

Conservative Campaign Headquarters
30 Millbank
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3rd April 2012

Boundary Commission for England
35 Great Smith Street
London
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Dear Sirs,

Second consultation period – West Midlands Region

We have much pleasure in enclosing our response to the representations received during the first consultation period on the initial proposals for the West Midlands Region.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Pratt CBE
Boundary Review Manager

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Submission of the Conservative Party regarding the responses to the initial proposals for the West Midlands region

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 We note that the Commission have received a large number of representations from the West Midlands proportionally larger than any other Region.
- 1.2 We note that the large majority of the representations are in opposition to the proposals, although in certain places a large number of representations support the proposals of the Commission, for example in Staffordshire Moorlands.
- 1.3 We note that a very large number of representations have come from Sutton Coldfield but we believe a lot of the representations there are based on misunderstandings and misinformation.
- 1.4 We will examine the proposals and any counter-proposals on the basis of Rule 5 of the Rules for Redistribution of Seats – Schedule 2 to the Act.
- 1.5 In particular we will look at the factors that can be taken account of under Rule 5 (1):
 - a) Geographical factors;
 - b) Local Government boundaries;
 - c) Existing constituencies;
 - d) Local ties that are broken from existing constituencies.
- 1.6 We note that both the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have submitted comprehensive counter-proposals.

- 1.7 We note that neither of these proposals fully support the county linkings proposed by the Commission.
- 1.8 We believe that the linkings of the Commission of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire and West Midlands and Warwickshire, with Staffordshire reviewed separately, are the most robust and apart from the national Labour and Liberal Democrat parties have received very little adverse comment.
- 1.9 Labour do review Staffordshire alone but have the other five counties all linked in one large review area. We think this is a weakness of their plan when there is no need to have a link between Worcestershire and West Midlands. We note this is therefore worse under Rule 5 (1) b.
- 1.10 The Liberal Democrat have the Region as one review area with all six counties linked together. We think this is a very detrimental aspect of their proposals which also create far too many cross-county constituencies. We note this is therefore much worse under Rule 5 (1) b.
- 1.11 We will propose changes to reduce the number of seats linking West Midlands and Warwickshire from two to one, to better respect the Rivers Wye and Severn, and to restore ties broken by the Commission. We will also move fewer electors from their existing constituency this being more compliant with all four factors under Rule 5 (1).
- 1.12 We will now examine all the proposals in the light of the representations and counter-proposals received.
- 1.13 Other than the Conservative Party response there are, as far as we can establish, two full region responses. These are from the

- a) Labour Party (Representation 025315)
- b) Liberal Democrats (Representation 025336).

1.14 We will not quote their reference number where we refer to them. We deal with specific aspects of the regional responses by county further below but we would make the following broad comments.

a) Labour Party

1.15 We do not agree with the Labour Party in their variation of the sub regional structure adopted by the Commission. This results in no reduction in cross county boundary seats, rather it adds further unnecessary complications. The Conservative Party has stuck to the sub regions and been able to reduce the number of cross county seats by a further one.

1.16 Across a large part of the region the Labour Party plan is predicated on an unacceptable crossing of county boundaries. A small area, which is only part of a community (Hagley) in Worcestershire is, in an effort to create a credible plan for the West Midlands and Warwickshire, tacked on to metropolitan Stourbridge.

1.17 Unfortunately even this major breach of a county boundary doesn't solve a more broad problem in that Labour are then also forced to propose a four unitary authority seat linking Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

1.18 The Labour Member of Parliament for Birmingham Hall Green, Roger Godsiff in oral evidence at the Birmingham hearing (Day One, 4.29pm, Pages 85-87) said that "the difficult problems and the cost implications of dealing with three [authorities] are considerable. If you have four... I would suggest it almost becomes horrendous

as the elected Member of Parliament. But in terms of cost and in terms of actually providing a service for the people, it's going to be extremely difficult.”

1.19 It is clear that as a general policy the Commission has attempted, wherever possible, to avoid three authority seats particularly where this relates to unitary, metropolitan or London authorities. At the Brent hearing (Day Two, 9.19am, Pages 3-5) the Chair of the Hampstead and Kilburn Labour Party argued against three authority seats and orphan wards yet one of Labour's Black Country seats (Walsall South and Bilston) contains not only four authorities but also two 'orphan' wards (Wednesbury North from Sandwell and Coseley East from Dudley).

b) Liberal Democrats

1.20 The Liberal Democrats seem determined not to cross the Hereford-Worcester county boundary but have in the process crossed almost every other county boundary in the region. By our calculations the Liberal Democrat plans cross county boundaries twelve times. This breaches Rule 5 (1) b, c and d so substantially that it makes the proposal, in our view, barely credible. We will however touch on a number of issues raised by the Liberal Democrat proposal in specific areas of the region.

1.21 In Staffordshire which the Commission review with Stoke on Trent they have no fewer than eight cross county seats.

2. HEREFORDSHIRE, SHROPSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE

a) Herefordshire

- 2.1 There are a large number of submissions which support our proposal that the Golden Valley should continue to be in a Hereford constituency with the commensurate exchange just to the north of the city. This reflects the current arrangement. At the Ludlow hearing this change was supported by Patrick Creasey (Day One, 11.46am, Pages 13-15). Frank Myers also at the same hearing (Day One, 12.48pm, Pages 25-27) described the Commission's switching of the Golden Valley wards for the 'four northern villages' of Credenhill etc as "having no logic whatsoever."
- 2.2 They and others have made the point that without this change the proposed Ludlow and Leominster constituency would be excessively and unnecessarily large.
- 2.3 There are virtually no crossings of the River Wye in the Golden Valley area and therefore a Member of Parliament would be obliged to travel through Hereford to get from one part of the constituency to another. The predominant means of communication through the seat would, the Commission suggests, be the A49 which one and all regard as inadequate. We note that the Liberal Democrats in their submission also propose such a change which would ameliorate the distances involved. Amongst responses on this matter Representation 003091 from a local vicar and Representation 001266 from a national journalist appear to reflect well the local opinion.
- 2.4 The proposal to retain the Golden Valley wards in Hereford means 9,962 fewer electors move constituency, fewer local ties are broken and the boundary of the

River Wye is respected, this being more compliant under Rule 5 (1) a, c, and d. We also note this position was debated at the last review where the Assistant Commissioner clearly supported the argument that the Golden Valley wards should remain in Hereford (Assistant Commissioner for Herefordshire's Report, Fifth Periodic Review, section 6).

