

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND



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REPORT No. 104

*LONDON*  
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE 1975

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# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

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To:—

The Rt Hon Anthony Crosland, MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment.

## REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE COUNTIES OF BERKSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE IN THE VICINITY OF SLOUGH

1. We, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, having carried out our review of the boundary between the counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire in the vicinity of Slough, now submit our Report.

2. This review is one of three cases identified in paragraph 36 of our Report No. 6, where Parliament, in effect, recognised the need to give further consideration to the boundaries created by the Local Government Act 1972, but could not find time to do so during the passage of the Bill.

3. In accordance with the procedure laid down in section 60(1) and (2) of the 1972 Act, notice was given on 12 December 1973 that we were to undertake this review. This was incorporated in a consultation letter addressed to all the local authorities in the counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Copies were also sent to the Regional Health Authority, the Water Authority, the regional offices of government departments, the headquarters of the main political parties and to the editors of local newspapers circulating in the area and of the local government press. Notices inserted in the local press announced the start of the review and invited comments from members of the public and from any interested bodies.

### DRAFT PROPOSALS

4. Representations were received from the two county councils, four other principal local authorities, fifteen parish councils, nineteen other organisations and 825 individuals.

5. Berkshire County Council advocated the transfer to Berkshire of a substantial area of Buckinghamshire to the north, west and east of Slough. They also offered an alternative submission, to be considered in the event of our not accepting their main proposal, which would transfer a smaller area to Berkshire. The County Council's main proposal was supported by the Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, though with alternative district arrangements for the transferred area. Most of the representations from the other local authorities expressed opposition to any major change in the county boundary and put forward proposals for minor changes about which there was a fair measure of local agreement. We also received representations for making no change at all, for reverting to the River Thames and for moving the boundary northwards to the line of the M40 motorway.

6. Several authorities said that major changes were necessary in this area but some of them thought that it was too soon after reorganisation for these

to be considered now. Buckinghamshire County Council and Beaconsfield District Council stated that their long term aim was to restore the River Thames as the county boundary in this area.

7. We considered all the representations. We thought we should first decide whether it would be appropriate to propose major changes as a result of this review. We accepted that there was some merit in the contention that Slough and the surrounding area of the former Eton rural district were well integrated and that they should be part of the same county. But, as Parliament had only recently decided that Slough should form part of Berkshire, a proposal that the River Thames should again be the county boundary would, we thought, be *beyond our brief in this review. We thought that the major proposals by Berkshire County Council and the Berkshire Area Health Authority might not be open to a similar objection but they would mean the dismemberment of the Beaconsfield district after only a short life. Any changes which we propose are required to be in the interests of effective and convenient local government and we took the view that there was insufficient experience of the new local government system to enable us to make such a judgement about major boundary changes during the current review. We also thought that a district so recently created as that of Beaconsfield should be given a chance to settle down and prove its viability in operation.*

8. Having concluded that we should propose no major change, we then examined the proposals for tidying up the present boundary and removing some of the existing anomalies. We thought that of the proposals which we had received, no one set was entirely satisfactory and we decided that, before formulating our draft proposals, we should visit the area. Accordingly, we made a private visit on 19 September 1974.

9. We then considered the possibilities for minor changes in the light of our visit to the area. The area to the east of Slough is divided between three county councils and the Greater London Council. Our inspection of this area had shown that a satisfactory solution could only be found following a major review of the boundaries of these four authorities. Following our conclusion above, we did not think that this was within the terms of reference which we had set ourselves for the present review. There was, however, one very small anomaly at Sutton Lane where a new road had been built and all the authorities were agreed as to how this should be put right. We decided to adopt their views in our draft proposals.

10. Moving round towards the north we considered a proposal by Slough Borough Council that an area of factories and gravel pits to the north of the Grand Union Canal should be included in the borough. We noted that the area concerned could not be considered rural but we thought the canal represented an extremely good and well defined boundary which would not be equalled by any line to the north and we decided not to adopt this proposal. The Council had also proposed that George Green and Middle Green should be included in the town. But we concluded that, in the context of the present review and following our inspection of the area, the boundary should not be changed at the present time.

