

GONDAR & AGAMEMNON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (GARA)

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

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Response to consultation on proposed boundary changes

Submitted on 28-Nov-11 at <http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/have-your-say/>

The Gondar and Agamemnon Residents' Association (GARA) objects to the proposal to move Fortune Green ward from Hampstead & Kilburn constituency to Finchley & Golders Green.

GARA has c.100 members. We live in a mixture of single family houses, houses converted into flats and purpose-built mansion blocks. We include both owner-occupiers and tenants renting from private landlords, Camden council and housing associations. GARA acts on behalf of all these residents, and we are typical residents of Fortune Green ward.

At our AGM on 31-Oct-11, there was unanimous support for remaining within the Hampstead & Kilburn constituency.

Both as individuals and as a community, we consider ourselves to be part of Hampstead & Kilburn.

Our interests and concerns are those of Hampstead & Kilburn, not Finchley & Golders Green: we live in West Hampstead, not in Finchley; we use services in West Hampstead, not in Finchley; we use transport in West Hampstead, not in Finchley; and our children go to school here, not in Finchley.

West Hampstead has its own ambience; it is nonsensical to split the community that contributes to this across different parliamentary constituencies. Here is one example of how we form a coherent community: we have an annual "jester festival" at which the entire community, covering West Hampstead and Fortune Green wards takes part. Our local MP regularly attends. Local businesses sponsor the festival and local shops have stalls at the event. So, if the wards were separated, then which MP would attend? Which businesses would continue to be interested (most of those involved would remain in the existing constituency)? And what would happen to this vital expression of community?

There is a significant physical divide between Fortune Green and the existing Finchley & Golders Green constituency – the A41, a three lane dual carriageway. This means that there is no integration; no common interest; and no architectural, transport or other connection between the parts of the proposed constituency. A simple look at the proposed constituency maps shows that Fortune Green is part of Hampstead & Kilburn, not Finchley & Golders Green where it would be an adjunct that has no relationship with the rest of that constituency.

The issues facing Fortune Green are those of Hampstead & Kilburn. We are a central London constituency with housing, school and transport issues that differ from those of Finchley & Golders Green, which is more suburban. It is precisely our density of housing that makes our existing constituency a busy one but also makes our issues differ from those of Finchley & Golders Green.

Whilst we appreciate the need to rebalance constituencies, we do not accept that convenience of numbers should outweigh the existence of a community, which must underpin the concept of a constituency. There are other options for rebalancing numbers. For example, Hendon would be a more natural part of Finchley & Golders Green, both geographically and in terms of its issues and concerns.

Fortune Green ward is simply part of Hampstead & Kilburn and should remain so.

David Yass, Chair GARA