

Local Government
Boundary Commission
For England
Report No.7

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BOUNDARY COMMISSION

FOR ENGLAND

REPORT NO.7

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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TO THE RT HON ROBERT CARR MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

1. We, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, present our proposals for revised electoral arrangements for the Belvedere ward of the London Borough of Bexley.
2. In August 1972 the Council of the London Borough of Bexley made representations to the Home Secretary for the alteration of the electoral arrangements for the Belvedere ward, with the object of making the part containing the new Thamesmead development into a separate and additional 3 member ward.
3. The representations were made under the provisions of Schedule 1 to the London Government Act 1963 but the effect of paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 2 to the Local Government Act, 1972 which came into force on Royal Assent is to prevent the electoral arrangements for London Boroughs being changed except by an order under Part IV of the 1972 Act following proposals made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The 1963 Act procedure could not, therefore, be concluded and we were asked to review the electoral arrangements for the Belvedere ward of the London Borough of Bexley, with a view to making proposals to the Secretary of State under Section 47(1)(i) of the 1972 Act.
4. In accordance with the procedure laid down in Section 60(1) and (2) of the 1972 Act, notice was given in July 1973 that the Commission were to undertake this review and were considering the proposals previously made to the Home Secretary by the Council of the London Borough of Bexley which had already been advertised. After consulting the local authority and other interested bodies our draft proposals were issued in September 1973. These draft proposals embodied the proposals made by the Council of the London Borough of Bexley to the Home Secretary in their representations under Schedule 1 to the London Government Act 1963, but with small alterations to the dividing line between the two proposed new wards in the interests of a good boundary.

5 Copies of these draft proposals were made available for local inspection, and comment on them was invited from the local authority and bodies and persons who may have been interested.

6 Two letters, one forwarding a petition, were received from residents of the area of Abbey Wood north of the railway line who objected to the draft proposals on the grounds that the suggested boundary between the new wards, which at this point followed the railway line as originally proposed by the Council, would separate the residents of this area from the rest of the Abbey Wood community south of the railway line. We considered these objections should be investigated and at our request an Assistant Commissioner, Mr J E Fishwick, was appointed to hold a local meeting in the area and report to us.

7 The meeting was held on 16 November and the Assistant Commissioner's report is attached to this report. Having fully considered the views which were expressed at the meeting and the practical difficulties involved in drawing any satisfactory alternative boundary we agree with Mr Fishwick's conclusion that the dividing line between the two wards should remain as defined in the draft proposals.

8 We accordingly propose that the Belvedere ward of the London Borough of Bexley should be divided to form two new wards; the names and descriptions of the wards and the number of councillors to be returned by each are shown in the schedule to this report. The boundaries of the new wards are illustrated on the map which we enclose.

9 In accordance with Section 60(5)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 a copy of this report and a copy of the map will be made available for public inspection at the Town Hall, Erith, Kent.

Signed

EDMUND COMPTON (Chairman)

DAVID R SMITH (Secretary)

4 December 1973

LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

SCHEDULE OF PROPOSALS

Name of New Ward	Description of ward	No. of Councillors
BELVEDERE	<p>Commencing at the point at which the northern boundary of Bostall Ward meets the western boundary of the borough; thence northwards along the said western boundary to the railway from Abbey Wood to Belvedere; thence eastwards along the said railway to National Grid reference TQ4926079204; thence due north to Yarnton Way; thence eastwards and northeastwards along the said way and continuing in a straight line to National Grid reference TQ4962979960; thence northwestwards in a straight line to National Grid reference TQ4955879972 and continuing northwestwards in a straight line to the centre of the access road from Norman Road to the Crossness Sewage Treatment Works, National Grid reference TQ 4929180369; thence northwestwards along the said access road to a point opposite the southeastern corner of Parcel No 1760 on Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Sheet TQ4880-4980 Edition of 1970; thence northeastwards to and along the eastern boundary of the said parcel and in prolongation thereof to the northern boundary of the borough; thence generally eastwards along the said northern boundary to the western boundary of Erith Town Ward; thence generally southwards along the said western boundary to the northern boundary of Northumberland Heath Ward; thence generally westwards along the said northern boundary and the northern boundary of Bostall Ward to the point of commencement.</p>	3

Name of New Ward	Description of ward	No. of Councillors
THAMESMEAD EAST	Commencing at the northwestern corner of the borough; thence generally eastwards along the northern boundary of the borough to the western boundary of Belvedere Ward; thence southwards and westwards along the said western boundary to the western boundary of the borough; thence generally northwards along the said western boundary to the point of commencement.	3

To: The Secretary
Local Government Boundary Commission
for England.

