

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND



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REPORT No. 145

LONDON  
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

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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 OXFORDSHIRE IN THE VICINITY OF READING

1. We, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, having carried out our review of the boundary between the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire in the vicinity of Reading, 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 Act.

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 Oxfordshire. 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, eleven other principal local authorities, nine parish councils, thirteen other organisations and over seven hundred individuals.

5. Berkshire County Council submitted two proposals. The first one, and the one which they advocated, would transfer to the county seven parishes from the South Oxfordshire district of Oxfordshire. These seven parishes would be divided between three Berkshire districts. 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 Berkshire Area Health Authority. Otherwise, the Council's proposals were the subject of much opposition and seemed to have little local support.

6. Reading Borough Council proposed that an area of south Oxfordshire, smaller in area than either of the proposals of Berkshire County Council, should be transferred to Berkshire and included in Reading. This proposal was opposed

by Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and a local residents association.

7. Oxfordshire County Council proposed a boundary realignment which would include in Berkshire the areas on the northern fringe of Reading which were already developed or allocated for development in the Reading fringe town map and which were contiguous with the existing county boundary. This proposal had some local support although, in the main, the representations which we received from the south Oxfordshire area were in support of the boundary being left unchanged. Oxford City Council proposed that the county boundary be realigned so as to include the areas of the former Henley municipal borough and most of the former Henley rural district in Berkshire. Berkshire Area Health Authority made a similar proposal, with the area to be transferred slightly smaller than that suggested by Oxford City Council. This proposal was supported by a local political organisation.

8. South Oxfordshire District Council submitted that the existing county and district boundaries should remain unchanged and pointed out that the main proposal of Berkshire County Council had been approved by a majority of only 2. The proposal to retain the existing boundary had the general support of the parish councils, many of the local organisations and most of the individuals who wrote to us.

9. We also received a proposal, from Eye and Dunsden Parish Council, for realigning the boundary along the River Thames, thus returning to the line which had existed up to 1911.

10. We considered the representations in the light of the needs of effective and convenient local government, the general objectives of local government reorganisation and, at district level, such guidelines as remained relevant from our first operation, when we made the recommendations for the new pattern of districts embodied in our Report No. 1 of November 1972 (Cmnd 5148).

11. In particular, we noted the weight of public opinion in the parishes around the north of Reading in favour of remaining in Oxfordshire and, on the other hand, the support of one representative body for the inclusion of their area in Reading. We also noted that only one principal authority, Oxfordshire County Council, had made a proposal which would result in their losing territory if it were accepted; while Eye and Dunsden Parish Council had proposed a minor change to transfer a small area to Reading if their main proposal were not accepted.

12. If there were to be any extension of the area of Berkshire, this would also call for an extension of Reading borough and we considered this in the context of our previous decision, made when recommending the new district pattern in our Report No. 1, that large towns which were already within or above the preferred population range should not normally be enlarged. We concluded, however, that it would be open to us to consider a change in the area of the borough of Reading if an exceptional case for this were made in consequence of a change in the county boundary in the Reading area.

13. We first considered the suggestions made to us for major changes, such as the inclusion in Berkshire of extensive areas of south Oxfordshire, or reverting to the River Thames as the county boundary. Any changes which we propose are required to be in the interest of effective and convenient local government and we took the view that there was insufficient experience of the operation of the new pattern of local government to enable us to make a judgement about such major boundary changes during the current review.

14. We then examined the proposal of South Oxfordshire District Council that the present boundary should be retained. We noted that the present boundary runs within, but close to the edge of, a built-up area in a number of places, leaving in Oxfordshire groups of dwellings which are part of a continuously built-up area of Reading. We also noted that in a number of cases the present boundary cuts through existing properties. We therefore concluded that, for our draft proposals, the boundary should be changed, but only to the extent necessary to encompass the continuously built-up area of Reading.

