

Surrey

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Epsom and Ewell Constituency Labour Party (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Dear Local Government Boundary Commission for England,

It is with pleasure that we attach the submission of Epsom and Ewell Constituency Labour Party for the current boundary review into the Surrey County Council Election Division Boundaries. This time with attachments!

We have taken considerable time to prepare this document and we trust that you find it a useful contribution.

Our submission covers the boundaries in the borough of Epsom and Ewell and we believe helps solve, amongst other things, some issues posed by the:

- creation of a new ward in the area: Horton ward and the subsequent changes to polling districts plus the boundaries of Court, Ruxley and Stamford wards
- the densification of the central area of Epsom to meet housing needs leading to considerable expected population growth

We would be most grateful if you could give our submission appropriate consideration.

Attached Documents:

- Epsom and Ewell Labour Surrey County Boundary Submission - Final.docx

- Epsom and Ewell Labour Surrey County Boundary Submission - Final.pdf

**Epsom and Ewell Labour Party Submission to
the Local Government Boundary Commission
for England (LGBCE)**

**New Electoral Arrangements for Surrey County
Council**

Stage One Consultation

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Introduction

Epsom and Ewell Labour Party is making the following submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of new Electoral arrangements for Surrey County Council. We have members in all parts of the borough up for review by the LGBCE and thus have deep roots in and a strong knowledge of all the local communities that make up the Borough of Epsom and Ewell.

We welcome the stage one consultation and the Labour Party submission recognises this is a two-stage process. We will be using this submission to engage with our substantial membership and with the community once we have seen the LGBCE's initial proposals for the Stage Two consultation. Thus our own thinking on this may change itself in the light of receiving the LGBCE's draft recommendations.

Mark Todd – Chair Epsom and Ewell Labour Party

Councillor Kate Chinn – Leader Epsom and Ewell Labour Councillors

LGBCE 2023/24 Review of Surrey

The previous boundaries for Surrey County Council were agreed in 2010.

The reviews have the following benefits:

- Fitting in with any changes to governance model operated by the Council
- Improving electoral equality after a period of time where home construction and family size in parts of the County may change
- Ensuring the electoral division reflect any changes to community identity

The LGBCE on their website state “*We are carrying out an electoral review of Surrey because it has been a long time since the last review and the Council has asked us to carry out a review.*”

They state their timetable is:

- **28 February 2023** - We decide how many councillors there should be
- **28 February - 8 May 2023** - We carry out an initial public consultation on communities
- **1 August - 9 October 2023** - We carry out a public consultation on our proposals
- **9 January 2024** - We publish our recommendations
- **TBD** - We ask Parliament to approve our recommendations
- **2025** - New arrangements apply to local elections

Epsom and Ewell Stage One Proposals – A Summary

The Labour Party in Epsom and Ewell are making the following set of initial proposals as a contribution to early discussions as to division boundaries. We recognise this is a two-stage process and that the LGBCE will have to balance out all the submissions it receives to make a draft set of proposals. Our paper also enables us to engage further with our members and other local people before we set out our own final proposals in the light of what we see as the outcome to the first stage of the consultation.

In summary our initial proposals for Epsom and Ewell are for 5 County Councillors:

- A 1 member **Epsom Common and Downs Division** comprising Woodcote & Langley Vale, College and Stamford wards
- A 1 member **Epsom Town Division** (or **Epsom Central Division**) comprising Town Ward and Court Wards
- A 1 member **Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington Division** comprising Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington borough wards.
- A 1 member **Ewell Division** comprising Nonsuch, Ewell Village and Stoneleigh wards
- A 1 member **West Ewell and Horton Division** comprising Ruxley, West Ewell and Horton wards.

Below we set out the context and justification for these proposals.

We recognise this stage is a good one to explore perceptions of local communities in the borough and our proposals seek to explore this.