Electoral Arrangements of the Belvedere Ward of the
London Borough of Bexley

Pursuant to my appointment by the Secretary of State as Assistant Commissioner to hold a local enquiry or carry out any consultation or investigation with respect to the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England of the electoral arrangements of the Belvedere Ward of the London Borough of Bexley, I attended at the Riverside School, Yarnton Way, Thamesmead on 16th November 1973.

Preliminaries

Draft proposals for the future electoral arrangements of the Ward in question had been formulated by the Boundary Commission in view of representations made to the Home Secretary under the provisions of the London Government Act 1963. In effect the proposals provide that the existing Belvedere Ward of the London Borough of Bexley shall be divided to form two new Wards to be named respectively, the Belvedere Ward and the Thamesmead East Ward.

The draft proposals had been published by the Commission and a map showing the boundary between the two proposed wards and a schedule giving the names and descriptions of the two proposed wards and the number of councillors to be elected for each had been deposited at the Town Hall, Erith. Notice had been given of the publication of the draft proposals and that copies of the draft proposals could be inspected at the Town Hall and that comments on the draft proposals should be made in writing to the Secretary of the Commission so as to arrive not later than 15th October 1973. The notices were published by display at places where public notices are customarily displayed and in local newspapers.

Objections had been received by the Commission to the draft proposals and notices had been given referring to the objections, to the appointment of myself as Assistant Commissioner to hold a local meeting to inquire into the proposed arrangements for the Belvedere Ward and to report to the Commission and to the fact that I would attend at the Riverside School on 16th November 1973 at 10.30 a.m. to hear local views on the proposed arrangements and to the fact that any person interested might attend the meeting and be heard. The notices of the meeting were published in the same manner as the notices referred to in the previous paragraph and also to the Greater London Council, the headquarters of the main political parties and the local Members of Parliament. The individual objectors had also been invited to attend.

Publication of the notices was formally evidenced at the meeting by the Assistant Town Clerk of the London Borough of Bexley, Mr.G.G.Phillips.

A list of those attending the meeting is included in the notes of the discussion at the meeting (Appendix A). At the beginning of the meeting, I submitted my formal appointment as Assistant Commissioner but stressed that in order to facilitate the expression and discussion of views on the proposals, I intended to proceed as informally as possible.

Documents Available

The following documents etc. were available to me either before or during the meeting:-

- (i) a copy of the map and schedule which had been deposited.
- (ii) a copy of a table of electorates and electorate/councillor ratios of the proposed wards of the London Borough of Bexley, indicating the 1973 and forecast 1978 figures.
- (iii) a copy of a letter dated 10th October 1973 from Councillor Ronald Barman, 42 Rushdene, Abbey Wood, SE2 to the Commission submitting and associating himself with communications which a number of residents in Rushdene, Sydney Road and Overton Road had asked him to submit to the Commission. Councillor Barman's letter and the communications enclosed in it are already in the hands of the Commission. They express opposition to the Commission's draft proposals and seek amendment of the draft proposals to enable the names of the residents of the three roads to be included in the Electoral Register for the new Belvedere Ward.
- (iv) a copy of the 1973 Electoral Register for the existing Belvedere Ward.
- (v) a paper on which it is indicated that 38 members of the Rushdene and Sydney Road Residents Association express their support of an effort to prevent the amalgamation of "our area with Thamesmead East Ward for electoral purposes." (Appendix B)
- (vi) a printed pamphlet giving information regarding a project known as the Harrow Manor Way Bridge and Works which is to replace the level crossing in Harrow Manor Way (Appendix C). I noted that facilities for pedestrians crossing the railway will be provided.
- (vii) a plan to a scale 1: 2500 of Rushdene, Sydney Road and Overton Road and adjacent areas.

Rushdene, Sydney Road and Overton Road: Railway

In the event, opposition to the Commission's draft proposals emanated from residents in these roads and related to the inclusion of those roads within the Thamesmead East Ward instead of within the new Belvedere Ward. To avoid repetition, I use the term "the three roads" in referring to them collectively.

