

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

PROCEEDINGS

at the

2018 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES IN ENGLAND

HELD AT

THE COTTON EXCHANGE BUILDING, OLD HALL STREET, LIVERPOOL, L3 9JR

ON

FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER 2016
DAY TWO

Before:

Mr Neil Ward, The Lead Assistant Commissioner

Transcribed from audio by W B Gurney & Sons LLP
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At 9.00 am:

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Neil Ward. I am the Lead Assistant Commissioner appointed by the Boundary Commission to conduct two things: To conduct the hearings across the whole of the North West into their Initial Proposals for the revised parliamentary boundaries for the North West region and, along with two fellow assistant Commissioners, Nicholas Elliott and Graeme Clarke, to take on board all the representations that are either made in the hearings or in written representations and to consider, in the light of them, whether we think it is appropriate to recommend changes, revised proposals to the Boundary Commission on their Initial Proposals.

I should say that I am, in a sense, essentially independent of the Boundary Commission. Although I am appointed by them, I had no hand in the drafting of the proposals and I received them the same time as everyone else and I am, in a sense, an honest broker in this process, considering whether or not changes ought to be made.

This is the second day of the Liverpool hearing. Just a couple of words on process. The purpose is to make representations, essentially, to me here. All the representations are being filmed and recorded and will be made available in due course, along with all the written representations. When people come up to speak, I will ask them to give their name and address and then proceed into their presentation.

This is not a forum for debating the relative merits of the proposals with the Boundary Commission or, indeed, with each other. It is not a place for cross-examination. Those who have lived through boundary changes in the past will know that that used to be the form. It is not anymore. It is a place to receive representations, to make and to be received.

It is worth saying at the outset it is not a place for making political capital either. Political statements carry little or no weight in this room at all, but it does not stop everyone doing it. If people are going to think about it, then it is possibly easier to save their energy than to do so.

A lot of people who speak at these hearings are professional speakers, used to speaking in public and a number of people are not. We try and be as supportive as we can to people who are not used to speaking and I will give every encouragement I can to everyone to make sure they get their points of view across.

At the end of each representation, I shall provide the opportunity for anyone to ask any points of clarification of any points that have been made or anything. I may ask some, but others in the audience may ask for points of clarification. Typically, we have ten minute slots. Typically, people do not take ten minutes but, if people are overrunning, then we will see how the day goes.

At the moment, we are a bit light on the ground. We have got a full afternoon ahead of us, so a full day ahead of us, so we will see. I may, as we have already done, either delay or make adjournments in order to try and get a good flow of speakers rather than stop and start all the time. We will almost certainly this morning have to have further adjournments.

I will try and keep to everyone's timetable the slots that they have got booked available, but please bear with me as I try to make it work. I am fluid about breaks. People should come and go as they wish. There will be a lunch break at 1 o'clock until 2 o'clock and the session will finish by 5 o'clock this afternoon. We are only allowed, by law, to hold hearings that last for two days and, therefore, there will be no overrun from this session.

Domestics. There are toilets around this corridor. There is a gents just by the corner and I think the ladies is around and further past the lift for anyone who needs them. There is no fire drill planned, so if the alarm goes off then follow me through that door at the back. Fire exits are at the back. We will get instructions and we will find the right way to go. There is also a door here.

Are there any points of clarification on that that anyone would need? (No response) I am supported by Glenn Reed here, who is the Senior Manager from the Boundary Commission, and a number of staff who are here from the Boundary Commission. Let us see if we can pick up the timetable at its right position. Margaret Greenwood, are you ready to speak?

MS GREENWOOD (Member of Parliament for Wirral West): Margaret Greenwood, Member of Parliament for Wirral West and I am making my submission to the Boundary Review as a representative of the people of Wirral West. The first point I want to make is about West Kirby and Thurstaston and Hoylake and Meols wards.

I support the Boundary Commission's proposal to keep West Kirby and Thurstaston and Hoylake and Meols in the same constituency. To divide them between two constituencies would require splitting West Kirby Town, since part of West Kirby actually lies within the Hoylake and Meols ward. It would make no sense to split West Kirby in two, particularly as it has many active local community groups such as Transition Towns West Kirby.

There are strong cultural ties between West Kirby, Hoylake and Meols. For example, the annual two-week long 'Festival of Firsts', which brings together people from across West Wirral in a celebration of arts, music and place. The area comprising West Kirby and Thurstaston and Hoylake and Meols has a distinct identity.

West Kirby and Hoylake both have RNLI lifeboat stations and both maritime history and

environmentalism is an important part of the area's identity. There is also an Incredible Edible Group that plants food for the community to pick for free which operates in West Kirby, Hoylake and Meols. The towns are closely connected through physical ties such as the beaches, the railway line and the highly-valued walks and cycle paths and the main road that runs around the north-west of the Wirral Peninsula.

The second point I want to make is in relation to Upton ward. I do not support the Boundary Commission's proposal to put Upton ward into Wallasey constituency, nor do I support the proposal that it be moved into a Birkenhead constituency. I believe that Upton should be part of the new Wirral constituency, which is currently named Bebington and Heswall, because of the strength of local feeling.

Over Church Residents' Association, which was founded eight years ago, have told me that they feel part of Wirral West and that they want to be part of the new West Wirral constituency. They believe that to move to either Wallasey or Birkenhead would be detrimental to the area and damage local community ties, such as those built up through Upton children using Greasby Children's Centre. The communities are very well-connected by a frequent bus journey that takes just six minutes.

Arrow Park Hospital is a major employer for the people of Upton, but it sits in the adjacent Pensby and Thingwall ward. The hospital is a source of local pride and would sit outside the constituency of many who work in it if Upton were to be moved into either Birkenhead or Wallasey. Arrow Park itself and its golf course are also in Pensby and Thingwall ward and would also be separated from the local community that they serve if Upton were to be moved into either Wallasey or Birkenhead. The ward boundary actually runs down the middle of the road that people have to cross to get to these amenities.

Similarly, Upton Police Station is in Greasby, Frankby and Irby ward and so this too would be separated from the large Upton communities that it serves if Upton were to be moved into Birkenhead or Wallasey constituencies. Finally, the M53 motorway forms a powerful boundary between the current Wirral West and Birkenhead constituencies. It makes sense for the constituency boundary to continue to be along the route of the motorway. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Can I just check whether anyone has got any proposals? (No response) What about the rest of the Bebington and Heswall proposal which subsumes Wirral West in the proposal, what are your thoughts on that?

MS GREENWOOD: I did not really want to make submissions. It is a very difficult scenario, is it not? My concern was really making sure that the people of Upton felt comfortable as to where they were placed because I have had quite a bit of representation around that, and particularly around just making sure that West Kirby

Town is not split in two and that part of the north-west of the peninsula is kept together.

The feelings in Upton ward are very strong. The motorway is a very strong physical boundary. So I had focused on those areas. I am very happy for the other elements of Greasby, Frankby and Irby, Pensby and Thingwall to be tied to the West Kirby and Thurstaston, Hoylake and Meols area. My preference would be really to bring Eastham into the new boundaries. I cannot really comment on the southern area because it is not my constituency area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Although it is the one in debate, as it were.

MS GREENWOOD: It is.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Upton, I think, has 12,000 electors, so it is a sizable group. To bring that in means that we have quite a big push on into Cheshire, I guess.

MS GREENWOOD: Yes, I guess so. But I think it is important because, as you say, it is a big ward and there are new houses being built in the ward and so it is going to be bigger. Also, a point was made to me by a resident yesterday that, in fact, we are talking about the electorate, so there are a lot of people who are not registered to vote yet in that ward who we believe should be registered to vote.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Are there any other points anyone would like to ask? (No response) No, thank you very much indeed.

MS GREENWOOD: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. It must be a Friday if Members of Parliament are here. Mr Twigg, would you like to come forward? Again, if you could give your name and address and then, please, proceed.

MR TWIGG (Member of Parliament for West Derby): Thank you, Mr Ward. I am Stephen Twigg. I am the Member of Parliament for the West Derby constituency here in Liverpool. Can I, first of all, Mr Ward, welcome the opportunity provided today to set out my views as the local Member of Parliament and, in particular, to thank the Boundary Commission for their work so far.

I recognise that the Commission has to work within the legislation that Parliament gives it. The legislation has required a quite fundamental change in the way that these processes work with the requirement for precisely 600 constituencies, a much tighter definition arithmetically of the numbers that are able to be in each constituency and, of course, the requirement that this process is conducted every Parliament rather than

every ten years.

In the light of that and bearing in mind those parameters, I want to give some evidence today in support of the Initial Proposals as they apply to East Merseyside, including my own constituency. I want to give three arguments in support of the proposals that the Commission has made.

The first is a general argument which is that, from the point of view of my constituency, the Commission's Initial Proposals have achieved minimum disruption. Five of the existing wards that make up the current West Derby constituency remain together and I very much welcome the fact that the Commission has done that.

Inevitably, to reach the new arithmetic quota, the Commission has had to add wards to my constituency and the two additional wards are Clubmoor and Fazakerley. I would like to comment briefly on each. Clubmoor ward was in the West Derby constituency prior to the last reorganisation. Clubmoor was part of the West Derby constituency until 2010 and so I think it is very logical, when looking to add a ward, to reinstate a ward that was the constituency until very recently.

Clubmoor has close ties with other parts of the constituency, but it is particularly close with the neighbouring ward of Norris Green. Indeed, part of what local residents would see as the Norris Green community is in the Clubmoor ward. The main shopping centre for that part of the City, the Broadway in Norris Green, is actually in the Clubmoor ward. In terms of local community ties, having Clubmoor back with Norris Green would reunite that community and I welcome the proposal very strongly.

The second addition to the West Derby constituency is the addition of the Fazakerley ward. Fazakerley has close ties in particular to the northern wards of the current West Derby constituency, Croxteth and Norris Green. It is part of what is known as the Alt Valley neighbourhood in that part of the City of Liverpool.

One example of the very close ties, the main registered social landlord for Fazakerley is Cobalt Housing. Cobalt took over the housing that was previously local authority housing. Cobalt is the social landlord for Croxteth, Norris Green and Fazakerley. In fact, we would have all of the tenants of that social landlord in one constituency by bringing Fazakerley into the West Derby constituency.

Fazakerley Secondary School is the local secondary school for many of the children in the northern part of my constituency. When the local authority closed Croxteth Secondary School six years ago, Fazakerley became the neighbourhood school for those who did not want a Catholic secondary education and so many children from Norris Green and Croxteth go to Fazakerley School.

Again, I think there is a logic in having the Fazakerley ward united with the Croxteth and

Norris Green wards. They are, Mr Ward, my three comments in support of the Initial Proposals and I thank you again for the opportunity to provide them here today.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much for coming. We are always particularly interested in getting those community links to understand how the various wards fit together, if indeed they do fit together. I have no particular comments, has anyone got any other points? (No response) Thank you very much indeed. Mr Nick Crofts?

CLLR CROFTS (Knotty Ash): Thank you, Assistant Commissioner. My name is Nick Crofts. I am one of the three Labour councillors for the Knotty Ash ward. I am, indeed, the longest-serving of the three councillors for the Knotty Ash ward, elected in 2012.

I am here today to speak in support of the Commission's Initial Proposals and I have just a few brief points that I wish to make in respect to geographical boundaries and community ties in respect of the Knotty Ash ward and its position within the existing and, indeed, the newly proposed Liverpool West Derby configuration.

You will see from the map that the southern border of the West Derby constituency and, indeed, the Knotty Ash ward is at Broad Green and it is bounded there by the start of the M62 motorway. It is an impermeable boundary for pedestrians, not exclusively but very significantly, and it makes a very sensible hard edge to both the ward but also to the constituency.

Similarly to the west, the boundary of Knotty Ash is Queen's Drive, which is the inner ring road in the City. That is not as significant a hard boundary as the motorway clearly, but it is, nonetheless, a very significant boundary. The part of the Knotty Ash ward which is comprised to the north of Alder Road, which you can see just above. This is Alder Road. The part of the ward which is contained to the north of that has, historically, always been in the original West Derby constituency.

It contains some very old properties that are one of the three original jewels, if you like, of the West Derby constituency; the other two being Croxteth Hall, contained in Croxteth; the Monument and various other ancient and historical properties contained in West Derby Village itself; and then Sandfield Old Hall, which is about 700 years old.

Those three historical properties and monuments are the key historical elements of the West Derby constituency and they are a strong fit together. They were contained originally, all three, in the original Croxteth ward which existed until the 2004 reconfiguration that was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

In respect of community ties, the strongest argument that I think I can deploy is around the community of Dovecot, which I will point at using the laser pointer, which is here.

Dovecot is an estate that was laid out by the City Council, or Corporation, as was, in the 1930s.

For all of its existence up until the local government boundary reconfiguration in 2002 leading into the elections in 2004, Dovecot was contained within one single Liverpool City Council ward for all of its existence. It was a matter of distress I think to residents in Dovecot that the Local Government Boundary Commission had no alternative but to divide it into two in that 2002-2004 process and still, to this day, residents from Dovecot do not really understand the difference between Knotty Ash ward on one side of the road and Yew Tree ward on the other side of the road.

There would be very strong local feelings if there were any proposal to take Knotty Ash out of the newly configured Liverpool West Derby constituency. Indeed, I spoke to the Chair of the Dovecot Neighbourhood Council yesterday who asked me to make precisely that representation on her behalf. Those are all of the arguments that I wish to deploy.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. I have no queries, as such. My brother used to live in Dovecot.

CLLR CROFTS: Ah, you know it well.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: So I know it really well. Are there any comments anyone or points of clarification? (No response) Thank you very much, Mr Crofts, very helpful.

CLLR CROFTS: Thank you, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Blakely, are you ready to speak now? It is a bit earlier than you were planning but please come on ahead.

CLLR BLAKELEY: No problem, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You were not here when I opened but just to say that the form is that, if you give your name and address and then make your presentation and then, afterwards, I or others may have some points of clarification to make.

CLLR BLAKELEY: Thank you, Mr Ward. Apologies for not being here at the outset.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Not a problem.