Methodology and Context

Our methodology follows the primary requirements of the LGBCE:

- Fitting in with any changes to governance model operated by the Council – **there does not seem to be any significant proposed change at this stage. We are aware ongoing discussions continue between the County and the Districts on the structure of local government in the County but do not believe this will be concluded before this review completes.**
- Improving electoral equality after a period of time where home construction and family size in parts of the borough may change – **this is addressed below.**
- Ensuring the electoral divisions reflect any changes to community identity – **this is addressed below.**

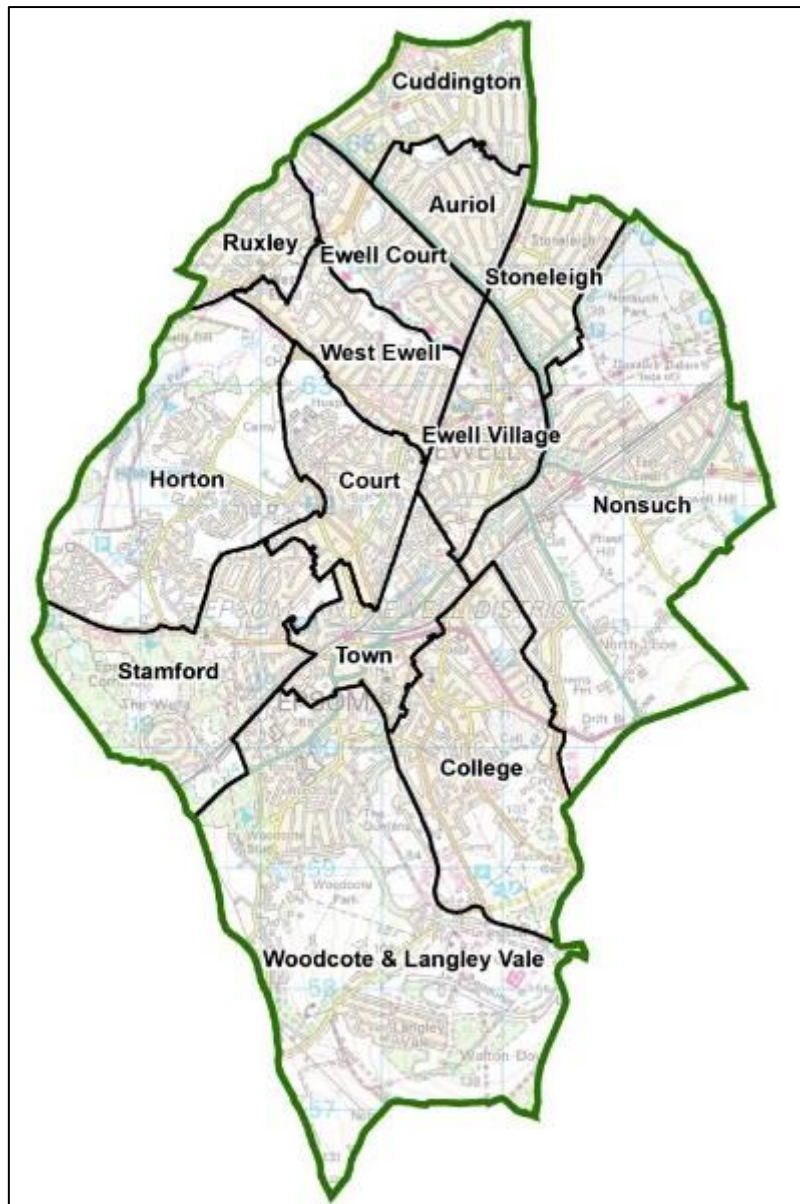
Unlike borough reviews, which have the granularity to enable transfers of very small numbers of electors we recognise County reviews have to build on the existing structure of wards and polling districts.

Electoral Size

The LGBCE said it had reviewed Councillor numbers in February and yet the posters and other general documentation does not make this clear. However the calculation spreadsheet in the top right-hand corner does state the number is 81 – the same as before, so we are working to that assumption. As a result it is clear Epsom and Ewell should have 5 County Councillors as before.

For the changes we propose the number of electors per councillor is calculated using the figures provided by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the proposed council size of 8 members. For 2022, the Surrey electorate is calculated at 876,454 giving an average electorate per councillor of 10,820. For 2029, the Commission's projection (we assume based on data supplied by the Council) has an electorate of 964,825, giving an average electorate per councillor of 11,911. To calculate the variances for each division, we have compared the number of electors per councillor we propose for each ward with the above per-councillor figures and expressed the difference as a percentage.

