tooting constituency, three wards out of how many in Streatham and Mitcham constituency and four out of how many in Wimbledon. Not one MP whose sole concern is their interest but four MPs in the Mitcham and Morden area certainly for whom they represent a marginal interest and, once again, I do not attempt to defame the quality of the MPs concerned, but anybody who looks at the adjacent boroughs of Lambeth and

Tooting particularly will not come away from any consideration of those boroughs with the simplest thought that they are comfortable, easy places to be and places to be represented. All of them have themselves considerable social and economic problems and the idea that those existing MPs will turn their attention and give equal care to these marginal arrivals it seems to me is unrealistic.

We do know that there is one requirement placed on you by Parliament that trumps all these others, namely the unprecedented narrowness of your ability to vary the electorate. Parliament has given you a gigantic rubric cube that you have to complete. We come along and ask you to unravel it.

To try to be more positive, I have looked at a number of proposals, not all I am sure but a number, and I would commend to you – if you have not seen it, I will make it my business to ensure that it is sent to you – proposals by Martin Whelton who lives in the Mitcham and Morden area but has drawn up a set of proposals that go far beyond Mitcham and Morden and Wimbledon and he addresses, in my judgement – you will make your own of course – the issues of preserving communities not only in Merton but also, given the limited options facing you at the Boundary Commission, to communities in adjacent boroughs. He looks to see whether we can construct constituencies that preserve Morden and Mitcham and preserve Wimbledon and Tooting and Streatham and I would, as I say, commend that to you.

Finally, you will have experienced already the passion that anyone who visits Morden would soon discover from the people who live there about the place in which they live. We do not do passion in Wimbledon but then we have not one but three Waitrose stores to encourage our characteristic Buddhist calm, but Mitcham and Morden is a proud community. The Boundary Commission has its own pressures but I hope no one underestimates when they leave here the real consequences of these proposals on the lives of people in Mitcham and Morden. Mitcham and Morden is not the product of a planner's drawing board in the 1960s, it is a living, diverse community with a long history. It has had a MP with the name Mitcham attached to them since 1918. Its common land is no less old than Wimbledon Common and other people have testified to its contributions.

I hope you will reconsider your proposal in the light of these representations and give serious consideration to a restoration of a vibrant Mitcham and Morden constituency that matches a vibrant Mitcham and Morden community. Thank you for your time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. You made reference to someone who has drafted some proposals and was that Martin Walton?

MR COWLING: Martin Whelton. I know that these exist and I am sure that you have been besieged by many. If you are asking me, I suspect you have not received them,

but I will make it my business, if you will allow, to get hold of them and to send them to you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please do.

MR COWLING: Obviously, again, you will make your own judgement but at least to have that in front of you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: That would be very helpful. May I say to all the speakers, we have recorded what you have said but, if you wish to give us a hard copy/a written submission, we would welcome that as well. It may well be that a summation of the points would be very helpful to us. Thank you very much, indeed.

Is there anyone who has not yet logged in who wishes to speak currently in the room? If not, what I suggest, as we have some other speakers coming, is that we adjourn for ten minutes and have a break. Thank you very much.

Time Noted: 5.50 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 6.05 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentleman, shall we reassemble and I believe we have Jacob Taylor. By way of introduction, could you state your name and address, please, as you start.

MR TAYLOR: Good evening. My name is Jacob Taylor and my address is Tufnell Park Road which is in the Islington North constituency, N7 0PS. I want to make some general comments about the process and then talk specifically about the proposed changes in my constituency of Islington North. I fully understand that the Boundary Commission have to implement the law as it is written; however, I want to make a number of general points about the process because I think that is important.

Fundamentally, the first one is that I disagree with an approach that bases constituency sizes purely on the number of registered voters. Members of Parliament do not represent those who voted for them or those that are registered on the Electoral Register; they have to represent everybody. When a MP is contacted by a constituent in relation to a benefits problem or an immigration problem, they do not say, "Sorry, you're not on the Electoral Register, we can't take it up". They have to take up everyone's case. We know from the experience of sitting MPs that, on a practical level, the constituents who often require the most democratic representation are those who may not be registered on the Electoral Register. Boundary changes based purely on the Electoral Register size will essentially mean, particularly in areas like London and in

Central London, the MPs will end up having much larger constituencies in terms of the size of population than other MPs outside of city areas and that requires more effective representation.

