

Surrey County Council

Electoral Review of Surrey County Council

Stage Three Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

October 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“LGBCE” or “the Commission”) announced that it would be conducting an electoral review of Surrey County Council. The review was triggered by the fact that it had been 12 years since our last electoral review in 2010.
- 1.2 The Review began in May 2022 with an initial consultation on the overall council size. Surrey County Council submitted a detailed response to this consultation, considering each of the Commission’s criteria in turn, and recommended that the current council size of 81 Members be retained. In commencing phase two of the Review, the Commission has confirmed that, in line with the Council’s own view, it is minded to recommend retaining the Council’s current size of 81 Members and therefore the County Council’s response to this phase begins at this point.
- 1.3 During Stage Two of the Review, the County Council submitted a scheme of electoral divisions that it felt best met the Commission’s three statutory criteria:
- **Electoral equality.** Each councillor should represent as near as possible to the same number of electors.
 - **Community identity.** Division boundaries should recognise and support strong community links, such as parishes, shared facilities and transport links.
 - **Effective and convenient local government.** Divisions should be coherent with good internal communication links. For example, ensuring the Member can effectively travel to all parts of his/her division.
- 1.4 In addition, no division could cross a district or borough boundary and therefore must be contained entirely within one of the 11 districts and boroughs within Surrey.
- 1.5 The Commission also made it clear that they could not consider any of the following as evidence:
- Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries
 - Current County divisions
 - Local political implications of recommendations
 - School catchment areas
 - Postcodes or addresses
- 1.6 The County Council is pleased to note that having considered the submissions received during Stage Two, the Commission developed proposals broadly based on the County Council’s scheme, having regard to evidence submitted by other interested parties (including District, Borough and Parish Councils.)

- 1.7 This report outlines the County Council's response to the Commission on its draft recommendations, focussing on the areas where the Commission has amended the County Council's proposed scheme and providing further evidence against the statutory criteria.

2 The Council's Approach

- 2.1 In May 2022, the Council set up a cross-party working group to lead on its response to the Electoral Review. This working group co-ordinated the Council's response on Council Size, divisional arrangements for stage two, and administering feedback for stage three of the Review.
- 2.2 As each division must be contained wholly within a district/borough area, the working group felt that it was appropriate to focus on each district and borough area discretely in the first instance. To ensure that any proposals put forward were fully informed by local knowledge, meetings were held with each local grouping of county councillors to gather their views on how best to arrange divisions within their district or borough area given the Commission's criteria.
- 2.3 In putting forward proposals, local Members were asked to give consideration to the Commission's criteria and to work within a 10% variance from the average electorate per division. Working within these boundaries, Members were asked to put forward a pattern of divisions that would best support strong community identity and used easily identifiable boundaries – such as parishes, major roads/railways and rivers. However, it is recognised that each local area is different and both the geography and pattern of communities can, in exceptional circumstances, make this 10% variance difficult to achieve. In such instances, local Members provided additional evidence to explain the detrimental impact of altering any proposed divisions to bring them within the tolerance range for electoral equality.
- 2.4 Where there was unanimous local agreement for a pattern of divisions that met the criteria, this was adopted as the Council's response as it was felt that local Members are best placed to advise on this. Where local agreement did not prove possible, the task group looked at all the views put forward and recommended the pattern it felt best met the Commission's criteria. If there wasn't a unanimous agreement on one option, the task group agreed to present multiple options.
- 2.5 Using this bottom-up approach, the proposals put forward by the County Council were locally drafted and moderated for consistency by the cross-party working group.
- 2.6 At the end of Stage Two, the Commission published its draft recommendations for a further period of consultation from 8 August – 16 October 2023. Members were made aware of the report and sent links to the Commission's website. All Members were given the opportunity to submit views on the Commission's proposals to the cross-party working group to consider when

drafting a response based on the Council's original proposed scheme and the Commission's recommendations.

- 2.7 The County Council's views are outlined in the remainder of this report for the Commission to consider prior to developing its final scheme of electoral divisions.