- 2.5 The Liberal Democrats suggest a Ludlow and North Herefordshire seat. While this seat has some merit the consequences of such a seat across Worcestershire and Shropshire result in unacceptable breaking of ties elsewhere.

b) Shropshire

- 2.5 One of the impacts of the Liberal Democrats' plan for Herefordshire is the need to alter the existing Shrewsbury & Atcham constituency. The Commission's proposals have the merit that both North Shropshire and Shrewsbury constituencies are unchanged. Cllr. Peter Nutting in his evidence at Ludlow (Day One, 6.31pm, Pages 42-44) welcomed the retention of the existing seats identifying that the areas to the south west of the county 'do not have any relationship with the Shrewsbury & Atcham area', a point also made by the local MP Daniel Kawczynski when he spoke at the Warwick hearing (Day One, 11.56am, Pages 17-18).

- 2.6 We agree with the Labour Party when they say they 'welcome the retention of the North Shropshire CC unchanged and the Shrewsbury CC unchanged save for a change of name which we support'. We therefore believe that the Commission has adopted the correct option and that this meets Rule 5 (1) c.

- 2.7 In his evidence at Ludlow Cllr. Nutting also said that he believed “the proposals for the rest of Shropshire, including Telford, also work well”. A view expressed by Sandy Trickett in an observation (Day One, 2.45pm, Pages 39-41).
- 2.8 We do not therefore share Labour’s view in relation to Telford and the Wrekin where they propose a substantial change. A number of witnesses at the Ludlow hearing including Christopher Gill (Day One, 11.52am, Pages 15-21), Helen Howell (Day One, 1.29pm, Pages 35-37) and Cllr. Richard Overton (Day Two, 8.59am, Pages 2-4) argued for a separation of rural and urban areas. Cllr. Dave Davies (Day Two, Ludlow hearing, 9.28am, Pages 10-12) even argued that Telford and Bridgnorth were separate areas only then going on to identify that his son, who is from Telford, had a job in Bridgnorth, thereby disclosing both economic and family ties between the two communities.
- 2.9 However we note that there has never been a requirement to create separate rural and urban seats and at previous Periodic Reviews the Commission has made clear that it is not within their remit to create sociologically uniform seats.
- 2.10 We note that this is precisely what the Labour Party believe would result from creating a core Telford seat then leaving “a largely rural seat centred on the towns of Bridgnorth, Newport and Wellington...” This is in effect a difficult to manage doughnut constituency. Jock Gallagher in his opening submission for the Liberal Democrats at the Birmingham hearing (Day One, 11.41am, Pages 23-32) significantly referred to the resulting constituency as “an uncomfortably large constituency whichever way it is constructed.” It is to avoid this uncomfortably

large constituency that we believe the two Telford seats were correctly drawn by the Commission.

- 2.11 The centres of population referred to in the Labour plan include Wellington, Newport and Bridgnorth. To serve these three centres would require constant travelling through Telford and would therefore make access for constituents from one centre to the others extremely difficult.
- 2.12 We note that there is no ‘A’ road from Bridgnorth to Wellington, nor from Wellington to Newport nor from Newport to Bridgnorth. In each case any travel between the centres would have to be through Telford.
- 2.13 We believe that constituencies should be created to help MPs serve constituents and voters have access to MPs, not to make the MPs remote and unable to get around their area.
- 2.14 Rule 5 (1) a refers to “shape and accessibility” of a constituency while 5 (1) d refers to “local ties.” We believe that such a proposal would be contrary to the Rules on grounds of “shape, accessibility and [breaking of] local ties.”
- 2.15 As well as creating “an uncomfortably large constituency” the Labour Party also argues as if the delineation of Telford is clear cut. It is not, as was identified by evidence given at the Stafford hearing by County Cllr. Jon Tandy (Day One, 6.25pm, Pages 80-85) and Paul Kalinauckas (Day Two, 1.26pm, Pages 61-64), both long standing and senior members of the Shropshire Labour party. They were both inadvertently honest as to what constitute the communities of Telford and The Wrekin. Cllr. Tandy in answer to both the Assistant Commissioner and Cllr. David Murray identified that he knew the area well and that a constituency should consist

of Apley, Hadley, Ketley, Donnington, Muxton, Priorslee, Wrockwardine Wood and Trench. Mr Kalinauckas in answer to the Assistant Commissioner specifically identified that Apley Castle and Hadley and Leegomery are one community and that Apley is in Hadley parish. The Labour proposal to exclude the wards of Apley Castle ward and Muxton ward therefore splits communities identified by their own spokesmen.

- 2.16 Cllr. Andrew Eade (Day Two, Ludlow hearing, 10.45am, Pages 22-28) at Ludlow identified that there were links across all of Telford and The Wrekin authority as he said “they live in the rural areas... they work in the urban area, they go to school in the urban areas and they have their health and everything else within the borough.” Cllr. Eade also took a similar view to Cllr. Tandy and Mr Kalinauckas that Apley and Leegomery and Muxton and Donnington were parts of the same communities.
- 2.17 We also note that Cllrs. Eade and Seymour and others believed the M54 made a sensible dividing line between constituencies. Mr Gill during his contribution to the hearing at Ludlow described the M54 and A5 as a “quite severe physical barrier.” Cllr Seymour also made the point that this division along the M54 “will more evenly distribute an urban area with a rural one.”
- 2.18 In a further indication of the linking between Telford and other areas within the borough Cllr. Tandy identified that areas such as Shifnal have Telford postcodes. It is therefore not clear where community boundaries fall.
- 2.19 We would therefore contend that all these submissions and others support the Commission proposal to link the areas of north Telford and the Wrekin in one constituency and not to split artificially one community of north Telford from

another. We further believe that the division of the area using the motorway where practical is the most sensible option since it is a boundary the authority uses for delineation of wards and will produce two easily served constituencies.

2.20 As an additional change to Bridgnorth and Telford South we proposed that Alveley and Claverley ward should be included in the seat. There was general recognition that this ward should be within a Bridgnorth seat because any links were across the River Severn at Bridgnorth. We note that Alveley and Romsley Parish Council (Representation 005178) have written proposing its inclusion in the proposed Bridgnorth and South Telford seat and the Stockton Parish Council (Representation 010066) has also written stating that “it has no objections” to its inclusion in the proposed constituency.

2.21 With this change in relation to Alveley and Claverley and the other counter proposals outlined at Birmingham and having considered the alternatives proposed, we believe the Commission should make no change to the three constituencies of North Shropshire, Shrewsbury and Telford North and the Wrekin and that there should be changes to the other seats within Herefordshire and Shropshire. We will comment further separately in relation Malvern and Ledbury below (see Worcestershire).

