

APPENDIX 2

The Labour Group's proposal

The Boundary Commission's proposals move two wards – North and St Margaret's – from Oxford East constituency to Oxford West and Abingdon constituency. The City Council accepts that two wards have to be moved to achieve the required number of electors on the December 2015 register, but proposes that rather than moving the St Margaret's ward from the current Oxford West and Abingdon to the new Oxford East, the Jericho and Osney ward should be moved instead.

The City Council's amendment to the Boundary Commission proposals would retain the numerical balance required, but would achieve better outcomes in terms of community and connectivity.

Community

The Jericho and Osney ward, like North ward, is part of both the University area and the city centre area of Oxford, and is therefore socially and culturally intrinsically connected to its neighbouring wards - North, Carfax, Holywell and Hinksey Park - all of which will be in Oxford East under the Boundary Commission proposals. The ward contains major city centre facilities like the Said Business School and Oxford railway station, which connect to the rest of the city centre and would benefit from being in the same constituency. Indeed, under the masterplan for the redevelopment of the railway station, the new station buildings will actually end straddling the boundary with platforms in two different constituencies. Moreover, including Jericho and Osney in Oxford East would ensure that the entire core of Oxford University was in a single constituency rather than being split across two constituencies.

Local shops and facilities used by residents are either on Walton Street or the City Centre. The Jericho GPs' surgery on Walton Street would be in one constituency, while all the people it serves would be in another under the unamended proposals; the building of the surgery and the opening up of the Radcliffe Infirmary site (in North Ward) has reinforced links between Jericho and the rest of the University/city centre area. The City Council's proposed amendment would put the surgery and local facilities on both sides of Walton Street into the same constituency.

The Osney and Botley Road area has close social, cultural and economic links into the city centre, with the majority of facilities and resources to be found in the other city centre wards of Carfax, Holywell and Hinksey Park, all of which will be in Oxford East.

Conversely, St Margaret's is socially and culturally the southern part of the Summertown area of North Oxford, and therefore links to that ward and the Wolvercote ward to the north; shops, leisure facilities, doctors and so on are almost wholly in the Summertown district centre. Under the Boundary Commission proposals this part of the broader Summertown area will be separated off from the Summertown ward immediately to the north, when they in fact make a single broad community. This point is further emphasised by the emergent Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan, which is being developed by community groups and will cover the entirety of both

wards. The City Council amendment keeps the two wards in the same constituency, retaining the community in one area.

Connectivity

While the shape of the Jericho and Osney ward makes it appear that it is connected to the Wolvercote ward in Oxford and the Wytham area of Vale of White Horse, this is highly misleading. Jericho and Osney contains a large meadow that makes up the greater part of the area of the ward; this meadow has no residents and crucially no roads, nor even footpaths that are passable for 12 months of the year because the area is often flooded during the winter. The inhabited parts of the Jericho and Osney ward are almost entirely concentrated at the far southern and south-eastern end, the exception being the hamlet of Binsey which is only accessible from the Botley Road anyway.

This means that there are no connections within Oxford at all, other than seasonal footpaths, between the Jericho and Osney ward and the Wolvercote ward to the north, that would not have to go through the Oxford East constituency. There are no links of any sort between the Jericho and Osney ward and the Summertown ward that do not pass through the Oxford East constituency.

Under the Boundary Commission's proposals therefore, the Oxford West and Abingdon seat would have a geography whereby it would be only possible to travel by road within the constituency from the northern most house of Jericho and Osney ward to the southern most house in the Summertown ward (a distance of 1500m at most) by making a journey of at around 10km along the A34. Even on foot across the meadow via Wolvercote would involve a walk of at least 5km.

In other words, the inclusion of Jericho and Osney in the Oxford West and Abingdon seat at the same time as North ward is included in the Oxford East seat makes Jericho in particular an 'appendix', cut off from the rest of its constituency.

The City Council's proposed amendment would instead mean that St Margaret's ward became the southern-most part of the city in Oxford West and Abingdon, but there would be no similar need for lengthy diversions to get to other parts of the city in the same constituency. Wolvercote would be directly to the north, and beyond that Kidlington. The connections by road from Wolvercote to Wytham or from Kidlington to Botley remain unchanged.

Conclusion

The moving of Jericho and Osney ward into Oxford East and St Margaret's ward into Oxford West and Abingdon achieves the same outcome of numerically equal constituencies, but at the same time achieves much better outcomes in terms of connectivity, community and administrative ease. Oxford City Council therefore asks that the Boundary Commission amends its proposals in this way.

The Liberal Democrat Group Proposal

Following consultation, the opposition LibDem group has the following suggestions in regard to the BCE proposals, which as you can see differ from the controlling group view:

Retain North & St. Margaret's in OxWAb.

Move Carfax and Holywell to OxWAb.

Move Garsington, Sandford and Wheatley to Oxford East.

The main arguments against the Commission's proposals are:

1. Their proposed OxWAb would be made up of parts of four different councils. This would make representing the seat overly complicated.
2. Their proposed OxWAb would have such a small part of Oxford City, and effectively split into two parts, that it would not be well represented.
3. Their proposed OxWAb would have such a small part of South Oxfordshire that it would not be well represented.
4. There is no community ties between the SODC wards and the rest of the OxWAb community.
5. There are strong community ties between the SODC wards and Oxford East. In addition, we would argue that moving Jericho and Osney ward would be anomalous, as the Oxford East constituency would then contain the most westerly part of the city.

The Green Group's proposals

The Green Group proposes that North and Jericho & Osney wards be transferred into Oxford East, rather than North and St. Margaret's as proposed by the Boundary Commission.

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