

12th October 2001

To:

The Chairman and Members of the Boundary Commission for England

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER'S REPORT ON THE GENERAL REVIEW OF
THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES FOR
THE LONDON BOROUGHS OF BROMLEY AND LEWISHAM

1. This general review began on 10th February 2000. Notice was published in the London Gazette on 17th February 2000. In accordance with the procedure provided for in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended), 17th February 2000 is the enumeration date, and the electoral quota at that date is 69,934.
2. The Boundary Commission issued provisional recommendations for Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South London Boroughs on 24th January 2001, which were published on 1st February 2001, and representations were received thereafter.
3. On Thursday 26th July 2001 I held a local inquiry into the Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the London Boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham. On Friday 27th July 2001 I conducted a view of some of the areas within those Boroughs, including Orpington, Bromley and Beckenham town centres, Hayes Common, the approach by road into Keston from Biggin Hill and the Cray Valley wards.
4. I have referred below to the evidence of a number of people and organisations that have made representations. The fact that I may not have referred to the evidence or arguments of a particular person or organisation does not mean that I have not paid attention to his or her contribution, nor that I have not taken it into account in reaching my recommendations. My report and recommendations are as follows.

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a. The Boundary Commission’s Proposed Pairing

- 6. In respect of the London Boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham, the Commission proposed that the two Boroughs be “paired”, that is, that the two Boroughs be considered together, with a consequence that at least one proposed Parliamentary constituency would cross the shared Borough boundary but so as to achieve the sum of the number of Parliamentary seats to which the Boroughs were separately entitled. This recommendation was a departure from rule 4 of the statutory Rules for the

Distribution of Seats to be found in Schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

7. The Commission justified this step in reliance on rule 5 which confers a discretion to depart from “the strict application of rule 4 if it appears to [the Commission] that a departure is desirable to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of any constituency and the electoral quota, or between the electorate of any constituency and that of the neighbouring constituencies....”. The Commission did not seek to rely upon the provisions of rule 6 in support of its proposed changes.
8. When deciding to pair Boroughs, the Commission identified six principles to which it would generally have regard. Of particular interest in relation to the London Boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham was the general guidance that:
 - pairing would be considered by the Commission where the average constituency electorate in a Borough was more than 10,000 above or below the electoral quota;
 - the result of pairing would be a reduction of the disparity from the electoral quota of both Boroughs in the pair, although the Commission recognised that one of the partners might be a Borough which did not have an excessive disparity;
 - in considering which Boroughs should be paired, there should be a continuous residential area or some community of interest across the Borough boundary of any proposed constituency which might lie on both sides.
9. This had the following numerical consequence:

Individual Borough Average	Deviation from EQ (69,934)	Combined Borough Average	Deviation from EQ
Bromley: 74,253 Lewisham: 58,345	4,319 11,589	66,299	3,635

10. It followed that the first two general policy considerations identified above were satisfied. Representations related mainly to the third of the considerations and as to matters falling within the scope of rule 7 of the Rules for the Distribution of Seats. For further consideration of these matters please see below.
11. The Commission proposals utilised the ward boundaries as they will be following the local government boundary changes effective in May 2002. With one exception, no objection has been taken to the proposal to use the new ward boundaries: it is consistent with Commission policy and appropriate.

b. The Boundary Commission's Proposed Constituencies

12. These provisional proposals are:

Name	Wards	Individual Ward Electorates at the enumeration date	Combined Electorate
Lewisham West and Penge	Clock House Crystal Palace Penge & Cator Bellingham Forest Hill Perry Vale Sydenham	11,073 7,031 10,787 9,552 9,482 9,982 10,504	68,411

Lewisham, Deptford BC	Brockley Crofton Park Evelyn Ladywell Lewisham Cent. New Cross Telegraph Hill	9,850 9,689 9,419 9,053 10,353 9,492 9,826	67,682
Lewisham East BC	Blackheath Catford Sth Downham Grove Park Lee Green Rushey Green Whitefoot	9,834 10,236 9,440 10,229 9,527 8,957 9,610	67,833
Bromley and Chislehurst BC	Bickley Bromley Cmn & Keston Bromley Town Chislehurst Mottingham &Chislehurst Nth Plaistow & Sundridge	10,897 10,842 11,117 11,586 7,162 10,958	62,562
Orpington BC	Chelsfield & Pratts Bottom Cray Valley E. Cray Valley W. Farnborough & Crofton Orpington Petts Wood & Knoll	10,755 10,748 11,769 11,393 11,629 10,873	67,167
Beckenham and Biggin Hill BC	Biggin Hill Copers Cope Darwin Hayes & Coney Hall Kelsey & Eden Park Shortlands W. Wickham	7,761 10,957 3,815 12,092 10,843 7,432 11,239	64,139

c. **Counter-proposals**

13. The representations were received within the statutory period and also after the expiry of the period and, indeed, after the inquiry had been held. There were 6 counter-proposals. The counter-proposals were as follows:
1. That the wards of Biggin Hill and Darwin be not included in the proposed Beckenham and Biggin Hill constituency but remain in the Orpington constituency, with a compensating transfer of the ward of Bromley Common and Keston, and that Cray Valley West be included in Bromley and Chislehurst rather than Orpington (the Conservative Party);
 2. (a) That in the London Borough of Bromley, the ward of Bromley Town be linked with Beckenham and the constituency be named Bromley and Beckenham BC, that the wards of Bromley Common and Keston, Darwin and Biggin Hill be within the Orpington constituency and the two Cray Valley wards be within the remaining constituency to be named Chislehurst BC; and