Even if we do accept the premise of using the Electoral Register, we know that the cut off for the data used in this exercise was 1 December 2015 and it has been reported that this misses off a whole chunk of people who registered in the run-up to the EU Referendum; I believe it is around 2 million people. Obviously, that needs to be looked at.

Another major problem as I see it is the statutory electoral range that was set down by law which effectively means that all constituencies have to be within five per cent of an Electoral Register size of 74,769. In practical terms, this means that proposals that have been set out actually see a huge amount of change in the boundaries. My understanding from the data is that 87 per cent of constituencies in England will see some kind of change to their boundaries and 33 are being abolished altogether and, as people have pointed out, with the constitutional changes that we are going to see in the next couple of years with Brexit and other issues, I am not sure that it is a good time to be fundamentally shaking up the electoral basis of the country. To that point, it is also my understanding that if that five per cent were changed to seven per cent, considerably less change would be required across boundaries.

I also want to make a point on reducing the size of the House of Commons more generally. We are reducing it from 650 to 600 at the same time that the House of Lords is increasing in size and I think this is fundamentally undemocratic. Every member of the legislature in the House of Lords and the House of Commons can vote on legislation and we are effectively increasing the number of unelected legislators and decreasing the number of elected legislators. At the same time, this is a change that the Government say they want to make to save money but I doubt very much that they will also reduce the number of MPs that are in the Government and, thus, the ratio between Government MPs and non-Government MPs will tip in favour of the Government and I think that is also undemocratic.

The last general point is on the optics of this. It is widely reported that these changes broadly benefit the Conservative Party and I would suggest that, in a big western democracy like ours, for a government with a working majority to be overseeing changes, although they are being made by the Boundary Commission, that effectively strengthen their electoral position is not a good look.

On to the changes. In my constituency, Islington North, I live in the St George's ward which is broadly known as Tufnell Park. The current proposals mean that the Islington North constituency effectively is abolished. My ward would be included in a new constituency that would be made up of Kentish Town, Gospel Oak and Camden Town. Most of the current constituency of Islington North, which includes

Upper Holloway, Finsbury Park, Drayton Park and Highbury, would become part of a new constituency that also includes a large area of Stoke Newington. I think the most obvious impact of these changes is that the new constituencies would go across more than one borough. I understand that sometimes that is inevitable, but my ward, St George's, which is within the London Borough of Islington, will become part of a constituency that is largely made up of areas in the London Borough of Camden. The rest of North Islington will be part of a new constituency that would have a large area from the London Borough of Hackney. Really, the effect of that in community terms is that it breaks up an area that I would consider an existing commercial and social community which the Holloway Road runs through and I think that most residents and the people to whom I have talked already in local meetings that we have had would say that St George's ward instinctively feels within Islington and is more connected to Islington than perhaps Camden and Kentish Town.

My suggestion would be specifically on these changes that the large bulk of what is northern Islington should remain part of a single constituency and if part of that constituency were to be included in a different constituency, it would seem logical that the Mildmay ward, which is on the eastern border of the constituency, would be incorporated into some kind of constituency with Stoke Newington or Dalston.

Really, the last point would be to come back to the electorate range and if we were to move that from five to seven per cent, a lot of these changes would not be required and there would not be so much disruption to communities. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you.

Next, Nigel Egglestone. Welcome and would you introduce yourself by giving your name and address,

MR EGGLESTONE: Hello. My name is Nigel Egglestone and I am a local resident of Mitcham; I live in 11 Graham Road which is in the Figge's Marsh ward. I am here to speak up for Mitcham. I cannot believe what is being proposed. I have talked to lots of my neighbours about the plans and no one can quite comprehend what it is all about, to be honest. I was born and brought up in Balham and, when I left home, I bought a flat in Streatham and I have had a house in Mitcham for the last decade. I owned and ran a hairdressers in Wimbledon for 20 years until I retrained as an addiction councillor and then went on to management positions within the substance misuse field. My first big project was in Merton where I ran a borough-wide programme helping young people get off drink and drugs. The project was actually based in Mitcham. I have also run a project for street drinkers in Tooting and I now run adult drug and alcohol services across three boroughs: Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Westminster. I think that all in all I know Mitcham and South-West London really well having lived in that area for 57 years and what I have realised more than anything is

that Mitcham is different to all the surrounding areas. People do not just come and live in Mitcham, they stay here for generations. You only need to walk down the street; everyone is related; everyone helps everybody else; we all know each other. You will see grandparents, parents and children walking down the street together. It is a very working-class area and it is the nearest thing to a northern town I have come across. It is very tolerant. I do not think you quite have the impact of what you are proposing. You are not just putting a line down the centre of the town, you are splitting families, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons.

