

**Comment: BCE-83845**

I have been the Member of Parliament for Bromley and Chislehurst since 2006. From 2000 to 2008 I was the London Assembly Member for Bexley and Bromley, which included that constituency, so I have represented it in one capacity or another for over 20 years. I live in Chislehurst.

I strongly object to the Commissions proposed Eltham and Chislehurst constituency on the following grounds:

- 1) The proposed constituency is an unnatural and illogical construct, geographically incoherent, and with no cohesion or common community interest between its disparate parts .It severs existing strong local ties, contrary to Rule 5(1)(d) and will be impractical to represent effectively and coherently.
- 2) Although the seat itself has an essentially north-south axis, it is split by several natural barriers running east-west, particularly two major dual carriageway roads (virtually urban motorways) in the A2 and A20 and two branches of the London-Dartford Railway line (the Bexleyheath and Sidcup loops, respectively). Public transport links north-south are poor. There is no direct train service from Chislehurst to Eltham, let alone to Kidbrook or Charlton Park. There is only one bus, route 161, which runs through much it, and that takes nearly an hour to do so. The A2 and A20 are heavily congested in rush hours.
- 3) The A20 in particular is a strong barrier throughout its length and communities to the south of it have little connection with those to the north. People in Chislehurst and Mottingham do not look towards Eltham and the Borough of Greenwich, but south and east towards the rest of the Borough of Bromley. In particular, they are in different Borough Command Units for policing purposes, are in different primary care networks, have different arrangements for community based health services, provided by Bromley Healthcare and are served by different Hospital Trusts. Their school catchment areas are for schools within Bromley.
- 4) For social activities, voluntary and community groups shopping and local businesses and places of worship they also gravitate towards neighbouring areas within Bromley, particularly Bickley, Sundridge, Petts Wood and St Pauls Cray. I strongly endorse the representations made by the Chislehurst Society and Visit Chislehurst. I have worked with them closely over the years and vouch for the depth of their local knowledge. Their 4000 members cover the majority of households in Chislehurst and also part of Mottingham and Chislehurst North Ward.
- 5) The open spaces of Chislehurst Commons (managed by local Trustees under a private Act of Parliament), the National Trust Petts Wood and Bromley Council run Scadbury Park are in fact a unifying rather than dividing factor between

Chislehurst and the St Paul's Cray part of Cray Valley East Ward. They are a joint environmental and recreational resources for communities on both sides, with significant natural habitats. Local voluntary groups such as The Friends of the Commons and Friends of Scadbury Park draw their membership from both sides, and the Cray Valley Partnership, with which I again have worked closely, recognises these links, drawing together voluntary, statutory and business organisations jointly to deliver environmental, community and businesses projects.

6) Chislehurst and Mottingham have never been in the same parliamentary constituency as Eltham since 1885. There are, however, strong historic links between them and St Pauls Cray, which has been in the same parliamentary seat for all but 13 years of that same period and in the same local authority since 1894.

7) All these strong local ties would be broken by the Commission's initial proposal and I submit that this represents a serious breach of Rule 5 (1) (d) and (e).

8) I strongly support the Conservative Party's alternative proposal for a Chislehurst and Bromley Common constituency, as set out in their submission in respect of the London Region (paragraphs 122 to 124 and 130 to 133 refer). This meets the electoral criteria of Rule 2 but better respects local ties and therefore complies better with Rule 5 (1) (d).

9) This seat would be almost entirely south of the A20, with much better community and transport links, as already set out, and would be a much more cohesive and practical unit to represent effectively.

10) I have already referred to the strong links Between Chislehurst and the Bickley and Plaistow and Sundridge Wards and the proposal reflects this. Similarly it respects the strong links between Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray already referred to. If a ward is to be split to come within the electoral range, this is a sensible way to do it, as CW4 is separated from the rest of Cray Valley West by the railway line and looks more towards Orpington. Indeed, it was historically part of the Orpington constituency from its creation in 1945 until 2010.

11) In relation to the inclusion of the Coldharbour and New Eltham ward, this makes sense, as, unlike the rest of the Borough of Greenwich, the vast majority of the ward lies south of the strong border of the A20 and has strong links with both Chislehurst and Mottingham: It includes the eastern side of Mottingham village and its southern part includes roads with Chislehurst post codes. In both cases there are shared school catchment areas and good transport links - much of it is a continuous built up area.

12) As well as the strong border of the A20, north and west of Mottingham Lane

there is a clear barrier with the rest of Greenwich Borough in the form of open farmland and fields either side of the A20 and the open grounds of Capel Manor Horticultural College. There is a clear benefit in having one MP to represent the whole of Mottingham and I strongly support the submissions of the Mottingham Resident's Association and the councillors for Mottingham and Chislehurst North and Cold Harbour and New Eltham in this respect.

13) In relation to the Bromley Common and Keston Ward, this has strong links with Bickley. Much of their common boundary lies runs through a continuous built up area, there are significant overlaps of school and GP catchment areas and many Bickley residents look to Chatterton Road, in Bromley Common Ward, as their local shopping area. There are a number of community, faith and youth groups whose membership straddles both wards.

14) In all, this alternative, as well as falling within the required electoral range under rule 2, makes for a much more cohesive unit and a much superior respects for local ties and therefore gives much better compliance with Rule 5 (1) (d).

### **Type of respondent**

Member of Parliament

### **Personal details**

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