(b) In the London Borough of Lewisham, the ward of Rushey Green should be within Lewisham, Deptford BC and Lewisham Central ward should be assigned to Lewisham East constituency (the Labour party);
 3. That the wards of Biggin Hill and Darwin be not included in the proposed Beckenham and Biggin Hill constituency, but remain in the Orpington constituency, with a compensating transfer of the ward of Bromley Common and Keston (Beckenham Constituency Conservative Association);
 4. That Lewisham Central should remain with Lewisham East, Rushey Green and Catford South be included in Lewisham West BC, that Hayes and Coney Hall ward be within a constituency by the name of Bromley Central BC (the Official Monster Raving

Loony Party). This would have the consequence that the wards of Biggin Hill and Darwin remain in the Orpington constituency;

5. That the London Borough of Bromley be paired with Croydon and Lewisham with Southwark (Mr Warbey). This proposal was limited at the hearing of the inquiry to the suggestion that Lewisham be paired with Southwark, although Mrs Briggs and Mr Evans lent support at the inquiry to a proposal that Bromley be paired with Croydon;
6. That Clock House be retained in the same ward as Beckenham, but with Crystal Palace and Penge and Cator wards becoming part of the proposed Lewisham West and Penge constituency.
7. That Hayes and Coney Hall ward be in a constituency with Bromley town centre.
8. There was in addition a suggestion that the new Constituencies should be devised according to the allocated post codes, but this would be a complete departure from the Commission's policy affecting all other parts of the country, it attracted no other support and, in any event, I would have had insufficient evidence to link the post code for any particular area with its local ties. I do not recommend this proposal and have not addressed it further below.

d. Recommendations regarding Pairing

14. Although there was some objection to the pairing of the two Boroughs, there was also considerable support for the Commission's proposal both to pair the Boroughs and to create a cross-border constituency involving the south west of Lewisham and north west of Bromley London Borough.
15. In principle, it seems to me that the case for this pairing is a good one. There was, nonetheless, a measure of support for leaving the constituency boundaries in the two Boroughs as they currently are, including from

residents in Clock House ward (currently in the same constituency with Beckenham and which is closer to Beckenham town centre than it is to the proposed constituency boundary if the Commission proposals are adopted). At present, the electors of Lewisham are significantly over-represented in numerical terms and Bromley is slightly under-represented. It is notable that if no changes are made (except realignment of constituency boundaries with ward boundaries, where wards are divided between seats), the average number of electors in the Lewisham London Borough constituencies will be below that of the electorate of any of the other proposed South London constituencies¹. The individual constituencies would contain the following number of electors:

Lewisham West, 58,713;

Lewisham, Deptford, 57,329;

Lewisham East, 58,993.

Therefore, every constituency in Lewisham would have fewer electors than the smallest electorate in the Commission's proposal for the South London constituencies. If Lewisham were to contain only two constituencies, on the other hand, its electors would be very significantly under-represented.

16. In opposition, the point was made that if the Commission had taken the figure of 12,500 as a measure of unacceptable deviation from the electoral quota, which was the figure used in the last review, Lewisham would not qualify for pairing. Jim Dowd, MP for Lewisham West, also advanced the counter-argument that the boundaries have been in existence for some 20 years or more. He commented, "there is as much public identity with them as there is in any of these artificial constructions that we make when discussing boundaries...". There is a slight tension between this observation and his later comment that "There are many people in Penge, in Anerley, in Crystal Palace, in Elmers End [earlier local names and ward descriptions which will now correspond approximately with Crystal Palace, Penge and Cator and Clock House wards] just as there are in

¹ The proposed Putney constituency will have an electorate of 59,331.

Sydenham, who would have great difficulty in telling you precisely where the boundary between Lewisham and Bromley is were it not for [the signs]”. He also commented that in previous years there have been minor boundary changes along the borders of Sydenham and Penge that do not seem to have caused any particular difficulty.

17. The counter-proposal to link Bromley with Croydon as an alternative pairing (Counter-proposal 5) has, in my view, no merits. It does not address the difficulty which provoked the provisional recommendation from the Commission for pairing, namely that the average electorate per constituency within the London Borough of Lewisham falls more than 10,000 below the electoral quota. Moreover, the Commission has finalised its recommendations for the new boundaries for Croydon.