Streatham is completely different to Mitcham and in that I include the east of the borough. Streatham is very transient and young. It is all bars and restaurants. Just drive down Streatham High Road and there is hardly a normal shop down there. I liked living there in my twenties but it is not a community in the same way as Mitcham is and I think that, as an older person, I am much more comfortable in Mitcham. It is worrying me that Streatham is a constituency that you are suggesting to put me in. It has nothing to do with me and I do not really relate to the area at all. I do understand that Streatham Vale is a bit similar to Mitcham but the rest of the area is nothing like it. Again, Wimbledon, where I had my shop, was different again; very middle class and professional. People tend to stay there until they have children and then they move out into Surrey.

The projects I ran in Mitcham was on behalf of a national charity. Our figures were the best in the country and we were cited as a model of best practice. Whilst Mitcham has a lot of deprivation, when the youngsters are in trouble, everybody in the area mucks in and everyone cares. We were based in the centre of the town and we worked with all the local groups, police, schools, community centres, right from Colliers Wood to Pollards Hill. It was all co-ordinated and simple. I really do not think you get the impact of this proposed change.

This East Merton community will not survive what you are doing to it. I know that I could not have done my job with four or five MPs. It is having one MP that creates a glue. We were able to do things together like campaign for a new station at Mitcham Eastfields. We are in the only area in London to have a new station since the Second World War and it is because we are very united. I appreciate that you have your quota but it cannot be right to have breached at the boundaries in so many areas against your own guidelines especially when this is already one of the smallest boroughs in London. May I ask why you have guidelines when you do not adhere to them? This area is going to be blighted by this. I really ask you to think again. Thank you for listening to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points for clarification? In which case, thank you very much, indeed.

We have further speakers booked but they are not due until 6.40 and I suggest that we adjourn until then.

Time Noted: 6.17 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 6.40 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, we will recommence. We have one speaker here, Mr Mohanaraj Paramagurus. Would you like to come forward and speak at the lectern. Would you introduce yourself by way of your name and address to start with, please.

MR PARAMAGURUS: Good evening, ladies and gentleman. My name is Mohanaraj Paramagurus and I live in Mitcham. My address is 43 Lansdown Road, Mitcham, Surrey. I am here to speak on behalf of the large Sri Lankan Tamil community that lives in Mitcham and which would be damaged and divided beyond repair if the current proposal for Mitcham area were to go through. I am originally from Jaffna Region in Sri Lanka and I moved to the UK in 1992 as a result of ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka. I have lived in South-West London ever since and for the last 16 years I have lived in Lansdown Road in Mitcham. I chose to settle in Mitcham and make my home because of an already large and united Sri Lankan Tamil community in that area. Many Tamils have moved to the Mitcham area because we have laid down our roots there and have become part of the local community.

I am part of the BNS organisation, the British Tamil Community Organisation, that organise football and cricket tournaments, matches and other social events. I help run events and many of my friends and neighbours are part of this organisation. We all come from the same village in Sri Lanka, Jaffna. As a community, many of us are also facing a similar problem. Many Tamils who have moved to Mitcham come with war injuries, both physically and mentally. Our local services have gone the extra mile to help us who have such a problem. For example, the local NHS have set up its own Tamil mental support service. A big part of the reason why we have become such a community and have merged with the existing community in Mitcham is that we have been supported by the local authorities and the MP who represent Mitcham. She has gone to great length to support the Tamil community both in terms of helping us at home and standing up for issues on the national and international stage.

If you have us from being at the part of one united community to being on the edge of three different constituencies, who will stand up for us with a current MP and for the whole community?

Thank you for listening and I hope you consider this.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, indeed. Are there any matters for clarification? In which case, thank you very much, indeed.

We do have other speakers booked but no one has as yet arrived. I am going to suggest that we again adjourn until our next speaker does turn up. Back to a little bit of relaxation!

Time Noted: 6.43 pm

After a short break

Time Noted: 7.20 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Ladies and gentlemen, our last booked speaker of the evening has now arrived, which is excellent and we are just about to commence. Mr Dean, please do come forward to the lectern. Would you introduce yourself and state your name and address, please.