References in my report to the railway are references to the railway which, I understand, is known as the "North Kent line" and which passes through the Abbey Wood Station and continues to the immediate south of the three roads.

Evidence

A note of the discussion at the meeting is annexed (Appendix A). It will be seen that no objection to the creation of the Thamesmead East Ward was expressed and that the objections related purely to the inclusion of the three roads in that ward.

Visit

After the meeting I visited each of the three roads, the adjacent areas to the north of the three roads as far as Belvedere Road (from points on which it is possible to view areas to the north of Belvedere Road), and Norman Road; and the general area south of the railway, with particular regard to the level-crossing and shopping centre in Harrow Manor Way. I had the benefit of guidance as to the future development of Thamesmead.

The situation is that Thamesmead is developing to the north, north east and north west of the three roads: the site of this development bridges Harrow Manor Way along which the boundary between the London Boroughs of Woolwich and Bexley runs so that there is a part of Thamesmead in each of those boroughs.

The three roads are situate immediately north of the railway which the Commission proposes shall form the boundary between the new Belvedere Ward and the new Thamesmead East Ward. In effect the three roads debouch on Harrow Manor Way and would form the south west corner of the new Thamesmead East Ward. The level-crossing in Harrow Manor Way is the natural vehicular and pedestrian access to Abbey Wood. There is, I am advised, no other vehicular or pedestrian access to Abbey Wood from the three roads for over a mile at present, but the GLC intend to construct pedestrian access over the railway roughly in prolongation of Maran Way. The residential development in Thamesmead is new: some of the houses in the three roads were built some years ago.

Conclusions

In forming the following conclusions and recommendations, I do not doubt the sincerity and strength of feeling of those who object to the draft proposal to include the three roads in the new Thamesmead East Ward. They are normal responsible people with a normal interest in the community. Thamesmead is a large new development. It is natural that some of those who have been residents of the three roads for some years should hesitate to accept separation in any way from the ward in which they have lived and which they understand, and that as the Thamesmead development is already large and is growing, they should feel that they will be "swamped." This is a not uncommon experience in ward boundary alteration and it is strongly felt in this instance because Thamesmead is largely a GLC development and

some of the newcomers are stated to derive from environments different from that of Abbey Wood and no doubt hold different attitudes. The objectors fear that, as a small minority, their interests will not be watched by representatives elected by the majority in the ward. Furthermore, this feeling has been exacerbated by the resentment arising from the exclusion of residents of the three roads from the Thamesmead Community Association and, to a less extent, by the belief which some of the residents rightly or wrongly hold, that they are excluded from the services of the health centre in Thamesmead.

However, it must not be overlooked that there is some doubt as to the proportion of residents in the three roads who object to the draft proposals. The 1973 Register of Electors indicates that there were approximately 500 electors in the three roads at the publication of the register nearly a year ago. Councillor Barman stated that he represented about 100 residents (128 names appear in the petition sent by him to the Commission). Mr. Bond's list of members of the association formed by him and Mr. Stanley contains 38 names. Mr. Rolleston stated that in Overton Road 90% of the residents are against the boundary. Mrs. Stanley felt the percentage to be even higher. The only comment one can make is that only a proportion have signified their objection in any tangible way.

Turning to the question of elector/councillor ratio in the several wards, it will be noted that if the three roads are placed in the new Belvedere Ward, the elector/Councillor ratio in that ward would not exceed that now existing in other wards of the Borough, and is not likely to increase unacceptably. Conversely, the elector/Councillor ratio in the Thamesmead East Ward would in that event become even lower than is already projected for the immediate future unless the number of councillors for that ward were reduced. Moreover, the placing of the three roads in the new Belvedere Ward would, in my opinion, involve other roads being placed in the new Belvedere Ward (e.g. Dalberg Way and Lanridge Road) in view of their location.

The suggestions put forward at the meeting in connection with alteration of the boundary in order to locate the three roads in the new Belvedere Ward appear to cover all reasonable possibilities, viz: from Harrow Manor Way along Overton Road, or along the rear of the houses on the north side of Overton Road, or along Lensbury Way, or along Yarnton Way. In each case the boundary would then turn southwards to rejoin the boundary proposed by the Commission along the railway: an open space running approximately north and south parallel to Maran Way might serve for this purpose. However, in my experience the use of roads as ward boundaries whereby one side of a residential street is in a different ward from the other should, although it is not uncommon, be avoided wherever possible and in this instance the further north the boundary line is fixed the greater the effect on the size of the ward electorate and elector/councillor ratio. None of the boundaries suggested compare with the railway line in the context of being and remaining easily identifiable; in addition the use of the railway line as a boundary would avoid the division of a street between wards.

