

Boundary Commission for England
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

15th November 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

As requested, this follows, in more detail, my presentation to the Hearing in the Council Chambers of The Guildhall, Kingston, on Friday 28th October.

My name is Iain Simpson and I live at 56 Home Park Road, London SW19 7HN. I have lived in Wimbledon Park (WP) with my family for 32 years.

I am Chairman of the Wimbledon Park Residents' Association (WPRA) and have been for the last 12 years. Some sort of residents' representation has existed in WP as far back as 1906. The WPRA membership covers the whole Ward of Wimbledon Park (approx 5000 homes) and unlike a lot of RA's does not confine itself simply to planning issues but casts its net far wider in all matters of interest to residents. For example, after many years of negotiation with the Council and developers, we succeeded in opening a new community centre and café complex in 2013. This is leased from the Council under a 99 year lease and is run by the Wimbledon Park Community Trust on behalf of the community. This is a company and registered charity.

The Association publishes a 44 page newsletter three times a year which is delivered to over 3000 households in the area. The newsletter is supported by local advertising.

I am also a past chairman and current Trustee of the Wimbledon Society, the local amenity society for Wimbledon, formed in 1903 and which runs a Museum of local history (est.1916) through a small army of volunteers.

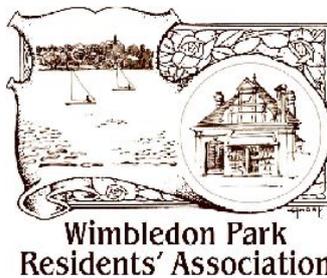
Wimbledon Park, the park itself, is a Grade II* listed park and was designed by Capability Brown (CB). This year we celebrated 300 years of the birth of CB under the auspices of the Friends of Wimbledon Park, a body that was formed three years ago, supported by the three local residents' associations. The 'Heritage' park has three owners: the London Borough of Merton, The Wimbledon Club and the AELTC, which owns the freehold of the Wimbledon Park Golf Club, which holds a long lease. Wimbledon Park is an intrinsic part of the activity surrounding Wimbledon Tennis fortnight with all the people in the queue camping in the park.

Originally the Heritage park covered some 925 acres and reached well into the area covered by Village Ward to Tibbets Corner (junction of Parkside and the Portsmouth Road North of Wimbledon Common).

There are four factors the Boundary Commission (BC) must take into account when making a constituency with the correct number of voters:

- 1) Special geographical considerations, including size, shape and accessibility
- 2) Local government boundaries
- 3) Boundaries of existing constituencies
- 4) Any local ties that would be broken

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Wimbledon Park Ward and Village Ward are effectively joined at the hip and, together with Wimbledon Town and West Wimbledon, represent the heart of what we know as Wimbledon. Wimbledon is, unusually, a worldwide brand, largely as a result of its association with the annual Wimbledon Tennis Championship. Travel anywhere in the world and there are few people who do not recognise the name. Similarly, the postcode SW19 is also extremely well recognised outside its own boundaries, both nationally and internationally.

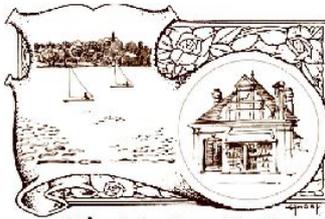
The proposal to include the Village Ward and Wimbledon Park Ward in Putney is to ignore the rich and tangible relationship that exists between these entities and is contrary to the criteria set out by the BC.

Wimbledon Park has the benefit of an underground station on the District line which offers a one stop journey into Wimbledon town centre and direct commuting into the city and west end. When WP residents want to go shopping they look largely to Wimbledon town centre – not to Putney. Similarly, when Village Ward residents want to shop they too look to Wimbledon Town centre not Putney. The idea of pushing Wimbledon Common into Putney is to disregard the fact that the common is called Wimbledon and Putney Common – not just Putney Common.

Very recently, after several years of campaigning, AFC Wimbledon football club has succeeded in obtaining planning permission to build its own brand new football stadium in Plough Lane, next to the area where the old Wimbledon team played. This 'return to Wimbledon' has been foremost in fans' minds. After all this effort, the last thing they would want is to be known as 'residing in Putney'.

1. The current Wimbledon constituency is remarkably cohesive, in terms of where residents live their lives, particularly shopping, leisure and transport. Within the constituency are a number of different residential areas, and the commercial and transport hubs they look to. The current Wimbledon constituency contains the vast majority of the 'SW19' postcode, the most famous postcode in the world, and the brand of 'Wimbledon' itself. Many landmarks across the Wimbledon area contribute to this.
2. Splitting Wimbledon Village and Wimbledon Park from the rest of Wimbledon is nonsensical. On the whole, these residents do not look north to Putney, rather they look to Wimbledon Town Centre. It is important that the Member of Parliament is able to fully represent residents in these areas on issues in the Town Centre that affect them, with Crossrail 2 being the most recent and significant example.
3. Wimbledon Village in particular is an essential part of Wimbledon. Residents in the Village do not look north to the Putney constituency at all. Instead, residents look down Wimbledon Hill Road to Wimbledon Town Centre, from which the majority of commuters will travel.
4. Most residents in Village Ward are physically separated from residents in the current Putney constituency by both the Common and the A3 road.
5. The Boundary Commission cites uniting Wimbledon and Putney Commons as a good reason to bring Wimbledon Village into Putney. However, the Common is enjoyed by residents across both the current Putney and Wimbledon constituencies and is called Wimbledon and Putney Commons. The Common is in fact a barrier between residential zones, not a uniting factor. Indeed, in order to unite Wimbledon and Putney Commons, the Boundary Commission has chosen to split Mitcham Common.
6. Furthermore, the current proposals would lead to a completely arbitrary split across the Ridgway, with the north side being in Putney and the south side being in Wimbledon. All

