

## Starkie, Emily

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**From:** Gavin Barwell [REDACTED]  
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This is my personal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on its review of electoral arrangements for the London Borough of Croydon.

I have lived in Croydon virtually my entire life, first in South Croydon, then in Shirley, then on Monks Hill and now in Sanderstead. Since 2010, I have served as the Member of Parliament for Croydon Central, which is currently comprised of eight wards of the London Borough of Croydon (Fairfield, Addiscombe, Woodside, Ashburton, Shirley, Heathfield, Fieldway and New Addington). Before I was elected as an MP, I served for 12 years as a councillor for the ward of Woodcote & Coulsdon West (which became Coulsdon West after the Commission's last review).

I am not proposing my own warding scheme. Given my position, I don't think that would be appropriate. I will confine myself to two observations, each backed up by some examples.

The first is a general one. When the Commission last reviewed electoral arrangements in Croydon, it had a preference for three member wards. It compromised when it came to Fieldway and New Addington, but elsewhere in the borough it got its way. The result is that a number of wards straddle communities. The ward I used to represent is a good example: although it is named Coulsdon West, the northern part of the ward is Purley. Three of the wards in my constituency suffer the same flaw:

- Fairfield straddles the town centre, the Whitgift estate (which is part of the community of Addiscombe) and Park Hill;
- Ashburton straddles the communities of Addiscombe and Shirley (the rough border between the two being along the Shirley Road and the boundaries of Ashburton Park); and
- Heathfield straddles the communities of Shirley, Addington Village, Monks Hill and Forestdale. The latter three are separated from Shirley by a large hill and look to Selsdon as their local centre.

Nobody who lives in these wards would say they live in Fairfield, Ashburton or Heathfield.

**So my first point is that it would be far better if the Commission opted for a mixture of two and three member wards whose names and boundaries reflect the places that people feel they live in.** Helpfully, there is a large degree of unanimity about what those places are - the Council has spent a lot of time identifying them as part of the preparation of the Croydon Plan and both political groups support this approach. It is not perfect - there are parts of the borough where people would say they come from a more specific locality (eg Park Hill, Addington Village) but if you forced them to choose one of the 16 places the Council has identified their answers would generally reflect the map that the Council has produced.

My second point follows from this. I was amazed to see that the Council's submission to the Commission completely departs from the places of Croydon in a number of areas. To take a parochial example, if the Council has its way after 2018 I will live in Croham Hurst ward. If the Commission went door to door in my road, nobody would say they live in Croham Hurst. We live in Sanderstead. Our local Residents Association is Sanderstead Residents Association and the 'village' centre is just at the top of the road. There is no Croham Hurst Residents Association, because Croham Hurst is not a community - it is a 33 hectare piece of ancient woodland. I walk there regularly, but it is not the place where I live.

Another example affects my constituency. The Whitgift estate and Park Hill both belong in the place of Addiscombe (the former undoubtedly; the latter is a place in its own right, but has much in common with Addiscombe and would identify with that above any of the other 15 places that the Council has identified), but they have been placed in a ward called Coombe. Coombe used to be an estate in Croydon, but nobody would now describe themselves as living there. And neither Park Hill nor the Whitgift estate have any connection with the old Coombe estate. Coombe lay near the junction of Oaks Road and Coombe Lane/Coombe Road as certain surviving landmarks illustrate eg Coombe Farm is just off the Oaks Road; Coombe Lodge, now a pub/restaurant, is on Coombe Road just west of its junction with Oaks Road; the former Coombe House, now The Cedars School, is off Coombe Road also just west of its junction with Oaks Road; and the former Coombe Wood House, now The Chateau Napoleon restaurant, is on Coombe Lane just east of its junction with Oaks Road.

These are just two examples. There are plenty of others eg Shirley Hills is wrongly placed in Addington, not Shirley; and Old Town is put together with Waddon despite the fact that it is part of the town centre and separated from Waddon by an impermeable dual carriageway.

**So my second point is that as well as having fairly large variances the Council's submission fails to align ward boundaries with the communities that the Council itself has painstakingly identified.**

**In summary, I would urge the Commission to adopt proposals built around the places of Croydon as identified in the draft Croydon Local Plan.**

Gavin Barwell  
**Member of Parliament for Croydon Central**

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