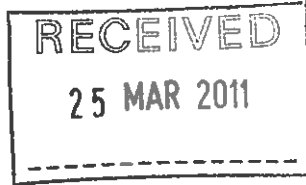


Mole Valley Liberal Democrats



20 March 2011

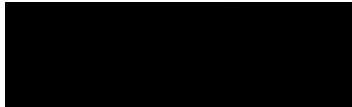
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Surrey County Council Review
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Dear Sir

Surrey County Council Review – Mole Valley area

I have pleasure in attaching the submission of Mole Valley Liberal Democrats in relation to the current Surrey County Council electoral division boundary review.

Yours faithfully,



Michael Watson

County Boundary Review – Mole Valley

Background

The current electorate of the six Mole Valley County Divisions is:

Ashtead	11,797	Bookham / Fetcham West	12,754
Dorking / Holmwoods	10,821	Dorking Hills	9,892
Dorking Rural	12,256	Leatherhead / Fetcham East	12,289

The County Average electorate is 11,076 resulting in Divisions being between 9,968 and 12,184.

The Mole Valley average is higher at 11,635 resulting in Divisions being between 10,457 and 12,798.

Preferred Solution

The preferred solution is for minimum change amongst the divisions.

The can be achieved by transferring the area of Dorking / Holmwoods bounded by the Westcott Road, Vincent Lane and Coldharbour Lane to Dorking Hills and by transferring the area bounded by School Lane, The Street, and Cobham Road and which includes Orchard Close from Bookham / Fetcham West to Leatherhead / Fetcham East.

In the Dorking case the boundary currently runs across the fields by Bury Hill Lake from Westcott Road to Coldharbour Lane. This proposal would mean that the boundary would run along main roads, principally the A2003 Vincent Lane, as a much clearer boundary. There are no community issues – the area being moved between divisions is still within a Dorking town based division.

[Note: This moves the following roads in BA polling district: Nower Road, Ebbisham Close, West Bank, Longfield Road, Hamstead Lane, Nower Close East, Nower Close West, Coldharbour Lane – north side only, Vincent Lane – east side only, Vincent Drive, Westcott Road – south side only, Glebe Road, and Sondes Farm – approx 687 voters].

In the Fetcham case the boundary is being moved to the old District ward boundary between Fetcham East and West and also runs along main roads through the village. As Fetcham village still has significant parts in both the northern divisions there should again be no community issues.

This solution gives the following electoral numbers:

Ashtead	11,797	Bookham / Fetcham West	12,418
Dorking / Holmwoods	10,134	Dorking Hills	10,579
Dorking Rural	12,256	Leatherhead / Fetcham East	12,625

In this proposal several divisions are close the permitted tolerances from the average suggested by the Boundary Commission but at least the Divisions are based on the District's natural communities.

In considering this, we note that with the District average 5% greater than the County average (half the permitted tolerance) it is very difficult to be well within the County average tolerances without severe issues in relation to creating divisions based on natural communities, especially given the diverse nature of our area with a small part of the District north of the M25 and the remaining area again split between the more urbanised and unparished north of the District and the more rural generally parished south of the District based around a small market town.

Further Thoughts

In developing this proposal, we have considered:

Ashtead

Ashtead is a discrete community to the north of the M25. It is appropriate on community grounds for Ashtead to be a single division.

The "North" and "South" of the District

The remaining part of the District is split into two recognisable separate communities and these communities should be recognised as separate communities – and, indeed, were recognised as separate communities a number of years ago when the County Council considered localism and proposed dividing Surrey into its "communities" for local decision making.

These two communities are the old Leatherhead Urban District area comprising Leatherhead, Bookham and Fetcham which is more built up, urban, unparished and looks to Leatherhead and the old Dorking Urban and Dorking Rural districts comprising the rest of the area which are more rural, parished and look to the market town of Dorking.

The "Northern" Area

The Bookham & Fetcham West division needs to lose electors as it has the largest electorate in Mole Valley. It cannot lose electors to the north or west as division boundaries cannot cross the District boundary. It thus has to lose electors either in the east in Fetcham to the Leatherhead & Fetcham east seat or in the south to Dorking Hills. However, if the seat is to lose electors to Dorking Hills it would involve transferring part of the village of Bookham to a Dorking based division which would needlessly break community ties and link areas with no natural affinity to each other. It also makes sense to only lose a few voters at most to a Leatherhead based seat as it makes no sense to just create issues in the Leatherhead & Fetcham East seat, which currently has approximately an acceptable number of electors, as transferring more voters than required to simply equalise the number of voters in the two divisions will create a further issue in the Leatherhead & Fetcham East seat causing this seat to then lose electors to

the south which would also breach the community principals set out in the preceding paragraph.