11. Buckinghamshire County Council had proposed that Wexham parish church, Wexham hospital and some intervening residential development should be returned to Buckinghamshire. This proposal was supported by letters from a number of local inhabitants who emphasized the links between the parish and the church. We had some sympathy with the argument about the return of the church to the parish but found that it would not be possible to draw a satisfactory county boundary which would give effect to this alone. We then considered the position of the hospital. We noted that it was a regional hospital and that the area of responsibility of the Berkshire Area Health Authority overlapped the county boundary as far north as the M40 and that, to this extent, there was a divorce between health administration and local authority administration. We concluded that we should propose, for the purpose of our draft proposals, the line proposed by Buckinghamshire County Council which would transfer the hospital to Buckinghamshire and would meet local wishes by returning the church and nearby housing development to that county.

12. We had received proposals from Berkshire County Council and Slough District Council for altering the boundary in the vicinity of the cemetery and crematorium. We thought it would be appropriate to include the crematorium in Slough, together with any land which was expected to be used for a cemetery extension during the next few years. We decided to formulate draft proposals to give effect to this view, on the basis of the information before us about future land use.

13. Several alternative lines were proposed to us for modifying the boundary at Farnham Royal. Following our inspection, we concluded that the line proposed by Farnham Royal Parish Council should be adopted for our draft proposals.

14. We found the boundary between Burnham and Slough to be unsatisfactory. However, the exclusion of Burnham from the Beaconsfield district would seriously affect that district and would go beyond the intentions of this review. Burnham Parish Council had proposed an alternative line which would take part of Slough into Burnham and require only minor changes, but this boundary too we found to be unsatisfactory. We concluded that Burnham represented a problem which would have to be faced on the major review of county boundaries in the 1980's and that, for the meantime, no change should be made.

15. At Dorney we noted that the village retained its rural character despite its proximity to the major built up area of Slough, and we concluded that the county boundary should remain unaltered.

16. Our decisions were incorporated in our draft proposals which were published on 21 October 1974. Copies of these draft proposals were sent to all who had received our initial consultation letter or had made representations to us. Representations on these draft proposals were invited from those to whom details had been sent and, by public notices, from other members of the public and interested bodies.

## RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT PROPOSALS

17. There was general acceptance of our draft proposals from those who were opposed to major changes. Berkshire County Council, Slough Borough Council and the Berkshire Area Health Authority opposed the transfer of Wexham hospital to Buckinghamshire. The Area Health Authority, as well as being concerned about the hospital repeated their earlier representations for aligning the county boundary along the M40. This submission was supported, though for different reasons, by a local political association. Slough Borough Council also sought the transfer to the borough, and hence also to Berkshire, of additional land in the vicinity of the crematorium.

18. In the light of these comments, we decided that we should not reach a conclusion on this review until we had had an opportunity to hear further representations at a local meeting.

### THE LOCAL MEETING

19. The local meeting was held in Burnham on 19/20 May 1975. The Commission were represented by Mr John Rankin, Sir Andrew Wheatley and Professor Michael Chisholm who prior to the start of the meeting, again visited the areas which were to be discussed.

20. The meeting was attended by representatives from Berkshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils, Slough Borough Council, Beaconsfield District Council, the Oxford Regional Health Authority, the Berkshire Area Health Authority, the East Berkshire Community Health Council, four parish councils, the Beaconsfield Association for Local Councils, three political organisations and a local residents association. Local MPs, a number of residents from the Wexham area and representatives of the press were also present.

21. The arguments which we heard were wide ranging and we shall summarise them in this report. Inevitably, this must lead to some loss of detail and we want to assure all those who attended the meeting that our final proposals were formulated only after we had considered a full report of the local meeting which had been presented to us by the Commissioners who were present.

22. Berkshire County Council and Slough Borough Council both expressed their deep disappointment at the limited nature of our draft proposals and expressed their regret at the limited terms of reference of the meeting. Following statements made in the House of Commons during the passage of the Local Government Act 1972, they had expected that we would take a comprehensive look at the county boundary in the vicinity of Slough and would take account of the extent to which the borough had grown and the fact that it now needed space to "live and breathe". The two authorities expressed the hope that, even at this stage, we would think again about undertaking a wide ranging review of the county boundary in this area.