18. The proposal to pair Lewisham with Southwark (also Counter-proposal 5), on the other hand, would, like the proposed pairing with Bromley, meet the first two of the Commission’s criteria for pairing noted in paragraph 7 above. Indeed, as Southwark has an individual Borough average of 78,230, a pairing of this nature would give a combined Borough average of 68,287 – closer to the electoral quota than a pairing of Lewisham with Bromley. Although Mr Warbey appeared at one stage to be saying in his evidence to the inquiry that his proposal would involve no disruption to the constituency boundaries in the London Borough of Lewisham as they were before the review except for the cross-border constituency, this is not the case. The plan presented with his evidence shows that the ward of Crofton Park would no longer be in the northern constituency of Lewisham Deptford but in Lewisham West (to be called Dulwich/Sydenham in his proposal), and that Rushey Green and Bellingham would be in Lewisham East (to be called Catford BC in his proposal). The cross border constituency of Dulwich/Sydenham would include College, East Dulwich and Village wards. This would give an electorate in the three Lewisham constituencies:

Catford	67,551
Dulwich/Sydenham	62,146
Lewisham/Deptford	67,827

19. My attention was drawn to the fact that this proposal would mean that Vauxhall, which is not within the scope of my inquiry, would have a very low number of constituents. I heard no other evidence in support of or against this counter proposal save in so far as criticism is made of the Commission's provisional proposal to include the ward of Rushey Green in Lewisham East not Lewisham Deptford. Mr Warbey's proposal has the merit of permitting the constituencies in Bromley to remain unchanged. I note, however, that Lambeth and Southwark were paired during the last boundary review. I do not make a positive recommendation that this proposal be adopted because it also involves consideration of the areas covered by the Lambeth and Southwark inquiry, but would comment that taking into account only those matters affecting Lewisham and Bromley Borough Councils, the proposal does not appear to offend against Rules 4 to 7 of the Rules for the Redistribution of Seats.
20. Notwithstanding this, the measured support for the pairing of these two Boroughs not only from the two major parties, but also from the affected local government bodies suggests that the proposed pairing is not significantly inconvenient and would not significantly disrupt local ties. In particular, while suggesting that the name Penge and Sydenham is preferable to the Commission's proposed name Lewisham West and Penge, the Beckenham Labour Party drew attention to a number of matters that may reflect local ties across the Borough boundary and within the proposed constituency. They contended that 9.8% of Lewisham's workforce lives in Bromley and 5.3% of Bromley's in Lewisham. They identified transportation links involving 20 shared bus routes, five over ground routes and a proposed underground train line. They argued that some north Beckenham residents and their General Practitioners treat Lewisham University Hospital rather than Farnborough Hospital (which is within the Borough of Bromley) as their local hospital, and Lewisham Citizens Advice Bureau provides the CAB helpdesk at the Bromley County Court. Four local fire stations cover overlapping areas of Lewisham and Bromley. Both the areas share an interest in the Crystal

Palace single regeneration area and a significant number of Lewisham pupils attend Cater Park School in Bromley. Another witness pointed out that there are a number of pupils from the three affected Bromley wards who also travel to school in Lewisham. Reference was additionally made to the work throughout the proposed new constituency done by an organisation apparently called “The Association of Churches Together in Sydenham Credit Union”. Mr Jim Dowd also pointed out an historical association between the earlier named wards of Anerley, Penge and Elmers End and the Sydenham area to the north which had prior to the formation of the London Boroughs in 1965 been within the same Urban District Council.

Recommendation

21. I concluded that, although the Commission proposals involve a breach of rule 4, there would be an excessive disparity between the size of the electorate in each Lewisham constituency and the electoral quota unless the Borough boundary were to be crossed. It did not seem to me to be appropriate to say that a disparity of more than 10,000 voters would not be excessive. 10,000 voters represents a deviation from the electoral quota of approximately 14% and, notwithstanding the larger allowance afforded in the previous review, in the absence of significant inconvenience or the significant breach of local ties, a departure from the strict application of rule 4 is desirable to achieve greater electoral parity in accordance with rule 5. I was not invited to consider any special geographical considerations. While any alteration of constituency boundaries will give rise to some disruption and will not accord with all possible community allegiances, it seems to me that the inconvenience attendant on the proposal to pair Lewisham and Bromley and the breaking of local ties by crossing the Borough boundary to the west of the two Boroughs would be only of slight proportions and there are, in fact, significant cross-border links.

e. Inclusion of Darwin and Biggin Hill in Beckenham and Biggin Hill constituency: counter-proposals 1,2,3 and 4

22. By far the most contentious aspect of the Commission's provisional proposals is the intended inclusion of the wards of Biggin Hill and Darwin with Beckenham in a new constituency to be called Beckenham and Biggin Hill. I have therefore addressed this first.
23. Counter representations were received from both the national and some local Conservative party associations and the central Labour party as well as from local residents associations and individuals. The point was strongly made that the proposed new constituency is an unsatisfactory shape with an extensive finger curling round the elongated ward of Bromley Common and Keston and forming a large bulb of rural land at the south of the Borough. Biggin Hill and Darwin are rural communities. Beckenham is urban. It was said that there are virtually no community ties between the Biggin Hill area and Beckenham, but rather that the community links were between the rural Biggin Hill and Darwin area with Orpington or, to a lesser extent, Bromley. Biggin Hill and Darwin were described by another witness as forming part of the rural crescent around Orpington. Mr Haslam, Chairman of the Biggin Hill and District Residents Association, among others, drew my attention to the history of this ward. He told me that in the early 1960s Biggin Hill, which had been part of Kent for local government purposes, became part of the Orpington Urban District Council. When the Greater London Council was created, Biggin Hill became part of Orpington Borough Constituency. This was followed by a move to Bromley Ravensbourne. Mr Benington of the Orpington Conservative Association told me that this occurred in 1983. I was told that involved "the grafting of two wholly rural communities onto a wholly urban Constituency, albeit that there was at least direct transport links with Bromley." At any rate, the move back to Orpington then occurred in 1997 and, I am told, was welcomed. Biggin Hill and Darwin have never been linked with Beckenham.