CLLR BLAKELEY (Moreton West and Saughall Massie): I had a few other issues to deal with this morning. My name is Cllr Chris Blakeley. I represent the Moreton West

and Saughall Massie ward in Wirral, which is part of the Wallasey constituency, and I am here in support of the Commission's Initial Proposals. I would like to talk to that a little bit and, also, talk about some geographical issues that might relate to name changes to what the Commission has currently named the seat to Wirral.

I will start off by saying that in the local press the esteemed Labour MP, Frank field, 37 years an MP, not of my party but a long-serving MP, stated that he welcomed the changes, saying they will protect Birkenhead's integrity. He believes adding Bebington ward to the Birkenhead constituency makes sense, saying that the two share strong historical links and it would re-establish the old Wirral county borough. Who am I to argue with such a longstanding political figure?

When we look at Upton, clearly I am speaking again to the Labour Party's counter-proposals, but when we look at Upton it shares a boundary with Birkenhead but it has a more natural affinity to the Wallasey constituency, as you have put it in there. In fact, in the last Local Government Review in 2003, an Upton ward, polling district ME, was moved into the newly created Moreton West and Saughall Massie ward which sits within the Wallasey constituency.

If anything, a precedent was set at that time about moving Upton into the Wallasey constituency and, therefore, seems a natural progression to support the Commission's view of moving Upton into the Wallasey constituency. That leaves Hoylake and Meols and we know that the Labour counter-proposal want to move Hoylake and Meols into Wallasey and they want to move Bebington back into the other seat etc.

Put simply, why should moving Hoylake and Meols into Wallasey be a bad idea? Simply, we do not believe that Wallasey has any social connection with the existing Wirral West constituency; therefore, it would have no social connection with the newly proposed constituency. The arguments made against such a move in a previous review in 2011 are as valid today as they were then.

The Episcopal church is in separate parishes. The Methodist church is in different circuits and the Presbyterian church is in different presbyteries. There does not appear to be any common boys' brigade, boys' scouts, girl guides, masonic lodges. In fact, the United Grand Lodge website specifically identifies the 27 Wallasey lodges as separate from the three Hoylake lodges. Hoylake and Meols have their own civic society, photographic society, social club, sailing clubs, rugby and football clubs, as well as their own rotary clubs.

Yes, there are some societies that are common, but they are all Wirral-wide. Apart from sharing a very clearly defined boundary, Hoylake and Meols has no affinity with Wallasey. It is also worth reminding the Commission that, during previous reviews, discounting 2011, the Labour Party opposed the notion of Hoylake and Meols being linked with Wallasey, just as the then wards of Moreton and Leigh, so constituent parts

of Wallasey, opposed being linked with the Wirral West constituency.

We believe those arguments are still valid today. I would, therefore, ask you to discount Labour's alternative proposals and ratify your original proposals for the three Wirral seats. However, as I alluded to earlier, I believe that to properly represent the geography and the communities within the seats, a consideration is given to the names of the constituencies.

With regard to your proposed Bebington and Heswall constituency, I would suggest (and I have made this in writing to the Commission) a more appropriate name would be Wirral, Deeside and Bromborough or, as an alternative and to take account of the two largest commercial communities, the name could be West Kirby and Heswall. I do not think Heswall and Bebington or Bebington and Heswall is a real fit for that new constituency.

With regard to Wallasey, my written submission stated Wallasey with Moreton and Upton to recognise other communities. However, I realise that is a bit of a mouthful. Having reflected on this, perhaps a more appropriate name will be Wirral North. We currently have Wirral West and Wirral South, why not have a Wirral North; or, if the Commission would prefer, reverse that to North Wirral. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this representation. Thank you for all the work you have done in coming up with these proposals. I wish you much success with moving forward. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: One of the points I made earlier is that, actually, they are not my proposals at all. They are the Boundary Commission's.

CLLR BLAKELEY: The Boundary Commission's, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am here to consider whether your arguments are telling enough to make recommended changes, for example.

CLLR BLAKELEY: Okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask you a question?

CLLR BLAKELEY: Yes, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I can see the argument for Upton itself and Upton Village maybe having links with Moreton and, therefore, across through to Wallasey, what about Woodchurch?

CLLR BLAKELEY: There is that difficulty always that Woodchurch might be closer to Birkenhead, but I believe if you are going to move the ward to equalise the numbers to

give equal representation then that has to come over. You could argue, and I have argued for many years, that Moreton, although it is in the Wallasey constituency has never been recognised. I did make a recommendation at the last review that Wallasey was renamed Wallasey and Moreton, so there will always be those communities that do not have a snug fit but they fit anyway.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are you able to tell me, you may or may not know, where the MPs' surgeries are in Wallasey at the moment? I know there is one in Liscard because I read it in the Echo the other day.

CLLR BLAKELEY: Well, the Wallasey MP holds surgeries at Wallasey Town Hall, Liscard and also at the library at Moreton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: At Moreton.

CLLR BLAKELEY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And can you get public transport from Upton to Moreton?

CLLR BLAKELEY: Yes, yes, you can.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other points, Mr Walsh?

MR WALSH (Conservative Party): John Walsh, representing the Conservative Party. Can you as a local councillor, just clarify in my own mind, the links between Upton and the remainder of the peninsula, are they stronger with the Wallasey direction or the Hoylake-West Kirby direction?

CLLR BLAKELEY: I would argue that currently they sit in the Wirral West seat and they sit comfortably within that, but if there is going to be a change I would argue that they have more affinity with Wallasey than they do with Birkenhead.

MR WALSH: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Are there any other points anyone would like to raise? (No response) Thank you very much indeed.

CLLR BLAKELEY: Thank you, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We currently have no speaker planned. I will just check if there is anyone in the room who wishes to speak at this stage? (No response) In which case, we will take a short break. Thank you very much so far.

After a short break

Time noted: 11.20 am

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for bearing with me. I see our next speaker, Mr John Bebell, is here; are you ready to speak now, Sir?

MR BEBELL: I am, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. The form is that you come up to the podium, if you state your name and address and then proceed with your representation. At the end of it, either I or others may seek points of clarification from you or we may just thank you and be grateful.

MR BEBELL: Right, my name is John Bebell. I live at 17 Shrewsbury Road, which is in West Kirby. I am part of the Hoylake and Meols ward in the Wirral West constituency. Can I start by congratulating the Commissioners for what they have done.

It would be a difficult job to divide the Wirral without causing some unsettled people. Well, I think they have done an excellent job and it is very well divided. There are 22 wards in Wirral and divide that by three, seven leave one is a little bit difficult to do, and what you do with the one is what you have done and put it with Ellesmere Port and Neston, which is excellent.

I also recognise the fact that you recognise that there are two rivers on the Wirral. There is the Dee and the Mersey. A lot of people seem to forget that where I live we overlook the Dee and I think the idea of putting the seats together, along the Deeside, including Bromborough, is an excellent one and it is recommended.

There are two major towns on the Wirral, Birkenhead and Wallasey, and they are an area over onto the Mersey side indefinitely. What is left? Well, left is a lot of very individual towns and villages starting from Hoylake, Meols, West Kirby and Thurstaston, all the way through, Heswall, they are all individual and they are all very parochial in their attitude. What would you do with a grouping of people of that nature? Well, put them all together. I think it is a wonderful idea of putting that band together. Again, I congratulate what they aim to do.

You have got to put an extra ward into Wallasey. Upton is the natural choice. It is linked with Saughall Massie. Moreton is now called Moreton and Saughall Massie ward. Part of Saughall Massie is still in the Upton ward. The road going down is called the Saughall Massie Road, so there is a definite link there with Upton.

The buses, it is easier to get to Moreton from Upton than it is to Hoylake or West Kirby

and it is certainly easier to get to Heswall that way. It is a definite link there. The housing blends into one. Therefore, the only option I could see was to put Upton into Wallasey and leave it that way. Bebington, well, again, Bebington is a link to Birkenhead and for the same reasons there is definite link in housing and all that type of thing, so it is easier to go that way.

The only thing I have to say is I do not like the name. How can anybody call the new constituency Heswall and Bebington when Bebington is not in it, I think is a little bit of a non-starter. In the Commission's report, they do actually that they do have concerns over the name.

My own view, and I have heard a lot of people and I have spoken to friends about it, we have come up with ideas of the Wirral Peninsulas, Wirral Two Rivers - and that sounds like a Red Indian but never mind - and my own view is let us just call it the Wirral. There is a precedent for that. In the old days, before probably you gentlemen remember - and I say gentlemen and ladies in the audience - but of when we had David Hunt as our MP, there was a Wirral seat and there was a Birkenhead seat and there was an Ellesmere Port seat and there was a Wallasey seat, so there is a precedent for it to just call it the Wirral and it would not cause any problem. Really, the Wirral would be my idea for the name. I may have friends arguing with me about that another time.

The alternatives. Well, I understand there is some suggestion made to put Hoylake and Meols, into with Wallasey. I actually live one road in from the border. I say "border", it is the ward boundaries but it is the border between Church Road and West Kirby. I am a West Kirbian.

I am proud to be a West Kirbian, even though the Boundary Commission at one stage when they did the local government to put me into Hoylake and Meols I am still a West Kirbian. I am happy to be a West Kirbian. I do not see Wallasey Town Hall or the Mersey from where I live. I do overlook the Dee.

Therefore, to put me in with the Wallasey, and is it not the sort of attitude of tagging on somewhere on the end of a bit just to make the numbers right? It is not any logic. I used to work in Wallasey Town Hall and I can tell you now that the only way to get there is by car because the public transport is diabolical.

There is no direct link between Wallasey and Hoylake and Meols, it is difficult to do, where certainly there is a direct link between Hoylake and Meols and West Kirby where I can actually see the borderlines. I do not like the idea of putting a border down the middle of West Kirby. Please, do not look at that. It is a nonsense. It should not even be considered.

The only reason I can see anybody suggesting to put Hoylake and Meols into Wallasey, and I am sorry to say this, is on political lines. Hoylake and Meols have three

Conservative councillors. It is a Conservative known seat. It is a strong Conservative seat and the only way of doing it is to weaken any political motivation.

I know the Boundary Commission cannot look at political motivations, but I think the only reason anybody would come up with that suggestion is based on political motivation. My main view is to say Hoylake and Meols stay in West Kirby and Thurstaston, the new seat, and congratulate the Commissioners for what they have done and support the Initial Proposals, and I will be as quick as that. Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Can I just ask a question. It flows from one of your statements. You talk about Hoylake would only be tagged on to the end of Wallasey.

MR BEBELL: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Does the same argument apply for Bromborough in relation to the Deeside part?

MR BEBELL: Well, no, if I can look at the map you can follow from Bromborough, Clatterbridge, Heswall to West Kirby, they are all there, and I do know from my little bit of knowledge on that side of the Mersey, Bromborough Pool's identity. It is another village. It is another town. Clatterbridge is another town. It is part of what I call 'the villages', and I think over in Cheshire they have 'the Cheshire villages' constituency. Well, they are all little individual places. The last time we had this debate I would have loved to have seen the Deeside seat coming in to Parkgate, but I think it would have been logical to go that way.

I think the MP would represent the whole area and they would blend in. With Wallasey, Wallasey is a very centralised community and the idea of putting Hoylake and Meols onto it, I believe, my own view is that we would end up as a sort of the forgotten part and it would be difficult for residents living there, who would they turn to, the local councillors who would be representing Hoylake and Meols or the MP? To divide the Marine Lake in half, it takes an effort. The line is Church Road which is one road. I do not know if your maps are detailed enough, but it is one road on from where I live.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I know.

MR BEBELL: And you look down there and I could go that way and I am looking into the new seat of Wirral, my view, or I am looking the other way and I looking into the other seat of Wallasey. It is a little bit difficult and it is a bit strange doing that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I understand the argument going that way. If I wanted to go by public transport from Bromborough to West Kirby?

MR BEBELL: You can do it. The bus service is there. You can get from Heswall and then through to West Kirby and Thurstaston.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Is that easier than going from Hoylake to Wallasey?

MR BEBELL: My own view, yes. I have done it. I do drive a car. We go shopping. There is a bus going through to West Kirby to Bromborough. It goes via Easton, so it goes onto Easton, that way, so there is a direct bus service there.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Let me see if anyone else has any points of clarification? (No response) The reason I understand this is because I was once of the parish of Wallasey some time ago, so this is home territory for me. Thank you.

MR BEBELL: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Would you be ready to speak Julie Hilling?

MS HILLING: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please come on up. As I have explained to others, the form is that if you could give your name and address and then make your representation and then, at the end of it, we will see whether I or others have points of clarification.

MS HILLING: Okay, thank you very much. I may slightly confuse the proceedings because I want to talk specifically about the Bolton West constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: You are very welcome to talk about anywhere in the North West.

MS HILLING: Thank you. My name is Julie Hilling and I live in Atherton. You do not want the full address or anything, no, okay.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We do want your full address.

MS HILLING: Oh, I live in 2 Wordsworth Avenue, Atherton, M46 9WW.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

MS HILLING: I am speaking because I want to support the Boundary Commission's proposal for Bolton West. Since 1997, I have lived in three different constituencies and

I do not want to be in a fourth. It is worth pointing out that I have not moved house in that time. We were in Leigh, we were in Worsley and now we are in Bolton West.

It seems that there is no good reason now to move us from Bolton West to Bolton South East, which is the proposals that are coming from the Tory proposals. In terms of supporting the Boundary Commission proposal, I will just talk about that in a second, but just to nail really the proposal at the moment that is coming from the Tory Party to put Atherton into Bolton South East and to bring Astley Bridge into Bolton West.

There is no link between the rest of Bolton West and Astley Bridge. In fact, I had to look on a map to see where Astley Bridge actually would be. It is in the north of Bolton. It is not in the west at all. It can only seem that, in order to shift two wards for no good reason, it must be around a political notion to do that. It can only be purely political. There is no other justification for swapping those two wards.

