

Boundary Commission for England (BCE), initial 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 is to divide the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) between three Parliamentary seats. Whilst I understand the constraints of the current review and do not object in principle to constituencies which cross borough boundaries, I believe the current plans could be much improved for local residents whilst better respecting local government boundaries, adhering to current Parliamentary constituencies and protecting local ties, all of which would be disrupted by these proposed changes.

## **3. Objections to current proposals**

- 3.1 My concern is that the current proposals are not as respectful to the current Parliamentary constituencies or local authority areas as they could be in central London (by which I mean the Cities of London and Westminster and the boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea).
- 3.2 I understand that the BCE has decided not to adhere to borough or sub-regional borders, other than respecting the River Thames as a natural boundary, but I think the BCE's aims could be better achieved by adopting such boundaries where possible.
- 3.3 Under the initial proposals, LBHF wards currently in the Hammersmith seat will be moved into seats where the majority of wards are in the boroughs of Brent (College Park & Old Oak) or Ealing (Askew, Shepherds Bush Green and Wormholt & White City). This means that around 40% of residents in the current Hammersmith seat will find themselves in different Parliamentary constituencies where the majority of the other wards are in a different local authority.

- 3.4 The proposal also extends the current boundaries of the Cities of London and Westminster seat into two wards in Camden which are not part of the current constituency – just as they are not part of Westminster or the City of London.
- 3.5 The proposed Queen’s Park and Regent’s Park seat takes in two wards from Brent when the majority of wards are located in the borough of Westminster. Again, this is very different from the makeup of the current Westminster North seat.
- 3.6 The initial proposals create an ‘orphan ward’ in College Park & Old Oak (CPOO).
- 3.7 CPOO is to be placed in a new Willesden constituency otherwise exclusively comprised of wards in the London Borough of Brent. Yet, CPOO is, in terms of geography, economy, history and community ties, completely integrated into the LBHF.
- 3.8 The division of LBHF at the Goldhawk Road is not a natural boundary within the borough. Communities on both sides of the road are increasingly similar and integrated
- 3.9 Whilst I understand and appreciate that only a few of the 73 existing constituencies in London can remain unchanged, and that many of the new constituencies will cross borough boundaries, I believe that there is a better approach that respects current constituency boundaries and the close relationship that exists between the local authorities in central London.
- 3.10 LBHF itself cannot justify a whole number of constituencies and the boundary must be crossed, but the logical place for this to happen is in between south Fulham and Chelsea, which are similar communities already joined in the same seat.

#### **4. Counter proposal**

- 4.1 My proposal would keep central London together and proposes that there should be four seats wholly contained within the Cities of London and Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea (see attached map).
- 4.2 This is adopted by the Labour Party in its response, which makes proposals for the whole of London. I support their submission but limit my comments to the central London sub-region, and to the Hammersmith area in particular.
- 4.3 Under my proposal, the Cities of London & Westminster BC is enlarged to include the Lancaster Gate ward and also the Brompton & Hans Town and Royal Hospital wards of Kensington & Chelsea (which is an area of Chelsea that many people consider to be part of the city centre).
- 4.4 The Westminster North BC would include the five northern wards in Kensington & Chelsea – which are characteristically similar to neighbouring wards in Westminster and broadly recreates the former Regent’s Park & Kensington North seat.
- 4.5 The Hammersmith BC is extended to include Fulham Broadway ward.
- 4.6 Chelsea & Fulham BC would include the whole of the Radcliffe and Stanley wards as well as eight others currently in the Kensington constituency.
- 4.7 This proposal makes more sense than the initial proposals for a number of reasons.

- 4.8 Firstly, it respects the strong administrative and political links established between Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. These were brought together five years ago as the 'Tri-borough', and have adopted 'shared services' across two or all three boroughs in areas such as children's services, adult social care and library services, environmental and leisure services.
- 4.9 Unlike the current proposals, the four seats proposed for central London do not extend into the neighbouring boroughs of Brent, Ealing and Camden but instead are contained within the central London boroughs.
- 4.10 This proposal requires far less disruption to the current Parliamentary constituencies than the BCE's initial proposals.
- 4.11 Under my proposal, Hammersmith BC and the Cities of London & Westminster seat retain all their current wards.
- 4.12 The revised Westminster North BC retains over 90% of its current electorate and Chelsea & Fulham over 75% of its electorate.
- 4.13 It maintains the links between Chelsea and Fulham that the Boundary Commission only introduced at the last review.

## **5. Fulham Broadway ward**

- 5.1** The addition of Fulham Broadway ward to the current Hammersmith constituency is a natural fit and there are close community ties between Fulham Broadway and the north Fulham wards of North End and Fulham Reach.
- 5.2** The large local authority housing estates of Maystar and West Kensington in North End ward have community links to the Clement Attlee estate in Fulham Broadway.
- 5.3** North End Road, the main shopping street in this part of Fulham, runs from Avonmore & Brook Green ward, through North End ward and into Fulham Broadway ward.
- 5.4** The central hub for North End and Fulham Broadway wards are the shops and the North End Road Market located in Fulham Broadway ward
- 5.5** The West Kensington/Earl's Court Opportunity Area, a 20 year redevelopment scheme for the area covers parts of both wards. This is not the first time they have been linked for regeneration purposes. In the late 1990s a ten-year £45 million investment programme, New Deal for Communities, was based on the two wards.

## **6. College Park & Old Oak ward**

- 6.1** My proposal avoids the creation of an 'orphan ward' in CPOO, and takes into account the geography, economy, history and community ties this ward has with the rest of Shepherd's Bush.
- 6.2** A large part of the ward is separated physically from the rest of its proposed new constituency by Wormwood Scrubs Common, major railway lines and depots and an industrial estate. Much of the housing in this ward is owned by LBHF.
- 6.3** Part of the ward is south of the Westway and included in the White City Opportunity Area with integral links to the rest of Shepherd's Bush. White City Station and the BBC Media Village are in part of the ward, but the

population, business and retail sectors which they serve, including Westfield, are in adjacent Hammersmith wards.

6.4 In 2011, the Boundary Commission proposed a similar move for CPOO to a new Brent constituency. I received 279 responses from the residents of CPOO (10% of all households) objecting to these plans and these responses were passed to the Commission during the last consultation. Local opinion has not changed since then – indeed there has been local opposition in College Park to joining the LB of Brent for the past 30 years – but I will be encouraging CPOO residents to have their say in this consultation.

6.5 Looking to the next 10 years, CPOO will be the site of the main HS2 interchange, bringing Crossrail, GWR, Heathrow Express, London Overground and Underground together at a single point. LBHF will play a major role in the development of this site and it would be peculiar if the MP representing this massive project otherwise exclusively covered a different borough.

## **Conclusion**

As someone who has lived in Hammersmith & Fulham all my life and who has been an elected representative in this area for over 30 years, I know the communities very well. It is my considered opinion that the proposals put forward by BCE could be much improved and I hope that you will consider adopting the counter proposal put forward here, which I think better reflects the communities in central London whilst also respecting current Parliamentary and local authority boundaries.

Andy Slaughter MP  
Labour MP for Hammersmith