

BCE Report – statements referring to Lewisham constituencies

3.163 Having made their recommendations for the Woolwich, and Eltham and Welling constituencies, our assistant commissioners then considered the representations with regard to the proposed Greenwich and Deptford constituency. They noted that there was a significant degree of opposition to our initial proposals. For example Tahsin Khan (BCE-25807) said, ‘this is a ridiculous division that will put me into a constituency that has no connections to where I live: I am nowhere near Greenwich or Deptford. This will make access to an MP difficult, and makes it very likely that the responsible MP will feel able to overlook our area with impunity. The changes are illogical and unnecessary, not to mention being detrimental to the community culture that characterises London regions.’

3.164 In his counter-proposal John Bryant (BCE-28349) supported our initial proposals but with the inclusion of the Telegraph Hill ward and the exclusion of the Peninsula ward. His rationale for suggesting this was to avoid the division of New Cross and Hatcham in our proposals. His arrangement retained the inclusion of Ladywell in the Lewisham and Catford constituency and Lee Green in the Greenwich and Deptford constituency.

3.165 Our assistant commissioners considered the evidence and, while they were mindful of the opposition to, and strength of feeling with regard to our proposals for Greenwich and Deptford, they considered that a degree of change was inevitable in the context of constructing constituencies in the area. They considered that John Bryant’s counter-proposals had merit in that he did avoid the division of New Cross between constituencies and recommended to us that we adopt Mr Bryant’s counterproposal for the Greenwich and Deptford constituency. We agree.

3.166 We received few representations from local responders with regard to our proposed Lewisham and Catford constituency, with some limited support for, and opposition to, our proposals, for example from Gordon Cowie (BCE-29911).

3.167 Both the Liberal Democrat Party (BCE-28274) and John Bryant (BCE-28349) supported our initial proposals for the proposed constituency. The Conservative Party (BCE-33279) largely supported the constituency but suggested the swapping of four wards. They said, ‘The Commission has, we believe, used the correct wards for the two seats of Greenwich and Deptford and Lewisham and Catford. We propose however that by swapping four wards the Commission could better meet Rule 5 (1) c. A direct swap of Blackheath and Lee Green wards for Ladywell and Lewisham Central would result in the existing Lewisham East seat being retained in full and much more of the existing Deptford constituency would also remain in a new, single seat.’ The Labour Party (BCE-33244) proposed a substantially revised Lewisham, Deptford and Catford constituency.

3.168 However, given some support for our initial proposals and the limited opposition, and the fact that our assistant commissioners had made their recommendations for the Greenwich and Deptford constituency, they recommended that we should not adopt any of the counter-proposals that made alternative suggestions and that we should make no further changes to our initial proposals for the Lewisham and Catford constituency. We agree.