3 Response to the Proposals by District and Borough Area

3.1 Elmbridge

- 3.1.1 After consulting the local Members on the Commission's recommendations, the Council supports the proposals for most divisions, however the local Member for The Dittons division stated he cannot support recommendations made to their division and the North-West of the Borough. The objections to the Commission's proposals can be linked to the LGBC criteria of community identity and good and effective local government.
- 3.1.2 With regards to geography, the local Member for The Dittons provided evidence for what he called an 'artificial divide' between Thames Ditton and Molesey, namely Hampton Court Way from Embercourt roundabout up towards Hampton Court. The Member noted this road has a 40 mph limit, is prone to accidents, also prone to gridlock during commuting times also any time there are events in Esher (eg racing at Sandown Park Racecourse), Hampton Court Palace (e.g. the Flower Show) and stretching as far as Twickenham (e.g. rugby and music events at Twickenham Stadium).
- 3.1.3 The local Member believes these to be examples of a significant divide and lack of community, not natural boundaries. In addition, the Member believed a number of other roads and their own associated issues acted more as boundaries and dividers of communities. On the other hand, Portsmouth Road which crosses the Dittons is narrower, not prone to gridlock, and more naturally provides crossings at Angel Road, Claygate Lane, and Thorkhill Road for traffic, the latter with lights. Towards Thames Ditton, also to Long Ditton, there is the junction with St Leonards Road, also 2 with Giggs Hill Road. The lights lead to the "Rec" in Long Ditton, also the Long Ditton Village Hall. Thames Ditton itself leads some way south at the Angel Road, Claygate Lane, and Thorkhill Road junctions, the latter also to the Ferry Lane cul-de-sac. The Angel Pub is by the Angel Road junction, well frequented by both communities.
- 3.1.4 In terms of community identity and interests, the local Member for The Dittons felt there is a clear sense of community within the existing boundaries of the division. There are 2 Residents Associations, the *Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association*, and the *Long Ditton Residents Association*. The local Member attends both "Exec" and open meetings of both and works closely with them. On specific items the Member highlighted in their feedback, both areas were involved with the Local Plan submissions for Green Belt retention. This is within Long Ditton, though

highly relevant to Thames Ditton and Weston Green as well and a recent application for Village Green status for a well-used recreational area used by many, not far from the border of Long Ditton. The well used Long Ditton Village Hall is available to and close by all.

- 3.1.5 The local Member believes in no case can the same, or close to it, be said to exist for Molesey. He added that at best there is little in common between the Dittons and Molesey, no joint meetings, nor liaison with ward Councillors, certainly at County level. As examples, the Member gave the efforts to prevent Green Belt release. This hugely affecting the Dittons as a whole, but not Molesey. In the case of the Village Green application, Thames Ditton & Weston Green contributed to the significant costs involved. Despite requests the Hinchley Wood Residents Association did not.
- 3.1.6 To conclude the additional evidence that rejects the LGBCE recommendation, the Member for The Dittons focused on the advantages in Thames Ditton and Long Ditton working together in pursuit of common interests, and the significant disadvantages in not doing so. The Member felt that any divide would continue to serve 'no useful purpose' indeed very much to the contrary. He explained they were not aware of any benefit in making change so far as the number of electors is concerned. Further to that any additional conversations between the LGBCE and the Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association, and the Long Ditton Residents Association, would reinforce the arguments made above.
- 3.1.7 The views outlined above were not unanimous, as a counter view to that submitted by the Member for The Dittons has also been raised. The Member for West Molesey is in support of the Commission's recommendations and the rationale provided which supports amendments to the East Molesey & Thames Ditton Divisions.
- 3.1.8 Taking into consideration the views of the local Members with regards to the changes to The Dittons division, the Council invites the Commission to reflect further on the evidence provided by the local Members. As outlined in the Stage Two response, the Council previously recommended that only minor changes be made to this division where a new boundary would sit where the northern part of Claygate Lane meets Manor Road North. Along Manor Road North, the East/West boundary would see Dene Gardens moved into The Dittons electoral division, alongside the few closes to its East (Greenwood Close, Orchard Avenue, Manordene Close, and Greenwood Close). The North-Western boundary would remain as is at the railway line which forms a fairly clear 'natural' border. This was supported by local Members when originally proposed, and the Council would encourage the Commission to further engage with local resident groups and associations before making further recommendations.

3.2 Epsom & Ewell

- 3.2.1 In response to the Commission's request for further evidence regarding the proposed name change of 'Ewell' division to reflect the three wards

‘Stoneleigh, Ewell Village and Nonsuch’: Whilst Epsom itself is probably more widely known (through the Derby for example), Ewell is much larger and extends across three of the current Epsom & Ewell divisions. If anything, the current designation of ‘Ewell’ as a division is confusing given that there is also currently a division called ‘West Ewell’ and ‘Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington division’.

