

**Record of a Public Hearing held into the Provisional  
Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries  
Commissioner for Northern Ireland in respect of the proposed  
Belfast Local Government District held at the City Hall, Belfast  
on 18 January 2007 – 19 January 2007**

*The Assistant Commissioner, Ms Roisin McGlone, opened the  
public hearing at 09.45am.*

<p>Ms Roisin McGlone Assistant Commissioner</p>	<p>Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is 9:45am and if it is convenient for everyone, I propose to open this public hearing into the proposed Local Government District of Belfast. My name is Roisin McGlone and I have been appointed as the Assistant Commissioner to conduct the public hearing for the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland. I just want to make some formal opening remarks and outline how the proceedings will be conducted. At this stage, I would remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones and put the pagers and beepers on silent.</p> <p>This hearing will consider the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations for the name and boundary of the proposed District of Belfast; the name, number and boundaries of its constituent wards; and the representations made in respect of those recommendations. I will take full account of the oral and written submissions made in respect of the recommendations in submitting my written report to the Commissioner within four weeks of the close of this hearing.</p> <p>I want to emphasise that my function is independent of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. I am not here to defend his Provisional Recommendations. I am here to listen to the evidence and information that is provided by interested parties in respect of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations. I would make clear from the outset that I will not be able to consider any representations on matters that fall outside the legislative framework for the work of the Commissioner. For example, I cannot consider arguments for an alternative number of local government districts to the seven as set out in the legislation, although I am quite happy to acknowledge any representations made in relation to that. My report will be independent of the Commissioner, and he can either accept or reject my findings and recommendations, if any, in due course.</p> <p>I am assisted today by members of the Office of the Local</p>
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Government Boundaries Commissioner and staff from Morrow Communications. On my left is Mandy Morrison, Secretary to the Commissioner. There is also Dermot Harkin and Crawford McIlveen on my right. Please approach any of these members of staff with any queries that you have about the hearing and they will be pleased to help you or to draw the matter to my attention in due course. I would also like to point out that the hearing is being recorded and a transcript of the hearing will be made publicly available.

Very shortly I am going to adjourn the hearing for no more than 10 minutes so that Mandy can meet those of you who wish to make oral representation and informally arrange an order in which you can be heard.

Copies of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations are available for consultation at the desk at the back of the room, as are copies of the Procedure Guide. There are also bound copies of written submissions relating to this district, which have been made to the Commissioner during the eight-week consultation period that ended on 5 January 2007.

The purpose of this hearing is substantially to obtain local views. If you have a view on the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations, this is your opportunity to make it heard. I must emphasise that what you cannot do is reserve your position and await my report. It will not be possible to make written or oral submissions to me after the hearing has been concluded. I have already examined the written representations received thus far closely as part of my preparation for this hearing. I will be taking those into account in formulating my report for the Commissioner. Some of you, who have made written representations, may wish to elaborate on and develop them during the course of the hearing. I welcome that, as this would really assist me in considering and clarifying the various issues that they are addressing.

If you wish to propose, elaborate or substantial counter proposals that have not already been made to the Commissioner, it would be helpful if you could inform Mandy during the short adjournment. However, if you have already made your points fully in writing, do not feel under any obligation to make any oral submission. You may wish to simply state your support or oppose a particular proposal for the reasons that you have already stated in writing. I can assure you that full account will be taken of the written submissions, whether or not they are referred to you during the course of this hearing.

As for the practical arrangements in the speaking order, I will try to accommodate people as far as reasonably

possible. There may be people due to work commitments or personal difficulties who wish to get away as early as possible and cannot stay for long. I will try to give them priority as much as I can. If there is anyone who wishes to be heard and has difficulty being present at a particular time, please let me know so that I can try and make arrangements for a suitable time. I would ask people to be flexible if they can.

It has been the custom in the past to hear first from the elected Members of Parliament from the respective local government areas, then Members of the Legislative Assembly, local councillors, and thereafter members of the public. There is no significance to this order, save that elected representatives often have other duties to attend to and while not making light of people's work and other commitments, this is a custom that I intend to adopt.

Let me say a word about the procedure we will follow in relation to the oral submissions. You will be called to come up to the front seating area, where you are at present in front of me, and speak from where you would be sitting, provided you can be heard and that what you say is relevant and material to today's proceedings. Microphones are in place. In making your submission could you please start by stating your name and whether you are speaking in a personal capacity or in a representative capacity, and if so for whom. Also please could you state at the outset whether you have made a written submission.

If you have a summary or a note of your submission you wish to make today, could you please provide me with a copy of that and provide some copies for the secretariat. If you do not already have copies of your statement, please approach a member of staff during the adjournment and they will arrange for copies to be made.

Your oral submission will be of particular assistance if you are able to explain the reasons why you have taken a particular position and if you are able to explain any counter proposals, which you may wish to make and the reasons for those counter proposals. When you have finished your oral submission, other people may like the opportunity to put questions to you in relation to your submission and any counter proposals you may make. I too may have some questions for you as well as points of clarification.

Just in regard to questioning, formal cross-examination is not appropriate at a hearing of this nature. However, I am very happy for people to put questions to the speaker through myself. Similarly for the person answering the question, I will facilitate that in the best way possible. The most important thing today is to hear the information, to

	<p>hear any counter points and to get through the hearing as efficiently as possible. I would like to emphasise that it is my hope and expectation that the hearing will be conducted in an informal manner, conducive to all those who wish to contribute and that proceedings being permitted to give it their best. I am sure that this will be the case.</p> <p>I want to touch briefly on visits on the ground. After this hearing is over, I may go to view areas under consideration. If there is a particular boundary or feature that you want me to look at, then please mention it during the course of the evidence. I will note that and try to arrange and go and see it.</p> <p>Upon entering the room today, you will have been given the opportunity to record your attendance. If you have not already done so, would you please ensure that you do so during the short adjournment.</p> <p>Signing the register will also assist us should it be necessary to evacuate the building during the course of the hearing, because it will enable us to check that everyone is accounted for. I have been asked to tell you that in the event of an alarm sounding it will not be a practice: it will be the real thing and it would be necessary for us to evacuate the building. I would like to hand over to Mandy now to give you the procedures for evacuation.</p>
<p>Ms Mandy Morrison Secretary to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner</p>	<p>Thank you. In such an event, you should all leave the building immediately by the nearest route and follow the directions of the security staff. All fire routes are highlighted by exit and emergency signs, and they will be pointed out by our staff around today as well as security staff. Evacuation of the building should take place in an orderly fashion. You should assist any guests in wheelchairs or who may need help to leave the building. You are required not to use the lifts. All persons must proceed to the front lawn area in Donegall Square North. Do not attempt to remove your car if you are parked in the City Hall Car park, and once the City Hall is evacuated you are required to remain outside until you are advised to re-enter by security staff.</p>
<p>Ms McGlone</p>	<p>Thank you, Mandy. I would also just like to remind everyone that the building is completely non smoking and people who do smoke, can smoke outside the building. I also want to advise you that the public toilets including disabled toilets are on my left, downstairs.</p> <p>As far as the times of this hearing are concerned, we have two days available if necessary. I intend to break for lunch between 1pm and 2pm and expect to finish about 5:30pm. However, subject to how people at the hearing feel, I am not going to get hung up on these times. If, for example, we are in the middle of a matter involving concentration on</p>