The "Southern" Area

The Dorking Hills division needs to gain electors as it is the smallest division in Mole Valley. It cannot gain electors from the East where it touches Epsom & Ewell and Reigate & Banstead or the west where it touches Guildford and Waverley as division boundaries cannot cross the District boundary.

The division should not gain electors from the north as this is the boundary of the natural community between the "Leatherhead" community and the "Dorking" community. If this were to happen it would mean putting a more urban, non-parished area that looks to Leatherhead into an area to the south that is substantially parished and rural. It would link either a small part of Bookham or Leatherhead which are discrete communities in their own right with a seat based on the northern part of Dorking Town which makes no sense.

In the south east Dorking Hills could gain Brockham, Betchworth & Buckland from Dorking Rural [there is no real justification to ward any of these parishes] and lose Westcott and Leith Hill to Dorking Rural in compensation in order to equalise electoral numbers. This was considered at the last boundary review in 2000 in depth as opposing views as to community ties were put forward to the Boundary Commission but we believe that there is now a settled consensus that the Boundary Commission last time made the correct decision and that this should not happen as (i) it makes the Dorking Rural division too large from Charlwood to Walliswood and then north to Polesdan Lacey and even curling around north Dorking to the border with Westhumble; (ii) Brockham, Betchworth & Buckland have good road links to the south; (iii) the villages are similar to the parished areas to the south such as Leigh and Capel; (iv) the villages share with their neighbours to the south the issue of traffic rat-running to Gatwick in the area once known as the "Dorking Box" for common traffic calming initiatives; (v) Brockham School now has a Leigh base which would mean that the school and its Leigh base would be in separate divisions, and (vi) Westcott, Wotton, Ranmore, Abinger Hammer and Abinger Common have good road links to Dorking but only very poor road links to the south.

In the south west Dorking Hills could gain Okewood or part of Okewood from Dorking Rural. This is not a realistic or reasonable division as (i) the Division would stretch from the borders of Epsom & Ewell to the Sussex county boundary [as well as right across the District from east to west] which is simply too large geographically to be considered for a County Division, (ii) it would mean that the geographic centre of the division which would be shaped as an arc would be outside the borders of the division, (iii) it would link Headley / Box Hill with Ockley / Walliswood between which there are absolutely no community ties; (iv) it would result in an unacceptably long drive time of nearly an hour and a half from end to end of the division; (v) there are no decent road links that directly join the extremities of the division – such travel would be through the Dorking / Holmwoods division and the Dorking Rural division; (vi) the Primary School in Capel and its outlying base in Ockley would be in different divisions; (vii) Ockley is linked by the A29 to Beare Green which is in the Dorking Rural division, not Dorking Hills; (viii) Walliswood is primarily linked by road to Horsham and Guildford across the county boundary, and next to Ockley and through to Beare Green in the Dorking Rural division and not to Dorking Hills; (ix) all the villages on the Sussex border look to an extent to

Horsham and all have the issue of the Gatwick flight path so share common interests which should be recognised whilst Okewood does not share any such issues with the area to its north; (x) Ockley Parish shares a long border with Capel Parish including houses in the boundary road being in one or other parish depending on their location giving the two parishes a community of interest (ie between areas that would be in Dorking Rural and Dorking Hills if this transfer took place) but has little communication or similarities with the major part of the Dorking Hills division which is based upon the northern part [not even the southern part] of Dorking town.

This leaves the only place to take voters from as the South Central part of the District – from Dorking Town itself. The movement of voters here has no community issues as the proposal is simply to move voters within divisions within the town. Furthermore, the best proposal is to move votes to the west as (i) this is a discrete area, (ii) as the new boundary would run along clearly defined significant roads from the Westcott Road / Vincent Lane junction along Vincent Lane and then Coldharbour Lane to join up with the existing boundary as opposed to running from the Westcott Road along the Bury Hill Lake path from the A25 and then across the fields to Coldharbour Lane and (iii) as this would simplify the division boundary on the western side of the town.

Finally, the movement of electors should be limited as suggested in the previous paragraph as to move more electors into Dorking Hills would require the further movement of voters from Dorking Rural to Dorking / Holmwoods. This can only be achieved by moving the Beare Green ward into Dorking Hills which would (i) break the substantial ties between Capel and Beare Green which are both within the Parish of Capel; (ii) split between divisions The Weald school and its two associated infant schools in Newdigate and Capel; and (iii) split between divisions areas which share a major common issue with the Gatwick flight-path.

Michael Watson