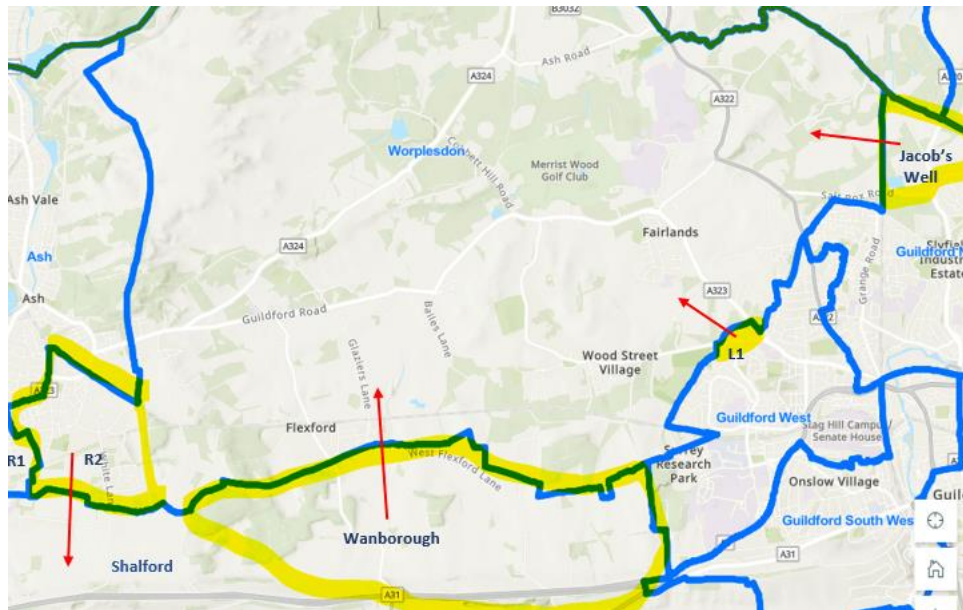
- 3.2.2 The Borough Council dates back to 1937 and the borough itself contains 10 distinct Residents’ Associations that coincide with ward boundaries and most of which have a large subscribing membership and are very active in the local community. Those include Stoneleigh and Auriol RA, Ewell Village RA and Nonsuch RA. Each of the three wards have their own unique identity and residents readily identify with these locations, whilst ‘Ewell’ and ‘Epsom’ are viewed as postal areas but not distinct communities.
- 3.2.3 Stoneleigh includes the borough’s second largest shopping centre, Stoneleigh Broadway. It also contains Stoneleigh Station, one of Surrey’s most used stations and which is currently receiving an £11 million upgrade to make it step free. Ewell Village is the borough’s third largest shopping Centre and Nonsuch includes Nonsuch Park and remnants of Henry VIII’s Nonsuch Palace. People from across Epsom & Ewell visit Stoneleigh to travel and Stoneleigh Broadway and Ewell Village to shop (not Ewell) and Nonsuch Park for leisure (not Ewell).
- 3.2.4 Epsom and Ewell residents are very conscious of where they live, and community is important. Bordering London with its large council geographical areas and lack of distinct individual communities, we should highlight and promote localism, identify communities, and design them into our electoral arrangements.
- 3.2.5 The name Stoneleigh, Ewell Village and Nonsuch continues the identification of those communities already established across the Ewell part of the borough in the Divisional names of West Ewell as well as Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington.

3.3 Guildford

- 3.3.1 The Council proposes the following changes to the Commission’s recommendations:
- 3.3.2 Worplesdon Division: The Council does not agree with the inclusion of South Ash (R2) into this division, or the removal of Jacob’s Well from it. In doing so, the Commission is disregarding the existing community identities of these areas. The Council requests that the Commission reconsiders the original proposal which would; retain Ash Polling District R2 in Shalford, Keep Jacob’s Well in Worplesdon, move part of Polling District L1 (above