	<p>which people are focused, I would rather finish that part of the discussion. I do not intend to stop for coffee or tea breaks. However, free tea and coffee is available and provided at the registration area. If people so wish, please feel free to get up and take a break. I will of course stop for adjournments, if issues arise of procedure or if people feel that there is a difficulty.</p> <p>That is really all I want to say in my opening remarks. As I had indicated earlier, I will now adjourn for 10 minutes. Just before that adjournment I would like to hand over to Mandy so that she can tell you how we are going to manage the oral submissions.</p>
Ms Morrison	<p>Thank you. For anybody who wishes to speak, could I just ask you to come forward and we can discuss, once the adjournment takes place, about the procedure and the running order.</p> <p>I will need your name and the organisation that you are representing and whether you want to speak in a personal capacity or representing someone else. I know you have already given some of those details to Morrow Communications, but it would also be helpful to be aware of what aspects of the Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations you want to speak about and just to clarify whether you have submitted a written representation. I would also like you to give a general indication of the times that you think it might take you to present your representation. We will certainly not hold people to that, but it is just to give us an indication so that there is efficient timetabling of the hearing. I am aware that many of you want to speak today but I am not sure, depending on numbers, how that will pan out. You will understand there might be a necessity for people to be asked to come back at a later stage.</p>
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much, Mandy, I would now like to adjourn for approximately 10 minutes. Thank you very much.
	Adjournment
Ms McGlone	I would now like to call Sean Begley from Sinn Fein to speak first please, thank you.
Mr Sean Begley Sinn Fein	Thank you very much. We have made a written submission about the recommendations. I would like to put on record at this hearing — as I have done at all the other hearings — that Sinn Fein supports the seven-council model. Within the seven-council model, the Boundaries Commissioner has to work within certain guidelines to try to break the council areas up into as near as 60 wards as possible. We are happy that we have got them broken up into 60 wards, right across the seven councils. We see the wards as building blocks for the District Electoral Areas (DEAs) and obviously there would be another Commissioner sitting regarding the DEAs. We are not really going to get into any great discussion about the wards. The only ward that I want to mention maybe later is

the Short Strand area and where it should be situated.

I know this is not really for the Boundaries Commissioner, but I just have to put on record, in terms of local government, that it is important to get all the dimensions of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) right. In a document regarding the RPA about our government for Northern Ireland which was issued previously, it said that it was important that we had a shared future. It is important that there is a shared future and it is important that there is proper legislation put in place, although I accept that is not for this office. It is important because we have three mainly Nationalist Councils, three mainly Unionist Councils and we have Belfast.

We have made it clear to the Commissioner at the start, that there needed to be a 20% of the minority population in the three predominantly Nationalist or Unionist Councils, and that this should be backed up by legislation. We also made it very clear that Belfast needed to be as near a 50-50 unionist/nationalist split as possible. I know that is not part of this Review's consideration, but it is important that we put it on record because certainly this is important in all aspects of RPA.

In terms of Belfast, we generally agree with the Boundaries Commissioner's recommendations. In the North of the city the M2 was used accurately as a point where the city would be cut and we would generally agree with that. We would agree that to get Belfast up to 60 wards and to get it up to 60 Councillors, obviously he had to look at the councils around Belfast. East and Inner East are the other two Councils which really would wrap around it. What the Commissioner has decided is to take a number of wards out of Lisburn and out of the Castlereagh Council areas. And I think there can be no argument against the wards that have come out of Lisburn, because they naturally looked to West Belfast and are naturally part of Belfast.

The more difficult one would be Castlereagh and a number of wards have come into Belfast, obviously from Castlereagh District Council and I think the Commissioner had to use the outer ring as a sort of a cut-off point.

There might be an argument that Carryduff would come into Belfast. We would oppose that because that would start to create an imbalance in two council areas and really we believe that that cannot happen. We need a balance right across if we are talking about a seven-council model. We would agree with what has been recommended from Castlereagh into Belfast, and that is our party's position on it; Carryduff would stay and that the ring road would be the point used.

	The one particular area of Belfast I want to talk about is Short Strand, and where it might sit. It might not be your remit, but Short Strand is a Nationalist area, so it has never had representation really from any type of Nationalist councillor. We feel that that is not right and I would ask the Commissioner maybe to look at that particular ward again to see if it can be re-configured.
Mr Bob Stoker Councillor Belfast City Council	Just on a point of procedure, is it allowed for an interjection to be made to put the record straight?
Mr Begley	No.
Ms McGlone	What I propose to do, Mr Stoker, is to wait until Mr Begley has finished and I will ask everyone to make any points.
Mr Begley	<p>We will propose that the Short Strand ward possibly could be reconfigured, into City Hall ward, or Woodstock ward. So we would ask you to look at that.</p> <p>As I did say previously, we are not going to get into any discussion or contention about the wards in general. We are talking more or less about Belfast in broad terms because we see the wards are only building blocks for DEAs and that is our position right across all the councils and is an overall Sinn Fein position.</p> <p>You have written comments that I want to make and you have a written submission which covers all that sort of detail which I have mentioned. Obviously we will look forward at a later stage to the Commissioner and the DEAs, which I think would be a much more difficult job. Thank you.</p>
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much, Mr Begley. I would request that if anyone wants to make some comments, you do so through myself.
Mr Bob Stoker Councillor Belfast City Council	Just from the point of clarification, he said that the Short Strand area had never had any Nationalist representation, Councillor Joe O'Donnell from Sinn Fein was actually an elected member for that area. Also I do not think that can be used as an argument for any particular change in boundaries as it is not a consideration that the Commissioner can take account of.
Ms McGlone	Sean, would you like to respond to that?
Mr Begley	I think the new configuration is difficult for that particular area to have a proper representation, so I have made a request that you would re-look at it in terms of Woodstock and City Hall wards.
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much.
Mr Begley	That may not be possible and possibly you may have to look at it later in terms of the DEAs.
Ms McGlone	Thank you.
Ms McGlone	Are there any other points of clarification?
Dr Stephen Farry, General Secretary, Alliance Party NI	I just want to clarify a point of procedure. The issue of the perceived religious backgrounds or perceived political persuasion of the electorates in any particular ward or

	<p>proposed ward is not actually a material consideration for the Commissioner. I just want to confirm that that is the case.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>That is correct.</p>
Dr Farry	<p>The second question I just want to ask Sean is, does he recognise that the issue of how a ward is designed is not material to what the political make-up of who is elected because that is the key issue for the DEAs rather than wards?</p> <p>Just to clarify that, I make the point that a ward is not actually relevant in determining the political makeup of any area. The key consideration is how the DEA is comprised. It is not actually how a ward boundary is comprised.</p>
Mr Begley	<p>Well, I will accept that, but at the end of the day you start at the ward and you build into the DEA, so it could be that your argument would not necessarily stand up to be correct. DEAs are the key but the wards are the building blocks, so that argument would not stand up.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>Can I just clarify at this stage, this would not be a consideration for me or the Commissioner.. Does anyone else want to make any further clarification or comments on that submission? Thank you very much. Next we have Dr Stephen Farry from the Alliance Party.</p>
Dr Farry	<p>Thank you very much, madam Assistant Commissioner. I am Stephen Farry, General Secretary of the Alliance Party and I am speaking on behalf of the party as a whole. We have made a written submission, which I am essentially speaking to and elaborating upon.</p> <p>Just to make a couple of points, we have gone through a number of principles and a written submission, and most of those are not as crucial issues in Belfast as they would be in other areas.</p> <p>A key point we will make is that we think that there are a number of areas in which ward boundaries can be straightened out and clarified. And as far as practically possible, we would urge the Commissioner to use natural boundaries to separate wards; and where natural boundaries are not available, to try to use main or arterial routes. We are aware of a number of cases in which boundaries are proposed to run down the middle of what are essentially residential streets, or where areas that are effectively natural housing developments or communities are split up without any necessary rationale for that.</p> <p>The other general point we will make is that we are conscious that the Provisional Recommendations referred to each of the seven councils having 60 wards and 60 councillors arising from that. There is a range of 55-65 for the potential number of wards in each area, and it may be that not sticking rigidly to the 60 mark may allow more natural wards to be drawn within some of the councils,</p>

including the Belfast area. We have not worked up a thorough counter proposal for Belfast but we have made a number of points that we would like the Commissioner to take into account.