If Atherton has to be an orphan ward, and clearly with the size of Wigan borough there is one ward that has to be orphan and Bolton West has been an orphan ward since 2010, it is better from my opinion to stay with similar towns. Atherton is in with Westhoughton, Horwich, Blackrod, all towns that feel neglected by the big Bolton or the big Wigan. There is similar housing. The communities are sort of terraced housing in the middle, going out to council estates and then getting out to ever larger houses on the outskirts of the towns.

All of the three big towns in the constituency are the same with that. They face similar issues, similar issues of transport across the conurbations, similar issues in terms of the make-up of the communities, the ethnicity, the education standards, all of those sorts of things are very similar across the current constituency.

Of course, there are historical connections as well, especially between Atherton and Westhoughton. If we go back to 1910 with the Pretoria Pit disaster that is in the middle of the two communities where 355 men and boys from that community were killed in the disaster.

Children from Westhoughton frequently attended Hesketh Fletcher school before Hesketh Fletcher school closed, Hesketh Fletcher school in Allerton, particularly children from Daisy Hill. In fact, there are still children now from Atherton attending Westhoughton High School. There is even an Atherton and Westhoughton Pool League. They are communities that are very closely attached.

One would ask the question which way does Atherton face? There are direct buses from Atherton to Westhoughton and to Horwich. Atherton residents shop in Bolton and in the Middlebrook. Of course, we use Bolton Hospital, which is probably our only link to the Farnworth area and there are no direct buses from us to the hospital there at all.

Other parts of Bolton West, especially Blackrod, feel very close to Wigan, so that there is other connection too across. If it has got to be cross-borough, then actually there is a close connection between sort of Bolton and Wigan that way. Atherton certainly does not feel close to Great Lever or Tonge or Kearsley or Farnworth.

We have become used to being part of Bolton West. It was a difficult transition in 2010, I think, and people were there saying, 'Well, hang on a minute, we pay our council tax to Wigan and we have got a Manchester postcode and we are now in a Bolton West constituency', but people have got used to that. To move us again would be an absolute nonsense. We currently fit with the Boundary Commission's proposals.

The additional proposal of the Boundary Commission of taking in Halliwell, actually, then just links the rest of the constituency to the Bolton Town Centre. We have already got some very odd ward boundaries between Halliwell and Heaton and Lostock and Smithills at that point. It just links it in then to the town centre. It makes absolute sense, if the constituency has got to grow, then bringing in Halliwell makes sense but leaving Atherton there makes sense. To move us anywhere else makes no sense whatsoever.

There is only one change that I would ask for and that would be to actually call the constituency Bolton West and Atherton. As I say, sometimes Atherton people find it confusing to be part of Bolton West when they do not live in Bolton borough, but to call it Bolton West and Atherton would actually solve that issue completely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Can I just ask a couple of questions, just sticking with your last point first if you see what I mean.

MS HILLING: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Bolton West and Atherton. If I lived in Westhoughton, would I think that was a good name for the constituency as well?

MS HILLING: I think so. For a long time now, it has been Bolton West for the other communities. For some considerable years, I think probably since 1997 it has been Bolton West that included Horwich, Westhoughton, Blackrod, those areas in together. They see themselves as west of Bolton. That is the difficulty for Atherton because, obviously, we do not see ourselves as west of Bolton. We see ourselves on the fringe of Wigan but, as I say, faces towards Bolton. The issue of being in there is not one, but to change that name would be helpful.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: In other circumstances, given we have a free map again to draw, and we do, are you really saying that Atherton and Westhoughton are more Wigan than Bolton?

MS HILLING: So Westhoughton is part of Bolton borough. I think all of the towns on

the edge. I do know if this happens in every other community, but all of the towns in Bolton West feel they are not neglected by the borough councils, but Atherton feels neglected by Wigan.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I see, the orphan ward point.

MS HILLING: Pardon?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Because it is an orphan ward sitting up, yes.

MS HILLING: Also because we are just on the fringe of the boroughs. Horwich is the furthest end out from Bolton, as is Westhoughton. We are on that periphery of the borough councils and, therefore, feel that, you hear it frequently in all the communities that Bolton does not care about Westhoughton and Wigan does not care about Atherton and all of those issues. We have that shared feeling, but that shared sense of we are separate communities but have much in common across the communities.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask one more question and then I am sure others will have a point or two. Halliwell and Heaton and Lostock, from the way you were describing, are they essentially part of Bolton town, as it were, and you have then got a series of towns or villages which were making up the west end of this constituency?

MS HILLING: Yes, the constituency sort of moves out, apart from sort of this gap with Halliwell. If Halliwell comes in, it would then move sort of seamlessly from Bolton town centre. So Heaton and Lostock is sort of the road coming out that leads to Horwich. Smithills, again, is sort of the road coming out leading in sort of Horwich and those directions. It is sort of a wedge that would come out from the Bolton Town Centre. They would see themselves, I think Smithills perhaps a little less so, but I would think the others would probably see themselves as more sort of related to Bolton. There is less community identity in those areas. There is less of a sort of a town centre.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Very helpful, thank you. Are there any other points that anyone would like to seek clarification?

MR WALSH: I have several, Sir. John Walsh on behalf of the Conservative Party. Can I look at, first of all, the Atherton-Hulton links. If I were travelling by choice between the two, would I take Platt Lane, the B road, or the main A579 through to Bolton?

MS HILLING: I think it depends where you are going. If I was going into Bolton Town Centre. I would go up Bolton Road and straight through Hulton, down the hill, through ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Can I ask someone, could you possibly do me a favour? There is a laser beam with a button on the top, which will then mark on this map and then everyone will be able to see which roads. If you can see the map. If not, then I can ask Mr Walsh to do it. If I can ask Mr Walsh to point to the roads. It would just be helpful to point out the roads.

MR WALSH: The two roads to which I refer, the A road is the road through from Atherton which links through to the M6 ultimately, the Leigh Bypass, through into Bolton and the town centre in that direction.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay.

MR WALSH: The B road, which is through to Westhoughton, is known as Platt Lane and links through. Historically, there has been a proposal for a bypass, has there not, from that junction there straight down there to link with the Leigh bypass in order to bypass that B road? What I was saying to you is would you, by choice, from Atherton, from the core of Atherton into Bolton Town Centre. Which is Halliwell ward, would you follow the A road or would you follow the B road?

MS HILLING: Well, it absolutely depends where I am going. Obviously, if I am going into Bolton Town Centre I go down Bolton Road, but if I am going to the motorway to the M61, I would go down Platt Lane. I would go Platt Lane up to the junction which, if you trust me with the pointer again ---

MR WALSH: It is all right, the junction you are looking at is at two more at that point. That is the motorway junction.

MS HILLING: Yes, and down a bit.

MR WALSH: That is junction 5.

MS HILLING: Down, John.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The next one down to the right.

MS HILLING: Yes, that ---

MR WALSH: Junction 5 is there.

MS HILLING: Yes.

MR WALSH: But junction 4 is here in Hulton ward, is it not?

MS HILLING: Yes.

MR WALSH: So if you are going south, would you not go to Bolton Road, A6 and junction 4?

MS HILLING: I think it is like any community, is it not, if I am going into Manchester then I will go up Bolton Road and I will turn right and go on at junction 4. If I am going north, I will go Platt Lane, up to junction 5 and jump on the motorway that way. If the proposal was to go back to having Hulton in the constituency, you could see a certain logic of that, but to take in a ward way over the top right-hand side of a map ---

MR WALSH: I will come to that one in a moment, Sir, if I may.

MS HILLING: --- makes no sense whatsoever. Like any of us travelling anywhere, if you lived in Westhoughton and you were traveling to Wigan then you would go through Hart Common. If you lived in Horwich and you were going to Chorley, you would go that way. Like all of us, we live in community but talking about community networks, not so much red networks. I cannot get a bus. I can get a bus into Bolton but I cannot get a bus to Farnworth or I cannot get a bus to the hospital, but I can get a bus to Westhoughton and Horwich.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR WALSH: But there is no hospital in Westhoughton or Horwich?

MS HILLING: No.

MR WALSH: Thank you. Could we, therefore, look again at the links between Hulton and Atherton, in particular the Logistics North, which whilst you were a Member of Parliament was Cutacre is now Logistics North, and we have got the opening of the major development. Where is the nearest railway station for employees at Logistics North? I submit to you it is there in Atherton.

MS HILLING: Potentially. I have no idea where Farnworth Station is and so I do not know whether Farnworth Station would be closer to it. We do not have a connection to Farnworth when we live in Atherton. Presumably, yes, and there is the bus that goes up the hill from Atherton station up to the A6.

MR WALSH: Can I take you back on the road issue, you will remember in 2011 the rail bridge was being reconstructed.

MS HILLING: Indeed.

MR WALSH: That caused considerable public concern and disruption, did it not, because of those very clear links and very strong links between Atherton and Hulton -

and Bolton?

MS HILLING: No, it is not about Hulton, is it, particularly.

MR WALSH: With Bolton.

MS HILLING: Of course, at that time we had to all drive down Platt Lane. We all had to go in towards Westhoughton to get up to Bolton. Of course, that is the main thoroughfare from Leigh to Bolton, passing through Atherton on its way. It is the main thoroughfare. There is no dispute, if you are going into Bolton Town Centre, that you would not go along Bolton Road. You would go up Bolton Road and then into --- I have forgotten what it is called, the next bit.

MR WALSH: Newbrook Road.

MS HILLING: Newbrook, yes, into Newbrook and then over Four Lane Ends and down into town. But we are talking about community links here, not just about is that the main road that goes through? I drive through many many different roads. If I am going to Blackpool, I will be on the motorway and I do not care which constituency I am driving through.

MR WALSH: Can we come back then to ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I think I have got the roads point, unless you are going to ask it again?

MR WALSH: No, I am going move it on, Sir. It is all right. Can we move to Logistics North now, the major employment area. That, you will confirm, straddles the Atherton, Bolton, Hulton boundary, because Wigan were partners in that co-development were they not?

MS HILLING: Yes, we have a very small part of the development that is in Wigan borough. There is quite a large part of it that is in the borough of Salford and a large part of it that is in Bolton. I think the bulk of it is probably within Bolton rather than in Wigan. We have only got a very small part of it, surprisingly. It surprised me when I saw it.

MR WALSH: Are you aware of the recent announcement in the last week or so in the public engagement for the Hulton Park proposals for residential and a golf course, leisure developments on the Hulton park estate?

MS HILLING: Yes, indeed.

MR WALSH: And are you aware that the principal access to that was actually onto

Newbrook Road in order to link through to the Leigh Bypass?

MS HILLING: I would imagine that it would be, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am only going to stop you now because you are not actually seeking clarification there. You are reaffirming your own points.

MR WALSH: Thank you, Sir. Can we move, therefore, to the Astley Bridge/Smithills area. You say there are a few links between those two wards. Could you just confirm the Woodland Trust and the recent acquisition of land there, which straddles the two wards and brings the two wards together, as that major development?

MS HILLING: I have had a number of conversations, as you would imagine, with people living in Bolton West and asked them about Astley Bridge and where they saw any connections. I did not find anybody that said they felt a deep connection to Astley Bridge. In fact, the majority of people were going, "But that is in the north of Bolton, it is nothing to do with the west of Bolton." The trouble is, is it not, we could make the whole of the UK one constituency because we have then got links.

Every one of us has got links to our neighbouring constituency, whether that is because we cross to go to school or we cross to go to work. There is always going to be those links. If I could just go back, because I was struggling to understand why you were pushing the link with Hulton. Of course, there is a link with Hulton going through for Atherton but there is no link for Atherton with Great Lever or with Farnworth or with Kearsley or all those other bits. There is a route that goes through, but the rest of the constituency is way off there in the distance with no community links. We do not shop there. We tend not to work there or anything else.

MR WALSH: But are you suggesting that there is a community link between Atherton and Heaton, for example?

MS HILLING: Probably not, no.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, I am going to stop it there because we were right on the edge of interrogation rather than clarification, but you are strong enough to take it so I did not interrupt it. Are there any other points?

MR WALSH: We have sparred before, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am sure you have. Are there any other points? (No response) But I would be grateful if we did not do that then.

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marcroft, Whitefield in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. I just want to seek clarification not anything else, purely and simply. I heard what

you said, and I agree entirely with the point you were making, that there is a link in terms of Westhoughton people feeling themselves west of Bolton, but the Atherton people being south of Bolton. I think that was the point that you were making. I just wanted to confirm that that is so.

MS HILLING: I think for those of us living in Atherton, we are in the borough of Wigan.

MR LARGAN: Yes.

MS HILLING: A lot of people in Atherton would rather not be and, in fact, when the boundary was announced before 2010, people were very excited because they thought they were actually moving into the borough of Bolton, it has to be said. We have got to have an orphan ward in Wigan. We have got one ward too many across Wigan. Atherton has been an orphan ward since 2010. In that sense, then, we are used to it, continue to do it, but do not shift us again into another constituency. Leave us where we are now getting settled and getting used to and where we have got community ties.

MR LARGAN: I am just seeking clarification on what you said.

MS HILLING: Yes, sorry.

MR LARGAN: You were saying that the Westhoughton people see themselves as west of Bolton.

MS HILLING: Yes.

MR LARGAN: And the Atherton people recognise that they are south of Bolton, geographically?

MS HILLING: I do not know if we would think about being south of Bolton. We know that we go to Bolton to shop. I think the south bit I do not think comes into it particularly. We are east of Wigan, if you see what I mean? People do not talk about being east of Wigan. We talk about being Atherton, Atherleigh, over on that side of the borough. I do not know if you are trying to make a point to say is there a difference between north and south?

MR LARGAN: I am not trying to make any point. I am just seeking clarification of what you said, that is all.

MS HILLING: Yes.

MR LARGAN: You are saying there is a difference between Atherton people and Westhoughton people in terms of Westhoughton see themselves as being part of Bolton West, because they are west of Bolton geographically. But Atherton is not west of

Bolton, it is south.

MS HILLING: Yes, we are on that sort of side of it. I do not think we even think about whether --- you know, I would never even have thought that we are south of Bolton. Excuse my geography but I would not have even of, you know we are sort of ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am going to bring this to a close now, but I am extremely grateful to you for your comments and your resilience.