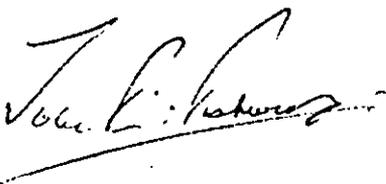
Another consideration is whether any local ties would be broken by placing the three roads in the new Thamesmead Ward. I do not doubt that there has been an

association between residents of the three roads and the Abbey Wood district of the Belvedere Ward. The three roads have, until the Thamesmead development commenced, been on the northern edge of the residential area of the Belvedere Ward and Abbey Wood has been the nearest shopping centre. As residents like Mr. Bond have lived in the three roads for many years, no doubt the association is of long standing. Probably there have been personal relations with residents and organisations in Abbey Wood, although this was not stressed at the meeting. Clearly, however, the boundary proposed by the Commission will not affect continuance of personal relations. No suggestion was made at the meeting that as residents of Thamesmead, people from the three roads would be precluded from organisations in Abbey Wood, and until the development of more comprehensive shopping facilities in Thamesmead, the residents are likely to continue to shop in Abbey Wood. Both sides stated that politics do not enter into the matter. No specific claims of other ties were made at the meeting. Geographically, the natural association of the three roads is with the area to the north. The evidence at the meeting showed that the process has already begun through schools, the library, youth committees and with the development of such facilities as the health centre will, I believe, strengthen further. The statements of Mr. G. G. Phillips (under the heading of "School Attendance"), and Mr. Dawson, are noteworthy in this connection. My conclusion is that the boundary as proposed by the Commission will not break any fundamental tie.

I have no doubt that the boundary in the draft proposals is a satisfactory one, and I am of opinion that it is the line which is most likely to ensure fair representation to the electors in the present Belvedere Ward at the earliest practicable date, bearing in mind the statutory requirement that the ratio of the number of electors to the number of Councillors should be as nearly as may be the same in every ward (taking into account the expected variations in the next five years) and having regard to the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable and avoiding the breaking of local ties.

Recommendation

I accordingly recommend the adoption of the boundary as described in the draft proposals for the new Belvedere and the new Thamesmead Wards.



John E. Fishwick

Notes of the Discussion at a Meeting held on Friday, 16th November 1973 at Riverside School, Yarnton Way, Thamesmead.

Present:

Mr.G.G.Phillips	Assistant Town Clerk, London Borough of Bexley
Mr.C.Alford	Chief Administrative Assistant —do—
Miss D.Rice	Group Planner —do—
Cllr.A.B.Forsyth	Member for existing Belvedere Ward
Mr.A.Clark	30 Penton House, Hartshook Drive, Thamesmead
Mr.J.Dawson	Thamesmead Community Association
Mrs.J.Stanley	15 Overton Road
Mr.George Bond	5 Sydney Road
Mr.Rollestone	110 Overton Road
Mrs.S.Barman)	42 Rushdene
Cllr.R.R.Barman)	
Mr.Francis Coates	Agent for the Erith and Crayford Labour Party
Mr.Jones	Regional Officer for the Labour Party
Mr.D.Llewellyn	Community Officer at Thamesmead

Mr.Phillips, having formally submitted the draft scheme and evidenced the deposit of the draft scheme and the notices in respect of the deposit and the present meeting, explained the Council's case for the proposed boundary between the Belvedere and the Thamesmead East Wards. A copy of his statement is annexed.

Those others attending the meeting were asked to comment or ask questions.

Councillor Barman said that he was pleased to see such an interest and emphasised that he was speaking entirely unpolitically but on behalf of about 100 residents of the three roads who were not able to be present but who share his views. He accepted that the boundary as drawn is a very tidy boundary and easily identifiable. This would obviously make things easier from an administrative point of view but he felt that the people concerned are more important than ease of administration. The fundamental point is that initially the three roads were part of the old Abbey Wood Ward which was amalgamated with Belvedere but that they still maintain community relationship with Abbey Wood.