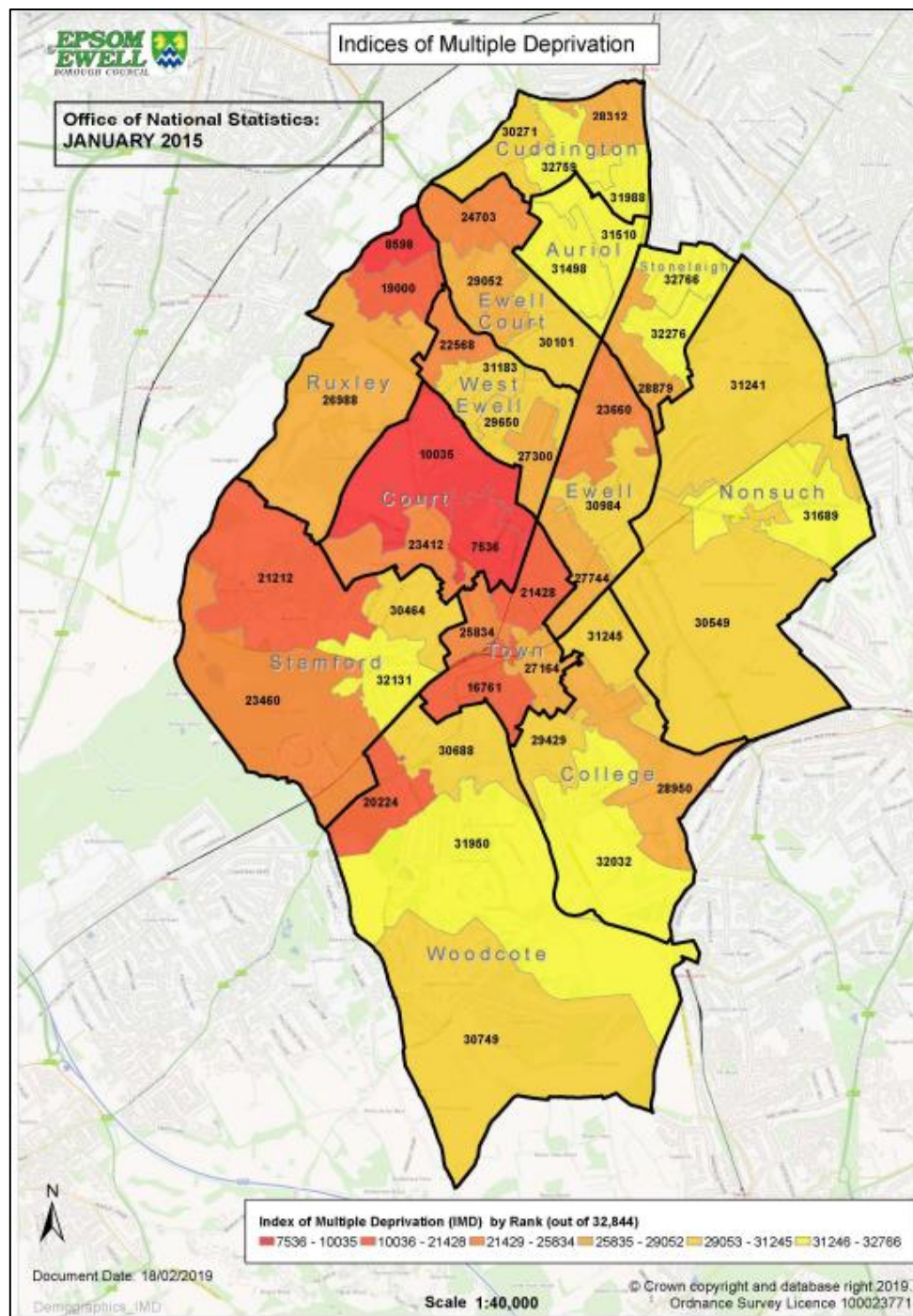
A problem we have faced in Epsom and Ewell is the LGBCE data is based on old borough ward boundaries and new boundaries came in during 2023. A map of these is below:



Thus we have used these as the building blocks of our submission rather than the out of date wards and Polling Districts provided by LGBCE.