In relation to the overall boundaries of Belfast, first of all, I think we are content with the boundaries in relation to the North and the West of the City. We have not made any direct comment on the boundary in the East, but we would make some representations in relation to the boundary in the Southern end of the City in relation to the proposed East Council. We note that a large part of Castlereagh or the current Castlereagh Borough is proposed to come into East, and those wards tend to be from the Castlereagh East and Castlereagh Central DEAs, as they currently stand.

However, there are a number of wards on the Western end of Castlereagh which are proposed to be part of the East Council. From our point of view, we think that there should be a consistency in the boundary between Belfast and the Eastern area, and that that should either be consistently the dual carriageway around the fringe of Belfast or it should be effectively the build line around the city. As things stand at the moment, some wards on the fringe, the Castlereagh fringe of Belfast are proposed to come into East, and others are not. In effect you are going to have three wards that are going to be separated from the rest of the East Council. Effectively they will have to be serviced through travelling through Belfast. We think it makes sense to transfer the Four Winds, Beechill, Knockbreda wards into Belfast City, and that using the build line around Belfast is the most natural boundary at the southern or south-eastern end of the City. And that that can easily be accommodated. That may necessitate moving to 63 wards within Belfast or it may open up opportunities to make further revisions of the ward boundaries within the city and in the process tidy up some boundaries to accommodate that.

So, effectively, our main point would be, that there should be consistency of the boundary in relation to Castlereagh and Belfast, and that we would suggest it should be the build line rather than the dual carriageway, and the three wards should be transferred in.

We also have a number of comments in relation to the internal ward boundaries within Belfast. We have set those out in detail in our written submission and I do not think there is any need for me to formally read those out again and place them on the record. I think they can stand and we are happy to take questions on those if anyone wishes to raise any issues in relation to what we have said as regards the detail within our written submission. Thank

	you.
Ms McGlone	<p>Are there any points of clarification needed on that at the moment?</p> <p>Stephen, maybe I could ask you a few questions. I noticed on your submission, I am not going to refer to all of that, but one of the points that you raise is in relation to Orangefield. You are probably aware the Ordnance Survey people are here today and we have had a look at different proposals. I think you will be very aware of the 10% variance principle applied by the Commissioner in defining wards to achieve substantially the same electorate for all wards within a district, as required by the statutory rules. What you propose would substantially reduce the Orangefield ward and increase the Cavehill ward. I am wondering if you have any counter proposals in terms of other boundaries that could be adjusted in relation to that? I do not notice any, but maybe I have overlooked them in the submission.</p>
Dr Farr	Just to clarify, are you referring to Oldpark and Cavehill?
Ms McGlone	Sorry no, it is the Orangefield and Beersbridge wards.
Dr Farry	<p>Thank you for that. We do have not any specific counter proposals on that. We are conscious that some of these proposals will have implications for the proposed population size. I think it is fair to say that these cannot be addressed in a judicial manner. Where one boundary is adjusted, it may have knock-on consequences elsewhere. In trying to rectify some of these problems, other boundaries in relation to wards that themselves join Orangefield may have to be taken into consideration as well, in order to address some of those problems.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>I appreciate that and that is one of the difficulties in terms of the size of the wards. It is not within my remit to look at other proposals of my own or outside of these hearings. So for example, hypothetically, if we were looking at a ward and it was substantially reduced, say, by approximately 700, and the adjoining ward was increased by 700, that may not be within the legal framework. I just want to make that point.</p>
Dr Farry	<p>Just to clarify, are you suggesting that those making representations need to make a counter proposal as to how a boundary needs to be drawn as opposed to identifying what is an effective problem within the current boundaries?</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>I am suggesting that according to the legal framework of the order, it is not within my remit to compensate. Where there is a proposal to compensate at another part of the ward, that just is not within my remit. The difficulty then is the decision has to be taken as to whether you go, for example, hypothetically with an electorate of 4,000 as opposed to one in an adjoining ward which would maybe 2,000-2,100. So, just to clarify I am suggesting that counter proposals would be very useful.</p>

Dr Farry	Just to clarify on that. We have made a number of proposals which should be relatively straightforward. For example, we suggested the boundary between Woodstock and Beersbridge ward should be straightened at Redcar Street. I take it that can be counted effectively as a counter proposal?
Ms McGlone	Yes, absolutely.
Dr Farry	But there are others where there are knock-on implications where we would need to table a counter proposal. The difficulty with that is in terms of resources for parties trying to crunch numbers, because it is a fairly complicated process. I think it is fair to say that our expectation as a party would be that it is ultimately for the Boundaries Commissioner to address the problems where they have been identified. But I do not think it is realistic for those who are identifying problems, to come up with detailed solutions to problems.
Ms Morrison	I am Mandy Morrison, Secretary to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. I hear what you are saying and the information that you put forward and there are certain things that can be looked at by the Assistant Commissioner. However the position of both the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner is that if there is no evidence or arguments that are within the rules to substantiate why you have put forward a proposal or an objection on a particular issue, it makes it very hard for them to second guess what you are proposing. To be able to make a reasoned judgment, it really is the responsibility of individuals putting forward written submissions to make those details available. Just to clarify, it is not population size but electorate size in the wards, and the rules do state that the Commissioner is expected to have substantially the same number of electors in each ward within a district. The point would be that in the Orangefield/Beersbridge situation, that would not be the case and obviously this would have a knock-on effect when you look across other wards adjacent to those two wards. Thank you.
Ms McGlone	I believe there are a few questions here.
Mr Ray Kennedy South Belfast SDLP	Actually, they are not so much questions, but rather a few points.
Ms McGlone	Excuse me, sir, you could just introduce yourself.
Mr Kennedy	Sorry, I was just going to do that. My name is Ray Kennedy. Dr Alasdair McDonnell is unable to make it, but I am here make representation for both for South Belfast and myself. On this particular point, I think the Assistant Commissioner should also recognise the difficulty of individuals and even political parties of trying to move the boundaries around the wards to recalculate, because we do not know the number of electorate per streets at that micro level. As long as you know to be aware and to recognise this. And also if we have to, can I ask the question that if we have two days set aside for this and an issue like this that crops up, does that mean we can come