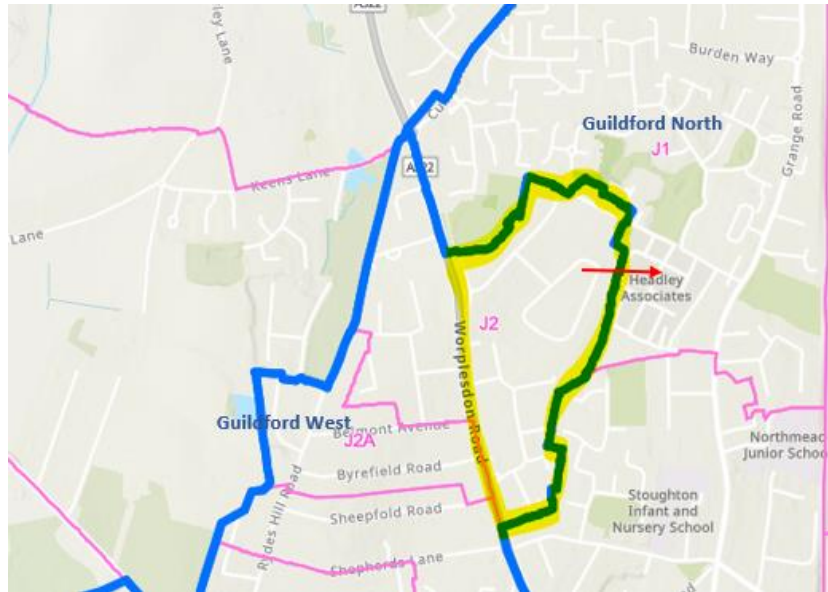
broad street) into Worplesdon and move Wanborough from Shalford to Worplesdon.

- 3.3.3 Shalford Division: To reemphasise the above point regarding Ash Polling District R2, local members submitted that this is not in alignment with community identity, as residents have a stronger affinity and identity with Tongham. To maintain the existing community identity links and keep Shalford within the electoral variance tolerance, the Council does not support the proposal to move polling district H5 from the Shere Division into Shalford Division.



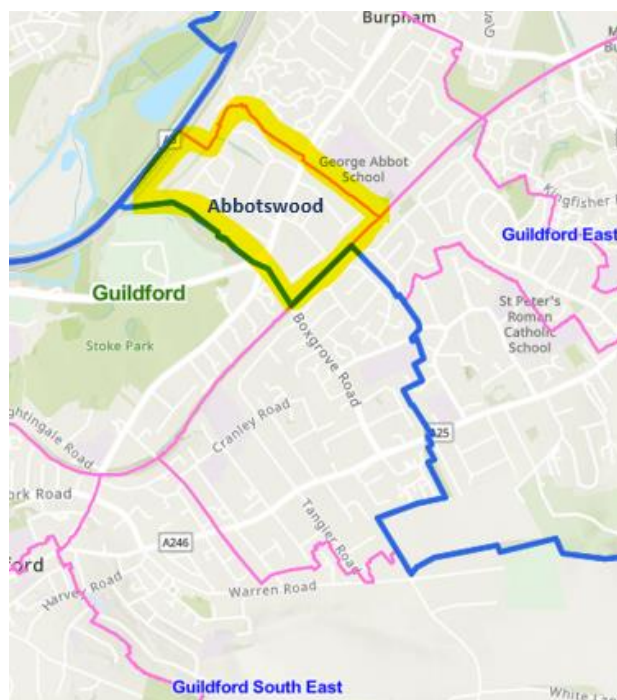
(Map references paragraph 3.3.2 and 3.3.3)

- 3.3.4 Guildford North and Guildford West Division: The Council requests that the Commission considers splitting the Polling District J2 along Worplesdon Road to improve co-terminosity with wards. We caveat this request on the basis that it does not create an electoral inequality consequence outside of the variance tolerance.



(Map references paragraph 3.3.4)

3.3.5 Guildford South East and Guildford East: The Council wishes to present the views of both local members, regarding the move of Abbotswood into Guildford East.



(Map references paragraph 3.3.5)

3.3.6 The member for Guildford East supports the Commission’s proposal on the grounds of co-terminosity (Option B in Table 1 below).

3.3.7 Conversely, the member for Guildford South East requests that the commission retains Abbotswood in the current division (Option A in Table 1 below). The commission’s rationale for co-terminosity is understood,

however the local member does not agree that this will benefit the community and this option delivers optimum electoral equality.