There are mixed views in the three roads about the creation of Thamesmead but he personally thinks it is a useful development. The maintenance of community relations between the three roads and Abbey Wood is clear when one considers three very important aspects of everyday life, i.e. shopping, drinking habits and religion. The shoppers from the three roads do their shopping in the local shops on the other side of the railway line (where there are over 20 shops) near the Abbey Wood Station, and do not go to the shops at Thamesmead. If they want to go for a drink, they tend to gravitate south of the railway line to public houses they know, rather than to the new public houses at Thamesmead and the same situation applied to those church-goers in the three roads - most go to the south. In reply to the points made by Mr. Phillips regarding schools and libraries, the residents of the three roads want their children to go to Thamesmead Schools not as part of the Thamesmead community but because these schools have new buildings, better facilities, better outlooks etc. The alternative schools south of the railway line (St. Augustine's and Picardy Schools) have seen better days and do not compare with the new schools. The same thing is true of the new library. It would obviously be better equipped than the Picardy Library. He did feel however that the residents of the three roads are basically attracted towards Belvedere and not to Thamesmead. The new and the old development do not mix very well and the ward boundary was not only concerned with the physical act of voting but implies community association or interest as well.

There would be a problem of ward representation if the proposed boundary were agreed. There is no advantage or disadvantage politically but the residents of Thamesmead would be represented by other residents of Thamesmead and fear that their representatives' time would be spent entirely on Thamesmead problems and that the interests of the three roads would be neglected. As the population increases in Thamesmead so the three roads would become more and more of a minority group. He stressed again that he has no objection at all to a separate Thamesmead ward - it is the proposed boundary which is objected to. He suggested that the boundary could be drawn along the backs of the houses in Overton Road leaving Lensbury Way in the Thamesmead ward.

Mr. Dawson than said that his main concern is that there should be a ward to represent Thamesmead. The Thamesmead Community Association has been in touch with the Bexley Council since December 1971 requesting them to institute such a ward. He fully supports the Council's and the Commission's proposals for the boundary line including the three roads in the Thamesmead East Ward. He understands the ^{objections} ~~objects~~ raised by the residents of the three roads - they have had foisted upon them a forceful community and feel that they do not want to be a part of it. He feels however that their fears will be resolved in the course of time.

Regarding the inclinations of the residents of the three roads, he pointed out that Cllr. Barman had not suggested that the residents of the three roads should not use the Thamesmead schools. Thamesmead residents also go south of the railway line to do their shopping as the shops at Thamesmead are inadequate and the prices there are high since there is no competition. There are more shops in Abbey Wood than in Thamesmead. It should not be overlooked that for larger items both the residents from the three roads, and residents from Thamesmead, go beyond Abbey Wood - to Woolwich for example. The same thing applies to the drinking habits of the Thamesmead population. There is a bar in the clubhouse of the Thamesmead Community Association but this is for members only and the Thamesmead pub "The Barge Pole" is a modern and expensive place used mainly by people from outside Thamesmead. All the Thamesmead residents are not members of the Association or inclined to go to "The Barge Pole." The majority gravitate towards the public houses south of the railway line. Cllr. Barman's point should therefore be disregarded.

As far as religion is concerned the church connection between Thamesmead and the three roads is strong and becoming stronger. Church activities in Thamesmead are attracting people from the three roads, particularly so far as concerns the young people of the three roads. Children from the three roads attend Thamesmead schools and

the two areas are becoming integrated through the children, and if one looks to the future these children will continue to mix and integrate when they grow older. Therefore, he feels that there is already a tie between the two communities.

Mr. Clark expressed the view that church worship is not really a subject for discussion in this context; the ecclesiastical authorities decide parish boundaries. He put a question to Cllr. Barman - did he not feel that his proposal regarding the boundary would create a political chasm or ghetto? (Cllr. Barman stated in reply that he did not agree: in his view politics are based on party and people go to the church they want to go to and not where they are told to go).

Mr. Clark continued by stating his opinion so far as education, public transport etc., are concerned; the interests of both areas are the same.

Cllr. Forsyth felt that the boundary suggested by Cllr. Barman would isolate Thamesmead. As a representative of the Belvedere ward he is hard pressed to keep up with the problems of the present Belvedere ward and the creation of a separate Thamesmead ward would certainly ease the burden. He has received many complaints that he is not devoting enough attention to certain areas of the ward but he simply is not able to keep up with the demand. The retention of the three roads in the new Belvedere ward would add materially to the workload of the Belvedere Councillors. The three roads would fit in best, both for Councillors and residents, in Thamesmead.