MS HILLING: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Just a reminder, if I may, please, that people come up here to make representations. Clarification is fine. A debate is not fine or cross interrogation. I would not want it to happen to me. I am sure you would not want it happening to you. Please let us not get drawn into that. It is not often I am running behind on our timetable here, but we are slightly. Is Mr John Ferguson here? Are you ready to speak, Sir?

CLLR FERGUSON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: If you could come forward and give your name and full address and then begin your representation, thank you.

CLLR FERGUSON (Pendlebury): I am grateful that you are running late because I had difficulty finding the place and traffic coming into Liverpool. My name is John Ferguson. I live at 43 Gladstone Street, Pendlebury, which is in the constituency of Salford and Eccles. I am here today, one, as a resident of Salford; secondly, I am a councillor on Salford City Council and represent the ward of Pendlebury where I have lived for about 40 years now. I am also Chair of the Salford and Eccles constituency Labour Party.

At the outset, I would like to state that I do not envy the job that the Boundary Commissioners have in reducing the number of seats within the area with the strict limits on number of electors in each of the new constituency. It is no easy task and you are bound to disappoint people. Nevertheless, under the circumstances, I think that you have done a very good job.

I am here to say that we are happy with the proposals that you have got covering the City of Salford and, in particular, my constituency of Salford and Eccles. Salford as a City has an electorate of 162,645 and is entitled to 2.18 constituencies. You have done that by maintaining the current situation of keeping us with the constituency of Worsley and Eccles South, Salford and Eccles, and then the 0.18, the two wards of Kersal and Broughton, in the Blackley and Broughton constituency.

You have kept to the criteria I think that you have got of, one, keeping to local authority

boundaries as much as possible. Salford, which is an ancient city with a long tradition of culture, industry and that people are proud to live there, you have respected those boundaries as much as possible and respected the local ties. I have got to say that in the ward that I live in, when people go shopping they either go to Salford Precinct which is in the Pendleton ward part of the constituency, or Swinton Centre, once again, which is in the ward.

You have respected, as I say, the existing constituencies which we are grateful for and I think that you have looked at the geographical considerations. To the north of the constituency, you have got the River Irwell which provides a boundary between Salford and Bury. As I say, it is a river but there is also a country park there.

There are, actually, only two roads which go between the constituency and Bury in that area. One is the M62 motorway and the other is Agecroft Road, Rainsough Brow. Those are the only two roads that go into Bury from there. There is public transport, one bus an hour during the day and no transport during the evening.

I am making those points because I understand that some people are coming up with other alternatives and perhaps at a later stage in this process that you are going through I can comment on those. To the south of the constituency you have got the Manchester Ship Canal, again, a major waterway and a major dividing line between Salford and Trafford.

The only point I want to make today that we think that you have kept to the criteria and we are very much supporting of the proposals that you have made. I do not know whether that is a strange thing for you or not, but everybody else probably comes and complains. We want to say thank you very much for what you have done and urge you to resist any other proposals which may be just playing about with numbers which do not maintain the criteria that you have got to decide upon.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much, Mr Ferguson. Just a point of information, because you were not here when I was explaining earlier, there is a distinction here between the Boundary Commission over here and myself who have been appointed by the Boundary Commission to conduct this review.

CLLR FERGUSON: Right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And, essentially, act as an honest broker.

CLLR FERGUSON: Right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Between all of us with views on how constituencies might be formed and the Boundary Commission have drawn up these Initial Proposals. That is just one general point because it is worth it for the room to

make the point. The second thing is, on behalf of the Boundary Commission, I imagine it is pretty rare for them to have heard praise from Salford for proposals.

CLLR FERGUSON: We did not last time but we will accept what was decided last time.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I was involved in the last one and this may be the first time I have heard anyone say "well done" for Salford, but thank you for that. Can I ask if there are any points of clarification from anyone in the room? (No response) No, thank you very much indeed.

CLLR FERGUSON: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We are very grateful. Is there Stuart Dickman in the room? Again, Mr Dickman, if you give your name and full address and then please carry on.

MR DICKMAN: Yes, it is Stuart Dickman, 81 St Peter's Road Salford, M27 0NB. I would like to echo some of the comments by John. I am here to particularly welcome the Boundary Commission. As you have said, in previous time you have not had support from Salford. I know in the previous review and before 2010 there were a lot of changes there and then the 2013 review there was a lot of impact where Salford did not even have a constituency.

I am particularly welcome of the proposals overall for the North West but particularly for Salford and Eccles. I think for Salford and Eccles, it minimises the impact, the disruption to the existing seats for Salford and Eccles, for Worsley and Eccles South and the surrounding constituencies.

I feel that the Commission's proposals have managed, overall for Greater Manchester, to keep the 11 out of the 27 seats as whole constituencies and with a lot of the other constituencies with only small adjustments, I think that for me is very welcome. Although it is a difficult job that you have had to reduce the seats down, I think by managing to keep a lot of those together is particularly welcome.

Just touching on what John had mentioned about Salford and Eccles, it seems to be proposals that could be coming towards which will put counter-proposals to what you have put forward which will cross over to other local authorities where there are no community links, where there is poor transport links and, as John has mentioned, the river divide which the Boundary Commission have already kept to.

I would particularly welcome the report that has been put forward and I would hope that any counter-proposals would be rejected.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Are there

any points anyone would like to make? (No response) No, thank you very much. Thanks for coming. Of course, for the Boundary Commission, support is as welcome as constructive criticism of how we can make change as well. I see Alison McGovern has arrived, are you ready to speak?

MS ALISON MCGOVERN (Member of Parliament for Wirral South): Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. If you would begin with your name and address and then carry on.

MS MCGOVERN: My name is Alison McGovern. I am the Labour Member of Parliament, currently for Wirral South, and my address is 99 New Chester road, Wirral CH62 4RA. Shall I begin?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes, please.

MS MCGOVERN: Okay. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I want to focus specifically on Bebington. I currently represent both the town and the ward of Bebington and the Boundary Commission's proposals have quite a stark impact on the town of Bebington, which I will explain. In fact, the Commission itself describes in its notes the exclusion of the Bebington ward from the Bebington seat and they say:

"We did investigate other configurations of constituencies that did not result in the Bebington ward being included in the Birkenhead constituency [rather than the Bebington constituency, I would add] but considered that alternatives did not better reflect the statutory factors."

Well, I am assuming that the statutory factors referred to are the size of seats by number of constituent, but I think it is possible to reconfigure the wards in the Bebington area, in line with the statutory factors, to preserve the integrity of Bebington, the town, within one parliamentary constituency.

That would maintain a historic trend that has persisted from 1950. There has always been a constituency within the whole entirety of Bebington in it. In fact, it was called Bebington and then Ellesmere Port and Bebington, and only became Wirral South, which I currently now represent, later on in the 80s.

I have held an informal community meeting with people in Bebington to discuss the proposal and I can report a great deal of concern from Bebington residents about the removal of Bebington, the ward from Bebington, the town, Bebington the place.

I want to offer four reasons why Bebington must be kept as an integral whole and not split through the middle: The shape of the wards, public transport links, the impact on local schools and shopping patterns. The first is, in many ways, the most important

because Bebington has an incredibly strong history and identity.

The fact that the Clatterbridge ward and the Bebington ward divide the historic village centre of Bebington the place down the middle means that, if you separate Clatterbridge ward from Bebington ward, you basically take apart Bebington the place at its heart.

The village of Bebington surrounds the old St Andrew's Church which was built in about 1350. In fact, the effect of the Commission's proposal, such as it runs through the heart of Bebington Village, would separate the historic church with its very old graveyard from the church's own buildings on the other side of the road. I can assist you on the map if you want to know precisely where that is, but it is basically in the heart of Bebington Village.

Whilst Bebington may have begun as a village, it is now a substantial town in the Wirral with people split across different wards that make up its constituent parts. Higher Bebington and Stourton Village are in Bebington ward. Lower Bebington and Spital are in Clatterbridge ward and New Ferry which was historically part of the old Bebington district is in Bromborough ward.

The place is actually split across several wards with the village centre itself being split between Clatterbridge and Bebington ward. This is important for practical purposes, given the integrity of the village, and there is much development work at the moment going on to both protect Bebington's history and make more of it, with the use of local development trusts but also through the Bebington Conservation Area which the Council have put in place which circles the village to emphasise its history.

As a small side point, Bebington Village abuts Port Sunlight which is, of course, an incredibly historic part of our country. The proposals, as described, would split Port Sunlight from Thornton Hoff Village where Lord Lever lived and, also, Lever Causeway which runs down to Thornton village.

You can see the industrial history of Bebington that grew up around the village is in slightly different wards but all centres around Bebington Village which these proposals would split. The result of that would be that you would have different Members of Parliament representing what is, I believe, a very important and historic part of our country and Bebington people would be insufficiently advocated for.

To move on to my further practical points, on public transport links it is clear what the communities of interest are because Bebington has a station on the Wirral line like Port Sunlight, Bromborough, Spital, Eastham Rake and all of the places south of Rock Ferry have this one train line. It is the reason why Port Sunlight was built where it was between the train line and the New Chester Road.

Bebington has a station, similarly. They all have consistent and similar interests.

Bebington station, in fact, is a crucial hub for the rest of the Bromborough and Bebington area and is one of the busier stations and it would be split off from its other partners on that line, just as the bus routes, the 1, 2, 38, 41 and the 42 all serve the Bromborough and Bebington area.

Birkenhead is served differently because it has a town centre hub where buses tend to go from other parts, whereas Bromborough and Bebington is one consistent whole that is served with one long public transport corridor. Thirdly, schools. The proposals as described would separate four major secondary schools, Wirral Grammar School for Girls, Wirral Grammar School for Boys, St John Plessington and Bebington High School, from their feeder primary schools.

It would be a historic break because, traditionally, families from the Bromborough, Eastham and Bebington area have sent their kids to primary schools locally and then to secondary schools in Bebington - as I was, for background. All of those schools have since 1950 been represented by the same Member of Parliament who could then work across those primary and secondary schools to improve outcomes.

Lastly, shopping patterns. I would argue that everyone in the Bebington area that I described earlier, Higher Bebington, Stourton, Lower Bebington, Spital, New Ferry, have fairly similar shopping patterns in that they use both the Bebington Village, which is a thriving heart of our community and also the Croft Retail Park, which is the out of town shopping centre that has grown up in Bromborough.

The impact of the proposals would be to separate the historic village centre which has needed much development and work to keep it thriving, and the out of town Croft Retail Park that many people across the Bromborough and Bebington area use, less so in Birkenhead. The proposal would sever that link for Parliamentary purposes, making it much more difficult to get the kind of economic benefits for local people.

Similarly, local farms and small traders in Claremont, New Ferry, Bromborough and Clatterbridge areas would be separated for their main customer base in Bebington. I worry that the economic development of our area would be impacted too. I will leave it there

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I wondered if you could just tell me what your counter-proposal would be? I can see what you are doing in Bebington, so you want to hold Bebington together?

MS ALISON MCGOVERN: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And its links. The question then is how would we make the constituency up in a way which would allow that to happen?

MS ALISON MCGOVERN: Firstly, I would support the Labour Party's counter-proposal that has been submitted to the Commission. Essentially, Wirral has 22 wards. If you move one ward into the constituency to the south, you can then get three roughly equal constituencies of seven wards each. In moving Bebington back into the Bebington seat, you would then need to make a change further north.

Personally, as a Wirralian who loves our beaches personally I favour having a link right across the North Beach area in Moreton, so I would favour an option that put Hoylake and Meols in with Wallasey and then Upton in towards Birkenhead. The most important thing is that, given the Commission have rightly identified Bebington as a crucial town in the Wirral, that that is restored and then that enables you to kind of connect the link across the top in the beach area around Hoylake and Moreton.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I wonder if you could just illustrate a bit further for me the issue around schools? I can understand the feeder schools and that, but why would changing the constituency boundaries prove to be a significant issue for that?

MS ALISON MCGOVERN: The historic pattern has been that people in the Bromborough and Eastham area have had a range of choices of different schools, St John Plessington, Wirral Boys and Wirral Girls, South Wirral and Eastham, and there is a lot of movement of families sending their children from Bromborough and the southern bit of the Wirral into Bebington for secondary school. That is a sort of historic pattern that has been going on for years and years.

The important thing there is that, in terms of school improvement, the connection between primary schools and secondary schools is absolutely clear. Birkenhead has a different pattern of schools. I worry that if families in the Bromborough area did not have consistency of representation for their child's primary school to their secondary school, it would be quite difficult for whoever the MPs were to work with families to improve their education.

Historically, the Wirral was split up into districts, that was Birkenhead and Bebington in our area, and the kind of pattern of education reflects that. I think it has given a strong relationship between the feeder primary schools and the secondary schools, that is aided and assisted by whoever the Member of Parliament has been, and I think that there is value in that continuing.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. Are there any points anyone would like to clarify at all? (No response) No, thank you very much for taking the time to come along. I appreciate it. I currently have no planned speaker for a little while yet. Is there anyone in the room who is hoping to speak but who has not put their name down, who would like to speak now? (No response) I will take that as a no. In which case, I suggest we should break now until 2 o'clock, if that is okay with everyone

because we have got a natural break coming anyway. Thank you very much indeed.

After the luncheon adjournment

Time noted: 2.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen, to the final afternoon session of this public hearing in Liverpool. We have got quite a full afternoon, but it just starts slowly and then gathers momentum as the afternoon catches on. I am pleased to say that Mr Graham Stringer is here, would you like to come up? The form is if you come to the podium, give your name and address and then make your presentation, at the end of which either I or others may or may not seek some clarification on any points you have made.

MR STRINGER (Member of Parliament for Blackley and Broughton): Graham Stringer, Member of Parliament for Blackley and Broughton and I live at 25 Park Road, Crumpsall M8 4HT. I will not detain the Commission very long. I have got two very simple points to make in support of the Boundary Commission's proposals for Manchester and Salford and as opposed to the proposals that have been put in by the Conservative Party.