MR DEAN: (London Regional President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Association) Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Naseer Dean and I am the London Regional President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association. My home address is 35 The Avenue, Worcester Park, Surrey, KT4 7HD.

Our community has been based in London for just over 100 years and we are currently probably the largest Muslim community based in the London Borough of Merton. Our first mosque was opened in East Putney near Southfields Station and East Putney Station in 1924. Subsequently, as our community grew – I will explain why it grew and why we are based where we are – we purchased a property which was a disused Unigate factory in Morden, Surrey, and that was purchased in about 1996. That had been left empty for a number of years. The members of our community mainly based in Merton contributed towards the purchase of that property and the refurbishment and subsequent building of a large mosque and many of you may be aware that it is the largest mosque in Western Europe; it is known as the Baitul Futuh Mosque. Our community basically has grown in Merton in particular in the last 20-odd years as a result of persecution and that persecution has primarily taken place in Pakistan. We are a Messianic sect of Islam where we believe that the founder of our community was the Messiah for the Muslims and for mankind and his ethos was “love for all, hate for none”, which was quite different to maybe what the other Muslims are looking for and, just as the first Messiah was persecuted, the founding members of our community have been persecuted. Because of that, they found sanctuary. Large numbers, in fact the largest concentration of our community is based around the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Merton. The majority of the members there have either themselves been persecuted or

members of their family and had to leave their homes and over the last 30 years they have settled in Merton.

I deal with a number of boroughs in London. I used to live in Wandsworth but I lived for a short period also in Merton and I can see that the community has grown. What we have found is that because I deal with a number of different boroughs and different MPs, the more people you deal with, you really require to be heard as well as the community and as a group of Muslims that are under a different sort of cloud, we really do need to be heard. Just to give you the success story in Merton, we deal with two MPs, Stephen Hammond and Siobhain McDonagh. Having the largest mosque, in the Press it is quite prominent; we also have to deal with the local authorities, the police and the fire service – we had a fire recently – and with health and safety and other issues as well. We also have to deal with individual members' issues as well and that would mean me in particular having to deal with MPs as well. The people we have to deal with come from different backgrounds; some of them are highly educated, some are not so highly educated and they have different issues. The issues that I face as a leader for our community in Merton are the issues that you would expect of anyone who has had to leave their home, whether they are highly educated or not, and settle down and the first point of call is normally their MP. If they are on asylum or they have some issues of housing or whatever or any other issues as all MPs normally deal with, the MP will deal with them and I would normally refer them to the MP or the MP would contact me. It is very easy to deal with two MPs at a local individual level and, as a community, we have a number of chapters within Merton and they also find it very easy to deal with two MPs. What I have looked at on the boundaries that you have proposed to split, in Merton, which happens to be among the smallest boroughs, I will probably end up dealing with five different MPs in total.

We have also membership in Sutton, Tooting and Wandsworth, which is Putney which you are suggesting parts of Merton go into, and also Sutton and also parts of Tooting. The demographics, you need to know, are very different. If you look in the Press, you will have seen that, particularly in Tooting, there is another Muslim community there and, if you Google it, you will see that we were being hounded by the local population there. Although my family has lived in Wandsworth for nearly 100 years, we have never experienced this. This was something very unique and we really did need to have a voice and in Wandsworth we did not really have much of a voice and the local MP, in my opinion at that time, had a bit of a deaf ear. In the constituencies where we had a voice, which was where our majority is, which this boundary will totally decimate, we were heard and, by the grace of God, things were done and these extreme elements, as you all know if you read up about it, have been put to bed hopefully, but also I have to thank Siobhain McDonagh because she agreed to be the Head of the APPG in Parliament. She knew our members; she is right across the borough and, with Stephen Hammond as well, they set up this APPG which we have been trying to do for over 30 years.