24. Mr Neill, Member of the London Assembly for Bexley and Bromley, emphasised that there are no public transport links between Biggin Hill and Darwin and Beckenham town centre, in contrast with the 146 bus route from Downe (to the east of Biggin Hill) to Bromley town centre and two bus routes, the R2 and R5 through the rural area into Orpington station. I was given a copy of the bus timetable and I observe that there are also other routes connecting Biggin Hill with Bromley (the 246 and 320) but none connecting Beckenham with Biggin Hill. There is, moreover, no direct major road connecting the two areas. To travel from Biggin Hill to Beckenham town centre, it is necessary to take the A233 into the ward of Bromley Common and Keston and thereafter to turn off the arterial road into 'B' roads or take the A232 which meanders around the south of Beckenham and finally approaches the town centre along the boundary of the proposed new constituency. Moreover, the bus service is reasonably frequent – about hourly in the case of the R2 and two-hourly in the case of the R5. That suggests that there is at least some regular use of these routes. There is no direct train service.
25. In addition, I am told that the local focus for shopping, excluding out-of-area shopping malls such as the Bluewater development to the east, and Croydon town centre, is predominantly Orpington and also Bromley, as, indeed, the bus routes suggest. It appears that many people drive to Orpington station also in order to take the train into central London for work purposes.
26. John Horam, MP for Orpington referred to the fact that police cover for Darwin and Biggin Hill is organised from Orpington police station and that the local concern affecting Petts Wood, Crofton and Farnborough wards over the development of Biggin Hill airport is shared with the wards of Biggin Hill and Darwin – matters which would not affect an area such as Beckenham which is not under the flight path.

Recommendation

27. It seems to me, therefore, that the case for retaining Biggin Hill and Darwin within Orpington is a strong one. In particular, I would be reluctant to endorse a change of constituency boundary which would link one more scattered rural population with another densely populated town centre which is, in contrast with the current arrangement, inaccessible by public transport and not easily accessible even by privately driven transport. This is particularly the case where a town centre may well be the focus of publicity and events affecting the exercise of democratic rights across the whole constituency. I was told, for example, that the likely means of communicating with people over the London Borough of Bromley would be by advertisement in the public buildings such as libraries in Beckenham, Bromley and Orpington and by local newspapers. There appeared to be a degree of uncertainty about the areas covered by the local free newspapers, although it would appear that the differences between the local papers for the various areas within the Boroughs relate solely to the front page. As for the distribution of the papers, I was told by Councillor Wilkinson of Bromley Conservative Council that the distribution pattern is “a law unto the distributors and [he] could make absolutely nothing of it”. I am not sure whether the paper for Beckenham would also be received in Biggin Hill and Darwin. At any rate, I have no evidence that it does. Accordingly, there would be a serious risk that the proposed boundary change would disadvantage in an electoral sense those dependent on public transport, which may, of course, include some of the more vulnerable members of the community. I find that the proposed change to link Biggin Hill and Darwin does significantly break local ties, and I would recommend that a solution be found which enables these two wards to stay in a constituency with Orpington.
28. However, simply moving the two wards would create a significant disparity from the electoral quota in the Beckenham constituency which would have an electorate of 52,563, and Orpington would have an electorate of 78,743 which is a significant departure from the electoral quota.

29. I now turn to the other counter-proposals.

f. Inclusion of Clock House ward in the proposed Lewisham West and Penge constituency: counter-proposal 6.

30. As indicated above, a counter-proposal was made that Clock House ward should remain in the Beckenham constituency. Simply to remove Clock House from the proposed Lewisham West and Penge constituency would give an electorate in that constituency of 57,338. This is a significant departure from the electoral quota and would, in my view be excessive unless it could be justified under the Rules 6 and 7 of the Rules for Redistribution of Seats. This proposal would, however, bring the proposed constituency of Beckenham omitting Biggin Hill and Darwin substantially closer to the electoral quota. The electorate of Clock House is only 503 electors short of that of the sum of those in Biggin Hill and Darwin.
31. In the main, support was forthcoming for the re-alignment of the cross-boundary constituency along the south and west side of the ward of Clock House, although I am slightly concerned to find that both Beckenham Library and the Spa are in fact in the new proposed constituency of West Lewisham and Penge rather than in the proposed Beckenham constituency itself. This has occurred because the boundary of the Clock House ward is very close to Beckenham town centre and I can well believe that for those who live to the east of Clock House station in the Clock House ward the principal link is with the Beckenham schools, shops and churches.
32. Although five submissions were received which approved a separation of Clock House from Penge and Cator and Crystal Palace and more objections were received to the proposed pairing, there was, as indicated above, much support for the Commission's proposed changes. Mr Rob Yeldham, who has lived in both Penge and Clock House pointed out that there were strong links within Clock House to Penge town centre, and he set out the use that had been made in his experience of the facilities offered

in Sydenham to residents in Penge and Clock House.