The first point is that it appears that Manchester is being disrupted to its disbenefit and for the benefit of Bury and Bolton. I think there are two consequences of that, which are the main two points I want to make. When I appeared before the Boundary Commission when the current boundaries were set up, one of the defining characteristics of that discussion was the natural boundary over the River Irwell which forms the boundary of the Blackley and Broughton constituency.

It is a natural boundary which, although is not ideal having a constituency in two cities - apart from the Member of Parliament who represents the City of Westminster, I think I am the only MP who represents two constituencies - the communities of Broughton and Cheetham and Kersal merge into each other. They have a long history of Jewish and, more recently, immigration from, primarily, Pakistan but increasingly from the Indian subcontinent. A great deal of work is done to support the communities getting on together.

Actually, although the city boundary would have been a good boundary, the River Irwell is a more natural boundary and it fits with those communities. I would defy anybody who did not know where the boundary was to guess where the boundary between Cheetham and Broughton was. That constituency works.

Conversely, because the River Irwell is a large natural boundary, if one goes across it to Riverside ward or some of the other wards that are currently in the Salford constituency, there is very little connection or community similarity between those wards and the wards of North Manchester and, indeed, of Broughton and Kersal. That natural

boundary, the natural community links that are there that would not be there in the proposed new constituency of Salford and Blackley is, I think, the first reason I would support the Boundary Commission's proposal.

The second reason is, and I speak not just as a sitting MP but as somebody who was leader of Manchester City Council for 12 years, is the consequence of the Conservative proposals which leaves three constituencies, Withington, Central and the new Ardwick constituency, wholly within the City of Manchester boundaries.

It actually means that the Wythenshawe and Sale East constituency, the wards of Gorton which go in with Denton and Droylsden, Levenshulme goes into Stockport, and Whalley Range goes into Stretford, as well as the Salford and Blackley constituency covering Manchester and Salford, means that Members of Parliament representing Manchester constituencies will also be representing four other districts: Salford, Trafford, Stockport and Tameside.

While it is possible (because I do it and other MPs do it) to represent two districts, it is always a position better avoided, I think, because there are natural conflicts that arise from that. Also, in terms of representing the City, having Members of Parliament who also represent four of the surrounding cities and districts will make it more difficult, I believe, to represent the City when there are difficult issues before both the communities and the City in terms of trying to economically regenerate the area, because there are always natural conflicts which will make it difficult both between the districts and between different communities from time to time.

It is much easier if you represent one local authority area. I think those are the main two points I wanted to make in support of the Boundary Commission's proposals and I am happy to try and answer any questions that may be put to me.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I have none myself, but can I see? (No response) It seems like no one has any points, Sir. Thank you very much indeed.

MR STRINGER: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am very grateful to you for finding the time. Alex Finney, are you happy to come?

MR FINNEY: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

MR FINNEY: Alex Finney. I live at 12 Clifton Park Road, Stockport, SK2 6LA. Whilst I have given my address as being Stockport, I have lived until recently in Urmston, in the

Stratford and Urmston constituency, which is where I want to talk about today and the place I will be moving back to in the next couple of weeks, hopefully.

I just want to open up by saying that the Urmston, Flixton, Davyhulme East and Davyhulme West wards together encompass the broader Urmston area. I think residents in those four wards all kind of look to Urmston as their kind of main shopping town and transport hub. With sort of bus routes and a train station being there, I think it has got to be welcomed that those four ward have been kept together in the Commission's original proposals.

I think it should also be welcomed that the Stretford community, which is made up of the Stretford, Gus Hill and Longford wards, have been kept together. I think that is also to be welcomed. The proposals would also see the two Sale West wards of Ashton on Mersey and St Mary's come into the Stretford and Urmston constituency which, whilst it creates a wholly Trafford constituency, I think it breaks a number of local ties, for reasons I will hopefully now outline.

Firstly, the River Mersey acts as a natural boundary between the residential areas of Urmston and the areas of Ashton on Mersey and St Mary's, which kind of follows the red existing constituency line between Flixton and Urmston. The River Mersey kind of follows this path [here](#), which is traditionally always acted as a constituency boundary and did along this stretch here as well.

It always presented quite a natural boundary in that location but, also, further along, there is a clear natural boundary where the A56 through Stretford and into Sale crosses the M60 motorway. That has been a clear constituency boundary. There is green space either side, commonly known as 'the Meadows' locally, which is a natural boundary between communities that currently exist.

Aside from the geography of it, there are natural differences in the communities of interest. People in the St Mary's and Ashton on Mersey wards look very much to Sale as their closest town. School catchment areas, for where they look in terms of night-time economy for local services it very much looks to Sale or to Altrincham as their nearest shopping town and transport hub.

It would make a lot more sense for those wards to remain within an Altrincham and Sale West constituency. I recognise that if that was to be the case, there would then need to be some amendments with the wards. What I would recommend as a kind of direction of travel would be for Altrincham and Sale West to gain an extra ward to make up the quota and that, I think, rather than taking wards from a Cheshire East, would make a lot more sense to move perhaps the Bucklow-St Martins ward from Trafford and Urmston into the Altrincham and Sale West constituency, which I think the Commission already intends to do. Bucklow-St Martins is this area [here](#), taking in the villages of Partington and Carrington.

People in those villages look as much to Altrincham as they do to Urmston and they kind of sit alone. They are quite insular, for want of a better word. They can look either way. There is nothing that defines them any more to Urmston than it does to Altrincham. What is more, there are plans to build an 8,000 house new village on the Carrington Moss, formally a Shell processing site, [here](#), the first stage of which was granted planning permission I think last week.

That would bring sort of the built environment up to the St Marys and the Broad Heath ward and Bowland wards, a lot closer to the ward boundaries of those wards which all exist presently within the Altrincham and Sale West constituency. As well as that, there is regular bus services between Partington and Altrincham with the 247. A lot of people in Partington will go and do their shopping in the big supermarkets in Sale and Altrincham. Partington does have its own secondary school in Broad Oak, but that is part of the Dean Trust set of schools which also operate a number of schools in Sale, Sale West, including Ashton on Mersey High School, which is in the Ashton on Mersey ward.

The catchment areas of those schools tends to operate much more in the Sale West, Carrington, Partington, Altrincham area than taking in children from Urmston, Flixton and Stretford in particular. Just to kind of flesh out that point about the Altrincham and Sale West constituency, I think the proposal at the moment is for the Cheshire East wards of Knutsford, High Legh and Mobberley to move into an Altrincham and Tatton Park constituency.

My view is that they should remain within a wholly Cheshire East constituency, where they already kind of share local government and administrative services, perhaps looking more so to Macclesfield as their nearest town. Perhaps a proposal could be brought forward to link Knutsford to Macclesfield rather than Altrincham because there are much better road links via the A50 than via the A556 from Knutsford up to Macclesfield, which is often gridlocked.

It crosses junction 8 of the M56 which, historically, has been a natural boundary, not just between the two constituencies but also between Cheshire East and Greater Manchester, which is somewhat of a quite neat boundary for a constituency to start and end.

Turning back to Stretford and Urmston, there would need to be an extra ward found if Ashton on Mersey and St Mary's had to be moved out of it to bring it up to the size required by the Boundary Commission's proposals. It is quite limited by geography as to where that extra ward would be. The Manchester Ship Canal, which runs along this boundary here, acts as a natural boundary between that part of Trafford and neighbouring Salford.

The only alternatives, really, are to look further into Manchester, probably some stretch along [here](#). That would leave us with the options of Whalley Range ward or Chorlton. The difficulty with picking the Chorlton option, which would geographically be quite a nice neat fit next to Stretford and Longford, is that Chorlton, the town, is split across Chorlton and Chorlton Park wards. Therefore, Chorlton would be split in two, which I know is something that the Boundary Commission is keen to avoid. Therefore, Whalley Range, which is in this location [here](#), would probably be the most natural fit. Sorry, just this point up [here](#).

Whilst I may sound as if Whalley Range is kind of the only solution, actually, there are a number of kind of sound links between Whalley Range and the neighbouring Old Trafford communities in Clifford and the north-eastern part of Longford. Firstly, with transport, Whalley Range residents are served by the First Wood Metrolink station which sits in the Longford ward as a kind of key route not just into the City Centre of Manchester but across the Greater Manchester network provided by the Metrolink service.

The number 15 bus is also a major service running out of Manchester City Centre which serves both the communities of Whalley Range and Clifford. It uses Moss Lane West, which is currently the ward and constituency boundary along this stretch [here](#). What is more, the number 15 bus runs all the way through Clifford, through along this road here, through Longford, into Stretford, into Urmston, through Daveyhulme around into Flixton.

It provides one neat service that would serve the whole of the constituency that I am proposing straight into the centre of Manchester. It would have a clear route of travel from the suburban parts of Trafford through into the City Centre. One personal anecdote, I have twice stood as a local government candidate for Clifford ward which has a boundary with Whalley Range. I can say from this experience that the two do share a community of interest.

The Trafford/Manchester border to me feels somewhat arbitrary. Yes, it is there and it has to be acknowledged, but due to urban sprawl there is not any real clear acknowledgment of where you are crossing that particular road in this case from one boundary to another. There are no particular landmarks or noticeable distinctions between the two.

As a final point, can I say that Trafford is too big for just two constituencies but too small for three. I think keeping Wythenshawe and Sale East together is a good step. It is something that I know the Commission is keen to retain where it can, but a decision obviously has to be made as to how to amend the existing Altrincham and Sale West and Stretford and Urmston constituencies.

In my mind, I think it is much more sensible where we can to take a ward from a neighbouring Greater Manchester authority than it is to move into Cheshire East where

there could well be possibilities of keeping wholly Cheshire East constituencies together and crossing of boundaries between Altrincham and Knutsford, which I think is more evident and more obvious than the one that currently exists between Clifford and Whalley Range and Trafford and Manchester in particular.

Just to make one comment that I forgot to make at the start, I am employed at the Conservative Party. That is probably an interest I should declare at this time, but I have no other comments.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. Are there any points of clarification anyone seeks? Mr Largan?

MR LARGAN: I am Terry Largan, 56 Marcroft, Whitefield in the Metropolitan Borough of Bury. You mentioned Clifford ward there and its links with Whalley Range.

MR FINNEY: Yes.

MR LARGAN: There are other wards in Manchester and, presumably, there are links there because the community is similar, is it?

MR FINNEY: Yes, very much so. I think Clifford, if you were to look at a ward profile of the ward, is very similar in terms of ethnicity, in occupier type. Those sorts of quantities, if you like, it is very similar in make up to many of the sort of the western Manchester wards. I think it has close ties with Whalley Range but also, likewise, with neighbouring the Manchester wards. I think it would be one community. It would not be bolting on a ward just to make up the numbers. There is a community of interest there.

MR LARGAN: (inaudible).

MR FINNEY: Do you mean to Chorlton into the wards to the south or?

MR LARGAN: (inaudible).

MR FINNEY: Or further north. Yes, I think it does. If there is a viable option there to bring one of those other wards in, I think that is something that could be looked at. I think if you look further that way though, you are probably getting to a case of you getting close to the City Centre and I think that is probably not a break-up that would be easier to sell.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have no particular points myself. Thank you very much indeed, much appreciated. I am probably going to look to you, Mr Cookson, if and when you are settled down. Are you ready to speak?

CLLR COOKSON: Yes, I am ready.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The floor is all yours. Please come up. If you state your name and full address and then make your presentation and, at the end of which, there may or may not be any points of clarification people might seek.

CLLR COOKSON: No problem.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much

CLLR COOKSON (Gorton): Good afternoon, everybody. I am Peter Cookson. I am a councillor in Manchester Gorton and my address is 36 Forber Crescent, Gorton, M18 7PU. We asked for several of our councillors to attend, but it ended up that it was only myself that was available. This is not going to take very long because it is quite straightforward.

I have seen all the documents that I was provided with and I am here on behalf of the Gorton councillors to support the Boundary Commission's proposal for Manchester Gorton. If the Boundary Commission's proposal is adopted, this seat would remain unchanged virtually and we are all happy with that. That is basically it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Good enough, thank you very much. Any points?

MR DIDSBURY: It is Liam Didsbury, 42 Greenbank Road, Liverpool L18 1HN. I was just curious to know what your reasons were for supporting the proposal in Manchester Gorton and why you would not support any other sort of configurations that may arise or be on the table?

CLLR COOKSON: Well, for several reasons. There has been a seat called Manchester Gorton since 1929, so we have the tradition. We have a lot of active communities and, as I said, the seat has not changed for a long time. I think that any other further disruption, given the fact that a number of Greater Manchester surrounding seats are proposed to be changed, would be chaotic because, of course, when you change one seat you have got to change the five ones that are next to it and you have to keep going and keep going and keep going.

As I said, I think the Boundary Commission's own proposal for Manchester and Greater Manchester offers the least disruption and I think is the easiest to administer. Especially given the city seats of Manchester, while I cannot speak for them I notice that with the exclusion of one ward all five City of Manchester seats have virtually are unchanged. Of course, as I said, if you change one you have got to change the one next to it and blah blah blah and it goes on and, as I said, this offers the least problematic solution to support the Boundary Commission's own proposal for our area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I do have a point now, if I may. We have just heard that Whalley Range might have more in common with Old Trafford than perhaps with the rest of the constituency, have you got a view on that?

CLLR COOKSON: No, because that is the first I have heard of it. I did speak to Whalley Range yesterday and they were happy with what I was going to say today. I cannot comment on that. I know the area geographically but, as I said, because it is the first I have heard of it I do not want to comment because they might have a reason for that that I do not know about. As I said, in terms of demographics, it is students, middle class and quite a large Asian population. That is the demographic of that ward.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much. Mr Largan.

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marcroft, Whitefield. That Asian population, how far does it stretch in that area? Which wards does that Asian community belong to?

CLLR COOKSON: Well, the current Whalley Range ward and you would be going I think over to the Fallowfield side. It is not a ward I know that well, so I cannot give you a hundred per cent accurate answer. Let me just think, I am just thinking where the borders are actually. No, Chorlton side. That hinterland, if you like, that is the Chorlton ward and the Whalley Range ward and that border.