	back within the period of two days?
Ms McGlone	<p>Absolutely, no problem. The two days have been set aside and I am aware that you may not have access to the information that I would have, but I have to emphasise the limitations of my role as well, and it is important to understand that it is about an electorate as well as boundaries.</p> <p>Just to give an example to try to bring this to a close. It may seem sensible, for example, looking at a map about a particular row of houses, but when you actually look at the calculation of that, it may involve a substantial number of voters. Just to emphasise that again it may seem very sensible to redraw a boundary along the back of houses or whatever, but that can substantially upset the ward and adjoining wards.</p>
Dr Farry	<p>To make a point - I think it is worthwhile putting into the record is that I think it is fair to say that some of the difficulties with the ward boundaries where they do cut down streets is a reflection of the rushed time scale in which this process is actually occurring and that a set of Provisional Recommendations had to be produced within a very short period of time.</p> <p>As a party we do not feel that it allowed us the consideration of all the permutations by the Boundaries Commissioner in making his recommendations which would address some of these difficulties. We are disappointed that the consequences of that is actually shifting quite a burden onto those making representations who wish to try to rectify some of those problems, so I think a lot of these issues could have been actually picked up at the outset.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>I will certainly acknowledge that, Stephen. I was not part of that process and this is a new process and we will do the best that we can within the parameters of where we are.</p> <p>Are there any other points of clarification</p>
Mr William Dickson Blackstaff Community Development Association	You mentioned about natural boundaries, why do you so emphasise that point?
Dr Farry	<p>Well, it is perhaps not as big an issue within Belfast as it would be elsewhere, but I think as far as possible wards should reflect natural communities and should not split up housing developments.</p> <p>This becomes a major issue whenever the DEAs are subsequently constructed in a latter process because if you break up what in effect are natural communities that creates a process whereby either DEAs then become unnatural or the possible permutations of DEAs is constrained. So we think that using natural boundaries as far as possible keeps communities together and gives most flexibility with respect to how you assemble your</p>

	DEAs.
Ms McGlone	If there are no other questions, Mr Farry, are you happy enough that you have been heard?
Dr Farry	Yes, could you just clarify that the rest of our suggestions regarding housing can be considered as counter proposals? Whenever you have referred to the Orangefield issues, was that the only issues where there was a difficulty?
Ms McGlone	There are a number of other ones. There was another one which was the last one that you made - the Shankill-Crumlin ward boundary. I have not had the time to go into these in detail but there are a number of other ones that are bordering on over the 10% and I could perhaps get Crawford McIlveen, from Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland to point those out to you.
Dr Farry	Yes, sure, just with reference to the Shankill issue, I think most of that does not actually affect residential areas, it reflects what are sometimes termed commercial buildings.
Ms McGlone	No, there are on the right-hand side going up a substantial number of houses which would — sorry I just cannot be specific about this — be coming out of one ward into another, and it is a substantial part of the electorate.
Dr Farry	Also on a point of clarification as well, if any of the hearings recommends a change in the overall boundaries of the councils and you end up with an addition of wards to be moved into those that will create an issue for the Commissioner as regards whether to keep at the figure of 60. Do they have a second process of shifting internal boundaries to make those 60 wards, or whether to vary the 60 figure to accommodate the original wards?
Ms McGlone	My understanding is that a decision would be taken at a later stage that if there were extra wards, that it would be a decision by the Commissioner: he would either recalculate the electorate to have the 60 wards or go for a higher number of wards. Again, that then has a knock-on effect on the other districts as well — do you recalculate the figures in the other district or do you go with the lesser amount of wards?
Dr Farry	Thank you very much.
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much for that. We will move on now to Ray Kennedy from the SDLP
Mr Kennedy	<p>Hello, thank you very much and good morning everyone. I have five key points to make in relation to the proposed changes in the boundaries in Belfast, but specifically in and around south Belfast.</p> <p>I do not wander too much away from south Belfast but in general terms the proposals, I think, should be welcomed as a starting point or an initial attempt to divide the proposed new Belfast City Council area. However, I believe that substantial changes are necessary to these proposals in almost every proposed ward if they are to</p>

become robust enough to be fit for purpose.

The wards may not be relevant to the point that was made earlier in relation to who is going to be elected. But they are relevant in relation to how people feel and the identity that the specific ward will create amongst people, and also where the polling stations are.

Newtownbreda and Carryduff is the first point. That area should no longer remain outside the city boundary. If Tullycarnet, for example, has now been proposed as part of the city of Belfast, there is absolutely no reason why BT8 in its entirety should not be part of the city. I would recommend that you review the new Belfast city boundary on the south eastern side of the Saintfield Road, to include the Purdysburn and Carryduff areas. Additionally, I do not see any rational or logical justification for the exclusion of the Newtownbreda area, encompassing the proposed new wards of Newtownbreda, Four Winds and Beechill, from the Belfast City Council area.

Carryduff is, and always has been, a part of Belfast. If you take it right back to the early part of the last century when Belfast was numbered 1-15, even the postal address for Carryduff and Newtownbreda is Belfast BT8. It is accepted by everyone as being that. It is part of Belfast except in relation to the council. I believe that people living there identify themselves there as being part of Belfast and should be considered within the Belfast city boundary. I remain committed to the assertion that the city boundary should be on the south side and include the Beechill, Four Winds and the Purdysburn wards. I would also ask you to consider changing the name of the Four Winds ward to Cairnshill ward, which is a much more appropriate identity for that part of the city.

The second point I would make, which has already been made by Sinn Fein earlier, is that the boundaries around Short Strand should be looked at, either to include it with Woodstock or within the City Hall ward. I have not looked at this in more detail as to how this is going to impact elsewhere, so apologies for that. I did not have the time, which is the reason I had asked if I could come back before the end of the two days. I think the people in Short Strand are ensconced in what a lot of them perceive as a hostile East Belfast, and to ensure appropriate representation for the people who live in this area I would recommend that you look at that very closely. Some adjustments could be made, for example, with parts of Sandy Row, Lower Falls, Hamill street, and I will move on to those further on.

Dunmurry is my third point. It should be wholly included within South Belfast. There is no real question as to

whether the boundary drawn for the local government ward may subsequently restrict or create unnecessary difficulties when defining constituency boundaries, but Dunmurry has always been seen as part of South Belfast. It used to be part of South Belfast many years ago electorally, but the way the boundaries are drawn at the moment, it would lead us into believing that is now going to form a part of West Belfast. I know your remit is not the constituency boundaries but this, obviously, will have some impact on it. The people who live in Dunmurry see themselves as being more from South Belfast and should be included within a south Belfast District Electoral Area, which I gather will be in a further consultation.

The boundary needs to be drawn around the old golf course and across Blacks Road, along the back of the houses between Greenan Crescent and the Brooke development and Mayfield Square, to include the new development of St Anne's. And I shall be making the same recommendations as part of our parliamentary constituency proposals. It should be noted that all of this area, as I said earlier, was part of the South Belfast area, and people who live there believe themselves as part of that.

Point number four. There are a number of examples where the split in wards just does not make sense. The Boucher ward, which would be better identified as the Village, should not include the area around the Lisburn Road or Stockman's Lane, which is an obvious addition to the Balmoral ward, but should encompass the whole of the Village area.

At present, the Village is split between the University, Boucher and City Hall wards. I think this is probably an oversight. The Village and Sandy Row areas have one of the strongest local community identities in Belfast and there is no logical reason why it should be split just to adjust for the difference in numbers. The whole of Stranmillis village perhaps could be included in the University ward.