Recommendation

33. It is inevitably the case that residents close to the boundary with another urban constituency will tend to cross into that other constituency for the purposes of daily life. On balance I do not find that the proposed alignment of the constituency boundary between Clock House and the central Beckenham wards of Copers Cope and Kelsey and Eden Park does significantly break local ties nor is it significantly inconvenient so as to justify a departure from the requirement to produce a constituency size as close as possible to the electoral quota.

**g. Inclusion of Hayes and Coney Hall with Bromley and Chislehurst
BC: counter-proposal 7**

34. The Boundary Commission's provisional proposal was for Hayes and Coney Hall to be within the redrawn constituency with Beckenham, instead of, as at present, with Bromley and Chislehurst. Although some exception has been taken to this, for example, by the Hayes Village Association and also Councillor Manning, a member of the council of the London Borough of Bromley, the opposition to this proposal has not been as vociferous as the opposition to the provisional proposals for Biggin Hill and Darwin. Moreover, although there was considerable opposition at the last Boundary review to the separation of Hayes from Bromley, I note that on this review, the ward boundaries have changed so that those areas closest to Bromley town centre are no longer in the Hayes and Coney Hall ward but Coney Hall and West Wickham which have closer links with Beckenham are newly in the ward. There are, nonetheless, some important considerations put forward in opposition to the Commission's provisional proposal, not least that Beckenham cannot be reached directly by public transport from Hayes or Coney Hall although it can be reached with one change of bus. The train service from Hayes does not go to Beckenham but to Clock House which is proposed to be within the West Lewisham and Penge constituency. It is, however, possible to reach Beckenham by rail including changing on to the new tram system at Elmers End.

Recommendations

35. These are disadvantages to which I attach some importance in relation to Biggin Hill and Darwin and I attach importance here. Notwithstanding this, though, the character of Hayes and Coney Hall is only semi-rural rather than rural, the ward is closer to Beckenham than is the majority of Biggin Hill and Darwin and the level of objection to the Commission's provisional proposal has been significantly less. In the light of these considerations, I have concluded that although there plainly is an interference with the local ties between Hayes and Bromley, it is not so significant a disruption of local ties that this ward cannot be placed with Beckenham instead.

h. Inclusion of Bromley Common and Keston with Beckenham and Cray Valley West in Bromley BC and Chislehurst/Inclusion of Bromley Town with Beckenham and Bromley Common with Orpington (Counter-proposal 1 and 2(a))

36. These two counter-proposals were plainly based on the need identified by the two main parties who appeared before me to make compensation for the consequences of accepting the counter-proposal for Biggin Hill and Darwin. I have therefore treated the two counter-proposals together.

Part 1: the Cray Valley

37. The Conservative party counter-proposal involves the separation of these two wards. This is opposed by the Labour party who regard this separation as undesirable because it severs local ties between the two Cray Valley wards: instead they argue that the two Cray Valley wards should be kept together and become part of a proposed Chislehurst constituency.

38. History of the wards

I was asked to consider the history of the wards. Councillor Ince, who represents Petts Wood and Knoll Ward, told me, and other witnesses confirmed, that the former wards of St Paul's and St Mary Cray which

contained the villages of St Paul's Cray and St Mary Cray had once been in separate Urban District Councils, St Mary Cray with Orpington and St Paul's Cray in Chislehurst and Sidcup UDC. Only in 1997 were the two wards brought within the same Orpington constituency, although I was advised that they were treated as a unit by the Local Government Commission in their recent review.

39. I was also provided with the report of the Assistant Commissioner following a Boundary Inquiry in December 1993 in which he investigated in some depth the character of St Paul's and St Mary's Cray as they then were. I have to treat his findings with some caution however, not only because the evidence related to a situation as it was approximately 8 years ago but also because the new ward boundaries to Cray Valley East and West do not replicate the former boundaries. Nonetheless, I note that he found that there was a very strong case for the ward of St Mary Cray to be in the same constituency as that centred on Orpington, the extent of community links between the ward of St Paul's Cray as a whole and of their sharing of services is uncertain and whereas the Assistant Commissioner was able to recommend the association of St Mary Cray with Orpington, he was not able to describe as strong a case for St Paul's Cray being removed from its constituency with Chislehurst to join Orpington.
40. Now these two wards are not in fact now centred on the old villages of St Mary's and St Paul's Cray, both of which are in Cray Valley East. But, although there have been significant ward boundary changes in this area, the former St Paul's Cray ward still bears some relationship to the former ward of Cray Valley West and the former ward of St Mary Cray still is similar to Cray Valley East.
41. The boundary between Cray Valley East and West is for much of its length along or very close to the Sevenoaks Way, which comprises some industrial estates and premises built in the 1960s and earlier. I also observed during my view that this was the case as well as hearing this

from Councillor Wilkinson. It does appear to be a not insignificant barrier between the two communities. Equally, the Labour party argue that the area of Petts Wood, St Paul's Cray Common, Park Wood and Scadbury Park Nature Reserve comprise a large area of open space to the east of the boundary with Chislehurst which also appears to form a natural boundary. That I accept.