MR LARGAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Thanks for coming. We have got a gap of about half an hour now, so we will adjourn until 5 to 3.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.10 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon, again, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to see that Mr Nigel Evans has joined us. Please come up to the podium. If you give your name and address and then give your representations, at the end of which I or others may or may not ask you for any clarification.

MR EVANS (Member of Parliament for Ribble Valley): Okay, thank you very much, Chairman. My name is Nigel Evans, Member of Parliament for the Ribble Valley constituency, which is in the North West of England. I live in a village called Pendleton, which is not far from Clitheroe. I have been the Member of Parliament since 1992.

I would like to make representations, if I may, on behalf of myself with the sort of judgment that I have built up over 24 and a half years of representing the constituency of the Ribble Valley. It is a glorious and gorgeous constituency and I am sure, that in

your time, Commissioners, that you have had opportunity to travel around the whole of Lancashire and see for yourselves not only the beauty of my constituency but also the commonality of interest.

I want to start by saying that not only is the Ribble Valley very much the heart of my constituency, contained within it is one of the villages called Dunsop Bridge, and OS representations put Dunsop Bridge in the Forest of Bowland at the very centre of the United Kingdom.

My first representation is not to destroy the fact that the Ribble Valley as a single entity containing the very centre of the United Kingdom by OS statistics. This would happen if we were to move to split the constituency asunder. The brand of the Ribble Valley has been built up for over more than four decades with all the villages working together.

I understand that the Ribble Valley District Authority are making their own representations but had a meeting to discuss these boundary changes. Whilst there is diverse political representation on the local authority, they were all united as one voice, asking that the Ribble Valley remain intact.

As I said, the brand has grown over a long period of time. It is not just things like the Ribble Valley Food Trail and the Ribble Valley Food Festival which attracts thousands of visitors every year as it did this year --- and I was delighted to be there - but even businesses who are now branding themselves like the Ribble Valley Inns containing the name of the constituency. It is synonymous with a large agricultural area, but it contains two large towns.

Both Clitheroe, which is the one that I live fairly close to, and Longridge, are very fast growing towns within the Ribble Valley and both have great empathy and similarities between the two areas, with a good bus connection between both of those areas as well. In fact, there is fairly well a good bus service within the constituency apart from, recently, where one village has been cut off from getting into Clitheroe, but we are fighting that particular issue at the moment.

The history of my patch. As your own proposals mention on page 15 I think it is of your document, the Ribble Valley, actually, as far as population is concerned is actually within the parameters that has been set down for you in order that the Ribble Valley could stay exactly as it is now, if you wanted to remain within those figures.

Over the period of time, from when I first became the Member of Parliament in 1992, we took in several wards from within the Preston borough which were in Fulwood and then the last major changes to happen took them out and then I gained some of the South Ribble boroughs to make the numbers up. Basically, we have always been the entity, therefore, of the Ribble Valley contained with some other wards added to it. That would have to be the case now.

If you were to contain the Ribble Valley, it is growing fast but it is not growing that fast that within, say, ten years that we could have the population contained within our own area, as I think Chorley is able to do. The fact is though that, as I said, it is not just Longridge and it is not just Clitheroe but there are other villages that are going. Permissions have already been given. They are building in places like Whalley rather large numbers of housing. Indeed, one of the villages just further to the side of Whalley called Barrow has been given permissions for almost 600 houses to be built.

I understand why the Commission is saying in their report on page 15 that to accommodate all the other changes, therefore, the Ribble Valley would to be torn asunder. My argument is that the brand is there, there is community of interest and if there is an alternative suggestion that could be looked at - and I, respectfully, ask the Commissioners to do this - then fewer people are going to be dislocated in any of the changes and the brand of the Ribble Valley and the soul of the United Kingdom is kept intact.

There are 32 villages within the Ribble Valley, most of which, as I say, look towards Clitheroe as an administrative, health and social centre, and then Longridge both with shopping, social and health as well. Many of the villages to the north, both of Clitheroe and to the north-east of Longridge, are contained within the area of outstanding natural beauty.

As far as the maps are concerned if we look, first of all, at the Clitheroe and Colne, this is the proposal to basically get that constituency divided between three local authority areas. It is not impossible to work with three local authority areas but, if it can be done without doing that, I think it is better for the constituents concerned if the MP is only dealing with two. The proposals that I am putting forward today, and others have put forward, will do just that.

To even look at going from Yearby or Coates or Craven in the east and doing the road journey down to Kirk Green or Bamber Bridge East would be incredibly time consuming. Indeed, if I was to tell you that my journey today from the Ribble Valley, Clitheroe, to Liverpool would be shorter than would be the case of driving from one side of the constituency to the other. Thank goodness for sat-navs, but not everybody has got those and if we can do without the necessity of people to get around their own parliamentary constituencies with a sat-nav then I think we should be doing that.

The commonality of interest in that area is Clitheroe. The areas that are proposed to come in from the east simply do not have a communality of interest with coming into the Clitheroe area. Therefore, I would respectfully ask that that is looked at very carefully. I know it is one of the areas that you do look at, where the community of interest is, and I would far prefer to see those particular wards staying within a Pendle constituency, which remains intact as well.

I know that those proposals have been made by the local Member of Parliament and I would endorse what Andrew Stephenson MP has either told you, has written to you or is about to tell you. He has spoken to me at the House of Commons.

Moving on to the other map, which is the North Lancashire county constituency, it is difficult to know where to start with this particular map because it is an amorphous mass with no community of interest at all. If the other one was, we called it, the sausage shape, this one is just, as I say, massive.

Going in from Rimington, which is one of my villages to the east, to get to anywhere near like Wharton or Silverdale, there, again, would take way longer than it took me to get down to this area as well. I think there are four local authorities involved in that particular constituency and I know that the Commission do not like certainly having four where it can be avoided. I am rather hoping that that can be done as far as that is concerned.

I have said that there is no community of interest. I believe Carnforth Town Council have actually opposed it as well. As far as people looking at a community of interest, I think local newspapers are interesting, but there will be four local newspapers that cover that area and not covering the whole of the area. They will be covering distinct areas. There, again, the community of interest will have disappeared.

At least the Clitheroe Advertiser and Times does cover the whole and I have seen it in newsagent shops all over my area. I respect the fact that changes are going to be needed if we are going to go down to the 600 constituencies that David Cameron wanted to see, but I do believe there has to be a recognition of community of interest.

There needs to be recognition of the transport links and family ties as well, which I saw first-hand during the floods in Whalley where people from all over the Ribble Valley came to help to clear people's furniture and to help with families generally. It was very spiriting to see what was going on there. As far as the suggestions as to where we then expand if we are not to take the South Ribble wards which I enjoy at the moment, and I do stress the fact that I have done that but, working with two local authorities, South Ribble was the wards that were added on towards me.

There is a sense that there are wards contained within the Hyndburn constituency, some of which in the past were very much members of the constituency represented by my predecessor, David Waddington. The suggestion is that the wards of Baxenden, Church, Immanuel, Netherton, Overton, Rishton, St Andrew's and St Oswald's are contained within the new constituency.

The name of the Ribble Valley, which I am stressing again and again should be retained, there could be recognition of the Oswaldtwistle area of actually referring to that

within the name of the constituency. If one has all of the current Ribble Valley wards contained within this new area, plus the Hyndburn wards that I have mentioned, the figure comes to 77,634 electors.

As far as the South Ribble wards are concerned, clearly, these would have to be redistributed. I know there are suggestions made that some go within South Ribble and some go to Preston where there is a community of interest there, Preston being sort of the major area and the major city within Lancashire.

In conclusion - I am happy to answer any questions that the Commissioners may have - I am asking the Commissioners to look at reducing the number of local authority areas that each Member of Parliament will have to represent, for ease and coherence of not just the MP but the local authorities as well who have to deal with our requests and our business. It also leads to more coherence with one voice looking at things such as, for instance, planning, which is a major concern within the Ribble Valley.

It is probably, within the last 24 and a half years as being the Member of Parliament there, the number one issue that I have really had to deal with, which is planning. Having one coherent voice about containing urban sprawl within many of my villages is something that I take very seriously and passionately. For the Commissioners to look again at the transport links, some of which clearly under the proposals would be almost impossible to think to get from one part of my constituency to the other, having a car it would take over an hour; by local transport, which many of my elderly constituents need to do, it would take much longer than that with maybe two hub stops before they were able to get off at the other end.

This is a major change, and I know because had the last boundary proposals gone through, and indeed some of the suggestions I am making now were contained in the revised version and I am sure that you are well acquainted with them, that in the future the changes that will be necessary will be more tweaking in the future rather than major dramatic changes.

As I understand it, we are going to be looking at boundary changes every five years as opposed to every ten years, and I commend that as something that will bring at least some stability for a greater number of people. I remember once talking to a constituent once who said, "Mr Evans, we have been moved into three parliamentary constituencies every time there has been a change, and it is not really good for us", and I really accept that.

When we move to the five-year changes, I think that is going to be a lot better as far as the changes are concerned. I am looking to you to, again, look at the identity that is contained within my rural constituency, the special identity that it has. I do not want to be flippant when I say Her Majesty is on record as saying that if she ever retired she would like to move into the Ribble Valley. I do not wish to see this happen - I mean, I do

want to see the Queen move into the Ribble Valley, you understand, I am a great monarchist.

But as far as the identity of the area is concerned, it is one of the beautiful gems of England. When I am asked what it is like, I say it is like the Lake District without the lakes and it is exactly that. It is an area that I have lived in for the last 25 years. Every year I do a Ribble Valley tour and it takes me five days to make sure I get round all the villages.

Whilst each village is different in some respects, there is a community of interest where they all go to the same Chipping Show or Hodder Valley Show and all of those things. The agricultural essence of it, contained with many who live in the villages who then work at BAE Systems at Samlesbury and Wharton and, indeed, some who travel using the train in Clitheroe down to Manchester.

With the greatest respect, I do hope that the Commission will look at the suggestions that I have made and I know that the local authority has written and that parish councillors themselves are having meetings and making their own representations. I have encouraged them to do so without even trying to flavour what they say, because I think over 24 and a half years I know fairly well what many of them believe and it is along the lines that I have just spoken about.

As far as the Pendle wards are concerned, I was not at the meeting but I understand that Ribble Valley councillors met with those councillors who are affected by the suggestions that have been made and they had a vote of the Pendle councillors and they voted in favour of the suggestion that has been made. On that, I am more than happy to take any questions that anybody has.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much for that. Very comprehensive. It is just worth pointing out that we have two bodies sitting at this table. We have got the Commission and we have got the Assistant Commissioners who are here, effectively, as honest brokers to decide whether or not the merits of your and other arguments are sufficient to recommend changes to the Commission.

MR EVANS: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: None of them are my proposals, but I look at them from what I get out of it. Just picking up a couple of points you made. One was that people described the Ribble Valley a bit like the Lake District without the lakes. One might also, I guess, describe North Lancaster as a bit like Cumbria and, indeed, the Yorkshire constituencies on its side, they are all large-scale constituencies, low population, hills, countryside and the like. Therefore, having a large constituency per se is not of itself an unusual feature in this country, a large geographical area.

MR EVANS: No, no, I know.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is a consequence of Parliament deciding that Parliament wants 71,000 to 78,000.

MR EVANS: No, absolutely yes. That is why I am accepting those proposals as far as the figures are concerned. I have my own private views, post-Brexit, as to the merits of it, but I think that is something that I will discuss with the Chief Whip, and in fact I have spoken with him, to see how much influence I have got there, but we will see. Anyway, the fact is, yes, there are large constituencies around and there have to be compromises made.

The suggestion that I am making today is that an area that does have identity and purpose could easily be contained within the new proposed constituency at the same time as reducing the number of local authority areas. I do stress four local authorities in that new proposed constituency, even for the amazing dexterity of the current Member of Parliament should he wish to continue to do so, would be not just difficult for him but also difficult for the people who live there and difficult for him, I think, to speak when he speaks in Parliament with one voice about the area he represents if he is talking about four local authority areas.

They do not always, in my estimation, have the same community of interest sometimes when it is so disparate, as would be the case under the North Lancashire county constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I take that point. Let me just play a bit more devil's advocate in a different way. Let us suppose that Clitheroe and Colne carries the day, as it were, I take your point that it might take an hour or so to drive from Coates ward down to Bamber Bridge East, for example, but, say, if you were the MP for that area where would the surgeries be placed in that because the surgery would go to the people rather than the people go to the surgery?

MR EVANS: Yes, I appreciate that and, as I told you, ever summer I do this constituency tour where I do the whole of the Ribble Valley and I try to make myself available, particularly to disabled constituents. You go and visit their homes, wherever they happen to be. I am talking outside of the Member of Parliament issues.

I do not do four surgeries, which I would fairly well have to do. If I wanted to do a Saturday, I would have to do one in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening somewhere to cover the patch. I try to do constituency surgeries as often as I possibly can. Sometimes, people do have to come into Clitheroe which is the main office where we own the building. We get the phone call where they do not have the sat-nav, they are trying to work out where we are because they have absolutely no identity with Clitheroe whatsoever.

People who live even as close as Craven and Coates will very rarely come into the Clitheroe area, as you can see how the shape. I mean, it is an awkward shape to be honest. If a politician had drawn the shape of the constituency like that, we would have been accused of gerrymandering because it does not look right.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: And in the Ribble Valley, how many surgeries would you have? You are not just in Clitheroe?

MR EVANS: Well, I had one last week and I have got one next weekend.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Sorry, location?

MR EVANS: Clitheroe.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Only in Clitheroe?

MR EVANS: No, it is not only Clitheroe. Because Longridge is a major urban area, I do them in Longridge from time to time. We rent the rooms in the centre of Longridge. Also, on fewer occasions I am true to admit Bamber Bridge where we go down and do one in a church there, but on many occasions people from Bamber Bridge do actually travel into the Clitheroe area.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. I am only playing devil's advocate.

MR EVANS: No, I appreciate that.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: To understand the points. Are there any other points that anyone would like to raise?