- 3.3.8 The local member argues that the decision by Guildford Borough Council to incorporate the Abbotswood area into the Burpham ward was not based on taking account of the community and geographic boundaries, affiliations and characteristics. They believe that this decision should not be perpetuated at division level when there are strong arguments to retain Abbotswood in the current division which meet the commission's criteria.
- 3.3.9 There is a strong physical boundary and geographic separation between the existing Guildford East and Guildford South East boundaries. To the south the boundary is George Abbot School, and to the north the boundary is the line between Abbotswood and the Weylea estate. There are no paths connecting the areas. The only connecting route is via the main A3100.
- 3.3.10 There is a historic physical milestone on the main A3100 identifying Burpham as starting at the eastern boundary of Abbotswood. There is a very discernible and active village community in Burpham, an active Burpham Community Association (a Residents' Association) and many local societies and organisations, including the Burpham and Merrow Facebook Page, Burpham Bowling Club, etc. The Abbotswood area is not considered part of the village. There is a Neighbourhood Plan for Burpham, but it does not cover the Abbotswood area.
- 3.3.11 The Abbotswood area is not a cohesive community (unlike Burpham). It comprises a number of separate communities each with their own social organisations. There are three residents' associations in the roads named Abbotswood, Abbotswood Close and Westward Ho alone. The pattern in this area is generally that resident groups are organised by road, rather than area, and people tend to identify with the road they live in rather than the area. This is in contrast to Burpham village.
- 3.3.12 The Abbotswood area comprises mature residential housing, which is very similar to the housing in the rest of this area of Guildford South East – on the other side of London Road past Boxgrove Roundabout. There has been no significant development in this area for many years. In contrast, Burpham village has grown significantly with many new developments since the 1970s and 80s into the 2000s.
- 3.3.13 In addition to arguing for the retention of the Abbotswood area, the local member accepts the Commission's proposal to add C4 into Guildford South East. C4 is in the town centre and adjacent to an existing area of Guildford South East, so the areas are similar communities and share many characteristics.
- 3.3.14 In summary for Guildford, the Council proposes the following amendments to the draft recommendations:

1. Retain Ash R2 in Shalford

2. Keep Jacobs Well in Worplesdon
3. Move part of L1 (above Broad Street) into Worplesdon
4. Move Wanborough from Shalford to Worplesdon
5. Retain H5 in Shere
6. Move part of J2 (East of the Worplesdon Road) from Guildford West To Guildford North
7. That the Commission has further reflection on the different views regarding Abbotswood.

3.3.15 Whilst we do not have the exact electoral number for suggestions 3 and 6, the table below estimates the electoral variances between the Commission's proposals, and the consolidated suggestions:

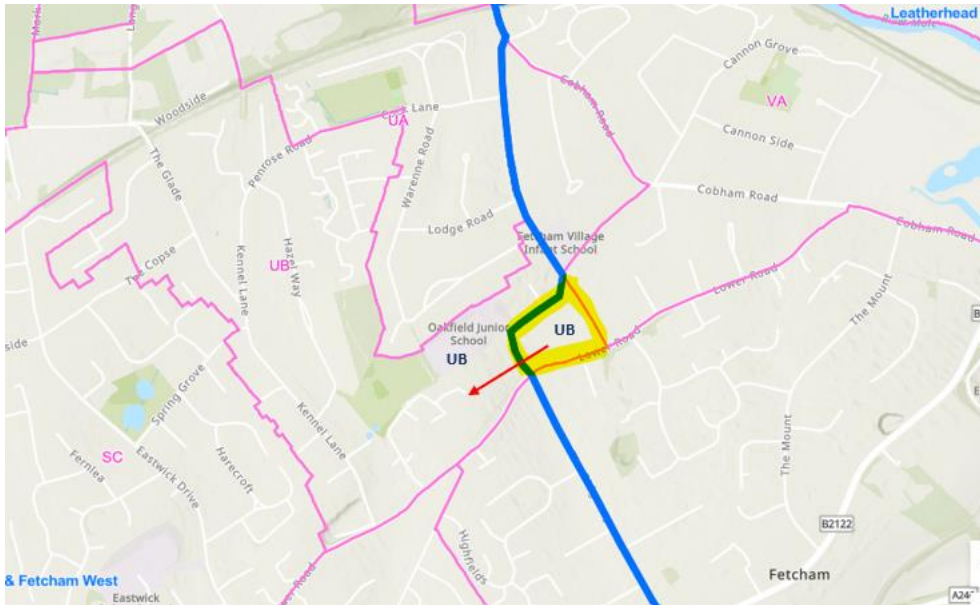
Division	LGBCE Proposals	Option A (with Abbotswood in Guildford South East)	Option B (with Abbotswood in Guildford East)
Ash	10%	10%	10%
Guildford East	6%	-1%	6%
Guildford North	9%	6%	6%
Guildford South East	-7%	0%	-7%
Guildford South West	11%	11%	11%
Guildford West	8%	3%	3%
Horsleys	8%	8%	8%
Shalford	-5%	10%	10%
Shere	-6%	2%	2%
Worplesdon	6%	-9%	-9%

(Table 1: Guildford options with electoral variances)