2.22 We note the evidence of Mark Pritchard MP (Representation 005027) and support his suggested name change.

c) Worcestershire

2.22 The Conservative Party supports the broad principle of the Malvern and Ledbury seat as, we note, does the Labour Party.

2.23 However, as a counter proposal the Conservative Party suggested that the three wards of Hartlebury, Lovett and North Claines and Ombersley should not be in the Malvern and Ledbury constituency on two grounds. The Commission's proposal is a three authority (and two county) seat. By removing these wards this would no longer be the case. Since these wards are beyond the Severn and somewhat removed from the rest of the Malvern and Ledbury seat while also being somewhat cut off from the proposed Evesham seat by a neck of land around Droitwich we contend that these wards would be better situated elsewhere. We note that the Commission has received a number of representations from these wards. Derek Stocker (Representation 003704) describes Hartlebury as "a corner of the constituency far removed from member of parliament [*sic*]." We also note the representation (Representation 009592) from Hartlebury Parish Council which expresses the desire to be linked with Wyre Forest. Wendy Coggan (Representation 001015) expresses the view that "Ombersley Parish's new constituency would be Malvern & Ledbury. We are out on a limb... on the other side of the River Severn." She expresses the desire to be linked with a Worcestershire town or city. Cllr. Tony Miller from Lovett & North Claines (Representation 005812) explains that his constituents use Worcester for a series of services. There are therefore representations from all three wards seeking a change from the Commission's proposal.

2.24 We particularly note that Wychavon Council which is affected by these proposed changes has written (Representation 022282) in support of adjustments which

would place Hartlebury with Wyre Forest and Lovett and North Claines and Ombersley with Worcester.

- 2.25 If these changes are effected it would be possible, within quota, for two wards which are integral to Malvern to be included within the proposed Malvern and Ledbury seat. Cllr. Ken Pollock (Day One, Ludlow hearing, 12.36pm, Pages 22-25) and Cllr. Cheeseman (Day Two, Ludlow hearing, 9.39am, Pages 13-16) in their evidence clearly outlined why the wards of Malvern Wells and Morton should be transferred from the Evesham seat. There are further representations from both wards. Betty Davis (Representation 018339) and Mary Watts (Representation 000061) indicate support for inclusion in a Malvern seat. Unlike the other three wards, these wards want to be part of a Malvern and Ledbury seat. We would regard a happy union as better than a forced one.
- 2.26 Please note the representations of the Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire Harriet Baldwin (Representations 006554 and 012183) and the Member of Parliament for Mid Worcestershire Peter Luff (Representation 015513).
- 2.27 We would then also propose that there be a name change for the proposed Evesham seat to South Worcestershire.
- 2.28 With the changes outlined above, we support the remaining proposed constituencies in Worcestershire, in particular we think the proposals for Bromsgrove and Redditch are logical and note that although there are few responses concerning these seats the majority are in favour of the Commission's proposals.
- 2.29 As referred to in our opening comments, the Labour Party proposal for Worcestershire-West Midlands includes Hagley ward of Bromsgrove District in

Worcestershire. Hagley ward does not contain an isolated and specific community. As can be seen from the Commission's maps, West Hagley is split between two wards (Hagley and Furlongs). Labour's proposal would therefore leave part of a community in an essentially West Midlands seat while the other part would be left hanging in Labour's proposed Worcestershire seat of Bromsgrove. We note that two cul de sacs i.e. Brookland Road and Meadow Croft are split in this plan. The 3,772 voters of Hagley ward would also represent a minute proportion of the overall Stourbridge seat. This proposal is therefore contrary to Rule 5 (1) b, c and d.

2.30 We note that the Liberal Democrats while unwilling to cross the Hereford-Worcester county boundary propose linking Worcestershire and Warwickshire. We believe this is unacceptable to the residents of either county.

3. STAFFORDSHIRE

- 3.1 We support the Commission's proposal to leave the three seats of Burton, Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire unchanged. A decision that was welcomed at the Stafford hearing by both Gavin Williamson MP (Day Two, 10.54am, Pages 28-30) and Mark Holland (Day Two, 9.14am, Pages 4-8) when speaking on behalf of Aidan Burley the Member of Parliament for Cannock Chase. South Staffordshire Council also made a submission (Representation 008329) expressing 'strong support for the Commission's proposal for South Staffordshire and Stafford [constituencies] relating to South Staffs'. We believe that not only does this respect Rule 5 (1) c, but we believe that there is no benefit in Labour's proposals which changes the existing South Staffordshire with consequential changes in Stafford and Lichfield for which there is no need and no apparent local support.
- 3.2 We would also commend the addition of one ward to the Tamworth constituency which is also supported by the Labour Party. Tamworth Council has written (Representation 016494) expressing support for the proposed change. We do however believe that the constituency should be called Tamworth and South East Staffordshire.
- 3.3 We welcome the clear message from a diverse range of parties that Staffordshire Moorlands Council area should be a single whole constituency as has been recommended by previous Periodic Reviews.
- 3.4 We particularly welcome the comments from the Liberal Democrats in their revised submission that they now support this view.

- 3.5 We also note that a separate local proposal in relation to this area was submitted at the Stafford hearing by Nicky Davis (Day One, 6.39pm, Pages 85-91). This also supports a separate Staffordshire Moorlands constituency. It therefore appears that five different plans have been submitted in relation to the north Staffordshire area, four of which propose Staffordshire Moorlands coterminous with the Council.
- 3.6 We note the widespread support for the ‘Staffordshire Moorlands proposal’ and the continuing wish expressed at previous reviews not to be linked with Stoke-on-Trent. The representations include proforma letters from over 600 residents (Representations 025389, 025399, 025402). We also note the evidence of the Member of Parliament for Staffordshire Moorlands, Karen Bradley, at the Stafford hearing (Day One, 1.25pm, Pages 32-37).
- 3.7 This proposal is most compliant with Rule 5 (1) b.
- 3.8 The sole opposition to this series of views is from the regional Labour Party. In the Labour proposal Newcastle under Lyme borough would have the same number of constituencies as that proposed by the Commission. However in Labour’s case this would be at the expense of Staffordshire Moorlands being placed in three different seats instead of the one under the Commission’s plans. The Commission also propose one link between the unitary authority of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire whereas the Labour Party proposes two. The Labour Party are proposing, not only an overall plan that was rejected at the last Periodic Review, but even the detail of crossing out of Stoke Central through the wards of Bagnall & Stanley, Cellarhead and Werrington was also rejected at that time. Their proposals are therefore considerably worse under Rule 5 (1) b and d.