Cllr. Barman said that the public transport requirements of the three roads are in fact

quite different to those of Thamesmead since his residents tend to cross the railway line and travel from there on buses which do not enter Thamesmead at all.

Mr. G. E. Bond said he also represented residents in the three roads and referred to the letter which had been received by the Commission from him.

Considerable opposition had arisen following publication of the Commission's proposals and he and Mr. Stanley of 15 Rushdene (who also represented residents in the three roads) had formed an association of residents in the road. Mr. Bond submitted a list of 38 members of the Association indicating their opposition to the proposals. Reference to the list shows names additional to those objectors who signed the petition submitted by Cllr. Barman.

Mr. Bond's main objection is that the environment of Belvedere differs from that of Thamesmead. In his letter Mr. Bond had called attention to the fact that his family has resided at 5 Sydney Road for 48 years and has had close association with the people of the Belvedere Ward. In his view the change of the three roads from the Belvedere Ward to the Thamesmead East Ward is not desirable. As further stated in his letter a proposal that residents in the three roads should be eligible for membership of the Thamesmead Community Association was defeated. Mrs. Stanley said that residents of the three roads were, and still are, very upset by this occurrence and are of the opinion that if the Thamesmead residents want nothing to do with them, then they do not want to join them in the same Ward.

Mr. Dawson intervened at this point to say that the occurrence referred to by Mrs. Stanley was unfortunate and had caused considerable resentment. He personally had been most disappointed at the outcome. The proposal would be put again in the near future. There has already been a considerable change of attitude. He stressed that it was individuals who had expressed views on this matter and it was not something agreed upon by Thamesmead residents generally. Although it is not absolutely certain that the proposal will be adopted when resubmitted, he feels that it will.

Mr. Rolleston of 110 Overton Road, who also represented the residents of that road who could not be present said that the three roads are not against Thamesmead and have not complained about it. The general feeling of the residents is however that they do not want to be and should not be integrated with Thamesmead. As Thamesmead is a council estate and properties in the three roads are privately owned he feels that they would not mix well and that the three roads would be swamped by the new development. This did not imply that they are against the Thamesmead development as such but that they do not wish to belong to it. In fact there are 50 mothers from the three roads who are on committees run in Thamesmead for small children and some residents are on the Parents Teachers Association of the Thamesmead Schools and even they are against the proposed boundary. He felt that despite what had been said at the meeting, politics do enter into the question.

Mr. Dawson confirmed that residents in the three roads do take part in the P.T.A. and other committees and suggested that the three roads and Thamesmead are far more integrated than is recognised. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly some residents in the three roads who are resentful that the Thamesmead has been "parked on their doorstep." Conversely all have a vested interest in the health centre in Thamesmead and in the Social Services area office which is in Thamesmead, and the growing number of children's play areas in Thamesmead.

Mrs. Stanley stated that the residents of the three roads are not aware that they are allowed to use these facilities and Mr. Rolleston said that some of them go as far as Erith to see a doctor, and there have been instances in which, he understands, residents of Overton Road have been refused by Thamesmead doctors. Cllr. Forsyth intervened to suggest that this could happen anywhere and is a matter for the National Health Committee.

Mr. Llewellyn pointed out that it has not been possible to advertise the health centre as it would cause opposition from the doctors whose code of practice precludes advertising. The Social Services Area Office was established as recently as August 1973; very few Thamesmead residents are aware of its existence let alone those outside the Thamesmead development. Mr. Phillips agreed to look into the matter of the health centre but said that he was sure anyone who approached the Social Services area office would be given all the help possible. Mr. Llewellyn pointed out that the residents of the three roads do use the information centre at Thamesmead considerably and from experience he knows that the young people from the three roads are very involved in Thamesmead, and feels they will integrate in due course. The objections made so far to exclude the three roads from Thamesmead would result in isolation not of Thamesmead but of the three roads themselves.

Cllr. Forsyth stated that in his view bad feeling has grown up between the two communities due to each side believing that the other does not want them. Comment in local publications has however been purely individual opinion. Integration will come about in due course and will be in the interests of both sides.

Mr. Rolleston said that in Overton Road 90% of the population are against the proposed boundary (Mrs. Stanley felt the percentage to be even higher) and the rest indifferent. He felt that a suitable boundary could be drawn along Yarnton Way so ^{that} the area to the south of the road would belong to the Belvedere Ward.

