

Boundary Commission for England (BCE), revised proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in London.

Response from Andy Slaughter, MP for Hammersmith

1. Introduction

I am the Member of Parliament for the Hammersmith constituency, a position held since the General Election of 6 May 2010. Between 2005 and 2010 I was MP for the former constituency of Ealing Acton & Shepherds Bush. Between 1986 and 2006 I was a councillor in LB Hammersmith & Fulham, representing Gibbs Green, later North End, wards in West Kensington. From 1991-1996 I was Deputy Leader and from 1996-2005 Leader of the Council. I am resident in Askew ward in Shepherds Bush. I have lived in Hammersmith & Fulham all my life and have been an elected representative in the area for over 30 years. I gave oral evidence to the Assistant Commissioner at the hearing held at Central Hall in Westminster on 18 October 2016.

2. Reason for responding

The BCE's initial proposal for the Hammersmith area was to divide the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) between three Parliamentary seats. The revised proposals retain the originally proposed seat of Hammersmith & Fulham, and create a new seat of Willesden & Shepherds Bush.

In my response to the consultation on the original proposals I stated that those plans could be much improved as I did not believe that they protected local ties nor adhered to existing Local Government boundaries.

I believe the revised proposals suffer from the same faults, and do nothing to address concerns that people in Hammersmith raised in objection to the original proposal.

3. Comments on revised proposals

There is a lack of balance in the weight given to responses to the initial proposals from residents in Hammersmith, as opposed to those in Kensington & Chelsea. Paragraph 3.82 makes reference to the "substantial support" for a constituency covering the whole area of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea but fails to note the opposition from residents of Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush, who did not want to see their constituency split along the Goldhawk road.

In total some 600 residents made this point or supported [my counterproposal](#) which respected the current constituency boundaries as far a possible. Only a third of this number agreed with the Commission.

Paragraph 3.84 quotes favourably a response in support of the proposed Hammersmith & Fulham seat referring to the 'village feel' of Fulham, though it is not clear whether this refers to the Fulham Broadway area, the SW6 postcode or the old metropolitan borough boundary. In any event, the same courtesy is not extended to Shepherds Bush which feels very connected to Hammersmith and not at all to Brent. Here the Commission comments:

“The assistant commissioners acknowledged that there will remain opposition to moving the White City area into a Willesden constituency, but could not find a suitable alternative.”

This is an understatement, the Goldhawk Road is a completely porous boundary with residents’ associations, neighbourhoods and families spanning what the commission has adopted as the seat boundary.

In the original proposal, Shepherds Bush would have been placed in a constituency with Acton and parts of Ealing. The comment from resident, Joseph Bitar, in paragraph 3.92 sets out the concerns that many residents had about this initial proposal.

But while the BCE seems to have accepted that Shepherds Bush has limited connection with Ealing, it has responded by placing Shepherds Bush in a constituency with Willesden, an area of London further removed, in part by the substantial open space at Wormwood Scrubs.

There are only two relatively narrow roads running north to south, between Shepherds Bush and Willesden, Old Oak Lane and Scrubs Lane and there are limited bus services.

Hammersmith, Shepherds Bush and Fulham share numerous services. Aside from all being within the same Local Authority area, residents rely on the services provided by Charing Cross and Hammersmith Hospitals. They share police and fire services, and where services cross borough boundaries these are usually to link with Kensington and Westminster.

All parts of the Borough have relatively easy access to the shops of Westfield, and to the various cultural facilities such as the Lyric and Bush Theatres. In contrast, Shepherds Bush and Willesden share almost no services.

The links between Shepherds Bush and Hammersmith are extremely strong, and the best fit remains for these two areas to be within the same constituency. The revised proposals would do significant harm to Shepherds Bush, and would create a constituency with two unconnected neighbourhoods, separated by poor transport links.

4. Conclusion

I have already been contacted by a number of constituents who have expressed real concern about these new proposals. The revised proposals put forward by BCE like the initial proposals do not reflect the communities within West London. I appreciate the commission has a difficult task given the constraints imposed by the terms of the current review, but the Willesden and Shepherds Bush seat is no more than an arithmetical device with a distorted shape and no adherence to administrative or community boundaries.

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