

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

Submitted by email to: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

4th December 2021

Dear Sirs

RE: LGBCE Electoral Review of Mole Valley

Buckland is a small rural parish located within the district ward of Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland, widely referred to as the 3Bs.

Buckland Parish Council ("Council") is served by seven parish councillors who represent a population of c.600 residents across 250 households.

When Council discussed the LGBCE consultation materials Council noted:

- the LGBCE had recently announced it is minded to support a MVDC proposal to reduce the number of members to thirty-nine;
- whilst wards in MVDC currently have one, two or three members; under current legislation, the MVDC decision to opt to retain elections by thirds will now require all wards to be served by "a multiple of three members" to ensure electors are impacted equally at each election;
- as the MVDC ward of Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland (the 3Bs) is currently served by two members, change will be required unless exceptional circumstances are identified to support the retention of a 2 member ward for the 3Bs; and
- the LGBCE target electorate for a three-member ward is 5826 electors and a ward comprising the 3Bs, and the current one-member ward of Boxhill and Headley would deliver an electorate of 5831.

Recommendation

It is Council's strongly held belief that the 3B need to remain within the same ward following this LGBCE review.

If the 3Bs needs to become part of a larger three-member ward, Council having reviewed electoral numbers and potential synergies has concluded that Council's preferred outcome will be for the 3Bs ward to join forces with the existing ward of Boxhill and Headley.

Supporting evidence for this recommendation is set out in the attached appendix.

Yours faithfully,

Sheena Boyce

cc. Betchworth Parish Council, Boxhill Neighbourhood Council,
Brockham Parish Council, Headley Parish Council,
MVDC Cllrs Simon Budd, Paul Potter and David Preedy

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU
Phone: 01737 448023 email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Appendix to Council response re: LGBCE Electoral Review of Mole Valley

Reasoning to support the recommendation for the 3Bs to remain within the same ward

Transport Links

The A25 passes through the 3Bs, providing an east/west link to our local market towns of Dorking and Reigate, Station Road, that crosses the A25 at Betchworth roundabout connects the 3Bs to communities to the north and south; all complemented by a network of country lanes between the three villages.

The No 32 bus route, a service that operates Monday – Saturday between Redhill and Guildford, routes through the 3Bs, supporting the many inter parish activities.

The North Downs Railway Line runs through the 3Bs and our parishioners are served by Betchworth Railway Station.

A network of rights of way between the 3Bs provides local residents with a choice of circular walking routes with plenty of options for en-route refreshments. Significant investment has already been made in both Buckland and Brockham to improve accessibility on its rights of way and a similar initiative underway in Betchworth is further improving the accessibility of routes for all our residents to enjoy.

The Surrey County Council led Active Travel initiative includes plans to

- (i) upgrade a well frequented public footpath between Brockham and Betchworth (known locally as the coffin route) to a bridleway to facilitate carbon neutral family friendly cycling within the 3Bs including commuting to our local school sites; and
- (ii) create an off road cycle track alongside the length of the A25 that passes through the 3Bs.

The recently published SCC Climate Change Policy Documents and SCC 10-year Transport Strategy both highlight the potential benefits of improving local low carbon travel routes in support of 20 minute communities. Council considers the 3Bs is a perfect pilot 20 minute community for SCC and that the SCC proposals to further enhance local cycling links within the 3Bs will further strengthen community links.

Amenities and Services

Brockham Surgery, part of Brockwood Medical Practice, is the primary provider serving the 3Bs as is the pharmacy located on Brockham Green. The 32 bus route ensures all residents have the means to visit doctors and the pharmacy by public transport.

Betchworth Post Office, now the only post office located within the 3Bs, is also conveniently located on the 32 bus route.

Residents can shop at a range of retail outlets along the route of the 32 bus that includes, running east to west, Squires Garden Centre, All Electric, Buckland Nurseries, Buckland Deli and Gifts, Betchworth Village Shop, Brockham Village Shop, Brockham Pharmacy, Chitty's Butchers and Strood Green Community Shop.

The Shell garage, located on the A25 Reigate Road in Buckland, serves the 3Bs, opening 6am – 11pm, 7 days per week and the fuel offer is complemented by a Waitrose and Amazon lock up boxes. A recently reconstructed A25 footway provides an excellent accessible route between the garage and local bus stops.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU

Phone: 01737 448023

email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Using the same no 32 bus, residents can visit a choice of leisure venues including The Pheasant, Buckland Park Lake and The Red Lion in Buckland, Hartsfield Manor in Betchworth and The Big Field, The Grumpy Mole and Royal Oak in Brockham.