Cray Valley West

42. It was not disputed that quite a substantial part of the old St Mary Cray ward is now in Cray Valley West. This area lies towards Orpington where the new ward boundary travels north-south along Austin Road (described as Ruskin Road in the course of the hearing). I was, however, told by Councillor Ince that those who live to the north of Poverest Road, which crosses Austin Road, would always have identified with the St Paul's Cray estate rather than with St Mary Cray and Orpington. If this is right, those who would, in contrast, identify with St Mary Cray and Orpington but who are now in Cray Valley West, are contained in a small number of streets, albeit that they are quite close to the Orpington Town Centre.
43. I was further told by Mr Benington, Chairman of the Orpington Conservative Association, that Cray Valley West continues to include much of the former London County Council St Paul's Cray Estate and that there is a natural community within that purpose-built estate. Cray Valley West residents have their own purpose built shopping centre in the heart of the ward. Cray Valley West children go to Kennal Technology College in the North of the ward.
44. Councillor Wilkinson made reference to a number of residential roads from Chislehurst ward into Cray Valley West ward that cross the boundary in an east-west direction and suggested that this lent continuity to the constituency if Cray Valley West were to be with Chislehurst and Cray Valley East with Orpington. He made the same point about some roads in Petts Wood ward, but the boundary follows the route of and bisects

Chislehurst Road, so that the continuity of the area might be thought to be visibly broken.

Cray Valley East

45. It is also apparent from the maps that I have seen that Cray Valley East forms part of Orpington High Street and is semi-rural. John Horam MP told me that Cray Valley East residents are more likely to shop in Orpington High Street. This was confirmed by Mrs Harwood, who told me that the public transport by bus from St Mary Cray is only to Orpington and not to Bromley and that she is accustomed to meet St Mary Cray residents in Orpington Town Centre. Cray Valley East children have no secondary school, so children attend the Priory School in the Orpington Centre.

Recommendations relating to Cray Valley West and East

46. On balance, I am persuaded that there are actual and historical ties between Cray Valley East and Orpington which should be respected. Although the local Government boundary changes have perhaps blurred the boundary between these two wards at the southern end, I am not persuaded that there is clear evidence of a strong tie between Cray Valley East and West which would compel a conclusion that they should not be separated. I did hear evidence of an affinity between the villages of St Paul's and St Mary Cray, but, in the light of their unity within Cray Valley East, this provides almost no guidance now for the recommendation I have to make.
47. Accordingly, my conclusion on these wards is that any proposed transfer of Cray Valley East away from Orpington would break local ties, but there is no particular reason why the two wards should be retained within the same constituency. If Cray Valley West were to be transferred to Bromley and Chislehurst, however, the resulting electorates would be:

Beckenham (excluding Biggin Hill and Darwin):	52,563
Orpington (excluding Cray Valley West) :	66,974
Bromley and Chislehurst :	74,331

This is a satisfactory outcome for Orpington but probably not for Bromley and Chislehurst in the light of the size of the other proposed constituencies in the Borough, and certainly not for Beckenham. It follows that a change is needed for those constituencies.

Part 2: Bromley Common and Keston/Bromley Town

Bromley Common and Keston

48. The Conservative party proposal is to link Bromley Common and Keston with Hayes and Coney Hall in Beckenham. The principal purpose of this is to compensate the Beckenham constituency for the loss of Biggin Hill and Darwin wards. It was not suggested that there was any strong link between the residents of Bromley Common and Keston and the town centre of Beckenham, although Hayes, which will be in the constituency, is said to be a focal point for Keston residents. I have already recommended that Hayes and Coney Hall be linked with Beckenham. There is no direct public transport link from Keston to Beckenham although there is a public transport connection from Keston to Hayes in the form of a single bus route.
49. This proposal would give a constituency size of 63,405 electors in Beckenham. In Bromley and Chislehurst, the electorate would be 51,720. This would be too disparate from the electoral quota, unless the Cray Valley West ward is also included in the Bromley and Chislehurst constituency, which I have indicated above it could be, in my opinion. With Cray Valley West, the electorate in a Bromley and Chislehurst constituency would be 63,489 which is, when compared with the other constituencies in the two Boroughs, acceptable.
50. The Labour party proposal, it will be remembered, involved the transfer of Bromley Common and Keston into Orpington and the removal from Orpington of the Cray Valley wards into the Chislehurst constituency and the transfer of Bromley Town ward into Beckenham. This proposal would give an electorate for the new Beckenham constituency of 63,680, a marginally closer figure to the electoral quota in Beckenham. If, moreover,

the ward of Cray Valley East is not included in the “donor” proposed constituency of Bromley and Chislehurst (to be called Chislehurst under the Labour party proposals), as I have recommended it should not, the figure in Bromley and Chislehurst after a transfer of Bromley Town is 63,214. This is also numerically acceptable.

51. Both from the evidence that I have heard and from my own observation of the area, I formed the view, however, that Bromley Common and Keston is an area of relative independence. It is substantially separated from the residential areas within Hayes and Coney Hall ward by attractive open common land. Indeed, a significant proportion of both Hayes and Coney Hall and Bromley Common and Keston wards are open common land which plainly provide much recreational ground for the nearby residents. This could form a convincing natural boundary between two constituencies if required to do so. Both wards contain Commons Conservation areas. Although it was argued that the common land might be a unifying feature, and I am sure that both wards enjoy considerable interest in maintaining this open area, it does not seem to me that it is appropriate to designate it as a local tie which would be broken if the two wards were to be separated. On the other hand, I am persuaded that the common land and the character of the two wards does give them a common interest which would justify their joinder in a single constituency.

