

Submission from the Herne Hill Society with regard to proposals affecting the Dulwich and West Norwood constituency



The Herne Hill Society was founded in 1982. The Society is a membership organisation, run through an elected committee by volunteers. It is a registered charity and is active in protecting and promoting the area's amenities and interests and publishes information about the Herne Hill area, including a magazine three times a year.

Under the proposals the constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood will disappear and Herne Hill will be divided between the constituencies of Clapham and Brixton, Dulwich and Sydenham, and Streatham. It will wholly lose the unity it enjoys within the one constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood.

This is a major loss to the people of Herne Hill on two levels. The first concerns local identity, a very important element in a city as large as London, although one that is not easily measurable. A vital part of community cohesion is the sense of belonging to a particular place. People are motivated by this sense to strive for the best outcomes for their area. It is the reason this Society was founded almost 40 years ago and it has inspired its work ever since. One of the criteria that the Boundary Commission must take account of is "local links that would be broken by changes in constituencies". The local links in this case are those that give Herne Hill its cohesion and hence its very identity. Splitting Herne Hill three ways can only be damaging to Herne Hill's identity.

The second level of loss concerns the practical advantages for Herne Hill in being in one constituency and is therefore easier to define. There are distinct benefits in having one member of parliament, where local issues concern the whole of the Herne Hill community, issues such as the use of Brockwell Park for events, traffic calming measures and transport more generally, public safety and policing, and the promotion of social, educational and economic initiatives that help tie our community together. It makes practical sense for one member of parliament to represent Herne Hill's interests, just as there is one member for Lambeth and Southwark in the GLA who does so. In the present constituency one member of parliament can speak to the local authorities in both Southwark and Lambeth and can have an overview of matters that cross the borough boundary. Under the Boundary Commission proposals, as they affect Herne Hill, Southwark and Lambeth are divided. In our view, this can only lead to a fragmentation of the interests of Herne Hill and a diminution in the ability of our community to be heard effectively through parliamentary representation.

We realise that the Boundary Commission encourages those who contribute in the consultation process not merely to criticise but also to offer counter-proposals. This is a far from easy task because any alteration has a knock-on effect. However, we are aware of a counter-proposal that would, we believe, achieve the goal of numerical parity within given margins and avoid the harm to Herne Hill outlined above without inflicting disproportionate disadvantages on other areas. It would mean retention of the current constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood (or whatever name is most appropriate), but with some modification of the boundaries. Thus the revised constituency would comprise: the wards of Coldharbour, Gipsy Hill, Herne Hill, Knight's Hill and Thurlow Park in Lambeth, and the wards of Champion Hill, Dulwich Village and Dulwich Wood in Southwark.

We urge the Boundary Commission to take into account the matters in this submission and ensure that Herne Hill remains within one constituency.

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