The boundary itself has an effect on people's lives and you are obviously hearing what effect it does have on people's lives, but I can give you real experiences that, by splitting a small borough into effectively five, you will affect people's lives. Very few MPs manage to touch people's lives at a local level; some MPs maybe become ministers or whatever or they are in the Shadow Cabinet, but very few MPs do make a difference and, in this particular borough, your move will make a negative impact on our community. Our community is growing and my family has seen it grow and, of course, you do have to make adjustments for administration, but to split a small area among five different communities or boroughs or boundaries, I feel that you will dilute the voice of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community based around there. Just to give you an example, every year we hold annual peace symposiums where we invite MPs from various parts of the country, local chapters around the country invite their MPs and they do come, but the biggest impact is from within the local area and that is the London Borough of Merton. We have the local chief executive from a council level but from the parliamentary level it has a large impact and I believe it is an impact for the good where you can meet the MP very closely and the MP gets to know you and also values the positive impact that the community has as well upon the area. The mosque that we have there, I invite the Boundary Commission or its representatives to come and visit us and meet the members and see how, in a small borough, it works very well and how the harmony of the community is there.

We have a AMA liaison meeting every three months we meet at the mosque with the local neighbours, the local Members of Parliament are invited as well if they are free and local councillors come and the last meeting we held just after the Referendum – the police are also members – and one of the interesting things was that one thing that was mentioned was whether there was any hate in the area and just one or two boroughs voted to remain in the Referendum but the majority of that borough voted to leave, but the police reported that in Morden around our mosque there were no incidents of any hate at all. We also have experienced that. We have not seen any incidents of hate and that I would say is a success of the cohesion and of the harmony that has been created by the political forces within Merton, by the local council and also by the membership of our community as well where we work together as a community and, by having this split in a small area where part of it is going to go I think to Tooting and part of it will go into a new borough with Streatham where the demographics are very different – I can talk about that if you ask me any questions – and then you are splitting also Wimbledon with part of it into Putney. Putney itself is very large and it is really governed mainly by Wandsworth. I know Justine Greening quite well and she is quite close to the council there and her affiliation and her ear would be bent to issues close to that area. I feel that members and people particularly in that area, whether or not they are our members, may be disadvantaged if that is the same MP.

Then we have Sutton. Sutton and Cheam; we have a very large membership in Sutton and Cheam and the demographics are very different and the needs are very different to the members of our community within Merton and people who live in Merton. If you look

at the demographics as well, that human level, you will find that in parts of Merton in particular, apart from Wimbledon, you are not expecting a community with the very high net worth of individuals who have very good jobs at the moment. Thus, you are going to associate them and, if you look at the demographics, for example, you are going to associate Morden, which really does need a lot of help in a lot of areas such as schooling etc, and you are going to provide them with a MP who is going to be attached to a very different community as well and his outlook and his views may not be so much inclined towards a small part of a borough whereas the majority of that borough, unless that is being split as well, I do not know, the focus will not be there. What I have seen in Merton is that it is very clear that MPs do focus because they know the local population and the population's needs. Again, here, you are going to put part of Mitcham, where we do have a large community and we have recently purchased an office block there because we need some offices right now and we purchased it because we thought it is in the Borough of Merton and we know the MPs and we know the whole structure and we feel that that will be also marginalised where you are going to have those people associated with a MP or a boundary which they are totally alien to.

Again, in Tooting, members of our community know how they were treated in Tooting and they will be probably aghast to know that potentially there could be a MP there from a population that is not very welcoming and may be very aggressive.

These are things that the Boundary Commission should look at, what is the ethnic make-up of the area you are splitting up? What are the socioeconomic backgrounds? What is the impact it will have on people's daily lives? The administration, from my point of view, to get the best and the best civic duty out of each one of our members is that we can say to them, "Meet this MP", the MP gets to know them, we invite them to an event at the mosque which is very large and they get to know the community, not only our community but we invite other communities. For example, in November, we have a career forum/education forum and we invite the whole borough to come: schools, colleges and whatever. We have invited Siobhain McDonagh to come and the other MP, Mr Stephen Hammond, if he is available. They spend the whole day there, they have surgeries and they listen to the problems and issues faced by their constituents, whether that be education or career. It is a very close community and to split that among five, who will I be dealing with? In the way you are splitting this, the mosque will be part of Sutton and Cheam but our membership is in the other parts of the borough.

Recently, I was at the SCRE meeting, which is the religious education meeting of Merton, and there was a heat map of where the Muslim membership is – if you need it for evidence; I did not realise I could bring that – and you will see from that heat map that it is around the areas in particular where you are splitting up our membership. That will have an effect on lots of things such as teaching religious education. We have a say through the MP because the MP also has an interest in how things are in the borough. Thus, in terms of religious education, the community is voiced. If, for

example, we do not have any joy with the local authority, we will go to our local MP. Technically, you will say, okay, the boroughs are the same, but it is not the same. It is part of a cohesion that is historical. This in particular is an old historical boundary.