- 3.9 We also note that in the Labour submission there has been no attempt to justify or claim links between Stone and the areas and towns of Staffordshire Moorlands such as Cheadle and Leek. Lines of communication from Stone are to the west of Stoke on Trent not to the east and to reach Leek from Stone requires travelling through Stoke-on-Trent.
- 3.10 We reject the overall Liberal Democrat plans for Staffordshire since they have no less than eight seats crossing between Staffordshire and other counties.
- 3.11 With the exception of the name change to Tamworth we therefore fully support the seats as proposed by the Commission in Staffordshire.

4. WARWICKSHIRE

a) Warwickshire

- 4.1 We particularly welcome the large number of representations seeking the inclusion of Coleshill and Water Orton wards in a complete (or virtually complete) North Warwickshire seat.
- 4.2 The objections are on two bases i.e. that they are part of a three authority seat and that the area is and fits naturally with the rest of North Warwickshire. It also seems that there is a relatively simple solution to these issues.
- 4.3 Not only were there representations from the Labour Party and the Conservative Party but also many residents such as Matilda May (Representation 007616), Gillian Morrissey (Representation 014321) and Charlotte Macchi (Representation 007803) who believed all (or most) of North Warwickshire district should be within one seat. This was a view given by Dan Byles MP through Sandy Trickett at the Warwick hearing (Day One, 11.43am, Pages 13-15) and also the former Member of Parliament for the seat Michael O'Brien (Day One, Birmingham hearing, 2.55pm, Pages 66-70).
- 4.4 We do not however share the view expressed by both Mr O'Brien and the Labour Party that Hartshill should be excluded from this 'all North Warwickshire seat'. We believe this is contrary to local wishes as outlined on a number of occasions at hearings and also covered by Cllr. Damon Brown (Representation 001561) who asks to "include Hartshill, Over Whitacre & Arley." With the exception of the Labour Party there seems to be a general view that the Commission should revert, in this area, to the existing seat structure i.e. including Water Orton and Coleshill

wards and then adding Hartshill and Arley and Whitacre into the North Warwickshire constituency. For a small authority we believe it is inappropriate to split the district.

- 4.5 There were a number of objections at the Warwick hearing and in writing that, as part of the process of constituency realignment, Weddington ward should be included in a Nuneaton seat and not North Warwickshire. Not only did these come from the political parties but also residents such as Richard Berger (Representation 002849) and Michele Kondakor (Representation 010884). We note the evidence of Marcus Jones the Member of Parliament for Nuneaton (Day One, Warwick hearing, 2.37pm, Pages 29-32 and Representation 015772).
- 4.6 The Liberal Democrat proposal for the area, although it includes the Water Orton and Coleshill wards and excludes Weddington from a partial North Warwickshire seat, has substantial demerits. Their proposed seat splits the community of Bedworth and crosses the Staffordshire-Warwickshire county boundary which we regard as being contrary to Rule 5 (1) b and d. There is no benefit here, nor elsewhere in the county, from this rather odd construct.
- 4.7 Our proposed changes in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton also have the advantage that, unlike the Labour Party's proposals, they meet the concerns of the residents around Rugby and Stratford on Avon. We note that Wolston Parish Council (Representation 016891) expresses its desire to be in a Rugby constituency and residents of King's Newnham and Church Lawford Alan Melck (Representation 011280) and Howard Parvin (Representation 014741) also wish to

be in a Rugby seat. Mr Parvin says that “the natural links for King’s Newham are to Rugby.”

- 4.8 These beneficial changes to the west of Rugby have the further advantage that the results of the changes can further coincide with the views in Harbury. Harbury Parish Council says that it “has obvious connections with either Stratford on Avon or Leamington” and Gerald Parker (Representation 009317) argues “Harbury had always been in the Stratford on Avon constituency and I think it should return there.”
- 4.9 The advantages then extend, again unlike Labour’s, in that Phil Riley (Representation 001894) suggests that Boundary Commission should ‘please rethink’. The Conservative Party’s plan meets that request by putting Mr Riley’s ward of Long Itchington into the Warwick & Leamington constituency.
- 4.10 Furthermore we note that both Peter Haine (Representation 014339) and Denis MacDaid (Representation 011795) have also submitted representations which will be met under our proposals. Mr Haine says of Cubbington that it would be “far more logical for the ward to be aligned with the proposed Kenilworth & Dorridge” while Mr McDaid expresses similar views in that he regards continuity as important saying “Cubbington should [remain] part of the new Kenilworth and Dorridge.”
- 4.11 These are consistent voices from a range of communities across Warwickshire which only our proposals can satisfy in full.
- 4.12 We note that the Liberal Democrats would exclude the Alcester, Kinwarton, Sambourne and Studley wards from Stratford on Avon to a Redditch seat. We totally reject this as it would break ties and be worse under Rule 5 (1) b, c and d.

4.13 We do not believe, as the Labour plan does by concentrating on areas around Solihull, that greater weight should be given to urban splitting of communities than rural. If anything, we would argue, that because rural communities have a set and more limited series of links they should be more readily recognised than urban areas where links are somewhat less clear and more diffuse.

b) Meriden

4.14 Although Meriden is part of the West Midlands, as has been shown, the creation of the currently proposed seat is the cause of serious disquiet in Warwickshire. The suggestion that the wards of Coleshill and Water Orton should be included within Meriden has been objected to both on the grounds that the proposed seat includes parts of three authorities i.e. Birmingham, Solihull and North Warwickshire and that they fit with the rest of the North Warwickshire District.

4.15 The Conservative Party and the Labour Party propose reducing the authorities included in the proposed Meriden seat from three to two. While it is acknowledged that, under the Conservative plan, this separates Knowle and Dorridge it does so to the better benefit of the design of the Meriden seat. Under our proposal Meriden would include the greater bulk of the area between Coventry and Solihull. It places Knowle with similar areas in the neighbouring wards of Meriden and Bickenhill such as Hampton in Arden and Balsall Common.

4.16 We note that the Labour plan includes two Birmingham wards with Chelmsley Wood with Bickenhill ward. The Bickenhill area is unlike the rest of the constituency and this change results in an unbalanced seat.

- 4.17 We believe that it is important that our proposal results in a genuine reduction in the number of cross county seats across the West Midlands rather than providing, as does the Labour plan, for the opportunity to switch the county crossing elsewhere thereby claiming consistency.
- 4.18 The Conservative Party plans for Warwickshire move fewer electors from their existing seats, improve local government links and break fewer local ties this being more compliant with Rule 5 (1) b, c and d.