3.4 Mole Valley

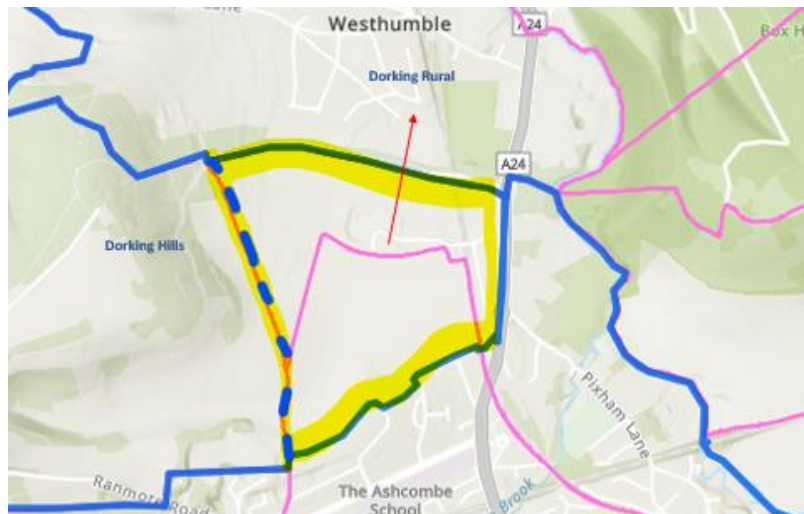
3.4.1 The Council agrees with most of the Commission's recommendations, but requests the following amendments and considerations:

3.4.2 Bookham and Fetcham West and Leatherhead and Fetcham East: Maintain the existing boundary of Bell Lane located within Bookham and Fetcham West, as the proposed boundary splits an established community and polling district (UB).



(Map references paragraph 3.4.2)

3.4.3 Dorking Hills/Dorking Rural: The Council requests that the boundary is moved to reflect the current Polling District boundaries within the Mickleham, Westcott and Okewood ward (changing to the dashed blue line in the image below).

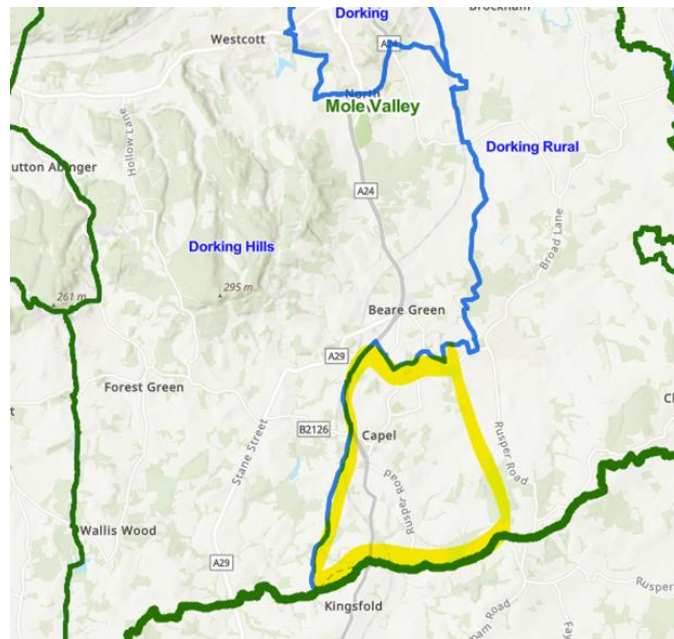


(Map references paragraph 3.4.3)

3.4.4 The six properties in Bradley lane [Voters LL 22 to 32 on the current register: 1–4 Bradley Farm Cottages, Bradley House and Bradley Farm House RH5 6AA] vote at the Westhumble Polling Station and are part of Westhumble village. If they are not in the same County Division as the rest of the Westhumble village then a new Polling District would need to be created for only 11 voters.

3.4.5 The Council also wishes to respond to the area of Capel, which was identified as an error within the draft recommendations. For the Commission’s variance proposals to work, the Capel Polling District JA needs to be in Dorking Hills, however the Commission’s mapping proposals

show it within Dorking Rural. We are content that the LGBCE has acknowledged this error.



(Map references paragraph 3.4.5 and 3.4.6)

3.4.6 The Council understands that the decision to move Polling District JA (Capel) into Dorking Hills does not align with ward co-terminosity, however, to not move it would result in this division being outside of tolerance at -14%. We have listened to both local members affected and there is a balanced argument that has not delivered a firm consensus for the Council to submit a clear preference. This is mainly due to balancing the different views of community identity leanings and aiming to deliver electoral equality. However, as has been seen in the North of the District, there are exceptions to variances outside of tolerance. On that basis, the Council requests that the Commission delivers a final recommendation based on further considerations gained throughout this consultation.