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Wimbledon Park Residents' Association

residents in this area very strongly identify with the current Wimbledon constituency and have very little interaction with Putney.

7. Being able to represent not only the area where residents live, but the areas where they go shopping, out for dinner, and commute from makes for a much more effective representation and helps residents have a greater say over what affects them.

The overall effect of the current proposals is to end up with the London Borough of Merton having to deal with five representative MPs. This is both likely to be unmanageable from a practical point of view and would be considered by most of the residents affected as totally unsatisfactory.

We appreciate the difficult task that faces the BC, particularly when it does not appreciate the relationships that are endemic to the areas they are considering.

We would like to suggest the following alternative proposals which we feel would protect the integrity of Wimbledon as it stands and at the same time achieve what the BC is looking for. It is worth mentioning that back in 1965 when the London Borough of Merton was formed it was effectively joining the interests of Mitcham and Wimbledon. It is important to remember that Mitcham has a strong history and identity of its own which should be preserved.

London currently has 73 parliamentary seats/constituencies, and the Boundary Commission (BC) proposals envisage this figure being lowered to 68.

The optimum electorate has been defined as some **74,769**, plus or minus 5%.

The normal 'target' for each seat therefore needs to be **between 71,031 and 78,507**.

The current electorate in the Wimbledon constituency is significantly lower than that, at **some 63,505**. This is presumably why amended boundaries are being suggested.

The BC proposals are guided by various criteria in the Act, eg:

- If "any **local ties would be broken** by changed constituency" boundaries
- "**special geographical considerations**, in particular the **size, shape and accessibility** of a constituency"
- having "**regard to local government boundaries**" including London Boroughs.

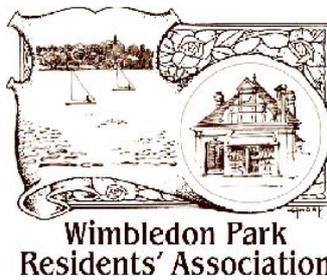
Reference to these local government boundaries includes the boundaries of the current Wards within each Borough.

As there is to be no change to the Borough boundaries, it is assumed that the existing Ward boundaries would **also** remain the same.

As the name Wimbledon is a "world name", it would be reasonable to expect that all the parts of the locality that were seen to be "part of Wimbledon" would be within a single **entity or constituency**. **However, the current proposals sever the main town centre from** many areas that are demonstrably "Wimbledon", such as the Common, Wimbledon Village, the All England Club, Wimbledon Park, West Wimbledon.

Wimbledon **town centre is instead** linked up to parts of Mitcham, which is itself a centre of real

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individual significance, but is not directly related to Wimbledon.

Mitcham has its own **very** special historical and social identity, which should be respected.

The shape of the proposed constituency has no recognisable **geographic rationale**, **does** not respect Borough boundaries, **and clearly breaks local ties**.

The current BC proposals are therefore considered to be deeply flawed.

An alternative approach should therefore be explored, which contains all the Wards which are demonstrably 'Wimbledon', with the addition of **adjoining** Wards so as to meet the criteria. Some options for this approach are set out below.

(The GLA 2013 projected population totals are given in brackets for information.)

The numbers of Electors in each 'Wimbledon Ward' of the Borough are:

ABBEY	6376	(10,400)
CANNON HILL	6559	(9,300)
DUNDONALD	6046	(9,350)
HILLSIDE	5666	(9,050)
MERTON PARK	6329	(9,550)
RAYNES PARK	6607	(9,800)
TRINITY	6424	(9,900)
VILLAGE	5633	(9,900)
WEST BARNES	6831	(9,950)
WIMBLEDON PARK	7034	(11,300)
.....		
Total electorate	63,505	(97,150)

There will have been some variations since 2013 due to redevelopment, changes of use etc., but on the basis of these figures it is clear that to conform to the BC's guidelines, two additional Wards would need to be added to the 'Wimbledon **Wards**' constituency.

These **need to respect** the BC criteria, and be able to be clearly seen as a justified geographical/social addition to the group of 'Wimbledon Wards'.

There are three such possible Wards within the LB Merton; the number of Electors (and the total projected population figures) for each are shown:

LOWER MORDEN	6491	(9,150)
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- In LB Merton
- Shares boundaries with West Barnes, and Cannon Hill in the 'Wimbledon group' of Wards, and also adjoins the St Helier Ward
- Not a strong link to either the Mitcham centre or to Sutton

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