In summary, on point four, I would request that you review your decision in relation to the following, which in my opinion, I may add, are illogical and perhaps unworkable splits: The splitting of Ardmore and Ashton in the Finaghy area between the new Finaghy and Balmoral wards — Ardmore/Ashton is a defined community estate, residential area and should not be separated into two different wards just to ensure arithmetical equality. The split of Balmoral Avenue and Lower Harbarton Park at the Kings Hall, and the split of Harbarton Park at the middle, the odd numbers. And the splitting of Piney Hills and Lower New Forge Lane, part into Stranmillis and part into Upper Malone, especially

	<p>when it would make much more sense to include it all as part of the Upper Malone ward.</p> <p>As I have stated above, it would be sensible to put all of the Stranmillis village into the University ward. More attention also needs to be drawn to the City Hall ward. Barrack Street/Hamill street are clearly part of West Belfast/Millfield, and whilst a significant element of the City Hall ward is considered as South Belfast, Barrack Street and Hamill Street etc. have always been considered West Belfast, and I think it should be a part of the Millfield ward. If Short Strand were included in this ward, Sandy Row could easily move to the Boucher ward, and I would propose a name change to "The Village".</p> <p>There is no logic to the splitting of Rosetta, Knockeden Parade and Gardens and the bottom of Knockeden Park. Church Road, Galwally Avenue and Park, Hampton Park, and the Southern half of Annadale Avenue, are proposed to be part of the new Belvoir ward, and they have absolutely no identity with Belvoir. They should not therefore be part of the proposed Belvoir ward but instead be included with the Rosetta ward. If necessary, it might be better to split the University/City Hall wards along University Street and Botanic Avenue.</p> <p>The Ormeau/Rosetta boundary — we did not go into this in too much detail because it is quite obscure and messy around the Annadale/Whitehall Square area.</p> <p>I would also recommend that you put University ward boundary down Beechlands and make adjustments to City Hall and Boucher wards.</p> <p>My last and final point. I do not see the logic of running boundary lines down the middle of streets. Doing so creates further unnecessary division amongst neighbours. It would be more effective to place the boundary at the back of the houses. This practice of defining the boundaries is consistent throughout all the proposed boundary changes in Belfast. Examples in South Belfast include Adelaide Park, Chlorine Gardens, Balmoral Avenue, Donegall Road, etc. It makes much more sense to ensure that neighbours living in the same street, especially if they are facing each other are included in the same ward, are able to use the same polling stations and be able to maintain the shared local identity. Thank you.</p>
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much. I want to ask just a more general point and this is possibly my own ignorance. Could you tell me just a little bit more about this Cairnshill name?
Mr Kennedy	Well, it is more to do with the Cairnshill Road. Four Winds is one specific part of the area at the very top of Newton Park, the Four Winds Inn and then the Four Winds housing development. The Cairnshill Road runs the whole way

	across and encompasses a lot of areas, Finsbury etc. So I think people identify it more as Cairnshill Road/Cairnshill as opposed to just Four Winds.
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much, I just was not clear about that. I take your point completely about the neighbours and streets, and I would say that initially my thoughts on that were much like your own. However, having a look at the boundaries again, I could see some of the reason for that. That is not to say that I will not revisit this again and look at this in great detail. I will look at everything that you proposed in detail and look at the scenarios for that. I could see in some circumstances where it may only seem to be a side of one street but in fact it is a massive electorate. And again with some of the counter proposals to balance that up, I will certainly have a look at that and take those into consideration.
Mr Kennedy	Thank you very much. I am aware that we did not go into maybe as much detail as we thought we needed to, so apologies from ourselves for that but thank you.
Ms McGlone	Thank you very much for that. Are there any other points of clarification on that submission?
Mr Stoker	I guess it is probably not relevant to the actual boundaries, but in your submission you are asking for Short Strand to be included in another electoral area because of under representation, let us say. Why have you not done exactly the same thing for the Suffolk area and Blacks Road, where that community could say they have been totally under-represented for the last 30 years because they are included in West Belfast?
Ms McGlone	Mr Stoker, can I remind you just to introduce yourself for the purpose of the tape.
Mr Stoker	Sorry, it is Councillor Stoker, Belfast City Council.
Mr Kennedy	I mentioned two or three times that I was concentrating purely in South Belfast. The Suffolk area that you are taking about falls into West Belfast.
Mr Stoker	Short Strand is not South Belfast or West Belfast. You specifically mentioned Short Strand because of misrepresentation or under-representation.
Mr Kennedy	OK, I take your point, blunt though it may be.
Ms McGlone	Thank you for that. If there are no other points of clarification or questions, I would suggest that we move on.  William Dickson from the Blackstaff Community Association. You are very welcome, William.
Mr William Dickson, Blackstaff Community Development Association	Could I say from the outset that our representation is non-political. We come under the umbrella of the Blackstaff Community Development Association.  There are two submissions: one from the association and one from the local History Group. And it is the local History Group submission I would like to comment on first of all.  We have given a written submission and I do not want to

go back over what I have already stated. In the written submission, however, there are one or two things I would just like to emphasise. I will be as brief as possible.

From the local history side of things, the earliest detailed map of Belfast is from the 1570s, which shows clearly the Blackstaff river, or the Owenvarragh. This river obviously played a major role in the industrial development of Belfast and the social division. Unfortunately, over the years the river has been diverted and culverted, because it became an open sewer. However, the river can still be seen in the Boucher Road area. The Blackstaff ward is the only part of Belfast remaining where you can actually see the Blackstaff river. We support the retention of the name Blackstaff. Blackstaff actually helps to unite the community.

Within the community, there are various names for segments, each a wee community on its own. You have, for example, Monarch, Richview, Empire, Donegall Gardens and Olympia. You also have a central area which the local people regard as the Village or Lower Broadway. I am encouraged by the representations so far because they mentioned identity quite often. Although the people see themselves as belonging to the Monarch or whatever, it is very important to have a name that unites the people.

So, I think the Blackstaff name is very important in uniting the people and also from the point of view of the historical and the tourist side of things. Whenever you have visitors to Belfast, when you talk about the Blackstaff, some people ask where they can see the Blackstaff. Well you can actually see it in the Blackstaff ward, and it gives you a basis for giving the history of Belfast. We do not object to even double-barrel names if that means that it could be a compromise.

We are not too keen about the linking of the Blackstaff with part of the Lisburn Road. However, if that came about, which we would regret very much, then the name Great Northern as a part of the double-barrel name, Blackstaff and Great Northern, would be acceptable. Great Northern would possibly be accepted because the Blackstaff community itself developed between the railway line, the Old Ulster railway line and the Blackstaff river. So those two names could link, but we certainly feel, as far as identity is concerned, that we should keep the Blackstaff as it is.

If there was to be an extension of the existing Blackstaff ward — as I say, we are not political and I would like to go on in general terms other than history — then we would see it going in the direction of what is known to local residents as “Middle Donegall Road” although I know

geographically it is not middle Donegall Road. That is where the City Hospital area is, and we would support an inclusion in that direction.

Community identity has been mentioned a number of times, and we support that fully. It is very important for us, for the community, that they feel involved with that community under one name. It helps a lot of issues, that the people feel that they belong to the community. The leading question of course to the SDLP representative here this morning and the Alliance of course, regarding identity/natural boundaries, is that the railway might as well be the Atlantic ocean as far as the Lisburn Road and the Blackstaff is concerned. There is a contrast in house prices and everything else. In fact some years ago when we first proposed a footbridge for the school children getting into the school, there was outrage from many people in the Lisburn Road as if they were going to be contaminated by the people from the Blackstaff side of the railway. That is basically how they felt about it and there was a lot of anger, but of course the need for children to get to school safely was paramount.

There is another factor too — and I do not know if this is being looked into — which I have not mentioned in the written submission but is probably an important point. At the moment, the Blackstaff is known as a disadvantaged area and attracts many grants and a lot of help. Sometimes it is difficult for Blackstaff to convince the authorities that they are disadvantaged, because they are part of South Belfast, although the area was in the past part of West Belfast. But once this disadvantaged community becomes part of a more affluent community like the Lisburn Road, it can cause a lot of problems securing funding for the community. I cannot be sure about that but I imagine it will cause a lot of problems.