Cllr. Forsyth protested that this would make the new Belvedere ward less manageable and Mr. Phillips expressed the view that inclusion of the three roads and part of Thamesmead into the Belvedere Ward would ultimately upset this balance between the two wards considerably.

Another suggestion, made in view of the difficulty of finding a continuation of any boundary drawn along the houses on the north side of Overton Road or Lensbury Way or Yarnnton Way, was that the boundary should run north to south through the length of part of an open space adjacent to Maran Way.

Mr.F.Coates asked that whatever recommendation was made to the Commission it should not propose the division of Overton Road.

At this stage, having satisfied myself that every point of view or comment of those present had been expressed to their satisfaction, I declared the meeting finished and stated that I would be reporting to the Commission as soon as possible.

Mr.Phillips stressed that on one point the meeting was united in that a separate Thamesmead ward should be created as soon as possible and he asked that the report be given a high degree of priority. There appeared to be no dissentient from that opinion.

LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

ALTERATIONS TO THE NUMBER OF WARDS AND COUNCILLORS OF THE LONDON BOROUGH

Statement by Mr.G.G.Phillips

Assistant Town Clerk

1. History

In December 1963 following a public local inquiry, the Secretary of State for the Home Office determined that there should be 56 Councillors for the London Borough of Bexley, then known as London Borough No.18 and it was stated at the time that this number would provide a margin for increasing the number of Councillors at a later date if development of the Erith Marshes area made this necessary.

In 1969 talks were held with the Home Office regarding the possibility of establishing a new ward for Thamesmead with representation on an escalating basis to keep in step with the influx of people to the area. This suggestion did not find favour with the Home Office and it was agreed that action should be deferred until there were sufficient people at Thamesmead to warrant a three-Member ward.

2. The Council's Application

The Register of Electors published in February 1972 indicated that there were 2,410 electors at Thamesmead and in July 1972 the Council resolved to make representations to the Home Secretary for the creation of a three-Member ward at Thamesmead in accordance with the provisions of the London Government Act 1963. This decision was agreed by the Council without dissent.

Representations were formally made by the Chief Executive and Town Clerk to the Home Office on the 1st August 1972, when it was stated that the latest population projection for the Bexley portion of Thamesmead five years ahead, as forecast by the Greater London Council, was 10,960. Taking account of Bexley's ratio of electorate to population, this gave an electorate of approximately 8,250.

The Council emphasised to the Home Secretary that in their opinion, a high degree of priority should be given to the matter. It was imperative that the new community at Thamesmead should integrate with the remainder of the Borough as quickly as possible. It was considered that the current lack of representation caused resentment and frustration and led to needless misunderstandings and this situation was bound to exacerbate as the population expanded.

Following receipt of the Council's representations, the Secretary of State indicated that he was satisfied that there were sufficient grounds for considering the alterations requested and he directed that the proposals be advertised in accordance with the provisions of the London Government Act 1963.

3. Procedural Difficulty

As a result of the advertisements no representations were received by the Home Office but the Secretary of State notified the Council of a procedural difficulty into which they had run. There was, in fact, a contradiction in the Local Government Act

1972 which the Home Office explained as follows:-

"Section 50(8) of the Local Government Act 1972 precludes representations under the 1963 Act being made after the passing of the 1972 Act, and therefore does not in itself preclude action on a representation made before the passing of the Act being completed before 1 April 1974 under the 1963 Act. The effect of paragraph 7 of Schedule 2 to the 1972 Act, however, is that, until an order has been made under Part IV of the Act, the Electoral arrangements for London Boroughs are to be as they were when Part IV came into operation (and the relevant provisions of Part IV came into operation on Royal Assent). This, contrary to the intention of Section 50(8), means that London borough electoral arrangements can be changed only by a Part IV order, which means in practice an order made by the Secretary of State under section 51(2), following proposals put to him by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England."

What this rather complicated statement boils down to is that one part of the Act says that the application can proceed but a later schedule prevents it.

The Home Office accordingly explained this position to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England who, in the circumstances, agreed to conduct an early review. Today's meeting is the outcome of this latest development.