Just to give you an idea of how we work with the community, the Council has a disused field quite close to our mosque and with the local church, ourselves, local football club, college and other interested parties, we set up a trust and that is with the blessings of the MP and everyone has agreed that that is the way to go forward rather than have it sent out to a commercial entity and it has an interest. If the Council for example – I know the Leader is sitting here – would not listen to the appeal of the voice of one community, through the MP, the MP could negotiate and say, “Look, you have all of these communities that you need to hear” but the way you are splitting it, it will be in the corner of a borough and why would the MP really have any influence in Merton? You are crossing different boroughs; you are crossing into the London Borough of Sutton, then you are going into the London Borough of Wandsworth, then you are going into Streatham and even Croydon that might touch into. You will have to deal with all sorts of different issues and it is not just complicated for us but it is also going to be complicated for other people who have communities. In particular, you have Tamil communities in parts of Mitcham and you have West Indian communities and you have other communities that are trying to have a cohesion there and it is working very well. To attach yourselves to something quite different I think is going to be detrimental to particularly Merton and I can tell you that I cover London.

I have not attended or I am not speaking at any inquiry for any other boundary because we do not have that sort of impact or we do not have the sort of issue but, in particular, this is the borough where I think it will have the greatest impact for us and yet our first mosque is in Putney which you are going to attach to parts of Wimbledon and I can tell you that I have also had to do boundaries for our chapters and that is the hardest chapter to do because there is no commonality. You have Roehampton, you have Wimbledon Common, which is a different socio-economic class, and then you have parts of Wandsworth and it is going to be what we say “a kitchrie”, which is a bit of a mix-up. You have to look at it with a different eye. Just drawing a line here or there and saying, “I am going to attach this” and “I am going to attach that”, but you are giving corners of another boundary to parts of Merton and it will have a great impact on our community.

I am open for questions.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any matters for clarification?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER C: Can you explain to us a bit more about your statement that it is the biggest mosque in Europe. How many people on a Friday can it potentially take?

MR DEAN: I think we can have more than 10,000 members coming there. We have had up to 14,000 members at an event. At the moment, we had a fire, as you probably saw in the papers – if you remember, there was a fire there – and I think it has gone to planning already but we are going to have a very nice new building put up there where the fire was and that is going to be used by the whole community, not just our community but the Police Force use it and the Teachers Association around the country use it. It has an impact on the local community. The 14,000 members can come there and pray. We have 10,000 members and it is a huge place, all from within Merton but different parts. We opened the mosque in 2003, 13 years ago, and Siobhain is here and Stephen is here and they can speak, but it is an integral part of our community and it does help community cohesion.

Having to deal with potentially five different MPs, I think we will never be able to do that ever. You can imagine, if you heard there was a large mosque being built in your neighbourhood, the difficulties we had and, initially, there were a lot of difficulties because the faith of Islam has a very negative effect on the world because of the acts of some people who claim to be Muslim and act in a certain way. It has taken literally probably from 1996, at least 10 or 15 years, to alleviate those fears and it is three steps forward and two steps back, but we have an open door policy and I think it has really been made possible because of having to deal with only two MPs who understood what we were based upon and made the effort to get to know us as well.

MS SIOBHAIN McDONAGH: Also, you have had a pretty historic decision from Merton Council about the SCRE. SCRE is Standing Conference on Religious Education and because the Ahmadiyya experience huge difficulties not just in Pakistan but also now translated to the UK unfortunately, some of these very boring and mundane things are incredibly important.

MR DEAN: I will just give you my background. I am born and bred in England and my family came to England in 1918. Pakistan for me is probably as alien as it is for you except that I can speak the language and I probably look a bit closer to the people who come from Pakistan. I had never experienced prejudiced base upon my faith; I did upon colour but that was in a period of ignorance as we will probably have some ignorance there. I never faced it ever until I was probably about 40 years old. I heard about Ahmadiyya persecution but to feel it in England ... My father fought Hitler and pushed him off and wanted to keep our shores safe from extremism and from intolerance and then my grandfather, and then you think how can that happen here? Racism you can understand, maybe people are not used to certain ways of life, but faith is quite interesting and I never experienced it really. If you spoke to an Irishman, he can probably tell you about faith discrimination, but I did not experience it. What we found was what I would coin white collar persecution coming in through the system and I am talking about government system: local government, local authority and probably in the political authority because there was a feeling in my view – it is probably true even