Just to emphasise on another point, and I will finish with this, which is the community identity again. For example, Stockman's Lane, Weston Drive area. That is part of Blackstaff but it has never been really been considered part of the community. In fact, even at election times some political parties do not even canvass it, as if it does not exist. Lost at the end of the Boucher Road and divided from the community by the large commercial area. It is still part of the Blackstaff and this comes back again to identity and the point made earlier about the railway line. In this case it is very much in the commercial area. The Boucher Road is very much in the commercial area. No one has, as far as I have never known, supported the name Boucher. No one can link the name with the Blackstaff community. The Blackstaff is the only part of Belfast remaining where the Blackstaff river can be seen. The Blackstaff river runs parallel with the Boucher Road but

	<p>also goes into the Donegall Road area and then a culvert goes to Ulsterville and to the river Lagan. So, we support the retention of the name Blackstaff as it unites the people. It is a united name.</p> <p>We cannot see anyone disagreeing with that and also we support very much the retention of community identity. We are not going into figures and about percentages because we are not political, and I do not want to get involved in that. So there are basically two main points that we have put across on behalf of Blackstaff Community Development Association and the Local History Group.</p> <p>Thank you for hearing me.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>Thank you, Mr Dickson. Can I just clarify a few things with you? I actually did look at the maps on this and I was not clear about the streets that were in your submissions. So I took a run over and had a look at them over in the Donegall Road. I can see the issue. I will acknowledge there is an issue around community identity, and I think that it is important. Would it be fair to say that your suggestion — and you are supporting the name Blackstaff — is that there are streets on the Lisburn Road that should be put into a different ward, and that possibly Stockmans Lane should be in a different ward. Would that be fair?</p>
Mr Dickson	<p>Yes, and this is where I have to be very careful — but here is the difficulty, you see. If the people of Weston Drive and Stockman's Lane feel that they do not belong to our community, the Blackstaff community, then they would be better represented in another ward. I do not think we would have too many problems, but again I do not want to get into the political aspect of things. But I am very strongly in favour of people having their identity. So I go along with what you have said: if they feel they could be identified in another ward and that is their wish, and they are not seen, and this is the important part, at this moment in time, by the overall Blackstaff Community as being part of their community.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>I probably need to confirm and clarify this. The reason I was asking you that is that I am sure that in another submission, there was the suggestion that Stockman's Lane should be in another ward. So I just wanted to clarify. Thank you very much, Mr Dickson.</p> <p>Are there any other clarification issues or questions around Mr Dickson's submission?</p>
Mr Kennedy	<p>Could I just say that in my earlier submission, I had suggested "The Village" but I do take your point that retaining "Blackstaff" is probably a much better idea.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>Thank you very much.</p> <p>Trevor Polley from the North Down Borough Council.</p>
Mr Trevor Polley Chief Executive and	<p>Thank you very much, Assistant Commissioner. My name is Trevor Polley, Chief Executive and Town Clerk of North</p>

Town Clerk of North Down  
Borough Council

Down Borough Council. I am here today to represent the Council's views as submitted in their presentation to the Boundaries Commissioner. In North Down Borough Council's submission, we concentrate obviously on the East Council area. However, we also make comment where the East area meets the South Council, and also where it meets Belfast. We felt that we should put a presentation forward this morning in connection with three areas where the East meets Belfast.

I am sure you would allow me to put on record the Council's view that North Down Borough Council remains firmly opposed to the proposed seven-council model for local government in Northern Ireland, and that our submission from council should not in any way be construed as giving the seven-council model any support or credence whatsoever.

Having given that health warning, I move on. Council considered a number of over-riding principles when making submission to the Boundaries Commissioner, and probably three of the four are connected solely with the East area. However, the one that relates to Belfast is that boundaries should be drawn to reflect the identities of areas. This may be achieved in part, by using natural features and main routes for boundaries, rather than dividing indefinable residential areas and using residential roads.

The three areas that I would want to concentrate on briefly is, firstly, the proposed boundary between East and Belfast at Knocknagoney and Holywood. The council's proposal is that that should be drawn along the Knocknagoney Road and the Old Holywood Road. The proposals for Belfast at the top of Knocknagoney Road move Cedar Grove from what is currently North Down Borough Council into Belfast. Certainly the residents of Cedar Grove, which is only accessible via the Old Holywood Road close to Holywood barracks, identify with Holywood as opposed to Belfast. We feel that the natural boundary there should be along the main route, which is the Old Holywood Road and the Knocknagoney Road.

The second area again is connected close to where the Holywood/Knocknagoney boundary is and includes the area known to all as Holywood Exchange. Regarding this area, we have received, and I know the Boundaries Commissioner has received, presentations from Holywood Chamber of Commerce and from Bangor and Holywood Town Centre Management, indicating that the Holywood Exchange area should be included in the East Council, as opposed to the Belfast Council area. There are no households affected in this and it is a commercial-cum-business area.

The Chamber of Commerce in their letter, indicated that they have forged very close links with the Hollywood Exchange. In fact Hollywood Exchange funds the Hollywood Arts Trust, the Hollywood Jazz Festival and Hollywood Music Week. The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce mandate is to develop and promote business along with the Hollywood Exchange businesses. We feel that that would be strengthened by including the Hollywood Exchange within the East Council and would improve the civic identity. It actually borders on to the Hollywood ward. It is called Hollywood Exchange and, as opposed to the boundary line currently going along the railway track, it could go along the main arterial route through Hollywood Exchange. We would certainly feel that we have support from the local business community and the very fact that Hollywood Exchange would be in the Hollywood ward of East, I think, makes a sizable amount of sense.

The final area is in connection with where the boundary between East and Belfast meets within the Castlereagh Borough Council area. Again, it may seem strange for North Down Borough Council to be commenting on Castlereagh Borough Council or perhaps even Belfast Council area boundaries there, but possibly at the end you will see why we feel that there is some level of significance.

We indicated that the boundary between areas should be natural boundaries or main routes. The representative from Sinn Fein commented that within that southern boundary the ring road was used as the dividing line. Within our council submission, we indicated that the ring road, the dual carriageway should be the dividing line. I have to say that, currently, at that part where the boundary splits what are Castlereagh and Cregagh wards, the dividing line is not the dual carriageway, as commented earlier by the Sinn Fein representative.

The Council submission has indicated that that should be the dividing line and that part of Castlereagh and part of the Cregagh wards should move into the East Council area. We do note the comments made earlier, both from the SDLP and Alliance Party representatives, where they would indicate that, as opposed to the dual carriageway, the build line which would go up around Four Winds, Cairns Hill, Purdysburn, Newtownbreda and Knockbreda should be used. And certainly there was debate within our own council as to whether that should be the line.

Our council view was that we would take the line across the carriageway instead, and we have shown that in maps. The comment I would make is that it should be one or other of those. At the moment, the Commissioner has gone for a mixture of both, where he uses a build line in

one area and the roads in another. So I think that is something perhaps that the Commissioner should look at. If one part goes back to East along with the rest, that is a solution. Or the other solution would be that the Belfast boundary does extend up to BT8.

The council's proposal would be that the carriageway is used as a dividing line and in conclusion on that it comes back to comments that you have made earlier. Obviously the electorate within Castlereagh and Cregagh is quite sizable. One of the reasons that we have included this is that part of the North Down proposal for the South is that the area within Newcastle and the Mountains of Mourne is all to be part of the Mourne National Park. Now, in representations in respect of the East and South districts most if not all the parties indicated that the Mountains of Mourne and Mourne Regional Park should be within one Council area, whether it be East or South. There are a number of solutions that have been proposed by the parties and, as might be expected, the parties' solutions differ as do the party views on other issues.

