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City  
Boundary  
Unchanged  
since 1731

As promised

the beginning of the land  
grab frozen

THE OX



Friday, December 18, 1981

## Greater Oxford

So Oxford City Council is looking for another 40,000 citizens, which are to be acquired (the council hopes) as the result of a bit of judicious annexation.

If the Boundary Commission agrees the limits of the city will be extended to take in the whole of Kennington, Littlemore, Marston, North Hinksey, South Hinksey, Risinghurst and Sandhills, Sandford, Wytham and Gosford and Water Eaton. Parts of Cumnor, Kidlington, Garsington and Horspath would also be included.

The main reasons given by the city for this extraordinary proposal are that the areas involved have "close associations" with Oxford, and that it would be far more convenient for those people involved if they were administered from Oxford rather than from far-flung posts of empire like Abingdon, Wallingford or Banbury.

The reasons are given in a document printed by the city council entitled: "City of Oxford Possible Boundary Extension."

It is pointed out therein that under the present boundaries refuse collections may occur on different days for parts of the same estate or street. One part of an estate may be subject to different rules from its neighbours and in some cases the city boundary runs through the middle of a property.

It is not, of course, stated that these inconsistencies could be resolved with minimum boundary changes.

Again, according to the city, there is the case of the night reveller travelling home from Oxford by taxi to, for example, Wytham who finds himself paying a surcharge because he has to cross the city boundary. If the new boundaries are accepted shall we then expect to hear the same tale from the man who lives in Wootton or Appleton?

Another reason put forward by Oxford for taking in these country parishes is the convenience that these new Oxonians will find in visiting the Town Hall. At the moment, the city argues a trip of 15 miles is required for an inhabitant of Wytham to visit his district council offices at Abingdon — presumably there is also the danger of attacks by highwaymen or footpads.

Above all, say the city council, these areas in question have close associations with the city. Many of the people involved feel they are "citizens of Oxford," argue the planners.

If that is how people in Wytham, Cumnor, Risinghurst and Sandford feel, then it is indeed news to us. It would be even more astonishing if the people of Kidlington expressed a desire to become part of Oxford.

It has even been said by the city council that such an amalgamation would not "necessarily" mean higher rates. This might be true for villages with large parish rates, but would not be for the smaller ones, and nobody really agrees on how such anomalies could be resolved. But it is claimed that, while Oxford would be £1m richer, the district rates would go down.

Well, anything in this life is possible. But the possibility of reduced rates, we suspect, falls into the class of Mr Benn joining the SDP, George Best becoming captain of the Northern Ireland squad, Boycott scoring a century in even time, and seeing a unicorn on the Oxford ring road.

Perhaps the real reason for this proposed invasion lies in the draft Oxford Fringe Local Plan, produced jointly by district councils around the city.

Oxford City Council has never accepted this plan, claiming that it falls "significantly" short of providing for the needs of the area for housing, industrial and recreational land. The city wants to expand and it wants to see more development on the fringes.

The city council says that the existing boundaries are "preventing the proper planning of the area." Is this the case, or is it more to the point that the existing boundaries have prevented widespread expansion into the Green Belt?

Be all these things — and motives — as they may, we believe that the 40,000 should have their say in the matter. Or is "Greater Oxford" to be achieved by bureaucratic compulsion, if not by the methods used to create the former "Greater Germany"?

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