3.5 Reigate & Banstead

3.5.1 The Council largely supports the proposals outlined in the Commission's recommendations for Reigate and Banstead. There is one minor amendment that the Council requests based on further conversation with the local Member. This involves Doods Park Road remaining in the Reigate division as opposed to the Commission's proposal to move it into the Redhill and Meadvale West division. This proposal is opposed on the ground of community identity and interest, as it is felt residents in this area identify far more as part of Reigate.

3.6 Runnymede

- 3.6.1 The Council supports the proposals outlined in the Commission's recommendations for Runnymede. A local Member expressed support for changes to the New Haw, Woodham and Row Town ward which would help resolve division.

3.7 Spelthorne

- 3.7.1 The Council largely supports the proposals outlined in the Commission's recommendations for Spelthorne. There is an amendment that the Council requests based on further conversations with the local Member.
- 3.7.2 In support of the proposal to change the name of the Stanwell and Stanwell Moor to Stanwell, Stanwell Moor and North Ashford the Member offers the following points.
- 3.7.3 The A30 is a major road dividing Ashford from Stanwell. The postal addresses north of the road are all Stanwell and those to the south Ashford. They are two very distinct communities, for example, no-one in Ashford would say they live in Stanwell and vice-versa.
- 3.7.4 Children from Ashford would normally attend Ashford primary schools and Stanwell children one of two in Stanwell.
- 3.7.5 One of the two borough council seats covering their electoral division is called Ashford North and Stanwell South. The other being Stanwell North.
- 3.7.6 The Member believes that voter participation in Ashford North will increase if the residents felt the name was more representative of the area.

3.8 Surrey Heath

- 3.8.1 The Council supports the proposals outlined in the Commission's recommendations for Surrey Heath. The Council raises a concern at a misprint on paragraph 108 of the LG BCE recommendation. Sovereign Drive will be moving from Heatherside & Parkside to Camberley East, not Camberley West.

3.9 Tandridge

- 3.9.1 In the Commission's proposals they noted the Council's suggestion around partial alterations to Tandridge Parish, but instead decided to go further and place all of Tandridge Parish in the Godstone division. After further consultation and evidence from the local Member, the Council asks the Commission reconsiders this proposal, based on the 'interests and identities of local communities'. Tandridge Village is closely aligned with Oxted to the North, with many residents accessing services including doctors, library, shops, schools and leisure facilities in Oxted town centre. It is closely linked

by the A25 road, and many residents here feel a closer identity to the Oxted area rather than Godstone.

- 3.9.2 Elsewhere in the District, the local Member has raised concerns over the recommendation from the LGBCE to include Burstow in the new name of the division. The Member contests that people are not familiar with that name and would instead know what is being referred to as Burstow as Smallfield. It is felt Burstow only evokes confusion and restricts the understanding of the area that Lingfield Division covers i.e. Felbridge, Smallfield, Dormansland, Dormans Park, Felcourt, Horne and Crowhurst, as well as Lingfield. The Member has stated that their views on this point are echoed by the local Parish Council Clerk, who would like the Parish name to be changed from Burstow to Smallfield, as it was before.

3.10 Waverley

- 3.10.1 Given Waverley's largely rural nature, it has always been difficult to address a number of the electoral variance issues without having significant impacts on the other criteria of community identity and good an effective local government. With this in mind, the Council again largely supports the Commission's recommendations for most of the Borough but rejects the proposed changes to the division, currently known as Waverly Western Villages (WWV).
- 3.10.2 After further evidence from the local Member, the Council believes the suggested name change to Frensham, Elstead and Hindhead does not fairly represent the other 6 villages: Especially Thursley which is, by a substantial margin, the geographically largest of the 9 villages and contains the Common which bears its name and is the most nationally important of the 15 separate Commons in the Division.
- 3.10.3 The local Member also noted, the general public have become accustomed to the WWV titled for reporting matters and for understanding how the various villages and their various parish representations work together across a very substantial and very varied geographical region. The LGBCE proposals retain the Waverley Eastern Villages, so the Member questions why it is not possible to retain the 'Western Villages' name? The Member further explains that, to an outsider, the two names separated by the ancient turnpike, now the A286, and the area adjacent to that road, are a clear expression of their relative geography.
- 3.10.4 With the Council proposing that Waverley Western Villages remain the name of the division. By extension, the Commission's proposed name change to Waverley Eastern Villages should also remain, as it is the Council's view that 'Eastern Villages' (the Commission's proposed name) was too generic and doesn't adequately convey the fact that many Waverley residents recognise they live within the West of the county.
- 3.10.5 In addition to the opposition to the proposed name change, the Council supports the local Member's view that that the proposal to incorporate part of