### Wexham

23. Turning to the position of Wexham Park Hospital, both authorities argued for the retention of the hospital and the neighbouring houses in Berkshire

and were supported by the Berkshire Area Health Authority, the East Berkshire Community Health Council, the Wexham Court Parish Council and the Wexham Labour Party.

24. It was stated that Wexham Park Hospital is primarily a hospital for the people of Slough and East Berkshire and that, although it caters also for the South Buckinghamshire overlap zone, only 15% of the patients came from this area. It was said that this hospital, although a general district hospital, is part of a group of hospitals in East Berkshire which together provide an integrated service and, to this extent, the facilities of any one hospital need to be complemented by those of other hospitals in the area. If the hospital were to be transferred to Buckinghamshire, the Berkshire Area Health Authority would continue to run the hospital for so long as the overlap arrangements last, but only as agent and not as principal authority, and overriding policy responsibilities would then lie with the Buckinghamshire Area Health Authority. This would lead to complicated liaison arrangements, particularly in the social services field, and these might be further complicated if the present overlap and agency arrangements in the health service were, in due course, terminated. It was argued that, in view of the integrated nature of the hospital facilities in East Berkshire and the fact that 85% of the patients came from that area, there was a strong case for retaining the hospital in Berkshire. It was also argued that the hospital was the result of voluntary efforts in Slough from 1936 onwards to secure the provision of a new voluntary district hospital for the town and that upon the passing of the National Health Service Act, the land which had been so secured had been handed over to the National Health Service and subsequently the hospital had been provided. The links with Slough had remained and the hospital continued to be supported by organisations in Slough who provided many services on a voluntary basis.

25. From the local authority, rather than the health service standpoint, details were given of the services provided by Slough Borough Council and Berkshire County Council to the hospital and the adjoining areas and the effect on these services of transferring the hospital to Buckinghamshire. There was particular mention of the problems which could arise over registration of deaths. The present arrangements for education, libraries, fire service, refuse, drainage, bus and taxi services were explained to us. It was also argued that the decision to include the hospital in Berkshire was one deliberately taken by Parliament and the boundary should be left undisturbed until it had been tested by several years experience.

26. Reference was also made to the extent to which our draft proposals to transfer the hospital to Buckinghamshire might have been influenced by the wishes expressed to us by those residents of the neighbouring area who wanted to return to Buckinghamshire. It was said that if the Commission felt that this was a case where local wishes should prevail, there was no reason why the hospital should not be retained in Berkshire.

27. The case for transferring the hospital to Buckinghamshire was argued by Buckinghamshire County Council and Beaconsfield District Council, the Beaconsfield Association of Local Councils, Wexham Parish Council,

Wexham Ratepayers Association, Mr Ronald Bell MP and a number of local residents.

28. It was stated that it was not possible to make the health service boundaries coterminous with those of local authorities and that the overlap arrangements, which already applied to two Buckinghamshire hospitals, could well be extended to include the Wexham Park hospital. The fact that hospital facilities would be provided in Buckinghamshire for East Berkshire people was in no way exceptional. It was pointed out to us that doctors had the right to refer patients wherever they wished. The case that the transfer of the hospital to Buckinghamshire would make it necessary to devise special administrative arrangements which would be highly inconvenient, was denied. The hospital was claimed to be as much for the people of South Buckinghamshire as for the people of Slough. They too had contributed by helping with the provision of voluntary services. It was not thought of as a Slough hospital but as a hospital at Wexham. It was also argued that satisfactory local government services could be provided by Buckinghamshire County Council and Beaconsfield District Council.

29. When all the parties concerned had stated their case we then entered into discussion about the arguments which had been raised in order to clarify, and to allow for the examination of, a number of the points which had been raised.

#### Slough Crematorium

30. Slough Borough Council pressed for all the land in their ownership in the vicinity of the crematorium, including that to the east of Church Lane and north of Muddy Lane, to be transferred to the borough, and hence to Berkshire. They outlined the history of their acquisition of this land, which was linked to the proposals for the Slough northern route, the purposes to which it was now put and their future plans for its use.

31. Against this proposal, it was argued that many of the plans for the future were uncertain, including those for the Slough northern route, and that it would be premature to make substantial boundary changes now. The transfer to Slough of land already committed for the purposes of the cemetery was accepted.