5. WEST MIDLANDS

a) Four-borough seat

5.1 As referred to in the introduction, the Labour Party propose a seat containing four unitary authorities including two ‘orphan’ wards. No other party, nor the Commission suggest a similar structure for a seat anywhere in England. We do not believe that it is justifiable that any such seat should be created. As identified above, in relation to Worcestershire, this is not the only major anomaly in Labour’s plan for the area. It cannot therefore be argued that there is a compelling reason for the seat which would result in simple and reasonable solutions elsewhere (see Sandwell below).

b) Three-borough seat

5.2 In general the Conservative Party and others are opposed to three authority seats where these involve a number of unitary councils. It appears that the Commission shares this view. In the case of Meriden we have successfully provided an alternative which reduces the authorities involved in a seat from three to two.

5.3 Where however there is apparently no reasonable alternative and a cohesive seat is created in the process we accept that this may be necessary. We therefore support the proposed Walsall South seat (although with a changed name). Cllr. Graham Green (Day One, Birmingham hearing, 6.30pm, Pages 102-106) in his evidence clearly outlined that there is a Great Barr community with Great Barr Hall in Walsall, the ward of Great Barr and Yew Tree in Sandwell and Oscott within Birmingham all historically part of the same area.

c) Walsall

- 5.4 We also note that Cllr Green in his evidence, in relation to the proposed Walsall South seat, identified that ‘just across from his area is Pheasey’, an acknowledgement that the overwhelming majority of the electorate in the Walsall ward of Pheasey Park Farm is linked by continuous housing development with his ward and separate from other areas of Walsall. He also identified the neighbouring Walsall ward of Paffrey as being linked. As he also explains “the motorway splits off the areas” of Oscott from Perry Barr. Cllr Rose Martin (Representation 005584) supported this view saying “The new boundaries in Walsall South with regard to including Streetly, Great Barr Yew areas would create a better boundary for this area of Walsall and more logical. [sic].”
- 5.5 We note that previously Streetly, although physically separated, was part of the former Aldridge Brownhills seat. There is green belt between Streetly and the rest of Aldridge Brownhills. Unlike the rest of the existing seat, Streetly also has a Birmingham telephone code and post code (B74).
- 5.6 Although we disagree with the final structure of Walsall as suggested by the Liberal Democrats we note that they have also used six wards of the Commission’s proposed Walsall South including Great Barr with Yew Tree; a clear indication that they also believe it is right to have a Walsall South seat that extends southwards beyond the Walsall borough boundary.
- 5.7 We therefore believe that the Commission is correct in putting Streetly and other separated areas of Walsall into a different constituency. We do however believe the seat should be named Great Barr and Streetly

- 5.8 In her submission Cllr Martin made a further observation that “Pleck is an area that would fit better to the old northern area of Walsall being closer to and having more in common with Bilston, Wolverhampton and Dudley.” It is therefore clear that not only are the plans for a Great Barr seat correct but the general direction of the Commission’s other proposals for Walsall also bring support with an appropriate boundary between its southern seat and Walsall West.
- 5.9 We also note that the Liberal Democrats propose a virtually identical Walsall North seat to that proposed by the Commission. We believe that while they have the principle of the structure for a Walsall North right, the Liberal Democrats fail to recognise the physical barrier between Streetly and other parts of their designated Walsall North. We therefore support the Commission’s proposal for Wasall North but believe the seat should be called Aldridge, Brownhills and Bloxwich.
- 5.10 The Labour plan for this area of Walsall borough places two extra wards into the existing Aldridge Brownhills seat. While this may appear a simple solution, this changes the orientation of this seat, with a substantial development gap between Streetly, Pheasey Park Farm and Paddock wards and the rest of the constituency. Therefore the Walsall wards which the Commission includes in the proposed Walsall South seat are both cohesive and look southwards rather than north or west. We believe that the Commission’s plans in Walsall (with the exception of a change to the west identified later) therefore make sense.
- 5.11 We also note that many of the objections from the existing Aldridge Brownhills are based on house price fears and the like. We believe that such unnecessarily stoked fears are not a justification for changing the Commission’s proposals. Others, while

maintaining a separate identity for Aldridge Brownhills acknowledge that they have moved from other areas (for example Representation 002635) thereby confirming our contention that this is not a distinct and separate community.

- 5.12 As we have indicated previously we are opposed to Labour's proposal for Wolverhampton and Walsall. Not only do they create a multi authority seat and what we believe to be an ill judged Aldridge Brownhills, the Labour Party also fail the substantial desire for a genuine Bilston based constituency. It also notably fails to recognise the community of Great Barr.
- 5.13 The four authority seat is based in Walsall but includes areas of Dudley, Wolverhampton and Sandwell. This is uniquely a seat with four boroughs and two orphan wards. This proposal is not acceptable to a Labour MP and many others. We share Roger Godsiff's belief (see opening comments above) that trying to represent four different boroughs in this way would not be practical. In his evidence to the Birmingham hearing (Day One, Birmingham hearing, 10.22am, Pages 5-13) Greg Cook (Page 12) seems to justify this seat on the basis of there being a three authority seat in Meriden, a proposal which he had previously disparaged (Page 10).
- 5.14 As we will show in relation to Wolverhampton (see below) in a revised counter proposal outlined by Robert Hayward at the Warwick hearing (Day One, 3.59pm, Pages 39-40) we take two Wolverhampton wards into a Walsall seat and vice versa to meet the well expressed view that Bilston should have a constituency based on that community.

d) Sandwell

- 5.15 As well as using an orphan ward (Wednesbury North) in their Walsall South seat the Labour Party are also thereby splitting the community of Wednesbury since the southern part of this area (Wednesbury South) is included in a separate seat.
- 5.16 We also do not agree with the Labour Party proposal that splits Sandwell into eight different seats, using no fewer than three orphan wards. Only one of Labour's Sandwell seats is wholly within the borough. This plan would substantially dissipate the voice of the borough while it faces the substantial issue of serious social deprivation. To put forward eight seats, seven of which are linked to other boroughs, is we believe another undesired first for any proposal across England. We think this is a serious breach of Rule 5 (1) b.
- 5.17 The Liberal Democrat proposal splits Sandwell into seven seats but also involves four orphan wards while both the Conservative Party and the Commission's proposals only involve Sandwell in six seats. This lower figure we regard as beneficial. We do however believe that the structure of seats should be changed better to reflect existing seats and community links (see Dudley below).