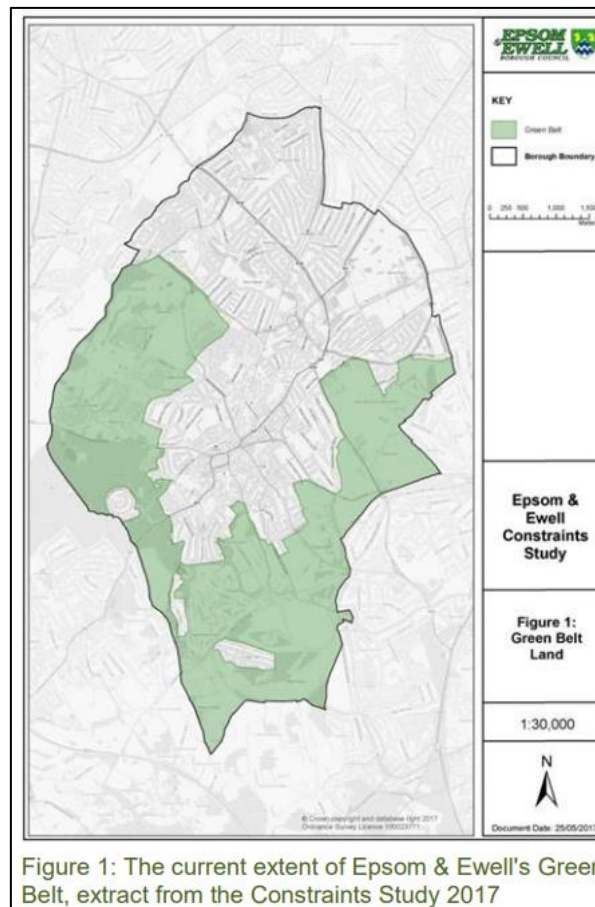
In the past Epsom County Divisions have been characterised by being made up of some borough wards split by Polling District. Up until the 1970's Epsom and Ewell had 10 even sized wards and these were simply paired to generate 5 County seats. In recent years it has had 13 mainly 3 member wards and this led to split polling districts in County Divisions. It has now moved to 14 wards with a wider mix of 2 or 3 members and this provides a wider range of ward-based building blocks for County Divisions.

This past splitting has particularly impacted on Court Ward and Town Ward. Both these wards have had much planning development as well as have some of the highest levels of deprivation so their needs may not be served well by the current boundaries.



Map of Deprivation in Epsom and Ewell

At the same time the borough also has important Commons and Downs comprising its Green Belt which could be better represented on the County Council.



Map of Epsom and Ewell Commons and Downs comprising its Green Belt

We have used road level electorate figures derived from the electoral register. From this, it is then possible to count the electors in any area of the borough proposed to be used for a new division.

For 2022 electorate counts, the raw dataset obtained as above was then adjusted so that the numbers of electors allocated to each existing polling district matching the figures from the LGBCE

For 2029 electorate counts, no road-level projections were available, so the polling-district-level information from the LGBCE figures referred to above was used to create postcode-level projections for 2024. This was done by scaling the number of local government electors in each postcode by the factor implied by the LGBCE population change for the existing polling district to which it was allocated, so that the total for the polling district as a whole matched the projections for 2029 from the LGBCE.

Community Identity

Epsom and Ewell is a combination of two historic Surrey places the Market Town of Epsom and the Surrey spring-line village of Ewell.

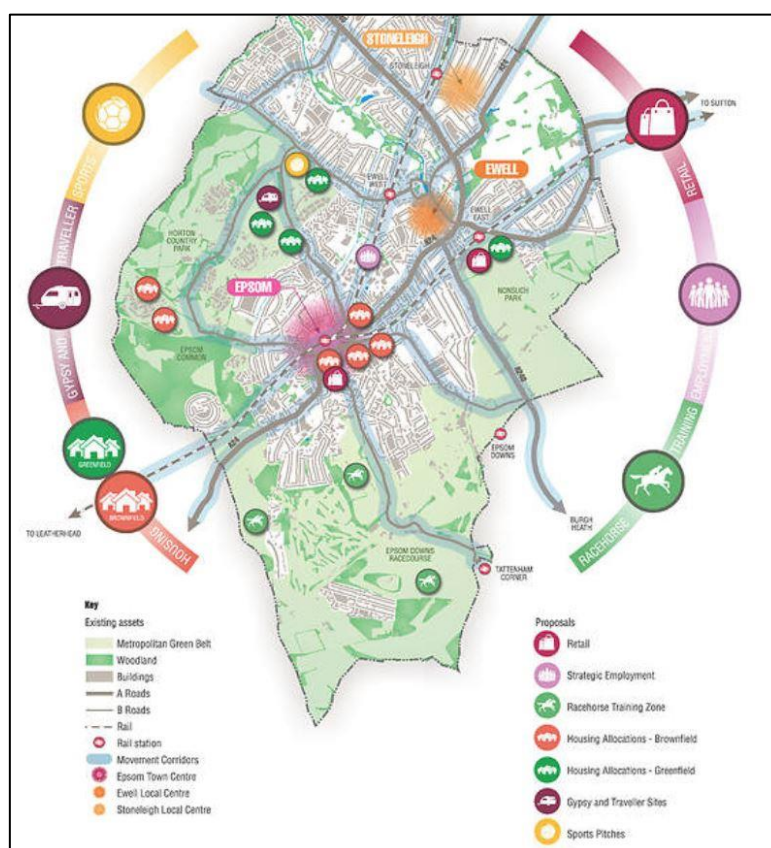
In the north of the borough it is strongly connected with the London conurbation with Worcester Park shared between Epsom & Ewell, Kingston and Sutton.