15. Our decision was incorporated in our draft proposals which were published on 9 August 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

16. In response to the publication of our draft proposals, we received representations from 15 local authorities, including all the principal authorities and most of the parish councils involved. We also received comments from 8 local organisations and from over 100 individuals who were resident in the areas affected. Although there was some support for our draft proposals from the local authorities, local organisations and local residents, the representations showed there were also elements of local opposition, some in favour of the boundary being left unchanged, others in favour of more change than we had proposed.

17. 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 visit the area and to hear further representations at a local meeting.

#### THE LOCAL MEETING

18. The local meeting was held in Reading on 24/25 March 1975. The Commission were represented by Sir Edmund Compton, Professor Michael Chisholm and Mr F B Young. Notice of the meeting was sent to all who had received our initial consultation letter or had made representations to us. Notices were also published in the local press and displayed in the area.

19. Prior to the meeting, two of the members of the Commission toured the area to be discussed at the meeting.

20. The local meeting was very well attended and representatives were present from all the principal authorities, 12 parish councils and 10 local organisations. A considerable number of residents from local communities were also present.

21. Berkshire County Council outlined the background to their proposals and identified the basis of their case which was to include in Berkshire all those communities which were within the county's sphere of influence, and in particular those who looked towards Reading for many of their services. They were also looking for a boundary line which would avoid the separation of town and country and which would be able to stand the test of time.

22. Reading Borough Council supported the principles behind the Berkshire County Council's case but favoured the transfer to Berkshire of a smaller area because they were only concerned with those communities which have links with Reading.

23. Oxfordshire County Council stood by their original submission which we had adopted as our draft proposals. It was their view that it was impossible to measure where Reading's influence ended and, therefore, the boundary should be related to physical development on the ground. There were no plans for substantial development beyond the line of our draft proposals and they concluded that that was the right place to draw the boundary.

24. South Oxfordshire District Council were in favour of maintaining the existing boundary and said that the results of their consultations had shown that local people were overwhelmingly in favour of its retention. This view was strongly supported by the representations which we heard from the parish councils.

25. These local wishes were reflected in the representations which we heard from local organisations. There was a recognition of the extent to which the people living within the boundary which we had proposed looked towards Reading. There was, however, some anxiety about the loss of local representation which the areas would suffer if they ceased to have parish government.

26. During the meeting there were references to the problems which could arise with certain services, particularly education, if the boundary were changed. We therefore discussed with the meeting the present organisation of services in the area to the north of Reading and the changes that would occur if the boundary were altered.

27. The main points of discussion centred on the education service, and particularly on secondary education. There are differences in the education policies followed by the two county councils and anxiety was expressed about the secondary education which would be available to children living north of the existing Reading boundary if they were transferred to Berkshire. The discussion largely centred on the future of the new purpose-built Chiltern Edge comprehensive school. The school had been built to take pupils from the area to the north of Reading and, because Berkshire's own schools in Reading were

already full, we were told that Berkshire County Council would need to take places at Chiltern Edge for many years to come and that parents in the fringe area would be able to apply for their children to go there. We were assured by Berkshire County Council that there would be no disturbance to the existing pupils against the wishes of their parents.

28. For further education there was a choice between the South Oxfordshire Technical College or one of the colleges in Reading. We were advised that people in the fringe area tended to go to Reading. For evening adult education, facilities were provided by Oxfordshire County Council at Chiltern Edge. At primary level there did not seem to be any problem which would be aggravated by a change in the boundary.

29. With regard to the library service, we were advised that large numbers of Oxfordshire readers use the Reading Central and Caversham branch libraries.

30. For the social services, Oxfordshire County Council referred to the difficulty which they had in providing adequate services in this part of the county. At present, the service is run from Henley on the basis that social workers visit their clients at home. But many of the people from the fringe areas go first to the Reading office and then find it difficult to understand why they have to be referred to Henley. The Reading influence was also clearly marked in the fire service where Berkshire provided first attendance cover over a large area of south Oxfordshire; but this would continue whatever was done about the boundary.