4. Defining the Boundary

The need for electoral representation at Thamesmead then was clear and all that was necessary was to determine how the new ward should be drawn. The First Schedule to the London Government Act 1963 provides that in considering the boundaries of a ward in a London borough, the Secretary of State and any Commissioner appointed to deal with the matter shall among other things have regard to:-

- (1) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (2) any local ties which have been or would be broken by the fixing of a boundary.

The Council took the view, and I think this is hard to dispute, that a railway line is a very good permanent boundary and is certainly likely to remain easily identifiable. Condition (1) therefore is clearly satisfied.

The question of local ties is somewhat more difficult to establish. It has certainly been the wish of successive Councils since 1965 that the Thamesmead development shall not be seen to be a separate new town. The concept of the development has always been that it would be fully integrated within the London Boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich and continual efforts have been made over the last few years to bring about this feeling of belonging.

5. School Attendance

In order to judge the matter of local ties the Council can only look to certain known factors. Undoubtedly one such factor which ties a population to a particular area is the habits of the school population. The first Thamesmead school to be built was the Abbey primary school and the original intention was to limit admissions to this

school to children living in the new development. The reason for this was that the Council would be hard pressed to provide adequate accommodation for all pupils in the new development.

However, in the summer of 1968 residents in the Abbey Wood area of the borough, on both sides of the railway line, applied for their children to be admitted to the new Abbey School instead of St. Augustine's school in Lower Belvedere, which they had hitherto attended. The matter was the subject of considerable debate by the Education Committee and ultimately it was decided that the case of families living to the north of the railway line was different from those to the south and that since Abbey School was sited immediately to the north of Overton Road, it was reasonable to allow pupils from the three roads concerned to attend Abbey School if there was room for them. The upshot was that pupils aged 5 years were admitted in the autumn of 1968 and infant pupils generally were admitted in 1969. In 1970 with the development of a second Thamesmead primary school it became necessary to define a catchment zone for Abbey School and the three roads were included in that zone. In July 1972 the Head Teacher of Abbey School reported to his Managers that 78 children out of his total roll of 253 (32%) lived in the older properties north of the railway.

Furthermore, when the children reach the age of 11 years, parents wish them to transfer to Riverside School and in September 1973 32 pupils from Abbey School went on to Riverside School whilst none was transferred to Picardy School in Belvedere. By contrast, 66 pupils from St. Augustine's Junior Mixed School were transferred to Picardy Secondary School and none to Riverside.

Clearly then the established link and community interest between the residents of the three roads concerned and the new development is undeniable and the Council applauds this situation.

6. Newacres Library

At the present time the nearest public library for residents of the three roads is the one at Picardy which is nearly $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles away from Rushdene. The Newacres Library is now in the course of erection at Thamesmead and is $\frac{5}{8}$ mile from Rushdene. In calculating the likely public demand to be made of the facilities at the Newacres Library account has been taken of the population living in Overton Road, Sydney Road and Rushdene, since $\frac{3}{4}$ mile is reckoned to be the usual radius for a local library.

7. Harrow Manorway Bridge

It ought to be mentioned that work is just starting on the Harrow Manorway Bridge and road works project at Abbey Wood and this will obviously have some effect on the three roads in question. It would not seem, however, to affect seriously the situation before us today since whilst it will be a longer route for vehicular traffic this will be compensated by the discontinuance of the level crossing and a pedestrian link over the railway will be maintained. I have a leaflet for the Commissioner which explains the scheme.

8. Voting

So far as the physical act of voting is concerned, there are unfortunately no suitable premises within the Overton Road, Sydney Road, Rushdene area for a polling station and it is considered that the most convenient direction for the electors in these roads to take is towards the Thamesmead schools. To do otherwise would involve crossing

the railway and Abbey Road in order to vote at St. Mary's Hall which is on the south side of Abbey Road.

9. The Eastern Boundary

Mention has been made in the representations by some of the residents that community consideration has been deployed on the eastern boundary of the proposed new ward by omitting the roads off Norman Road. The Council consider this to be an entirely different problem since these roads are more than a mile from the centre of Thamesmead development and it is very unlikely that the residents of these roads would gravitate towards Thamesmead in the same way as the residents of the three roads concerned. For example, the school children there attend the St. Augustine's and Picardy Schools.

Having regard to all the circumstances the Council consider that there is community interest between the Rushdene area and the Thamesmead development and that the other consideration of identifying a permanent boundary weighs the balance in favour of including Rushdene, Overton Road and Sydney Road in the proposed Thamesmead East Ward.