32. Slough Borough Council also argued for the transfer to Slough of that part of the grounds of St John's Church which is in the district of Beaconsfield. They said that, as the rest of the Church is in Slough, it seemed only sensible to unite the two portions in one county. There was general agreement at the meeting to this proposal.

#### FINAL PROPOSALS

33. We have now reviewed our draft proposals in the light of the written representations which we received, our inspection of the area and our discussions at the local meeting.

34. We have concluded that there is a clear case, at the present time, for leaving the Wexham hospital in Slough and in Berkshire. This conclusion flows from the position of the present county boundary and it does not follow that we would have reached the same conclusion if we had been considering a major shift of this boundary.

35. As to the adjoining residential area, we accept that the great majority of those living there want to move back into Buckinghamshire and that their feelings are genuine and strong. In the context of the current review, we think that these views should prevail. However, if all the houses were to be so transferred it would not be possible to find a suitable boundary which would leave the hospital in Berkshire and it would probably be necessary to transfer the hospital as well. We did not think this was an acceptable solution. We considered alternative approaches and concluded that, by drawing the boundary around the hospital and along Church Lane, it would be possible to retain the hospital in Berkshire and to meet the majority of local wishes by transferring most of the neighbouring houses to Buckinghamshire. This boundary, whilst a little curious in shape, follows readily discernible features and is, in our view, acceptable in the circumstances.

36. As to the land in the vicinity of the crematorium, we agree to the proposals to unite St John's Church in Slough and to transfer to the borough the area of land which has already been committed for the purposes of the cemetery and which can only be reached from Slough. For the rest, we consider that the position is too uncertain to justify any change at the present time and we recommend accordingly.

37. In addition to the changes which we recommend above we also wish to confirm our draft proposals for a revised line in the parish of Farnham Royal and for a minor change to remove a small boundary anomaly at the northern end of Sutton Lane so that the boundary would run along the east side of the road. In both these cases there was no opposition to our draft proposals.

38. Details of our final proposals are set out on the attached map and in the schedule to this report. The proposed boundary is defined on the map. The schedule specifies the proposed changes in local authority areas.

#### CONSEQUENTIAL REVISION OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

39. We are currently reviewing the electoral arrangements for the districts in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Slough Borough Council and Beaconsfield District Council have been advised that the start of their electoral review will be deferred until a decision has been taken on the future county boundary. These reviews cannot, now, be completed in time for the elections in 1976 and any changes resulting from these reviews would not normally be introduced until the 1979 elections. If our recommendations are accepted, we propose, in view of their minor extent, to proceed at once to consult the local authorities at county, district and parish level, about consequential changes in their electoral arrangements. We envisage that such a consultation could be completed fairly quickly and would avoid delay in implementing any boundary changes.

40. Consequently, we have not made any proposals for consequential electoral changes for these areas.

#### PUBLICATION

41. In accordance with section 60(5)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, a copy of this report and of the map is being sent to the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils. This report and the accompanying map will be made available for public inspection at the council's main offices. Copies of this report, which includes a small scale map, are also being sent to those who received the consultation letter and to those who made comments.

L.S.

Signed

EDMUND COMPTON (Chairman)

JOHN M RANKIN (Deputy Chairman)