today – that there was a pandering for a vote and anything else that makes sense is quietly forgotten about and what we saw – it happened in a couple of London boroughs which I will not mention but you are going to attach us to one of those anyway – was that I had to really fight to be recognised as a Muslim and yet I said, “We have been here for 100 years. What are you saying? Why are you discriminating against us? How can you decide who is a Muslim and who is not? Why are you listening to some extremist mullah?” Finally, I had to explain to them that the coat of arms of that borough has some drops. I used to go to school and I used to wear that coat of arms and I never thought what they meant being a school kid and I was worried, how am I going to explain to these people and it was just like this and, yes, it was interesting because the Council at that time did not have a single Muslim on the Council and I was thinking, why are they making this discrimination? The coat of arms had drops and I always thought they were raindrops but actually they were the teardrops of the Huguenots and the Huguenots were a community that was persecuted for their faith, came and settled in this borough and prospered and lived very well. I had to explain to them, this borough gave asylum and freedom to a community to live as they normally would live and to practise their faith and they endeared you and they prospered your borough and there are still remnants of that success today, but in education – the Council realised that and they overturned some prejudicial ruling – what we found was, in particular where we did not have a large community, for example in Birmingham, we are members of the local inter-faith communities and other Muslim communities say, “You can’t come as Muslims, you must come as ahmadiyyas. Our faith is Islam and the way we practise – we fast, we pray, our books are the same and it is the same as someone telling a Catholic or a Protestant that they are not followers of Christ. It is just a doctrinal difference. They were saying, “You are declared as non-Muslims by some Muslim countries” and we were told, “You cannot come to the SCRE meeting or to the inter-faith forum meeting as Muslims” and we are being persecuted. For us to accept that is bound to say, “Okay, we accept that persecution” but this is England and you can call yourself what you are. If you are a community/a faith group within a borough and you practise a faith, you should be recognised for that faith according to the rules of SCRE etc.

A recent example was that, in Birmingham, the education syllabus was being put together and our community was barred from coming as Muslims and, effectively, our voice was not heard and to have a voice on the syllabus and to give your point of view, you have to be on the A List. That is an ongoing court case now and because a large number of councillors from there are from the Muslim community, in our view – I may be wrong but I think I am correct – they have their view, they can dictate someone’s faith, and yet they are giving a faith syllabus to be practised in schools.

I will give you an example. In Merton – I give credit to both Siobhain and to Stephen and Alan Bridges that it is a very open-minded view – we have recently had the SCRE meeting – this only came to light and, within Merton, we also felt this as well but it is because of it being a smaller borough with two MPs, they understood the political and

the implications of such things because for a persecuted community to be told in England, "Sorry, we agree with the decision made in Pakistan, although they get to kill you there, "but here, we will not recognise your right to be a Muslim as well". It was condoning that decision and this was what made the other borough realise and I hope that Birmingham ... This is what they are doing, they are actually condoning a decision made in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia where a man's faith can be determined by a judge when it is to do with his heart. We are seeing that in here in England but, in Merton, thank God I would say and I have to stand up to them, the Council and the members of SCRE recognise that we are a big community, we are a Muslim community, that we have those rights and we are now on the Advisory Committee of SCRE. I went to the last meeting and I was really pleased because I went through the syllabus with all the different faith groups there and then they had a video of how it is taught to children and these children have a very broad and open mind. Children are allowed to look at other faiths, understand them, appreciate them and realise that, actually, we are all the same. I think we would not have succeeded with those issues in Merton if we had not had co-operation from two MPs, or from Siobhain McDonagh in particular, and from the Council, but they go hand in hand.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand that and that is extremely interesting. There are no other matters of clarification. I thank you very much indeed.

We have no other speakers booked for this evening and it is now coming up to 7.45. What are the views of colleagues here? Shall we sit here until 8.00 to see if anyone else turns up or shall we close this evening's proceedings and reassemble tomorrow? In which case, we will close this evening. Thank you for your attendance and your contributions and I look forward to seeing you at 9.00 tomorrow morning. Goodnight.

At 7.45 pm the hearing adjourned until 9.00 am on Tuesday 18 October 2016

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