31. For the other services which were discussed, the boundary did not seem to be a critical factor. We did receive a request that, if we confirmed our draft proposals, the playing field in Mapledurham should be retained within the parish.

32. Reference was made to the effects of the loss to the Oxfordshire authorities of rateable value if the county boundary were changed.

33. We were advised during the course of the meeting that if we were to recommend the retention of the existing boundary or the confirmation of our draft proposals, the need for minor modifications would arise. Details of some of these possible modifications were given to us at the meeting but others were not available at that time. Subsequent to the meeting, we consulted the local authorities about possible minor modifications should either line be adopted.

34. One of the issues raised at the meeting was the loss of representation if areas, which are at present part of a parish, were transferred to Reading and lost their parish status, and hence their parish representation. We received a request that the Caversham Park area, if it were to be so transferred, should become a parish within the borough.

## FINAL PROPOSALS

35. 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.

36. During the course of our review we received a strong, though not unanimous, expression of local wishes in favour of the area to the north of Reading remaining in Oxfordshire. When formulating our draft proposals, we took the view that the rural areas should remain in Oxfordshire but that those areas which are a continuation of the built-up area of Reading should be transferred to the borough of Reading, and hence to Berkshire.

37. Following the response to our draft proposals and the discussions at the local meeting, we remain of the view that the rural areas should not be transferred to Berkshire but should remain in Oxfordshire.

38. There was much local support in favour of retaining the present boundary but we found this boundary to be unsatisfactory as it stands, in that it runs through existing properties. It was clear from the advice which we received during the discussions at our local meeting that the presence and influence of Reading is very strong within this built-up area. There are no obvious differences of character between the housing on either side of the present boundary and we were left with the distinct impression that all the development in the vicinity of the boundary is part of the town area of Reading. At the local meeting we heard nothing to persuade us that we should alter our view, set out in our draft proposals, that the whole of the built-up area of Reading should be included in the borough, and hence in the county of Berkshire.

39. We received a few proposals for minor modifications and we have decided to accept those that are in the interests of technically better boundaries.

40. In relation to the request for a new parish to be created for the Caversham Park area, we are of the opinion that this would call for detailed consideration to decide what would be the most appropriate boundary. There would also be the question of whether other areas to be transferred to Reading should be similarly treated. We note that when this proposal was put to the meeting it was not opposed by Reading Borough Council. We conclude that this matter is one for the Borough Council and the local residents concerned to follow through together.

41. 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

42. We are currently reviewing the electoral arrangements for the districts in Berkshire and Oxfordshire under the provisions of Schedule 9 to the 1972 Act. The reviews of Reading borough and South Oxfordshire district will be started as soon as a decision has been taken on the future county boundary and should take about a year to complete. Our recommendations for revised electoral arrangements will take account of your decision about the future county boundary.

43. A change in the county boundary cannot be implemented without making amendments to the existing electoral arrangements of the local author-

ities affected so as to bring them into line with the revised administrative areas. Waiting for the completion of our Schedule 9 review might delay the date when any alterations to the county boundary could be brought into effect and we have considered whether it would be possible for us to make proposals, ahead of our Schedule 9 electoral review report, which would be confined to revised electoral arrangements only for the areas directly affected by any boundary change. However, in view of the number of electors affected by the boundary changes which we are proposing, any consequential revision of the electoral arrangements for the districts might be extensive. We have concluded that it would be more satisfactory to deal with the new electoral arrangements as part of the main Schedule 9 review. We have not, therefore, made any proposals for such changes in this report.