e) Dudley

- 5.18 One element of the Labour Regional submission with which we agree is that there should be separate Halesowen and Stourbridge constituencies. We also note that the Liberal Democrats disagree with the Commission's proposal to link the two communities.
- 5.19 While the other two major parties' plans to separate Stourbridge and Halesowen disrupt the whole of the West Midlands, the Conservative plans only change three

seats within the Commission's proposals. As is indicated in evidence by all parties the lines of communication in Dudley and Sandwell are not east-west but north-south. A key element of the Conservative Party proposals, unlike that of the Liberal Democrats and Labour, is also that our plan does not cross the West Midlands and Worcestershire or Staffordshire borders. (see Worcestershire above)

- 5.20 In the case of Stourbridge it is interesting to note that the submission (Representation 005370) by Christopher Bramall produces exactly the constituency we propose. Mr Bramall has fought the Stourbridge constituency three times as a Liberal Democrat.
- 5.21 We also note the evidence of James Morris the Member of Parliament for Halesowen and Rowley Regis (Day One, Birmingham hearing, 3.56pm, Pages 77-79) and Margot James the Member of Parliament for Stourbridge (Day Two, Warwick hearing, 9.58am, Pages 18-22).
- 5.22 We also note that the Commission's proposal for Dudley West has met with approval including Daniel Horrocks (Representation 014926) who expresses a view on behalf of himself and his organisation that the proposed seat is the "major part of the Dudley West seat which existed from 1974-97." We also note the evidence of the Member of Parliament for Dudley South Chris Kelly (Representation 017764).
- 5.23 We believe that Labour's proposal for other parts of Dudley also inadequately reflect existing constituency boundaries and results in two seats (Dudley North and Tipton and Dudley South and Rowley Regis) which meander east to west across Dudley and Sandwell boroughs. Their seats link, in Parliamentary terms, communities which are currently not linked, do not have natural lines of

communication and do not share common interests. Christopher Bramall (Representation 005370) also objects to the Commission's proposals as being east-west.

5.24 Labour also link Dudley and Sandwell in four separate seats.

5.25 We therefore support the proposed Dudley West constituency and we re-order the seats to create a Halesowen and Rowley Regis and Stourbridge seats which are very similar to the existing constituencies. In just this change 57,345 fewer electors move from the existing constituencies this being more compliant with Rule 5 (1) c.

f) Wolverhampton

5.26 The hearing at Birmingham received a very distinct if not unique, series of submissions in relation to Bilston. At the Warwick hearing the Conservative Party submitted a revised counter proposal that links the wards which the Bilston objectors most clearly identified as core i.e. Bilston North, Bilston East and Ettingshall within Wolverhampton and Darlaston South from Walsall. Lord Bilston in his evidence (Day Two, Birmingham hearing, 9.15am, Pages 4-8) quite specifically identified the wards of Bilston East, Bilston North and Ettingshall within Wolverhampton and other witnesses linked those with Darlaston South in Walsall. The Labour proposal splits Bilston from Ettingshall ward and we are surprised, given the strength of feeling expressed, that the Labour Party has not revised its proposal in this area.

5.27 Our revised counter proposal meets the residents' requests by moving Wednesfield North & South wards into a revised Walsall West and Wednesfield constituency and replacing them with Bilston East and Darlaston South, a seat which was

supported by the fact that an area of Wednesfield could only be reached through a neighbouring Walsall ward.

5.28 We are somewhat confused by the Liberal Democrat phraseology in their submission in relation to Wolverhampton. They “suggest that the Commission notes the widespread feeling at the hearings that an East/West split [of Wolverhampton] would be more appropriate” when, given the wards listed in their submission, they appear to propose a north/south split. Both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats suggest a dividing line for the city which is broadly north/south. Significantly both parties suggest that Oxley and Bushbury North fit together in one seat.

5.29 We are particularly surprised and disappointed that the Labour Party suggests splitting the Tettenhall wards. As their names suggest these wards cover an area of the city which has a long shared history which it is not necessary to break. Paul Uppal MP in his oral evidence at the Warwick hearing (Day One, Warwick hearing, 4.20pm, Pages 43-44) and others indicated that the two Tettenhall wards fit together and should not be either side of a newly created constituency boundary.

5.30 We strongly commend our revised proposal for Walsall and Wolverhampton which reflects community ties, the objections heard at the Birmingham hearing and historic ties within the area both to the west (Tettenhall) and south east (Bilston) of the city centre.

g) Birmingham

5.31 We note that in any major city there are links within any other area but that there are ongoing changes to cities where modern structures such as motorways form

barriers to communities but also that social mobility makes links which might previously have seemed abnormal normal.

5.32 We note the very large number of contributions from Sutton Coldfield. It is striking that so many of the representations at the Birmingham hearing and received in writing are based on misinformation. Representations 002096 and 002097 are cases in point. People have been convinced that their property values are at stake, their house insurance will be greater, motor insurance will change or that postal districts and titles will be altered. Paul McNamara (Representation 019840) refers to house prices, Lorraine Cantrell (Representation 022945) does likewise and Paul Meredith (Representation 012410) refers to not only a “negative impact on house prices [but also] a likely increase in car/house insurance and crime rates.”

5.33 We attach two leaflets, issued in different areas concerned, clearly intended to arouse fears. This sort of ill informed scaremongering is unacceptable and responses based on this should be disregarded by the Commission. In the case of Kingstanding the fear played on is less funding, while in Sutton it is being moved to Erdington.

5.34 It was striking that at the Birmingham hearing many people who spoke insisted they had no links with either Erdington or Kingstanding, only to confirm they had been born/went to school or were married in those areas or alternatively had moved from the areas and still had family there. These witnesses who were attempting to argue against the links between areas such as Walmley and Erdington/Kingstanding were in fact proving substantial and continuing links between the areas.