North Down Borough Council is indicating that a number of wards in the Newcastle area and the Donard area move from East to South. As part of that, as a counterproposal, we indicated that part of what is currently in the Belfast area divided by the ring road, should move into the East Council area, and that in some way the area versus the electorate could well balance that out. Assistant Commissioner, that may not be something that is within your remit because it involves the East Council and the South Council, but I would have to say that it could well have a knock-on effect and, given the discussion earlier about boundaries being moved, what effect that might have.

Within the council, we would view that identity is more important than the numbers of the electorate, and I think again it was probably within the Alliance Party submission, that there is no need for the Commissioner to have set the boundaries at 60 for all seven. There was a lot more room for manoeuvre to change boundary sizes for the different councils. That in turn could result in a redrawing of all the boundaries and, I think, that point was probably made within the SDLP submission as well. But just tampering around some of the edges of these may not be enough.

All the details are in our written submission and, as I say, we have had two representations in support of our submission from Holywood Chamber of Commerce and Bangor and Holywood Town Centre Management, and that would finish the proposals put forward by North Down Borough Council.

<p>Ms McGlone</p>	<p>Thank you, Mr Polley. I want to make a couple of follow-up comments on that. The one is that the legislation actually does suggest that 60 is the optimum amount of wards. I just want to make that point. I think it would be worthwhile if people could bear with us here. I think this issue around the Knocknagoney/Hollywood boundary could do with a bit more discussion, because you can see here that we have two counter proposals, and I do take into consideration what you have mentioned in relation to the Mourne area.</p> <p>What I would just clarify for you is that each of the Assistant Commissioners works completely independently. I think there is very good reason for that. So I take that into consideration in terms of the point that you are making and it is very well made that it might be compensation. You will probably make your submission to the East area, and that is something they would consider. I have noticed the submissions from the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce and the Town Centre manager in terms of the Hollywood Exchange.</p> <p>Could I just ask a bit more around the Knocknagoney issue? Maybe I missed it, but in terms of the reasons for that I am just not as clear as I could be.</p>
<p>Mr Polley</p>	<p>The previous boundary between North Down Borough Council and Belfast City Council came at the very top of the Knocknagoney Road, the area known as Cedar Grove, although there is no access off it from Knocknagoney. It was part of North Down Borough Council and certainly there is a very strong Hollywood identity there. North Down Council would argue that really the Knocknagoney Road, the Old Hollywood Road and the Tillysburn roundabout area is seen as the natural boundary between North Down currently and the East area as it would be known, and Belfast City Council. In fact, on the carriageway the North Down boundary starts just beyond the bottom of Knocknagoney Road and the main entrance and exit into the whole of the Hollywood Exchange, and also thereby on into the Harbour Estate actually, is accessed from North Down Borough Council, and within the East area and within that Hollywood ward. So we see the natural boundary of Belfast finishing at Tillysburn and then heading on out towards the East. That would be our view. The top part of Knocknagoney Road and Cedar was always included within North Down. We see that, as opposed to taking a build line, as the boundary. We go back to the general principle that we have within the rest of our submission: that in this case it should be the main road as being the natural boundary.</p>
<p>Ms McGlone</p>	<p>I would be very anxious to hear submissions from other people. Mr Farry, in particular, when you mentioned earlier about that boundary, did you give any consideration to the amount of change that that would mean in terms of the East area and with regard to the meeting of that boundary?</p>

Mr Farry	<p>Are you referring to the Castlereagh boundary or the Knocknagoney boundary? I should declare that I am a councillor within North Down Borough Council and Mr Polley is speaking on behalf of the Council. I am representing the Alliance Party and, as a party, we have not taken any specific view on the boundary between Belfast and North Down. We appreciate that we have representatives in both of those areas and it is not an issue that has been discussed between them. So I cannot elaborate any further except to say that, as an individual councillor, I am part of North Down Borough Council and would endorse the comments of our Chief Executive in relation to ones he is making on behalf of the council in respect of that boundary. But I cannot add further to that.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>That is fine. Does anyone else want to make comments at this stage?</p>
Mr Kennedy	<p>Could I ask the North Down Council representative why he considers the main road a better boundary than natural build lines?</p>
Mr Polley	<p>Because natural build lines can change. That particular build line, the old boundary, I can only assume, must have been at some stage a river, not as well known as the Blackstaff, I am sure, that came down through what is the current boundary between North Down and Belfast.</p> <p>I think our calculation would be that there are at least 16 houses, that are currently within the North Down Council boundary. Yet the entrance into them, the entrance out of them, and the crescent shape, the original line which was possibly taken down a river, meant that 10 houses on one side of the road are within North Down Borough Council area and the houses on the other side of the same crescent are in Belfast. In fact if you look at the very detailed map which we have, there are possibly three houses where the front room could strictly be in North Down and the back room in Belfast.</p> <p>Currently Belfast City Council collects the refuse for those 20 houses. This again goes back to where a boundary was put without taking any recognition of possible future development. The proposed boundary comes right down the build line whereas at the moment the boundary between North Down and Belfast cuts through the middle of Tesco's car park, because it was not taken on a natural route, or it was taken on the basis of, "Well, there is a little river that flows down".</p> <p>B-Map would like to suggest that the green fields beyond that will not be building ground, although some developers would like that not to be the case. This particular boundary has always been troublesome because it did not follow a natural route, and the natural route down there is the Knocknagoney Road. The current boundary goes through Tesco's car park splitting off a number of houses. I would</p>

	<p>recognise that the Boundaries Commissioner has moved to correct the problem that currently exists.</p> <p>What we are suggesting is that, as opposed to removing part of North Down into Belfast, the boundary should be brought along the main road, and then that saves any further difficulties if there is to be building or development on what is currently green fields. Again, sorry Assistant Commissioner, we have submitted those plans in detail to you. And apologies to the SDLP representative that I do have them in front of me and I know he does not. That is the council argument, and I am sure it would be up to the Assistant Commissioner to decide whether that is valid or not.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>Thank you very much. Any other points of clarification around that? Thank you very much for that, Mr Polley. We now have Councillor Robert Stoker.</p>
Mr Robert Stoker	<p>I am making representations today on behalf of a local community organisation, The Greater Village Regeneration Trust. We have already made a written submission via email, which is most convenient this weather. We have broken our submission down into three different sections.</p> <p>First of all, on the boundary within the City of Belfast, and it is a very simple submission, we believe local government wards should be coterminous with the parliamentary boundary within the City of Belfast. This would have the knock-on effect which, we believe, should happen for every other part of Northern Ireland as well. This would then reflect the opposition to seven councils from a community perspective, as we do believe in local identity being retained within each parliamentary area, and the seamless delivery of services right from parliamentary level to Assembly level to local council level.</p> <p>I know the potential inclusion of other wards, especially in the south and north of the city, to reflect the parliamentary boundary, would mean a lot of additional changes. We have not gone into great detail simply because we are a community organisation and we do not have the time or the financial resources to do so. Again I just state that we believe local government boundaries should be coterminous with parliamentary boundaries.</p>
Mr Stoker	<p>Secondly, on the name of the wards, in particular on the proposed change from Blackstaff to Boucher, again speaking with the local community in that area and representatives of several community organisations, there is no commonality or no support whatsoever for a change of name to Boucher. One, because the particular name Boucher is after a political representative who has long since left us, of course, and we do not believe that boundaries should be named after any politician whether dead, alive or whatever.</p>

So there is no sympathy whatsoever for the name change to Boucher. Several names have been changed. If it were to change, the community would obviously prefer the name of Blackstaff to be retained, but several other names have been mentioned. I think Billy already mentioned in his submission that that particular community is made up of several distinct local communities such as Village, Olympia, Monarch, Empire, Barrington and so on. The community would obviously prefer the retention of the Blackstaff name.