52. In addition to the common land, Hayes and Coney Hall ward is suburban to the north west of the ward where it borders on Shortlands and, further south, West Wickham, and Bromley Common and Keston ward is suburban to the north where it leads into Bickley, Petts Wood and, to a lesser extent, Bromley Town. Although to the east of the Bromley Common and Keston ward, there is an area of contiguous housing which leads into Farnborough and Crofton ward in the Orpington constituency, there appears also to be some open space separating housing from the boundary and the A21 forms a clear boundary between the two.

53. The notion that Bromley Common and Keston enjoys a relatively independent status is additionally reflected by the proposals which affect it: it is currently in Bromley and Chislehurst; one party proposes that it should be with Orpington, the other that it should be with Beckenham.

Recommendations

54. On balance, I formed the view that no local ties would be broken, no matter in which of the three constituencies it eventually should find itself. I would, however, comment that although the provisional proposals of the Commission cause Bromley Common and Keston to form a slightly unsatisfactory shaped, southern pointing finger from the remainder of Bromley and Chislehurst constituency between two other proposed constituencies, the fact that the two arterial roads the A233 and A21 both lead from the south into the ward, where they join, for the A21 to continue into Bromley ameliorate any inconvenience of shape. Importantly, it would not be inappropriate to link this ward with Hayes and Coney Hall.

Bromley Town

55. I had significantly more concern about the proposal to incorporate Bromley Town with Beckenham in a single constituency, leaving Chislehurst to form the focus of the third constituency. This would mean that both the heart of Bromley town and all of Beckenham were joined in a single constituency, but other areas which were outlying areas of Bromley town, albeit very close to the centre, particularly Plaistow and Sundridge ward, would be associated with Chislehurst as a focal point for the constituency. Parts of the town centre of Bromley do in fact fall into more than one ward – mainly Bromley Town, but also Plaistow and Sundridge and to a lesser extent, Bickley. The effect of the Labour party proposal would be therefore to divide the Bromley commercial centre into different constituencies. This, on the face of it, would not appear to reflect local ties which will have a community of interest in the integrated development of the town centre.

56. Although I heard evidence of ties, moreover, between those in Cray Valley West and Chislehurst, this town was not otherwise regarded as a source of local allegiances. On the contrary, the evidence strongly suggested that the three principal towns within the Bromley London Borough are Bromley, being the dominant town, Beckenham and Orpington. It might be expected that the use of these three towns as the focus of each seat would best reflect local ties and, therefore, would be a preferable outcome, provided always that number of electors in each seat is appropriately close to the electoral quota.
57. I was impressed, too, by the evidence of Jacqui Lait, MP for Beckenham. She contended that it would be difficult to represent both Bromley Town centre and Beckenham because they would be the two major commercial centres of the proposed constituency but they have conflicting interests. One (Bromley) is now a substantial retail and commercial centre and the other is a town centre that has undoubtedly been impoverished by the competing attractions of its neighbour. The significance of this is not that it therefore renders the constituency difficult to represent, it is rather that the two conflicting commercial interests are a demonstration of an absence of local ties between the two principal centres of the proposed constituency.
58. Councillor Wilkinson also pointed out that the proposal of the Labour party involved a change of constituency by the greatest number of electors within the Borough of Bromley, some 53,000, as opposed to 31,415 if the Conservative proposals were followed and 20,506 if the Boundary Commission proposals were to be adopted.

Recommendations relating to Bromley Town

59. It follows from the above that I would not recommend the creation of a seat which involves both Bromley Town and Beckenham town centre.

i. Rushey Green to be in Lewisham Deptford constituency and Lewisham Central to be in Lewisham East constituency (counter-proposal 2)

60. This is another area where the Local Government Boundary changes have made a significant difference to the ward boundaries. Rushey Green (which is similar to but not the same as the previous ward of Catford Central) was in Lewisham West with Catford South. Lewisham Central (which is similar to but not the same as the previous Hither Green) was in Lewisham East. It was proposed that Lewisham Central ward should be in Lewisham East constituency and Rushey Green with Lewisham, Deptford. This would give an electorate for Lewisham, Deptford of 66,286. For Lewisham East the figure would be 69,229. This means that there is a degree of imbalance between the electorate of the two constituencies, but when compared with the other constituencies within the two Boroughs, the discrepancy is not inappropriate. In the absence of any other considerations, however, it would be appropriate to render both constituencies as near as possible to the electoral quota, so preferring the Commission proposal. There are, however, other matters that must be considered.
61. This counter-proposal received much support. All three affected Members of Parliament were in favour of the counter-proposal. Bridget Prentice MP for Lewisham East told me that the Commission's proposals would disperse an important part of the community of her constituency, and contended that the people of Lewisham Central were affiliated with the Lee and Grove Park areas rather than the north of the Borough. The Rushey Green ward, she contended, was more closely identified with the north of the Borough. She conceded, however, that the boundary changes had resulted in the acquisition of "quite a bit" of the Ladywell community which was essentially based in the constituency of Lewisham Deptford. Jim Dowd MP also accepted that Rushey Green now includes part of what is currently Blythe Hill ward which is in the Deptford constituency.

