



Ms Jennifer Grossman
Chair
Markham Street Residents' Association

Via email: Jennifer@grossman.biz

21 July 2021

Dear Ms Grossman,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Markham Street Residents' Association to seek your assistance.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has recently published its proposals for new parliamentary constituencies in London, and across England.

The proposals will have a significant impact on our local area, specifically:

- They divide Chelsea into two parts, 'Chelsea West' and 'Chelsea East', which has no known geographic basis, either present or historic.
- 'Chelsea East' becomes attached to Westminster. 'Chelsea West' remains attached to Fulham.
- Each of the King's Road and the Fulham Road, currently all within the constituency of Chelsea & Fulham, are cut in two.
- The Fulham part of the new 'Fulham and Chelsea West' constituency extends northwards into the existing Hammersmith constituency, to take in the two wards of Fulham Reach and West Kensington.

I am opposed to these proposals, as they unreasonably divide Chelsea into two. Residents and stakeholders have only until **2 August 2021** to make representations to the Boundary Commission.

This letter covers the proposed constituencies of *Westminster & Chelsea East* and *Fulham & Chelsea West* from the initial proposals for North Central and North West London presented by the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the 2023 review. Radical changes, as proposed by the commission, would only be justifiable if alternative models cannot be created, but in this case they can be.



My counter-proposal comes from a local perspective. Firstly, I will set out the problems created by the proposed model, in respect of broken community ties, and secondly I will outline the reasons why my proposed alternative would be better whilst still meeting the required constituency size with regards to number of voters.

Proposed Chelsea Split

The BCE proposes to split Chelsea into *East* and *West Chelsea* which would find themselves in different constituencies.

Apart from a small number of split wards, the main parts of Chelsea have never been split apart in any previous boundary reviews. It is worth noting that the present constituencies are based on old Council ward boundaries, which prevailed before 2018. This explains the current split ward of Brompton & Hans Town.

As you know, Chelsea can be described as a small community between the River Thames and the Fulham Road, although including some features further north like Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, with the King's Road acting as a central thread. In the past, Chelsea formed a Parliamentary constituency of its own, but it is now too small and therefore needs to be joined with a neighbouring area to meet the minimum voter threshold.

The BCE's proposal to join the wards of Royal Hospital and Brompton & Hans Town with the City of Westminster is justified by the commission as the "*Belgravia, Brompton, East Chelsea and Knightsbridge areas share a similar character*". I fundamentally disagree with this illusory argument. Eastern Chelsea features largely re-brick buildings of the Cadogan Estate and focuses onto Sloane Street and the King's Road. Belgravia has white stucco fronted buildings, very characteristic of the Grosvenor Estate. Focus points for residents are amongst the streets, especially Motcomb Street and Elizabeth Street.

The artificially drawn borders between the wards of Royal Hospital (east) and Stanley and Chelsea Riverside (west) do not mirror community boundaries and do not take into account longstanding community linkages. Iconic features of Chelsea, like Royal Hospital, Sloane Square, Duke of York Square, the World's End Estate and the great hospitals along the Fulham Road (Marsden, Royal Brompton and Chelsea & Westminster) would be separated into different constituencies. Furthermore, the famous King's Road as well as the Fulham Road would be divided themselves. St Luke's Church would find its parish split between two constituencies.

The BCE proposal splits several 'Character Areas' and Conservation Areas in Chelsea, causing significant harm to community identities and the coherence of new constituencies.



Rt Hon Greg Hands MP

Member of Parliament for Chelsea & Fulham

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) has recently undertaken a Character Study, the purpose of which is “to divide the borough into ‘character areas’ which share common characteristics” both in relation to community identity and the built environment.

The Cheyne Character Area identified in RBKC’s study and defined as “predominantly compris[ing] early to mid Victorian uniform terraces”, spans from Sloane Court East in the east to Milman’s Street in the west. Flood Street and Oakley Street do not divide this community as proposed by the BCE. Splitting the area along Oakley Street and Flood Street would be unfounded and unnatural.

In addition, the BCE proposal splits several Conservation Areas into different parliamentary constituencies. The Royal Hospital Conservation Area and Thames Conservation Area would have parliamentary boundary lines splitting their designated areas. The Chelsea Conservation Area together with the Elystan Street Neighbourhood Centre around Chelsea Green would be equally affected by finding themselves in different parliamentary constituencies, despite being very much united through the central hub.

Number of MPs per borough

RBKC is the smallest London borough with only 7500 voters over the threshold to justify a parliamentary constituency of its own. The BCE proposal to split the Royal Borough into three Parliamentary constituencies is wholly unjustifiable as I firmly believe that an alternative model can be created.

The following proposal solves the problems listed above without splitting Chelsea:

I propose to remove Courtfield ward and replace it with Royal Hospital ward. This way, the vast majority of the Chelsea community would remain united and combined into one parliamentary constituency with the entirety of Fulham. The current constituency name ‘Chelsea & Fulham’ could continue to be used. The constituency would cover the full length of both the (New) King’s Road and Fulham Road (bar about 30 yards), which are natural linkages between the two named communities.

The inclusion of Redcliffe ward is a point of continuity with the current constituency, even though it is historically part of Kensington. Overall, this is a much less radical change to the present arrangements than the BCE’s initial proposal. I accept that part of Brompton & Hans Town ward is historically residential Chelsea, but the ward also contains the most iconic parts of South Kensington, so I recognise that this linkage could be used rather than the Chelsea one for Parliamentary purposes. This proposed Chelsea & Fulham constituency is within the required number of voters and there is no unnatural linkage of eastern Chelsea with the City of Westminster as proposed by the BCE.



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Furthermore, my alternative proposal leaves the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea with only two MPs, which is the minimum number necessary to fit the quota, and is therefore a better solution than the BCE's proposal which would divide the borough between three MPs.

I firmly believe that my proposed alternative solution would be far better for the local area and its residents.

Submissions to the Boundary Commission for England have to be made by **Monday, 2 August 2021**. Submissions should be made online:

<https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/node/add/informed-representation/6485>

If you have any difficulty submitting your views through the website, you can alternatively do so by email (information@boundarycommissionengland.gov.uk) or send a hard copy to Boundary Commission for England, 35 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BQ.

Thank you for taking part in this vital process and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP
Member of Parliament for Chelsea & Fulham

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