

County Councillor Hazel Watson

Dorking Hills Division

30 April 2023

Review Officer (Surrey)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
PO Box 133
Blyth NE24 9PE

Dear Sir

Surrey County Council:
Proposals for a New Divisional Configuration for the Mole Valley District in the County of Surrey

I have represented the Dorking Hills, and its predecessor Dorking North, County Division for the last 30 years. Over this time, and through two previous Boundary Commission Reviews, a division which stretched east – west across the centre of Mole Valley and made some geographic sense has had its boundaries changed into a division that covers an area from just inside the M25 at Headley to the Sussex Border at Walliswood, where the geographic centre of the division is no longer within the division, and which has absolutely no geographic cohesion and no community links between its north eastern and south western villages.

The demographic changes in Mole Valley that the Boundary Commission now must consider in developing new county divisions mean that there will have to be further significant changes to the divisional boundary to the north of the Dorking Hills division with consequential changes to the south of the division to maintain electoral equality throughout the county divisions within the Mole Valley District. I, therefore, strongly suggest that now is the time to seriously look at a complete remodeling of the three county divisions in the south of Mole Valley rather than simply tinkering with the divisional boundaries.

It is my understanding that the average number of voters per division across the County is 11,911 electors, so we need to aim for divisions plus / minus 10% of this number ie between 10,720 and 13,102.

My proposal that does this is set out below.

Ashtead

It is recognised that Ashtead is a separate community separated from the rest of the District by the hard boundary of the M25. The Boundary Commission recognises this and in the recent Mole Valley Electoral Review a specific exception was permitted for oversized Ashtead wards so that no ward boundary crossed the M25. For this Review, the Ashtead electorate is 12,250 so well within the acceptable voter number range and thus this division sorts itself as a single division with clear “hard” boundaries.

Polling District		2028 Electorate
NA	Ashtead Common No.1	1,407
NB	Ashtead Common No.2	2,037
PA	Ashtead Village No.1	1,934
PB	Ashtead Village No.2	1,547
PC	Ashtead Village No.3	1,593
RA	Ashtead Park No.1	2,078
RB	Ashtead Park No.2	1,654
		12,250

Leatherhead / Bookham/ Fetcham

The Leatherhead / Bookham / Fetcham area comprises the remainder of the old Leatherhead UDC area that is incorporated into Mole Valley. It is generally built up and urban in sharp contrast to the market town of Dorking and the surrounding rural villages, most of which are parished.

This area was historically two divisions. At the last County Division Boundary Review, the Givons Grove and Tyrrells Wood areas of Leatherhead South were moved into a southern Mole Valley division to bring electoral numbers into closer parity. The demographic movements since the last County Division Boundary Review have continued and a further part of this northern area will need to be moved into a southern division to seek to achieve electoral parity in this Boundary Review.

Considering this area, the western and northern boundaries are the District Boundary which cannot be crossed and the eastern boundary is the Ashtead division with the hard boundary of the M25. The majority of the southern boundary is the Parish of Wotton, with Wotton presenting a special problem in relation to electoral boundaries as it has a very low population most of which is concentrated in the centre of the parish around the A25. This results in the Parish not being warded as it is not possible to create Parish wards with each Parish ward having over 100 electors. Furthermore, the Parish of Wotton extends to Forest Green [Gosterwood Manor is in the Parish] in the deep south of the District and there are no communication links between the Parish and the northern part of Mole Valley. As a result, the only area where significant numbers of electors can be moved into a southern electoral division is in the South Leatherhead area.

This means that the Review needs to start in the west of the area and the new Bookham based County Division needs to comprise the two new Bookham District Council wards plus additional electors from West Fetcham (a division similar to the current Bookham and Fetcham West division but with the boundary being redrawn to accommodate the correct electoral numbers).

The remaining part of this area is too large to accommodate a single County division with the result that approximately a further 1,500 voters (ie in addition to those Leatherhead South voters moved into the Dorking Hills division at the last Boundary Review) from Leatherhead South will have to be moved into a southern Mole Valley county division. I would have suggested that the boundary across South Leatherhead be drawn along Vicarage Lane / Church Road / Highlands Road / Headley Road) but have extended this to divert along the path between 57 and 59 Highlands Road out to the A24 via the southern end of Fortyfoot Road to bring the whole of the southern part of Highlands Road and Headley Road as well as Beech Holt and Tanners Dean into a southern ward - the residents south of this line are closely linked with the Leatherhead South Polling Districts of Givons Grove and Tyrrells Wood which are already included in a southern Mole Valley county division and as this will mean better electoral equality is achieved. This suggestion is consistent with the Boundary

Commission's view at the last County Division Boundary Review which recognised that this was the most appropriate area to move south as it does share similar issues with the villages of Headley and Mickleham.

This area would have 26,247 electors as shown in the table below which would be split into the two divisions, as noted above, albeit I have not defined the boundary between the two divisions. This is very marginally outside the 10% variance for two divisions and if this was an issue then the rural part of Bookham South [Polesden Lacey and area around Phoenix Farm in Chapel Lane] could also be moved south into my Villages West proposed division with the divisional boundary drawn around the built up area of the southern edge of Bookham but this would be at the expense of community cohesion in Bookham.