- 5.35 The objectors also play on the myth that Sutton and Kingstanding are currently totally separate. As Cllr Graham Green pointed out in his evidence (Day One, Birmingham hearing, 6.30pm, Pages 102-106) “Kingstanding police station did come under Sutton Coldfield.” Mr Gareth Compton (Day One, 12.27pm, Pages 34-38) and Cllr. Robert Alden (Day Two, 11.33am, Pages 33-39) in their substantial submissions to the Birmingham hearing identified links between these areas and that any alternative constituency would be based on areas that had no physical links across major motorway barriers.
- 5.36 We strongly support the evidence of Mr Compton and Cllr Alden in respect of the proposed Sutton Coldfield and Erdington constituencies. We appreciate the strength of feeling in these areas but believe we have shown that this is based on misinformation. We believe the Commission’s proposed constituencies are well shaped and robust which will make far more coherent constituencies. We believe any other proposals are less robust, have damaging consequences elsewhere and in the case of a swap of two wards will create a very poorly-shaped constituency with very limited linking between the different parts.
- 5.37 It is striking how Birmingham City Council use motorways and major roads as ward boundaries but the Labour Party propose to cross them regularly. The whole length of the M6 as it passes through Birmingham is used as ward boundaries. The Labour Party however propose to disregard this, despite the fact that for much of its length the M6 was built through either former industrial areas or open space. The construction of the roads was therefore, in many cases, only reinforcing existing dividing lines. We therefore take the view that where appropriate motorways can

reasonably form the basis for not only ward boundaries but constituency boundaries as well.

- 5.38 We note that there are only two pairs of wards in Birmingham which have cardinal compass points in their titles (Handsworth Wood and Lozells and East Handsworth, South Yardley and Stechford and Yardley North). It is notable that the Labour Party proposes to split both these apparently linked communities. We regret this and believe it further confirms Labour's plan does not link communities but rather splits them. We believe splitting both Handsworth and Yardley to be a serious breach of Rule 5 (1) b.
- 5.39 In the case of south Birmingham we note that both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives support the Commission in their proposals for the constituencies of Birmingham Edgbaston, Birmingham Harborne and Birmingham Northfield, although we propose that in the case of Birmingham Edgbaston the name should be Birmingham Edgbaston and Moseley.
- 5.40 The Labour Party attempted at the hearings to establish a link between the wards Bournville, Kings Norton, Brandwood and Billesley. We agree with them that there is a link between Bournville and Kings Norton but they failed to establish any link between those wards and the other two of Billesley and Brandwood.
- 5.41 We also note that there was a welcome for Edgbaston and Selly Oak wards being linked on the basis that they are the 'Birmingham University' wards. The university is on the boundary between the wards and accommodation etc stretches between the two.

h) Solihull

- 5.42 The overwhelming majority of submissions including those of the Labour Party oppose the Commission's proposal to link three local authorities across two counties in the form of the Meriden seat. We note elsewhere the strength of feeling against Coleshill and Water Orton wards being in Meriden.
- 5.43 We cannot agree with the Liberal Democrats in splitting parts of the existing Meriden seat and placing it with parts of North Warwickshire.
- 5.44 We appreciate there is no perfect solution to Meriden and Solihull. The Commission solve this problem by splitting Shirley. We believe this is the least worst option and agree with the Commission in respect of the Solihull borough wards. We believe the broad thrust of the Commission's proposals here, amended by the Conservative Party, to take account of the widespread desire for Meriden to include only West Midlands wards, is preferable to other proposals which as a consequence of change here results in much more disruption elsewhere.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 We believe broadly the Commission have done a good job in the West Midlands bearing in mind the difficulties they had, particularly with the size of wards in Birmingham.
- 6.2 We particularly welcome the county groupings and believe that these are the best possible option and the other options are worse.
- 6.3 We believe the number of crossings between Warwickshire and West Midlands can be reduced to one.
- 6.4 We also believe it is possible to limit the disruption, break fewer local ties and better respect the Rivers Wye and Severn.
- 6.5 We believe the proposals of the Labour Party are much less compliant with Rule 5 particularly in terms of local government links as they have six constituencies comprising of three local authorities and one comprising of four local authorities (in this case the four metropolitan districts of Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton). This compares with our plan which has only three constituencies comprising of three local authorities (all proposed by the Commission) and none comprising of four.
- 6.6 They also have a borough, Sandwell, comprising of eight seats rather than the six as proposed by us and the Commission.
- 6.7 They also link Worcestershire with the West Midlands and in doing so break important local ties in Hagley.
- 6.8 They also propose some unwieldy and poorly constructed constituencies, for example Newport and Wellington.

- 6.9 The Liberal Democrats proposed local government links are also very much worse also having six constituencies made up of three authorities and one of four authorities, albeit not metropolitan districts. They have no less than twelve cross-county constituencies as opposed to four under the Commission's proposals and three under our proposals.
- 6.10 So we believe the proposals of the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats are much worse than those of the Commission and ourselves, particularly under Rule 5 (1) b.
- 6.11 We believe we improve the Commission's proposals under all four factors under Rule 5 of the Rules for the Redistribution of Seats – Schedule 2 to the Act.
- 6.12 We better respect the Rivers Wye and Severn so being more compliant with Rule 5 (1) d.
- 6.13 We reduce from five to three the number of constituencies comprising of three local authorities and we cross the West Midlands-Warwickshire boundary once as opposed to twice. We are therefore more compliant with Rule 5 (1) b.
- 6.14 Over 65,000 fewer electors move from their existing constituency. We are therefore more compliant with Rule 5 (1) c.
- 6.15 We restore a number of local ties that are broken by the Commission, for example in Malvern, in the Golden Valley, in Coleshill, and in Bilston, so we are more compliant with Rule 5 (1) d.
- 6.16 We therefore commend our proposals as outlined in our final response to the initial proposals (Representation 025311).

KINGSTANDING DOES NOT WANT THE BOOT

"The London based Boundary Commission for England is proposing to boot Kingstanding out of Erdington Constituency for no good reason. The plan at the moment is to put us into Sutton Coldfield – an area completely different to here. If this goes ahead the impact on us here in Kingstanding could be serious. A number of organisations in Kingstanding have come together to fight these proposals which we think will be bad for our community."



Linda Hines, community activist

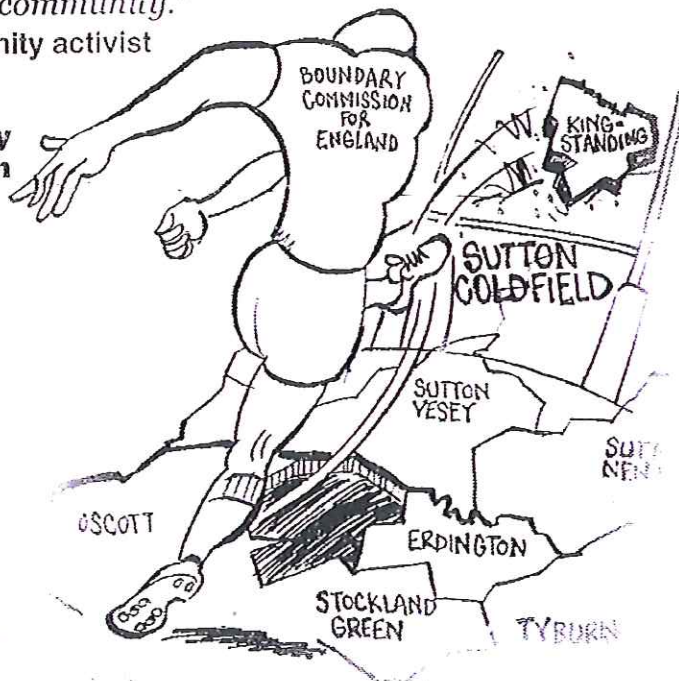


We have absolutely nothing in common with Sutton Coldfield.