Whenever we looked at the proposed boundary of Boucher, which was going to include mid to upper Lisburn Road, there is no community cohesion whatsoever between those two communities in that area.

We feel there would be a difficulty with electoral arrangements with having to have at least two separate polling stations. So with that in mind, we are proposing a change to the boundary of Boucher (3,415) ward, which would be to delete that area east of the railway line and south of, I think it is, Donnybrook Street. That whole area would come out of Blackstaff ward, or rather the proposed Boucher ward, and to be replaced with the inclusion of that area of mid Donegall Road bounded by Coolmore Street, Thalia Street and Coolfin Street and bounded by the railway line running parallel to Abingdon Drive.

Also, the inclusion of the area commonly known as Sandy Row bounded by the railway line to Great Victoria Street and all the lands west of Great Victoria Street to the Lisburn Road, to the junction of the entries at the north side of Dunluce Avenue would all be included in a new ward. That ward would be either named Blackstaff — and again we would certainly agree with Billy's submission that the name Blackstaff be retained — or to reflect the local identity of the Sandy Row area by having a double-barrelled name of Blackstaff and St. George's ward.

That has quite an effect on the proposed other boundaries within that area. It removes somewhere in the region of 1,100 people on the electorate from the Sandy Row area. We would therefore propose the complete abolition of the proposed City Hall ward. The proposed City Hall ward (3,400) should be completely abolished and those areas that are coterminous with other existing or proposed wards.

For ease of reference I start with the Falls (3,482). The area known as Hamill Street should be included within the Falls ward. That is bounded by Grosvenor Road and Divis Street.

The area that would be coterminous with the Lower

Shankill, known as Brown Square, should be included within the Lower Shankill. The boundary would be Petershill to Divis Street and bounded along the east side by Millfield.

The area known as Donegall Pass, bounded by Shaftesbury Square to the Ormeau Road to Ormeau Avenue and at the railway line parallel to McClure Street, to be included within the University ward.

The area on the right hand side of the Ormeau Road to Bankmore Street, at a boundary with Linenhall Street, and Chichester Street to the Waterfront Hall and bounded by the river Lagan, to be included in the Ormeau ward.

The area of Boucher that was to be removed, that area of the mid Lisburn Road from Donnybrook Street to Adelaide Avenue, to be included in the University area.

The rest of the area from Adelaide Avenue to Stockman's Lane to be included in the Malone area.

There are several different reasons why we are proposing the extension of the proposed Blackstaff ward. The amount of services that are delivered within that community of The Village/mid Donegall Road and Sandy Row are done on a geographical basis — should it be hospital services, doctor services, postal deliveries, everything is done in that one particular area. There has always been a historical connection of families between the Sandy Row, mid-Donegall Road and the Village area. Again that is made up of several quite distinct communities. Certainly, there are differences geographically, but they are all linked through family and community development.

As for the services contained within Belfast City Council and even government, the Department of Social Development have recognised this as an area of deprivation. And it has been declared a Neighbourhood Renewal Area as the Department of Social Development have already put together the Sandy Row, mid Donegall and Village areas for targeting social need and deprivation. The Housing Executive provides their services on a district-by-district basis, which also includes those three areas within one particular module of housing delivery.

The one thing that sprung to mind when the community organisation was looking at all of these proposed changes — and by nature we are not conspiracy theorists — was that those areas and wards that are already in the top 10 indicators from Noble suddenly disappear as areas of need and deprivation because of the inclusion of the part of the Blackstaff ward with a fairly affluent area of Lisburn Road.

	<p>The part of the mid Donegall Road is being taken into a fairly affluent area of the university and obviously the Sandy Row Community is being taken into new City Hall ward.</p> <p>The same applies to other communities right across the city with the Markets in Lower Ormeau being the spoils divided there. The same occurs in the east of the city at proposed boundary changes. It actually hides and masks the levels of deprivation throughout the city. We are not given to conspiracy theories, but the input of Northern Ireland's Statistic and Research Agency does give a bit of concern that while local government boundaries are being done for electoral and democratic election purposes, it could be used to, let us say, "alleviate" those levels of deprivation that are already very evident throughout the city.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>Thank you, Mr Stoker. I would like to make a couple of points on that. The first point would be that I am not into conspiracy theories either and I am not sure of that. But I do know that the Commissioner did not take those issues into consideration when putting the boundaries down.</p> <p>I completely acknowledge, and I take on the record, that wards are used for much more than for electoral reasons, and I think that you make a very fair point. I accept that. If people could bear with me, there was a lot of information and there are a lot of changes. There are two questions that I would like to ask you. Do you have those in written form? We are recording this hearing but would you be able to supply us with those in writing before tomorrow by 5:30 pm.?</p>
Mr Stoker	<p>The other pieces that were not put in the original written submission. Yes.</p>
Ms McGlone	<p>That is great. The other thing I would like to do is possibly call for an adjournment because I have not got the maps in front of me. I would like to look at the maps and see the proposals on some of the previous submissions as well. If that would be not seen as unreasonable, I would like to call an adjournment.</p> <p>Thank you very much.</p> <p><i>Adjournment</i></p> <p>Welcome back, everybody. Thank you for that opportunity just to focus my head a bit more on some of the recommendations. I have had a look at these proposals. You will probably appreciate that this morning what I have had is both an elaboration on the previous written submissions and then some substantial changes in terms of wards in the submissions.</p> <p>Just to run over again what we have been discussing this</p>

	<p>morning. There is an issue and there are proposals around the South Belfast region and Castlereagh. I have heard proposals around Knocknagoney,,Holywood and Holywood Exchange. I have heard submissions regarding the retention of the name Blackstaff for the ward that has been provisionally given as Boucher. And there are a number of other representations which take in quite a number of other wards in Belfast, not major as some of those would be, but certainly minor changes.</p> <p>I have the written submissions. I would appreciate if anyone who has anything else to give it to the staff please, who will make copies available. I mentioned at the beginning that we are having this tape recorded, so I will hopefully have a transcript next week. We have the services of the Ordnance Survey and we will be able to look in detail at the implications of any of those changes. What I would like to do now is adjourn for lunch. Thank you very much for your time and the effort that you have put into this.</p> <p>If anybody wishes to come back for this afternoon's session, it will commence at 2:00 pm.</p>
	<i>Adjournment</i>
Ms McGlone	Just for the record I am going to adjourn this meeting for ten minutes. If there have been no further representations brought forward in that time we will adjourn this afternoon until 9:30 tomorrow morning.
	<i>Adjournment</i>
	<p>Good afternoon, everybody. As the 10-minute adjournment has now elapsed, I would like to formally further adjourn this hearing until tomorrow morning. As we are closing early today, I propose that we will leave a member of staff, Dermot Harkin, from the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Office here to handle any enquiries from people who may want to come forward tomorrow with submissions. I will resume the hearing at 9:30am on Friday 19 January.</p>
	<b>Friday 19 January 2006</b>
Ms McGlone	It is 10:45am on Friday 19 January 2007 and I am now closing the public hearing on the Provisional Recommendations of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for the District of Belfast.