Families opting to educate their children in the state school system can register their children to attend North Downs School, which operates across three sites for its early years before consolidating all pupils at its Brockham site from Year 3 onwards. Families have the choice of heading east to Reigate and Redhill or west to Dorking for senior school education with the no 32 bus route and train providing travel options. Friendships established at the school gates lead to parents becoming involved in a wide range of activities across the 3Bs and this is an important feature of our 3Bs community.

The joint benefice of St Michael's Betchworth and St Mary the Virgin Buckland is served by a part time rector who, supported by the two PCCs provides a full range of church services and support to Betchworth and Buckland.

Brockham is served by Brockham Church, which is located adjacent to Brockham Green and includes a Memorial Garden. Betchworth Parish Council runs a burial ground which is open to Brockham residents at a preferential rate in recognition of the historical boundaries of Betchworth civil parish.

Annual endowments from the Henry Smith charities enable the Buckland Village Charity and Betchworth United Charities to extend support to residents in need. The Betchworth United Charity operates across Brockham and Betchworth as its scope reflects the parish boundary of Betchworth which at the time the charity was established included Brockham.

The Poland Trust, a charity based in Brockham, considers the needs of residents living across the 3Bs. The Poland Trust owns Poland House, sheltered housing that accepts applications from across the 3Bs and whose residents include former residents from all three villages. Poland House is located on the 32 bus route.

There is a recognition across the 3Bs that the broader community of the 3Bs is stronger when we all work together as was evidenced during the 2020/21 lockdowns during which time the Brockham Emergency Response Team operated a 3Bs Hub for Mid-Surrey Community Fridges with Buckland and Betchworth providing volunteers to make deliveries from the hub to residents living in their parishes.

Activities, Clubs and Societies

Across the 3Bs clubs and societies welcome members from across the 3Bs. With different sized community facilities across the 3Bs groups typically select from the choice of 3B venues able to accommodate their membership. Currently groups operating across the 3Bs and drawing members from across the villages include the following:

- Toddler Groups in Buckland and Brockham meet weekly with many families attending both groups;
- Brownies and Rainbows meet in Buckland and have established links with the two Guide units in Brockham. There is an established Scout group in Brockham;
- Brockham Young Farmers meet in Betchworth;

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU

Phone: 01737 448023

email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

- The Girls Alive Network meets in Brockham and WI groups meet in Brockham and Pebblecombe;
- Singing for Fun meets in Buckland and the Buckland and Betchworth Choral Society meets in Betchworth;
- The Horticultural Society meets in Brockham;
- The Fine Arts Society meets in Betchworth;
- Local Cricket teams play in Brockham and Buckland and there is a Bowls Club based in Brockham;
- A broad range of exercise and wellness classes including Pilates, Zumba, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Yoga and Nordic Walking are offered across the 3Bs as are activities arranged by special interest groups that include art and bridge;
- The Surrey Hills Adventure Company operates a range of water based and woodcraft activities at Buckland Park Lake; and
- The Big Field at Brockham provides a venue for a range of sporting activities including rugby, football and occasional cross-country events and Brockham Recreation Ground hosts an external gym that is used by residents from across the 3Bs.

Shared issues and concerns

Outcome of the LGBCE Review

The 3Bs Parish Councils work together on common issues and concerns, sharing knowledge, learning and experience to improve our collective efficiency and effectiveness. Each of the three part-time clerks works closely within their communities, liaises openly and operates with a proactive approach to the benefit of their parish councils and the community of the 3Bs.

Buckland's only neighbouring parish is currently Betchworth. As Buckland is not claiming to have sufficient insight into the strength and characteristics of other communities across Mole Valley to be able to express a credible proposal for three member wards across the district; Buckland does not believe the strong and effective 3Bs community should be undermined by any suggestion on the part of other communities seeking to achieve a target electorate to split Brockham from Betchworth and Buckland.

Buckland recognises that until Brockham Parish Council being established in the 1930s the whole of Brockham was within Betchworth parish. Some 85 years later it is easy for local residents to see how community boundaries are actually less well defined than might appear on a map. By way of example, whilst Poland Meadows is currently being constructed on land that is in Betchworth parish, its close proximity to Brockham village centre would at the very least create electoral confusion if the two parishes were not to remain in the same district ward. A similar scenario can reasonably be applied to people who live in Brockham Park and on Roothill Lane.