It has a major retail centre at Epsom reflecting its market town history and two local centres at Ewell and Stoneleigh.

The western part of the borough has important Common land which is part of its Green Belt.

The southern part of the borough with its racecourse and the downs also has a long equestrian history and is mainly Green Belt.

At the same time the borough is also changing due to intensification of urban development in the Epsom Town Centre as well as the redevelopment of the “Epsom Cluster” of long-stay mental health hospitals in the early 2000s.



Map: Local Plan – Key areas of the borough

In this submission we will look at both the Epsom and Ewell areas separately.

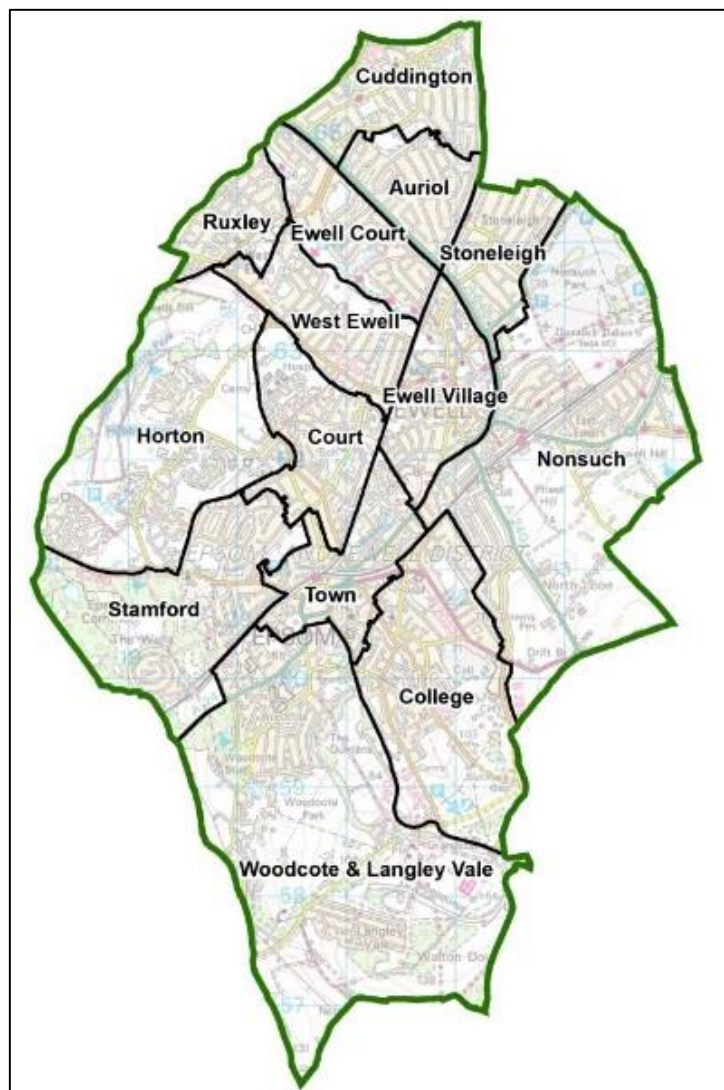
Types of Boundaries

We support where possible sensible use of clearly definable boundaries such as rail lines, major roads, and watercourses. Some of these are seen as quite strong boundaries such as:

- **Hogsmill River**
- **Worcester Park to Epsom Railway line**

The **A240/A24** is seen as a strong boundary at borough ward level but has not been used for County Boundaries.