DIANA ALBEMARLE

T C BENFIELD

MICHAEL CHISHOLM

ANDREW WHEATLEY

F B YOUNG

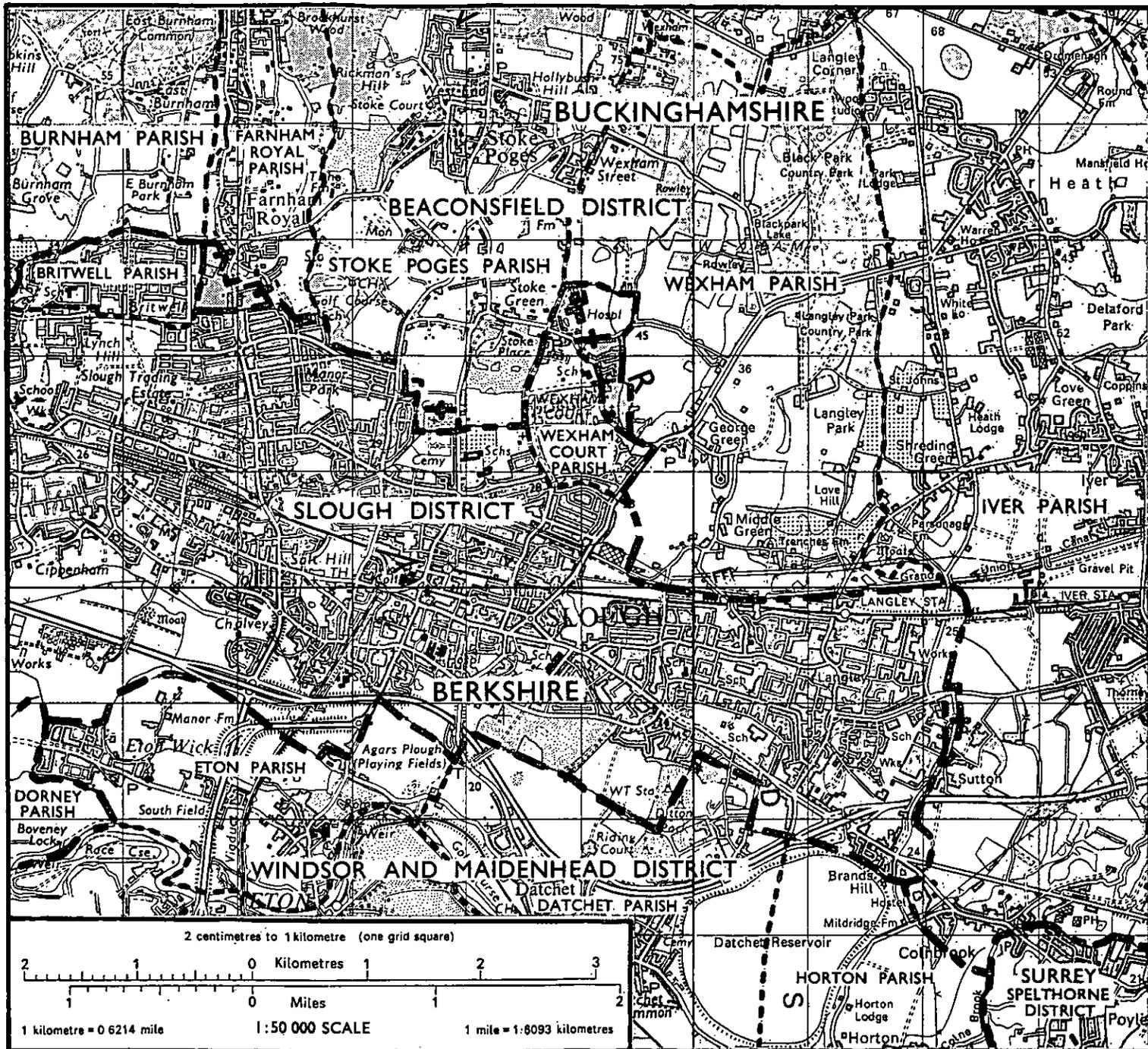
DAVID R SMITH (Secretary)

23 October 1975

PROPOSALS FOR REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS IN THE VICINITY OF SLOUGH

It is proposed:—

1. that the boundary between the counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire should be realigned as defined on the map which accompanies this report;
2. that the parts of the parishes of Farnham Royal, Iver and Stoke Poges, which will be transferred to the borough of Slough, shall cease to be parts of any parish;
3. that the part of the parish of Farnham Royal remaining in the district of Beaconsfield shall be a parish known as the parish of Farnham Royal;
4. that the part of the parish of Iver remaining in the district of Beaconsfield shall be a parish known as the parish of Iver;
5. that the part of the parish of Stoke Poges remaining in the district of Beaconsfield shall be a parish known as the parish of Stoke Poges;
6. that the part of the parish of Wexham Court, which will be transferred to the district of Beaconsfield, shall be added to the parish of Wexham;
7. that the part of the parish of Wexham Court remaining in the borough of Slough shall be a parish known as the parish of Wexham Court.



Existing County Boundary - - - - -  
 Proposed new County Boundary - + - + -

Existing District Boundary - - - - -  
 Existing Parish Boundary - - - - -

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