MR WALSH: John Walsh, Conservative Party. Can I just deal with two or three areas of the constituency or the proposals. You have talked about the, if I could use the phrase, Bowland villages, the Chippings through to Waddington, all of that group. You said that they all look to Clitheroe, very clearly southwards to Clitheroe and Longridge.

MR EVANS: Yes.

MR WALSH: Would there be any perception that the more northerly and westerly, Chipping for example, might look west and north to the proposed North Lancashire, or would they look equally strongly towards the more distant Clitheroe?

MR EVANS: No, very much towards Clitheroe, Mr Walsh. I go into Chipping on a fairly regular basis. It is a gorgeous village. I have to say, I am not even sure where one of those roads out actually goes to and hardly any traffic ever uses it. But the roads, on

the way in towards both Longridge, where the schools are and where the health centre happens to be and both into Chipping, are very well-used indeed.

MR WALSH: So they sit together as a whole?

MR EVANS: Yes.

MR WALSH: At the southern end of your current constituency and the proposed Clitheroe Colne seat, there are four South Ribble wards which are referred, Samlesbury Walton, Coupe Green, Gregson Lane and Bamber Bridge East; do they sit together as a whole or is there any division between those wards? Would you see those moving as a community of interest or would it ---

MR EVANS: There is more of a commonality of interest there, yes. The only one of that that I would say sits more closely with the Ribble Valley, because of its rural nature, is the Samlesbury one where it has a lot of agricultural area and has sat with me for a long time. When you go further south into the Coupe Green, Gregson Lane and Bamber Bridge East and West, you are talking urban and suburban and there is more of a commonality of interest with those.

MR WALSH: Thank you very much. That is all, Sir.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Are there any other points? Mr Largan?

MR LARGAN: Terry Largan, 56 Marcroft, Whitefield in the borough of Bury. Pendle Hill geographical feature there, to what extent is it a barrier between Clitheroe on one side and the Pendle wards on the other?

MR EVANS: Well, you cannot miss it. When I leave my village, I look up at Pendle Hill and it is very large. I have got Sabden, which we go into over one side, and then to the right then down towards Read and Simonstone around that area which tend to be more suburban. As far as looking at the Pendle wards are concerned, that may be one of the reasons why fewer people do tend to come to walk from that area down in towards Clitheroe. It is certainly a geographical feature, a historical geographical feature. Retaining the name of Pendle, I think, would at least recognise that too.

MR LARGAN: Thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Any other points? (No response) In which case, thank you very much indeed. We will look very closely at both the existing arrangements, the Initial Proposals and the counter-proposals that we have got. We have clearly got to give a lot of thought to that but I am not quite sure what they are yet.

MR EVANS: I am grateful to the time that you have given me and I wish you all in all your deliberations. Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is a pleasure. Thanks for coming at the end of the week. Thank you.

MR EVANS: I will see if I can find my way home now.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Well, we have a little gap and so I think we will just, not formally adjourn but I will just sit and wait. Thank you. Feel free to wander around.

After a short break

Time noted: 3.50 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Good afternoon. For those who have just arrived, we have just been milling around because we have been waiting for the last few speakers, of which you are two of the last four, or at least one of them. Do you need a few more minutes or are you ready to speak?

CLLR MCGUIRE: I am only speaking for a few minutes, so.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, would you like to come and speak now?

CLLR MCGUIRE: Would that be okay?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It would be perfect. So, Mrs Sue McGuire.

CLLR MCGUIRE: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: The form is, if you come up to the podium, if you give your name and full address and then make your representation and, if there are any points of clarification, I will ask if anyone has got any. If not, we will thank you and be very grateful for your contribution.

CLLR MCGUIRE (Southport): Thank you very much. My name is Cllr Sue McGuire. I am an elected councillor for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. I represent Cambridge ward in Southport, which is one of the more northern wards on the map.

The first thing I would like to do, actually, is to congratulate the Boundary Commission for the work that they have done so far on these proposals. As far as Sefton I think are concerned, the current suggestions deliver the best fit in terms of revised

constituencies. Certainly, for Sefton as a whole. The proposal not to split Formby and to move the town of Crosby into one constituency is by far the neatest solution in terms of recognising established communities within Sefton.

I am a councillor for Cambridge ward, but that is part of Sefton and so I am talking on behalf of Sefton Liberal Democrats. It is also the closest fit in terms of the geographical splits within the Sefton local authority area. Sefton has an area committee which is called Sefton Central.

That area committee includes the wards of Blundellsands, Church, Harington, Manor, Molyneux, Park, Ravenmeols, Sudell and Victoria. These proposals actually reflect those wards. As a Southport councillor though, I would also like to speak in support of the recommendation to expand the Southport parliamentary constituency to include North Meols, Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton.

Currently, North Meols, Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton are included within the South Ribble constituency which has, at its heart, the town of Leyland. I am fortunate to be able to speak on this because I was the Liberal Democrat candidate for that particular parliamentary constituency in the 2015 General Election. I did not win. I have first-hand experience of working with and campaigning within those areas that make up the South Ribble constituency.

During the 2015 General Election, it became very clear to me that North Meols, Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton are, in actual fact, separate and distinct communities which have very little in common with the main South Ribble constituency and certainly with the constituency town of Leyland. Geographically, they are split by the River Douglas, which I think is referenced in the Boundary Commission's proposals. These three communities are much closer, geographically and historically, with Southport. That is why we support, and I personally support, these proposals.

In terms of local service delivery, the communities of North Meols, Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton share common services with Southport, particularly health services where they access the Southport and Ormskirk District General Hospital. In addition, the three communities also have much better public transport links to Southport than they actually do to Leyland and the rest of the South Ribble constituency. In fact, to get to Leyland from Banks - Banks is the other name for North Meols.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

CLLR MCGUIRE: To get from Banks (North Meols) on public transport, a resident actually has to travel to Preston and then catch a bus back down to Leyland, which is a journey of more than an hour. I think it is an hour and 20 minutes. That is also the case for residents in Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton. Buses to Southport, on the other

hand, run every 30 minutes from Banks and Tarleton and every hour from Hesketh-with-Beaconsall, with a journey time in total of 40 to 55 minutes.

One of the other things that I think is quite important as well is communication via newspaper and media. Hesketh-with-Beaconsall, North Meols and Tarleton - can I just say I hesitate because actually they are called Hesketh Bank, Tarleton and Banks. When I struggle, because I come from there, that is where I grew up, that is where I was born, that is where I went to school. Looking at it the way you have written it, I kind of keep tripping over because that is not how it is known locally.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Though they are the right names of the wards, it is just that locally?

CLLR MCGUIRE: Yes, they are the ward names, but if you went to sort of Banks and told them they lived in North Meols they would possibly look at you slightly funny. If we go back, sorry, North Meols, Hesketh-with-Beaconsall and Tarleton actually receive the same newspapers as Southport. Stories within those three communities are reported in the newspapers in Southport. We have two free newspapers within that area, one from the Trinity Mirror Group and one from an independent, that actually go out to these three communities. In terms of media, being within Southport makes the most sense. They are Southport's hinterland, if you like and so we would support fully the proposal. Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. I have got no questions on that point of detail, I should have explained it, but can I ask a generalised question which is linked to this. It links back to satisfy my curiosity from a previous hearing like this a few years back. When there was talk about fracking down this coast, what happened to that just out of interest?

CLLR MCGUIRE: The fracking site is actually just on the marsh between North Meols and Hesketh-with-Beaconsall. Can you see where the tributaries are towards the thing?

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

CLLR MCGUIRE: They drilled a test well, Cuadrilla, but then they withdrew. I think that area is still covered by PEDL 164, which is the Petroleum Exploration Development Licence, so it is likely that fracking would be explored further in that particular area. The roads I do not think would necessarily support it. It is a SSSI site. It is also a Ramsar World Wetland site. So, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you very much.

CLLR MCGUIRE: Okay, thank you.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Dr Pugh, would you like to come forward, thank you.

DR PUGH: (Member of Parliament for Southport) I do not think I can improve on the presentation done by my colleague but, for the record, I have been the Member of Parliament for Southport since 2001. Prior to that, I was a councillor in Sefton from 1987 to 2001. As the MP for Southport, I tend to see Southport, at any rate, as three of its sides clearly and explicitly defined and separated by an airfield and pinewoods in the south by prime agricultural land in the east and, obviously, by the sea in the west.

Probably the most porous border, if I can put it like that, is the border in and around Meols. Left to my own wishes, I would not like to see Southport being any bigger than it currently is on the grounds that the level of casework I currently get is demanding and I do not actually myself support the proposal which you chaps have to implement in increasing the scale of parliamentary constituencies, particularly with a 5 per cent margin.

I do suspect that over time this will lead to a horrendous amount of work for the Commissioners as the registers update themselves in Southport itself, as more of the migrant community get on the electoral roll and they are seriously underrepresented at the moment. As the housing plans go ahead, obviously, we will need possibly to look long-term at further and further proposals maybe on a regular basis and so these meetings may be things we have more often than we suspect we should.

However, to the particular proposal we have got before us today, broadly speaking, I support it because I accept two things. One, there is a strong affinity and connection between Southport and the Lancashire hinterland around it. Secondly, people in that area look to Southport for a range of facilities and as the central place within the cluster of communities that make up this particular corner of Lancashire.

There are mostly quite strong links across the units that have the Boundary Commission propose to unite. Media is one, as mentioned by Cllr McGuire. People read the same newspapers and sometimes, because I am in these newspapers quite a lot, think that even though I am not their MP, in places like Banks I am, and I do have to redirect a level of correspondence.

There are quite, obviously, very strong transport links, and where transport links need to be developed they need to be developed through and in that area. I will say a little bit more about that a bit later. Quite clearly, most of the people in that area, where they look for health facilities, they clearly have local GP surgeries, but where they look for secondary care they will then look towards Southport and Ormskirk Hospital. Certainly, if you have an occasion to visit Accident and Emergency or you have some serious medical problem, that is where you will go. You will go into Southport and you will visit the Southport Hospital.

Increasingly - and this was not a point mentioned by Cllr McGuire - there are quite strong education links. This is because of the thriving and expanding nature of Tarleton Academy and increasingly large numbers of children from the northern part of Southport choose that. There are some very strong educational reasons to do with quality of education which prompt them to do that, but the flow of children from the outer Southport area into Southport for primary school education and out of Southport for secondary education is quite marked and, I would say, is a new and expanding development.

There is, additionally, of course, a series of environmental issues that directly interlink the areas that it is proposed to be added and Southport itself. A lot of the issues with regard to drainage, flooding (and this, of course, affects housing development and issues like that, which we need to address in Southport) are, basically, dependent upon facilities provided by the Environment Agency, or whoever, lying outside Southport.

Fracking has been touched on. You will be aware that the Bowland shale, which still interests the shale gas companies, of course, extends over the Southport border. We are on the fringes of it. Banks, I think, is more centrally placed and the Hesketh area is even more so. I think it makes broad sense, as it stands, if there has to be a change to include these areas.

There is a particularly strong case for Banks, where, quite frankly, I think people locally do not know where the demarcation line actually lies between what we consider to be the Banks area and what we would consider to be Meols ward in Southport. In fact, if you go down some streets in Meols ward, you go to the end of them and you come to the stream, the houses continue for a little while and you are in a different area and there seems no obvious and logical reason for that.

A point made by Cllr McGuire, which I will underline as well (which probably makes these proposals more workable than otherwise) is the fact that the areas scheduled under these proposals to be included are, to some extent, at arm's length from the rest of the South Ribble constituency and they do not sit particularly well in the current situation that they are in in terms of local or national government.

Probably though an equally powerful reason for going in the direction of what I would call the porous border of Southport rather than down south to Formby is the fact that it is very difficult to pursue a proposal of that character without doing something very odd and very strange to Formby.

The previous proposal of the Boundary Commission I think included Harington ward as part of Southport. Although that makes up the numbers, in geographical and community terms it looks very odd. I was actually genuinely surprised myself, when I had to come to terms or think about this proposal, at the actual shape and contour of

Harington ward and how it was dividing or divided and how it was situated within Formby.

It did strike me that, if that proposal had been pursued, residents would be genuinely puzzled and unsure on quite regular intervals as to exactly who their MP was and who ought to represent them on specific issues. On some specific issues, it may be that both MPs might be implicated but for different reasons and in different ways. It did not strike me as a good way of binding together the community of Formby, which is quite distinct and geographically separated by pinewoods, golf courses and an aerodrome from Southport.

The unworkability of that proposal was one I thought good reason not to pursue that alternative and pursue the more practical alternative that is currently on the table. Just one last thought, if I may, because people would see it slightly complicated from an MP's point of view to suddenly find that they had to deal not just with one set of local authorities but with two sets of local authorities.

I think everybody is aware that any future MP for Southport would have to consider Sefton, which presumably would remain within the city region of Southport and other areas of the constituency which would remain presumably within Lancashire or, alternatively, a city region of Preston or whatever. I actually think this is a good thing rather than a bad thing, simply because I have struggled in terms of progressing issues that are critical to Southport's future like our rail links to Manchester.

I have struggled in dealing with and in making contact with some of the major players, particularly Lancashire as a transport authority. That is because an awful lot of the time I am not considered in Lancashire and they do not communicate directly with me. But in order to progress many of the things that are needed for the future of Southport, better road and rail connections, any future MP of Southport needs to have a lot to do and a good working relationship with Lancashire.

This proposal to some extent would force that on them and on Lancashire. I think that would be quite good in terms of providing a bridge between the city region area, which Southport presumably will be part of, and the Preston area and the wider Lancashire area which it needs to be better linked with.

For that rather sort of odd reason, and it may not affect me long-term but certainly for the future, I think it will be good for the MP of Southport to have a more ordinary 'business as usual' relationship with the transport authority that affects, quite crucially, a large number of the residents of Southport. That is it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed. Very helpful. Both presentations give us a very good picture of Southport and particularly of the three, I will call them, Banks and Tarleton now, now that I am learning. I have no

questions.

DR PUGH: It is quite hard to see the lines. They are quite good on the map but, when you are actually there, you know.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have no particular points, does anyone have any points? (No response) Thank you very much for coming at the end of the week.