62. The counter-proposal was also supported by Lewisham Borough Council who confirmed the view expressed by Bridget Prentice MP in her written representation that Lewisham Central includes a large proportion of the present western wards in Lewisham East and the community there look more to Blackheath as a centre than to the north.
63. Although the assertion of a local link between Rushey Green and the north of the Borough was expressed by a large number of people in an official capacity, there were only two submissions at the inquiry from local residents themselves in relation to the allocation of Rushey Green. Both of those residents identified a wish that Rushey Green should remain in Lewisham East.
64. Mr Ockendon, as spokesman for the West Lewisham Conservative Association, made the point that Rushey Green comprised one half of Catford and the other is Catford South which is in Lewisham East. These wards form a ring around Catford shopping centre and the two local railway stations of Catford and Catford Bridge. It was suggested that the proposal to move Rushey Green into a constituency with Deptford would split Catford in half. I was told that at the last boundary review there had been opposition to the removal of that part of the new ward which lies between Catford railway lines and Blythe Hill into the Deptford constituency on the basis that the Deptford town centre is over two miles away and difficult to reach. Mr Furze, from Lewisham, Deptford Conservative Association, drew my attention to the fact that residents from Lewisham Central make use of Lewisham shopping centre and Lewisham hospital, both in Lewisham, Deptford, and Ladywell station is right on the border between Ladywell and Lewisham Central. I should add that as Lewisham hospital is only just the other side of the ward boundary from Rushey Green, I think it quite likely that a number of its patients also come from Rushey Green, but I do not recall that anyone gave evidence as to that, and so I do not place weight on this assumption. Mr Furze also made the point that it would be undesirable to separate the two halves of Catford. I should add that these are currently together in Lewisham West.

Councillor Anderson, leader of Lewisham Council's Conservative group also welcomed the notion that locating Lewisham central ward with the Deptford constituency would unite the centre of Lewisham. He also added that pupils from Ladywell in the Lewisham, Deptford constituency attend the Lewisham Bridge school within the new Lewisham Central ward.

Recommendation

65. On balance, although it appears that there is a depth of sentiment which would unite Rushey Green with the north, I found it hard to identify the view with compelling evidence of a likely breach of local ties. In the absence of such evidence, I would recommend adoption of the Boundary Commission's provisional proposals.

i. Counter-proposal 3

66. Within the London Borough of Bromley, the division of wards into constituencies proposed by the Official Monster Raving Loony Party represented reasonably fairly the expression of local views that I heard within the inquiry, and also in Lewisham the proposal reflected only those changes which had been occasioned by the movement of local government boundaries. Were it not for the fact that this counter-proposal does not address the low number of electors in each constituency within Lewisham, adoption of this proposal would have meant only minimal disruption. However, as I consider that the need to pair the two London Boroughs is unavoidable, I do not recommend this counter-proposal.

k. Names

67. In the light of my recommendations above, summarised in the table below, Beckenham and Biggin Hill constituency should be known simply as Beckenham constituency. No other consequential name changes are necessary. There was, however, a degree of concern about the name of the new cross-border constituency which, arguably, has a degree of imbalance, referring to a comprehensive geographical area in the north but to the name of a small town in the Bromley part of the constituency. A proposal was advanced for Sydenham and Penge (and vice versa) as well as

Lewisham West and Crystal Palace. I take into account the imbalance that I have referred to, which appears to describe one part of the constituency more fully than the other, and I also take into account, that, unlike the current Lewisham West, which includes a substantial part of Catford, the north part of the new constituency centres on Sydenham. I would recommend that the new constituency be called Sydenham and Penge.

I. Summary of Recommendations

68. My recommendations are therefore as follows:

Name	Wards	Individual Ward Electorates at the enumeration date	Combined Electorate
Sydenham and Penge	Clock House Crystal Palace Penge & Cator Bellingham Forest Hill Perry Vale Sydenham	11,073 7,031 10,787 9,552 9,482 9,982 10,504	68,411
Lewisham, Deptford BC	Brockley Crofton Park Evelyn Ladywell Lewisham Cent. New Cross Telegraph Hill	9,850 9,689 9,419 9,053 10,353 9,492 9,826	67,682
Lewisham East BC	Blackheath Catford Sth Downham Grove Park Lee Green Rushey Green Whitefoot	9,834 10,236 9,440 10,229 9,527 8,957 9,610	67,833
Bromley and Chislehurst BC	Bickley Bromley Town Chislehurst	10,897 11,117 11,586	

	Cray Valley W. Mottingham &Chislehurst Nth Plaistow & Sundridge	11,769 7,162 10,958	63,489
Orpington	Biggin Hill Chelsfield & Pratts Bottom Darwin Cray Valley E. Farnborough & Crofton Orpington Petts Wood & Knoll	7,761 10,755 3,815 10,748 11,393 11,629 10,873	66,974
Beckenham BC	Bromley Cmn & Keston Copers Cope Hayes & Coney Hall Kelsey & Eden Park Shortlands W. Wickham	10,842 10,957 12,092 10,843 7,432 11,239	63,405

CLAIRE ANDREWS
Assistant Commissioner