Polling District		2028 Electorate
SA	Bookham North No.1	1,998
SB	Bookham North No.2	1,711
SC	Bookham North No.3	1,653
TA	Bookham South No.1	1,396
TB	Bookham South No.2	1,918
TC	Bookham South No.3	1,553
UA	Fetcham West No.1	1,392
UB	Fetcham West No.2	1,660
UC	Fetcham West No.3	428
VA	Fetcham East No.1	1,609
VB	Fetcham East No.2	1,727
WA	Leatherhead North No.1	1,668
WB	Leatherhead North No.2	2,892
WC	Leatherhead North No.3	2,476
XA	Leatherhead South No.1	575
XB	Leatherhead South No.2	1,591
		26,247

Dorking and the Villages

The area in the centre of Mole Valley is sparsely populated and it makes no sense in community terms having Headley (which includes a small part within the M25) in the far north west of this area in the same county division as Walliswood by the Sussex border in a division in the shape of an arc.

It also does not make sense for the town of Dorking to be artificially split between two divisions or for part of Dorking to be linked with part of Leatherhead.

Furthermore, it makes a better community fit to link the new Holmwoods and Beare Green ward with other village areas, and not with part of the town as the issues faced by the villages and the town are different.

I would thus suggest a Dorking Town division, an Eastern Villages division which would pick up the rural piece of Leatherhead South noted above that would be based upon the large village of Brockham, and a Southern / Western Villages division based upon the villages of Holmwoods, Beare Green, and Westcott.

On the electoral numbers provided [and tabulated into the polling districts] this would be:

- Dorking Town – 13,111 voters, less a small number that will be moved to villages wards to align with the new District Council ward boundaries and which will bring the division back within the 10% electoral variance: Dorking North, Dorking South, Goodwyns and Pixham (taking account of very slight differences on the western, northern and eastern edges of the area compared with the old polling district designations below).

Polling District		2028 Electorate
AA	Dorking North No.1	1,850
AB	Dorking North No.2	1,925
BA	Dorking South No.1	2,065
BB	Dorking South No.2	2,370
BC	Dorking South No.3	2,106
DA	(No.1) Goodwyns	1,570
FC	(No.3) Pixham	1,225
		13,111

- Eastern Villages (including part of Leatherhead South) – 12,791 voters : Leatherhead South (South of Vicarage Lane / Church Road / Highlands Road / Fortyfoot Road), Givons Grove, Tyrrells Wood, Westhumble, Mickleham, Headley, Box Hill, Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Newdigate, Leigh, Charlwood, Hookwood.

FA	(No.1) Mickleham	360
FB	(No.2) Westhumble	586
GA	(No.1) Box Hill	1,244
GB	(No.2) Headley	627
HA	(No.1) Brockham	2,500
HB	(No.2) Betchworth	954
HC	(No.3) Buckland	504
JB	(No.2) Newdigate	1,539
JC	(No.3) Leigh	817
KA	(No.1) Charlwood	1,169
KB	(No.2) Hookwood	835
XA	Leatherhead South No.1	1,096
XB	Leatherhead South No.2	167
XC	Leatherhead South No.3	121
XD	Leatherhead South No.4	272
		12,791

- Southern and Western Villages – 11,616 voters : North Holmwood, Chart Downs, Westcott, South Holmwood, Capel Parish (which includes Beare Green and Coldharbour), Ockley, Abinger Parish, Wotton, and Coldharbour.

CA	Westcott No.1			1,049
CB	Westcott No.2			915
DB	(No.2) Chart Downs			678
DC	(No.3) Holmwood Park & North Holmwood			2,090
DD	(No.4) South Holmwood			771
E	Beare Green			1,719
JA	(No.1) Capel			1,369
LA	(No.1) Abinger (South)			267
LB	(No.2) Abinger (South)			578
LC	(No.3) Ockley			774
MA	(No.1) Abinger Hammer			231
MB	(No.2) Abinger Common			379
MC	(No.3) Abinger (North)			125
MD	(No.4) Coldharbour			192
ME	(No.5) Ranmore			90
MF	(No.6) Wotton			303
MG	(No.7) Leith Hill			86
				11,616

In assessing this:

Dorking: Dorking is an historic market town and as it has the number of residents for a single division it should not be subject to an artificial division with a boundary through the town. The artificial nature of this division through the town is shown as the division between the Dorking North and Dorking South District Council wards was High Street – West Street and this has become High Street – South Street with the recently approved new District Council wards. The town also has clearly defined boundaries that are reflected in the two new District Council wards that cover the town and would benefit from one clear voice speaking for it at County Hall.

This leaves the two village wards.

The population across Ranmore Common is very sparse and there are no real road links and no community links across this area. This makes for a clear divisional boundary between the east and the west north of Dorking with Wotton Parish [which cannot be warded – see above] in the west and the villages of Westhumble / Mickleham [FB and FA Polling Districts] in the east. Mickleham and Headley also link with the Givons Grove and Tyrrells Wood part of South Leatherhead.

In the south there is a clear boundary east of Holmwoods and Beare Green and then further south between the Parishes of Capel and Newdigate. This will result in all the historic parishes being in a single county division with, in particular, the villages of Capel, Beare Green and Coldharbour which are all within the area covered by Capel Parish Council being in the same county division. Furthermore, the two larger unparished villages close to Dorking – Westcott and North Holmwood – which have similar issues as a result of their close geography to Dorking being in the same division.





I attach a map of the proposal which shows the geographic cohesion behind the proposals for ease of reference.

I trust that these suggestions will assist in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hazel Watson', written in a cursive style.

Hazel Watson
County Councillor for the Dorking Hills

	Parishes
	Wards
	Electoral Divisions (various colours)
	Polling Districts