#### PUBLICATION

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

LS

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)

22 January 1976



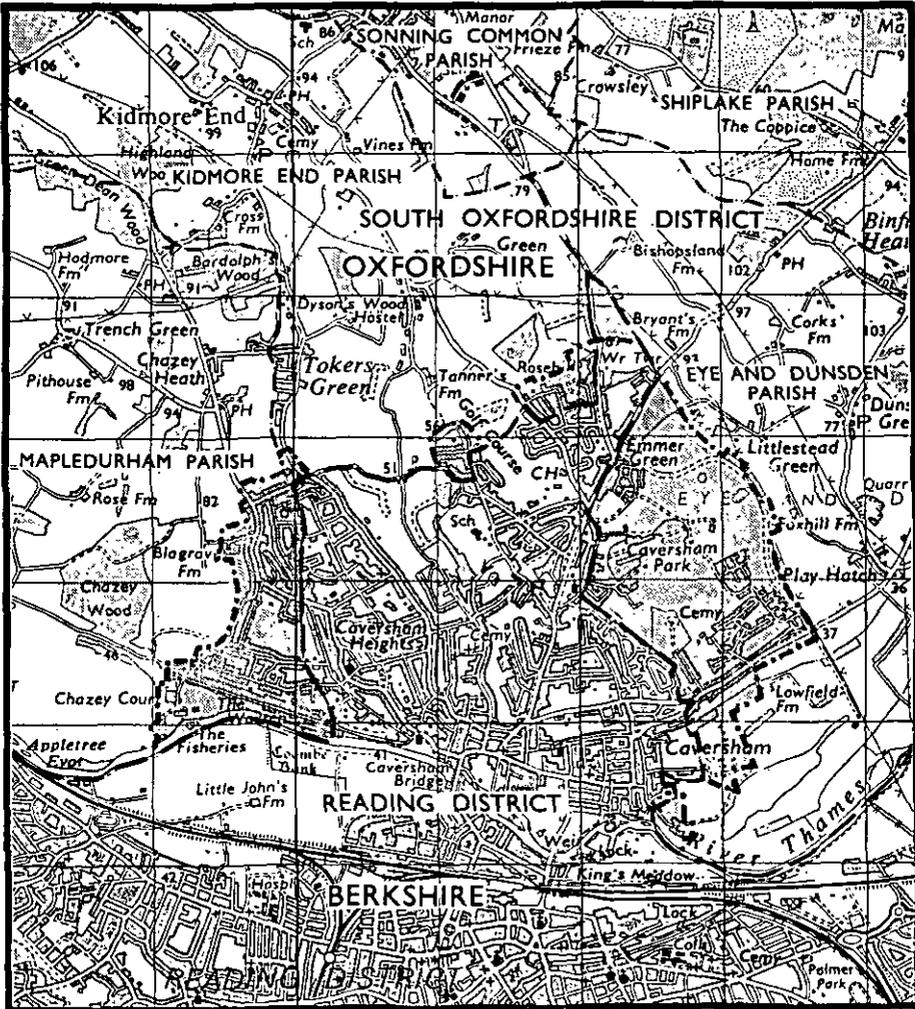
## SCHEDULE

### PROPOSALS FOR REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS IN THE VICINITY OF READING

It is proposed:

- 1 that the boundary between the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire should be realigned as defined on the map which accompanies this report;
- 2 that the parts of the parishes of Mapledurham, Kidmore End, and Eye and Dunsden which will be transferred to the borough of Reading, shall cease to be parts of any parish;
- 3 that the part of the parish of Mapledurham remaining in the district of South Oxfordshire shall be a parish known as the parish of Mapledurham;
- 4 that the part of the parish of Kidmore End remaining in the district of South Oxfordshire shall be a parish known as the parish of Kidmore End;
- 5 that the part of the parish of Eye and Dunsden remaining in the district of South Oxfordshire shall be a parish known as the parish of Eye and Dunsden;
- 6 that the part of the borough of Reading which will be transferred to the district of South Oxfordshire, shall be added to the parish of Eye and Dunsden.





SCALE 1:50 000

2 centimetres to 1 kilometre (one grid square)



1 kilometre = 0.6214 mile

1 mile = 1.6093 kilometres

- Existing County Boundary      — — — — —
- Proposed new County Boundary      - · - · - · - · - · - ·
- Existing Parish Boundary      - - - - -