Impact of Traffic on our local roads

National Highways recently instigated a change in the official M25 diversion route to route traffic along the A25 Reigate Road through the 3Bs whenever traffic is diverted from the J8-J9 section of the M25. With the majority of closures operating overnight the traffic is predominantly heavy goods vehicles and residents living alongside Reigate Road are experiencing a lack of sleep whenever this occurs.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU
Phone: 01737 448023 email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

When traffic along the motorway network is busy drivers routinely divert onto the National Road Network. The routes through the 3Bs are adversely impacted by traffic travelling along the A25 Reigate Road and by the additional traffic that heads south into the 3Bs via the B2032 Pebblehill Road. Drivers regularly routing through the 3Bs increasingly opt to use the smaller rural lanes to divert around congestion that builds in Dorking and Reigate/Redhill.

Aviation

With the majority of residents in the 3Bs living north of the Gatwick controlled airspace and flight paths and south of the London controlled airspace, much of the 3Bs experience:

- low level overflying by often noisy small aircraft and helicopters typically routing east/west i.e. either heading west to the south of Reigate before heading north to London or south/west to other destinations or the reverse;
- low level overflying of flight departures from Heathrow, instructed to remain at low level until clear of the airspace reserved for the Ockham stacks serving Heathrow;
- high level circulating aircraft within the Ockham stack awaiting clearance to continue to Heathrow.

Climate Change and Environmental

Across the 3Bs initiatives are underway to raise awareness of and help combat climate change:

- Greener Buckland, Re-Betchworth and the Brockham Environmental Working Group are at the forefront of the 3Bs drive and the close liaison evident between the volunteers ensures residents across the 3Bs are able to benefit from a range of complementary activities and initiatives;
- Brockham Parish Council supported by the Brockham Emergency Response Team (BERT) has invested considerable time and effort to reduce the risk of a repeat of the disruption caused by flooding in 2013. Residents from across the 3Bs volunteer for BERT and the work they undertake to help safeguard homes crosses parish boundaries.
- 3Bs residents have observed the increasingly rapid reappearance of bournes after heavy rainfall and the three parish councils are working together with the aim of implementing measures to slow the flow of water from tributaries of the Mole, between the North Downs and Brockham.
- It is broadly recognised that the local sewerage systems are under pressure and a joint initiative across the 3Bs to minimise the volume of surface water drainage entering the foul water network is also underway.
- Terracycle recycling schemes operate across the 3Bs with collection points located at Brockham Village Hall and Betchworth Church. Residents typically combine depositing items for recycling with travelling between the villages for another reason. The success of the recycling provides further evidence of the high level of interconnectivity.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU
Phone: 01737 448023 email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Potential synergies for a 3Bs plus Boxhill and Headley Ward

Shared characteristics

Boxhill and Headley already have strong community ties which arguably mirror those existing between the 3Bs and, working collectively, the 3Bs have identified the following shared characteristics as offering the potential for closer community links to be established if a three-member ward were to be created:

Development across much of the 3Bs will impact the views from sections of Boxhill and similarly any development along the ridge will be in full view of much of the 3Bs

Headley is impacted when traffic diverted from the M25 opts to follow routes between Leatherhead and the B2032 Pebblehill Road.

Boxhill and Headley are similarly, if not more impacted, by the overflying experienced across much of the 3Bs. .

There is the potential for Brockham to benefit from knowledge Boxhill and Headley have built up over years of working with the National Trust which could prove helpful given there is National Trust Land in Brockham.

As buses do appear to be routed between Dorking and Boxhill via Pebblehill Road there should be the potential to jointly promote a stop at Betchworth Railway station and perhaps elsewhere in the 3Bs to the benefit of all residents across a larger ward.

With the Surrey Hills AONB seen by many as overly focused upon West Surrey Buckland believes there is the potential for a larger ward comprising the 3Bs, Boxhill and Headley to work together to help deliver change. This idea comes from considering the following shared land designations:

- The northern boundaries of the 3Bs run along the brow of the North Downs with Betchworth and Brockham sharing a parish boundary with Boxhill.
- The current wards of the 3Bs and Boxhill and Headley include land designated part of the Internationally recognised Mole Valley Gap to Reigate Hill Escarpment Special Area of Conservation which has a UK SSSI designation.
- 3Bs land to the north of the North Downs Railway and Betchworth Park (in Brockham) fall within the Surrey Hills AONB as does Boxhill and parts of Headley. This currently amounts to just under half of Buckland and Headley, about 35% Brockham Parish and a lesser proportion of Betchworth
- Natural England recently commenced a review of the Surrey Hills AONB boundaries and there is a reasonable expectation that proposals for AONB boundary extensions will include a sizeable proportion of 3Bs; including Buckland Park Lake and the land currently designated AGLV (that is located to the north of the A25 and south of the North Downs Railway).

END

Sheena Boyce, Clerk

Hill View, Old Road, Buckland, Betchworth, Surrey, RH3 7DU
Phone: 01737 448023 email: parishcouncil@bucklandsurrey.net