

# MPs Serve Their Constituency, Not Vice Versa

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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Most members of parliament come to love their constituencies and the residents. MPs are recognised as the last resort when an issue cannot be resolved in other ways. Voters know their representative at Westminster can be active in the community interest locally, nationally and internationally.

Virginia wants me to adopt the quotations she offers to students. Disraeli said the greatest honour for a person in this country is a seat in the House of Commons. Burke said your MP owes you their industry- but if they substitute your opinion for their views, they fail instead of serving you.

The good things done are common to MPs in each party; so are the bad things done or not done by a few. It is seldom necessary to inform the member that what they are doing is wrong and unpopular because they probably know. It is helpful to send a note when the action is popular yet wrong or when unpopular yet right.

Boundaries are set by the independent Boundary Commission for England. In some parts of the United States, there are accusations of exaggerated gerrymandering, together with occasional extreme voter suppression.

Across the House and from the Scottish border to Land's End by way of West Sussex, there was interest in the provisional recommendations that came this week. On Tuesday the Commission made clear that variations and changes might come from views put in by members of the public in addition to the responses by political and other associations.

See the map and have your say at [www.bcereviews.org.uk](http://www.bcereviews.org.uk) as the Commissioners need to hear your local views.

Naturally each party will look for possible political consequences. Support or opposition to elements of the new constituencies' boundaries may be based in part who might win and who might lose. The Commission will not be swayed by anything that does not match their responsibilities.

Worthing West is not 'mine'. I am yours from each election result until a dissolution of parliament. Then there is another contest, resulting in another term for me or for whosoever else is lent the greatest number of votes that time.

Why redraw the constituencies? It is to make them more equal, recognising the movement of population up to March last year. The process will occur every eight years. This time they have to come in between 69,724 and 77,062, that is 73,393 plus or minus 5%.

Arundel and South Downs was + 12%, Bognor and Littlehampton + 6%, Chichester + 17%, Crawley +1%, East Worthing and Shoreham +1%, Horsham +19%, Mid Sussex + 16% and Worthing West + 7%, just too high to be left alone.

I would like to continue to represent and to be responsible for the combination of most of Worthing Borough together with the fine eastern villages of Arun District. Now, oddly, it is proposed that Salvington and Offington be removed from Worthing, perhaps in the surprising idea that the residents want to be associated in preference with Littlehampton and Arundel.

In their place, it is proposed to bring in good people of Adur, east of the A27. The Commissioners will receive views from across the county and from our local media, journalists and editors who are in touch with local communities.

Assuming 17,000 voters move from Arundel and South Downs to constituencies closer to East Sussex, the five western West Sussex constituencies can be considered for minor modifications that meet the Commission's rules on numbers without the majority of residents changing their constituency. That is more important than the majority for any MP.