"From housing to health the types of issues we deal with in Kingstanding are entirely different.

We have much more in common with Erdington, Tyburn and Stockland Green."

Local GP



Local charities believe it will make it far more difficult to attract funding.

"If third sector organisations working in Kingstanding could access more funding they would be able to have a greater impact within the community. If we go in with Sutton I fear we will end up with less cash to spend in Kingstanding"

Kevin Hayes – ENTA

Kingstanding and Sutton are both proud but different.

"Things are working well and we are working together in partnership across the Erdington wards to raise standards. Why change them? Chelmsley Wood was forced into Solihull and teacher colleagues have missed out on funding as a result and we are waiting to go into partnership across the wards to raise standards."

Matt Poyser – Chair of the Erdington Schools Consortium

PLEASE HELP US OPPOSE THESE CHANGES BY FILLING IN THE PETITION OVERLEAF

Kingstanding Standing Together includes the following Kingstanding Community Organisations

Elders with Attitude | Kingstanding GP | ENTA | Erdington Schools Cluster | New Heights Community Centre
 Kingstanding Parents and Carers ADHD Support Group | Kingstanding Carers Group
 Homestart Kingstanding | Kingstanding Regeneration Trust | Kings Rise Primary School
 Christ the King and Warren Farm Schools | Kingstanding Ex-Servicemans Club | Kingstanding Labour Party



Stand with us

Support our campaign to keep
Kingstanding out of Sutton Coldfield

1. Will you add your name to the petition which asks the Boundary Commission to keep Kingstanding in Erdington and out of Sutton Coldfield?

YES

NO

2. Can you tell us in your own words why you do not think Kingstanding should be part of Sutton Coldfield?

It would be helpful to share this with the Boundary Commission – please tick here if we cannot send this comment to them.

3. We need all the help we can get to persuade the Boundary Commission they have got this wrong.

Can you deliver some of these leaflets for us? Yes No Maybe

Can you collect some petition signatures for us? Yes No Maybe

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email

Telephone

Please return to Linda Hines, Kingstanding Standing Together, 87 Witton Lodge Road, Birmingham, B23 5DJ.
Kingstanding Standing Together might contact you using details you have provided above.

YOU ARE MOVING TO ERDINGTON

under proposals from the Boundary Commission for England



WWW.NEWHALLINSUTTON.WORDPRESS.COM

Autumn 2011

The Boundary Commission for England proposes to move New Hall Ward (Wylde Green, Walmley, Thimble End, and Minworth) into Erdington constituency and replace it with Kingstanding. You live in New Hall ward so what does this mean for you?

- **You will elect an Erdington MP**
- **Your house will not be in Sutton Coldfield Constituency**
- **You will have NO SAY over how money is spent in Sutton Coldfield**
- **Your links to Sutton Coldfield will be history**

<http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>

What can we do to stop it.? The Boundary Commission have asked for responses in writing by **5th December**. If you disagree with these proposals it is vital you tell the Boundary Commission either by using the **form over-leaf** or by going to web address above

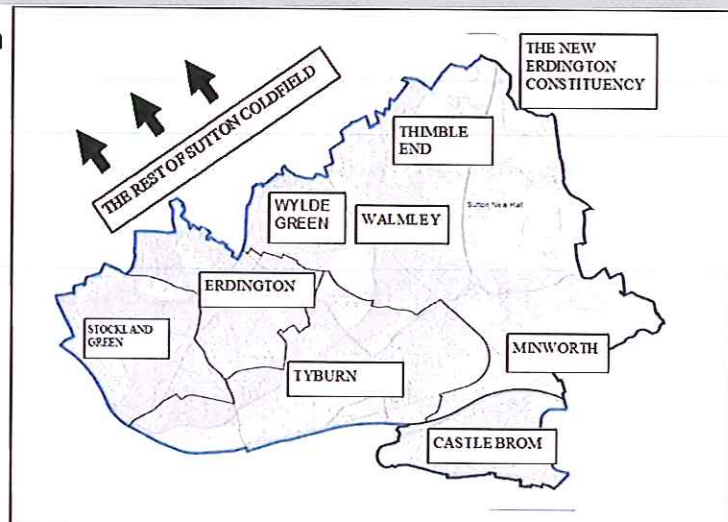
The Boundary Commission is also holding a public meeting. You need to register to speak.

- **Location:** Copthorne Hotel, Paradise Circus, Birmingham, B3 3HJ
- **Date:** 03 Nov 2011 to 04 Nov 2011
- **Time:** Day 1: 10:00 – 20:00; Day 2: 09:00 – 17:00

You need to register to speak. <http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/have-your-say/register-interest/> Again it is vital that we get as many people there as possible.



This leaflet has been printed and delivered by Chris Hillcox, 2 Newhall Drive, Sutton Coldfield, B75 7UU. Tel 07783903096 01213780528 email chrishillcox1@hotmail.com in conjunction with **Walmley Residents' Association.**



WWW.NEWHALLINSUTTON.WORDPRESS.COM

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tele-
phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

I **disagree** with the boundary commission proposal to move Sutton New Hall to Erdington and Kingstanding from Erdington to Sutton. (please tick)

If you fill out the box below it will help the campaign—we will pass you comments to the boundary commission and will include with it your contact details.

For the attention of the Boundary Commission: My view about this proposal is:

This leaflet has been paid for and delivered by a small number of New Hall residents—we need more help to stop these proposals. Please tick if you can help with any of the following things:

- I can deliver some of these leaflets in my area
- I can donate some paper
- I can collect petition signatures—send me a petition

Please return this form asap to **Chris Hillcox, 2 Newhall Drive, Sutton Coldfield, B75 7UU** or leave at **Jeff's Useful Shop, Walmley Village**. We will not share any information you give us with anyone apart from with the Boundary Commission. We may contact you using the details you have given above. If you do not wish to be contacted please write to Chris Willcox at the address above.