Wormley village into the former Waverley Western Villages division is not helpful. Whereas there are a small number of Wormley properties on the Western side of the A283, they look to the North and South of that road rather than to the West, as applies equally to the small number of properties on the Western side of the A283 near its junction with Church Lane. It is the Member's view that Wormley has no cultural attachment to the Western villages.

3.10.6 With this in mind, it is the Council's view that what the commission gains in term of electoral equality by making the change, it loses in terms of community identity and making an already geographically very large and difficult to effectively cover division, even bigger.

3.11 Woking

3.11.1 The Commission received three proposals from the County Council and they have recommended a slightly modified scheme that does align with one of the original proposals.

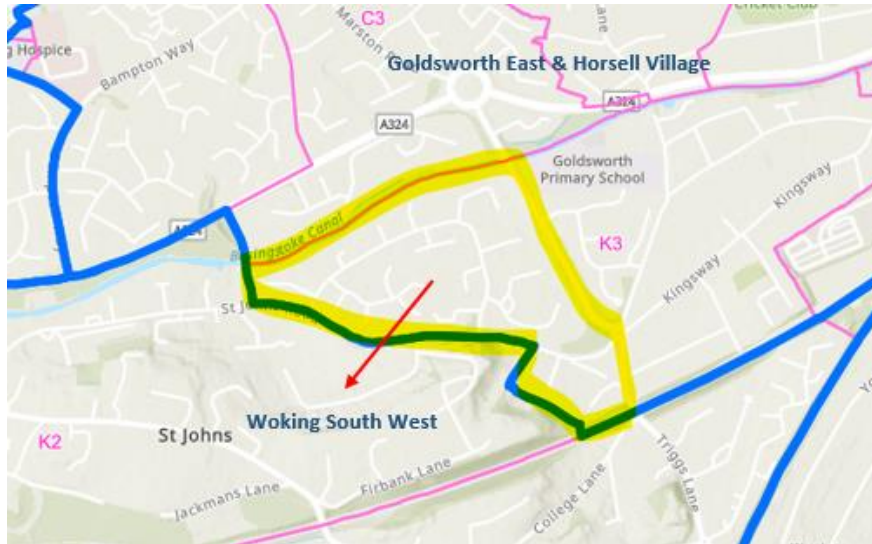
3.11.2 The Council proposes two alterations to the recommendations.

3.11.3 The first is to move Polling District E5 from Woking South to Woking South East. Historically the boundary between divisions and wards in Woking was along the River Wey, but a housing development called Gresham Mill has been built partly over the waterway. Most of Gresham Mill is in Woking South East, but a small section, Polling District E5 (72 electors) is in Woking South. If E5 is moved to Woking South East, it will create a boundary that unites a community within one division.



(Map references paragraph 3.11.3)

3.11.4 The second alteration is to move the boundary between Goldsworth East & Horsell Village and Woking South West, from the current St John's Road to Parley Drive and Triggs Lane.



(Map references paragraph 3.11.4)

- 3.11.5 The argument in support of this was this it would create a much clearer boundary between the divisions (due to these roads being substantially larger physically), and it would address the unclear boundary that exists in the south of the highlighted area where the boundary comes off St John's Road and moves through Janoway Hill Lane and down to the railway line.
- 3.11.6 However, this was not a unanimous suggestion. The member for Woking South-West does not agree that this creates clearer boundaries, nor does it support coterminosity with the ward boundaries. They argue that Winnington Way and the roads off it were the initial stages of the Goldsworth Park development in the 1970s and were historically part of the Goldsworth Park ward, which was split into East and West in 2000. This part of K3 remained in Goldsworth East, which is why it was placed into the Goldsworth East and Horsell Village division in 2013. Therefore, St Johns Road is the correct boundary historically, which was not developed along the south side until the 1980s. This impacts the existing community identity as the north side had never been considered to be related to St John's Village. Consequently, there is existing rationale for maintaining the current St John's Road boundary and to change this could negatively impact community identity.
- 3.11.7 The Council requests that the Commission takes a balanced decision based on the views received.