DR PUGH: Thank you very much.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Excuse me, before you slip off, I have got Tony Dawson down on my list as someone who was going to speak, do you happen to know if he is coming?

DR PUGH: I was intending to (inaudible) this has taken place. I do believe he is also intending to go to the Lancaster sessions. You may well have a future opportunity to listen to him.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, he is just due about now. He is not here. We have still got to wait until 4.30, I am afraid. We have another speaker at 4.30. Those who wish to, feel free to press on. Those who wish to stay, keep yourself amused for half an hour, thank you.

After a short break

Time noted: 4.00 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Mr Tony Dawson. The form is, if you would come up to the podium, if you could give your name and full address and then say what you want to say. If there are any points of clarification that I or anyone else in the room would like, we will ask you at the end.

CLLR DAWSON (Southport): Thank you, Mr Chair. First of all, I apologise again for my lateness. The good people of Liverpool misdirected me three times off the train. I have come here before but it was in a car. Cllr Tony Dawson. I live at 103 Forest Road, Southport, PR8 6HY and I am here to speak for myself and also I am the Deputy Chair of the Southport Liberal Democrats, upon whose behalf I am speaking.

I know that you have already had the leader of the Sefton Liberal Dem Group and the MP. I can say, without any hesitation of doubt that, despite the fact that I have not heard a word they said, I probably agree with them wholeheartedly. I just wish to draw your attention to two things. I was a contributor to the last boundary review and what I am saying now is in support of what the Boundary Commission are currently saying, which is not what they were saying previously for Southport.

What the Boundary Commission now are currently saying is exactly what I put to the last boundary review and so I hope that it is not unsurprising that I say the same thing. In referring to that, I hope to go to the Lancashire hearing because the proposal of course is for a constituency that crosses the Lancashire/Merseyside boundary.

I think perhaps the greatest trepidations which I am going to try and listen to there (as well as make my own small contribution, I hope) will be about that from people who live in Lancashire. From the point of view of Sefton Borough Council and Merseyside, I just want to make about three points really.

The first one is that we welcome, as do our friends in the Crosby and Bootle Liberal Democrats, the manner in which the borough of Sefton has been treated, in particular that Crosby is going to be the heart of the new Sefton Central constituency where it was literally split in two before this boundary review. That, I am sure, will give heart to everybody who lives in Crosby that there is a Member of Parliament for Crosby, with the exception of a small bit of it at the fringe.

The second thing relates to the area of Formby. The previous proposal as put forward was for a Southport constituency which included the Harington ward. If you were able to walk or take your car or motorcycle across Woodvale Airport, you could have got from Southport to the Harington ward directly, but it was effectively isolated. I know that, and I know that the people who created the original Harington ward in the Harington/Ravenmeols split never had any idea whatsoever that there would ever be a suggestion of splitting Formby. The reason I know that is the person who put the particular proposal which was adopted by the Local Government Boundary Commission on that was myself.

All it was was a neatening up of the Ravenmeols/Harington boundary. There are not any real natural communities within Formby. It was a population balancing exercise and I can remember counting the streets on my fingers to ensure that the two wards that existed were roughly equal in population. That is to explain why I welcome several aspects of this change.

The only other aspect, of course, is that we are going to be joined with our natural hinterland, if you like, to the north. I have talked about one island that could have existed. There is an island which does exist, and it is exactly the same. If you go from Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and Banks into the rest of the South Ribble constituency as it stands, again if you look on the map it is fine, it is continuous but, in fact, you actually have to go through about something like a mile I think of the Chorley constituency by road. It is a separate idea.

Of course, it is all in the West Lancashire borough, whereas the rest of South Ribble is not in the West Lancashire borough. So if that little bit, and this is quite a natural unit

really, those three wards of West Lancashire are a natural unit, they go much better with the Southport area. Putting Redcliffe-Maud and the 1974 reorganisation aside for one moment, the bottom line is this: These are people who largely work and shop in Southport.

If you ever have the local newspaper, the free local newspaper that is around there, you would believe that their existing Member of Parliament would be the Member of Parliament for Southport. There is very little in terms of, if you like, political, large or small, that gets into the newspapers that is circulated in that area - the main one being the Southport Champion --- that, in any way, ever relate to other politicians.

I am not saying never, there are some but, strictly speaking, I would say over 90 per cent of the political coverage that goes into that local newspaper comes from the Southport area. It is not surprising really because these people, as I say, very many of them work and shop in Southport.

I like to be truthful and not overegg the pudding and so I would say, of the three, obviously Tarleton is a dormitory area and there are lots of people who commute to Preston and other places from that. That is, by no means, as strong as that but, then, having said that, not all of the Tarleton ward is really Tarleton. Quite a bit of it is actually Hesketh Bank anyway.

The boundary between those two areas is pretty artificial. I do not know whether it is based on historical or population balancing aspects, but it is rather strange. That is about it, Sir. Thank you very much. I am sorry I was late again.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very for doing that. The road you were talking about, I take it, is the one at the south end of Tarleton that runs ---

CLLR DAWSON: Yes, yes the main road ---

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Just over the border, through the roundabout and up to Much Hoole.

CLLR DAWSON: Yes, yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, thank you. I have no real points. I have got a slight observation, which I am sure the Boundary Commission will take heart from: That there are other people who have had to balance numbers in order to come up with solutions which others might not think is the most natural solution but which your Harington solution, for example, creates an odd shape and so the Boundary Commission have had to, over time, balance their numbers in order to meet the law.

CLLR DAWSON: Yes, I am conscious that you have got the whole region to balance

and that knock-ons do sometimes mean that somebody who has got a real big problem 40 miles away may require a solution that requires a knock-on and a knock-on and a knock-on and so on. I would say that if it can be contained within this area, if you like, if we are only looking at this area, then, obviously, the particular size of parliamentary constituencies now is different than what we were looking at before. The solution for our area was harder, whichever way you looked at it, with the smaller sized constituencies.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Yes.

CLLR DAWSON: From our perspective, as I say, from the borough of Sefton, Sefton Central becomes a very natural, balanced community, which actually matches the area that is used pretty much, with a slight exception, by the Sefton Borough Council for its Sefton Central Area Committee. They recognise that despite the fact that the other two are based on the constituencies that, if you like, that particular area, the people who go to it --- well, basically, pretty much the centre of Crosby was previously split between the Bottle and Sefton Central constituencies, as they then were, and this solution gets rid of that. It also has, what we think, are very great advantages for the Southport constituency.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay. Can I ask if anyone has got any ---

MR WALSH: Just a comment, if I may. It may be helpful for you. John Walsh of the Conservative Party. Can I assure you, the Conservative Party supports entirely the Boundary Commission in its proposals for this part of the region. South Ribble Conservative Association and West Lancashire Conservative Associations both endorse that document and so you will not hear any contrary proposals from the Conservative Party in that area.

CLLR DAWSON: Well, that is very useful for me. It might save myself a little journey, I do not know, but I would like to listen some more about what they have to say.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I was going to make the same point. We had both the MP and the delegation of councillors here who have all said the same.

CLLR DAWSON: Thank you very much, Sir. Thank you for waiting.

MR WALSH: So far as we are aware, the Labour Party are not proposing any changes either.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, they are not. Thank you very much. Thanks for coming.

MR WALSH: (inaudible).

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: We shall continue to sit and wait for our final expected final speaker.

After a short break

Time noted: 4.30 pm

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Welcome back, everyone. I am pleased to say that Mr Edward Timpson is here. Are you ready to speak?

MR TIMPSON: Yes, I am, please.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Please come forward. If you could come and use the podium and, if you could just open with your name and address for the record, and then please make your presentation, at the end of which there may or may not be questions of clarification from the audience.

MR TIMPSON (Member of Parliament for Crewe and Nantwich): Well, thank you very much. My name is Edward Timpson of 30 Victoria Street, Crewe in Cheshire CW1 2JE. I am speaking as the Member of Parliament for Crewe and Nantwich constituency, which I have had the honour of representing since June 2008. I am also speaking in support of the counter-proposals advanced by the Conservative Party which, as you know, include the proposed transfer of the Audlem ward of Cheshire East Council from the Eddisbury and Northwich constituency into Crewe and Nantwich.

Can I start by saying that I welcome the Commission's Initial Proposals in a number of different respects. I am pleased that the strong and longstanding community ties between Crewe and Nantwich are reflected in the proposal for my constituency and I agree that it is sensible for the rural and urban parts of the Leighton ward to be united in a single constituency, together, as it happens, with Leighton Hospital that does actually serve principally my own local community. In fact, my three children were all born there and, hopefully, a fourth in January.

In order to best reflect and represent community ties across South Cheshire, you will be aware that a comprehensive counter-proposal has been made by the Conservative Party, which in our area uses the Commission's Initial Proposals as its basis but which alters the boundaries of Crewe and Nantwich, Eddisbury and Northwich, Weaver Vale and Ellesmere Port and Neston. I think you have been provided with a map reflecting that. I have another copy should you require it.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: No, we have, thank you.

MR TIMPSON: I am grateful. I would like to focus on the element of the counter-

proposal that applies to the Audlem area and the Crewe and Nantwich constituency for obvious reasons. The area that is now Audlem ward is made up of ten parishes. When Crewe and Nantwich was first formed as a constituency for the 1983 General Election, all ten of those parishes were included. I am just going to hand you a map that reflects those 1983 boundaries (Same handed).

As time has gone on, subsequent boundary changes have taken those parishes out of Crewe and Nantwich. I would like to support, I believe, the strong case that has been made for them to be reunited with the constituency. I will just hand you another map from the boundaries from 1997 which show part of the receding geographical area of the constituency but still the inclusion of some or all of the Audlem ward (Same handed).

Indeed, when I was first elected in 2008 it was a pleasure to represent electors in the parishes of Austerson, Hankelow and Coole Pilate, which are now part of the Audlem ward and were transferred away from the Crewe and Nantwich constituency at the 2010 General Election. It was a brief two-year relationship but one that we are keen to reunite.

It is fair to say that, as a Member of Parliament, to this day I am regularly approached by residents of these parishes and the wider area of Audlem ward, many of whom expect that I am and remain their local representative. A cursory perusal of my email in-tray and other correspondence would confirm that continued belief and affiliation.

It is a natural assumption to make, not least because of the previous electoral administrative history of the area. The whole area of the Audlem ward was previously part of the Crewe and Nantwich constituency and the borough of Crewe and Nantwich.

If I may, I want to go on just to explain in a little bit more detail some of those local ties which are still very strong to this day. For instance, there are two primary schools in Audlem ward, Audlem St James's and Sound and District Primary School. Both of those feed into Nantwich secondary education providers, mainly Brine Leas and Malbank and, to some extent, schools in Crewe as well. I regularly attend school related events in my constituency where pupils and parents from both schools are present.

In relation to emergency response services, the whole Audlem ward area falls within the Nantwich local policing team area and officers responding to call-outs would be dispatched from Nantwich, as I have found out for myself when I have been out on patrol with them.

In relation to transport, the A529 and the A530 roads are the main north-south road links connecting the parishes in the Audlem ward, and both roads connect directly into Nantwich. Local rail services run from Nantwich Station. Nearby Wrenbury does have

a station, but on most services only a request stop. The major rail exchange is, of course, Crewe.

As for employment, Nantwich is a major centre of local employment, drawing on a rural hinterland that includes much of the Wybunbury ward as well as Audlem. Although Wybunbury is already part of Crewe and Nantwich, the villages of the Audlem ward are not.

Recreationally and shopping, Audlem is the largest village in the ward. It does benefit from a Co-operative food store of a medium size, but for supermarkets, town centre retail and other leisure activities, Nantwich is the nearest and natural destination for people living in the Audlem ward.

I would also, I think, importantly point out that this counter-proposal does improve the electoral equality for Crewe and Nantwich, as well as the whole of Cheshire, something I know which is set out in more detail as part of the Conservative Party proposal.

What I will be doing myself is making a further written representation to the Commission's consultation, which I hope will provide further clarification information that supports the submission that I have made in person this afternoon. I hope that gives you a flavour of some of the key points that I think fit very well with the criteria set rightly by the Boundary Commission.

I know there are also consequences for the other three constituency proposals that I mentioned at the start which I am happy to discuss further, but I know you have heard from the Member of Parliament for Eddisbury about her counter-proposal and, also, I know that my proposal is supported by her as well as the current Member for Weaver Vale. I do not know whether he has had the opportunity to speak to you in person. I suspect he has knowing him.

It is supported by all the current Members of Parliament that I have direct access and information about. I hope that gives it some credence when considering how well we are able to still represent what we think are very good local boundaries for the communities that we are currently very lucky to represent.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much indeed.

MR TIMPSON: If there are any other questions of clarification, I am happy to provide but, of course, I will be putting in a written submission which I can use to endeavour to provide any further detail that you need.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: Okay, no that is very helpful and these earlier maps are helpful for me to be able to get my head back on how they are. I have had the benefit, of course, of having the Conservative counter-proposals, having your

colleagues' presentations and, indeed, Mark Holland gave us a presentation.

MR TIMPSON: Yes, indeed, it was in Chester.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am losing track of the dates, but in Chester, yes.

MR TIMPSON: Yes.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I have no particular points, but are there any points anyone would wish to raise? (No response) In which case, I am grateful to you for making the effort to come along late on a Friday evening.

MR TIMPSON: And thank you for bearing with me. Friday traffic is always fun.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: It is our pleasure. It takes us exactly to the right timings for us.

MR TIMPSON: Great, lovely.

THE LEAD ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER: I am grateful, thank you very much indeed. If I might, just to conclude, thanks to everyone who has participated over these two days, whether you have spoken or listened. They were very helpful sessions. A bit surprisingly light on Liverpool, I was a bit surprised to find, but that is credit to the Boundary Commission I would say in those terms.

Thanks to the Boundary Commission staff and team of technicians, all of whom enable this to run smoothly. I look forward to seeing those of you who are so inclined in Lancaster on Monday. With that, I formally close this Liverpool hearing. Thank you very much, everyone.

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