Compared to places like Enfield which is divided in two directions by two major road systems, Epsom's defined boundaries are not quite as firm. This should aid the LGBCE with being able to connect various borough wards together.



Map of borough showing key identifiable features

In creating County Divisions the assumption is the new borough wards recently created by the LGBCE have good boundaries so the issue with this review is where do those wards connect together. This is different to using Polling District boundaries where the driver is distance of access to the polling station and they might not be as good boundaries to clearly define a ward.

Population Change

It is clear from the data supplied by the LGBCE based on Council estimates that a number of areas of the borough are not fully achieving electoral equality.

Council planning policy has focused on intensification of town centres and they are to the north and west of it where the “Epsom Cluster” of hospitals was sited.

In addition, from GLA planning assumptions ¹the cost of housing in central London is both driving Londoners to move to the ring of towns around the capital, plus we have seen an increase in population in nearby London suburbs which overlap with this borough.

This was shown for example in the northern suburban London borough of Enfield by the LGBCE electoral forecasting tool being 8,000 voters lower than the Council's own forecast. The latter showed that the Borough's electorate could be close to 30,000 larger by 2024.

As new communities settle and develop, electoral registration is also likely to increase so it is possible numbers may well be under-estimated.

We have also examined the number of potential future housing developments in the borough and we believe the amount of building that may occur in the next decade may mean estimates become out of date quickly too.

Size of Wards

As all current County Divisions are single member and recent LGBCE reviews have shown an increased support for these at borough as well as County level, we assume from the electorate and governance numbers that the preference of the LGBCE will be for 5 single member divisions for the borough.

¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan>

Epsom and Ewell Stage One Initial Proposals for Defined Areas of the Borough

As stated earlier we are using Epsom and Ewell as the two main areas to look at.

The material in this section is a text narrative setting out what we propose and its justification with a summary of the suggested divisions listed at the end of each defined community. The numbers for this, plus maps, are attached as appendices.

Epsom

For Epsom we propose two divisions that reflect the two different aspects of the area we describe above.

We would argue there needs to be a County Division that represents the Commons and Downs of Epsom's Green Belt and another that reflects its rapidly changing urban core

We would therefore suggest:

- A 1 member **Epsom Common and Downs Division** comprising Woodcote & Langley Vale, College and Stamford wards.
- A 1 member **Epsom Town Division** (or **Epsom Central Division**) comprising Town Ward and Court Ward.

Ewell

The Ward combinations have stood the test of time and seem sensible to retain.

The one outstanding issue is that of Horton ward as it is on land traditionally associated with Epsom. However it has been connected with the Ruxley part of West Ewell at both borough and County level for more than a decade and Horton Lane (B290) is the road that connects all of Horton ward together and that is much better connected with the West Ewell road network at Chessington Road (B2200/B284) than it is to Epsom. Many people who live in the ward commute from West Ewell rather than Epsom on cost / zone / parking grounds too. At the same time the population of the ward is very new and does not automatically have a community identity with Epsom and indeed Horton may be developing its own separate "village" identity as it was mainly developed together over a 10-15 year period.

We would therefore suggest:

- A 1 member **Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington Division** comprising Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington borough wards.
- A 1 member **Ewell Division** comprising Nonsuch, Ewell Village and Stoneleigh wards
- A 1 member **West Ewell and Horton Division** comprising Ruxley, West Ewell and Horton wards.

Our proposal or a minimum change option

In developing this proposal we did look at what might be defined as a minimum change option. This would comprise the following combination of borough wards:

Epsom Town and Downs

- Woodcote and Langley Vale
- College
- Southern polling district of Town Ward

Epsom West

- Northern two Polling Districts of Town Ward
- Court
- Stamford

Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

- Cuddington
- Auriol
- Ewell Court

Ewell

- Nonsuch
- Ewell Village
- Stoneleigh

West Ewell and Horton

- Ruxley
- West Ewell
- Horton

This essentially involves moving the large Court Ward polling district into Epsom West and giving West Ewell all of the new Horton ward (which in any case is one Polling District only) which improves electoral equality and reduces electoral variance. It also reduces the number of split borough wards from 2 to 1 and also brings together more of the core developmental area of Epsom into one ward thus meeting part of the approach we suggest above.

However our preference is to change to the one we have submitted because it did not split Town ward which is going through the most developmental change compared to other borough wards

Conclusion

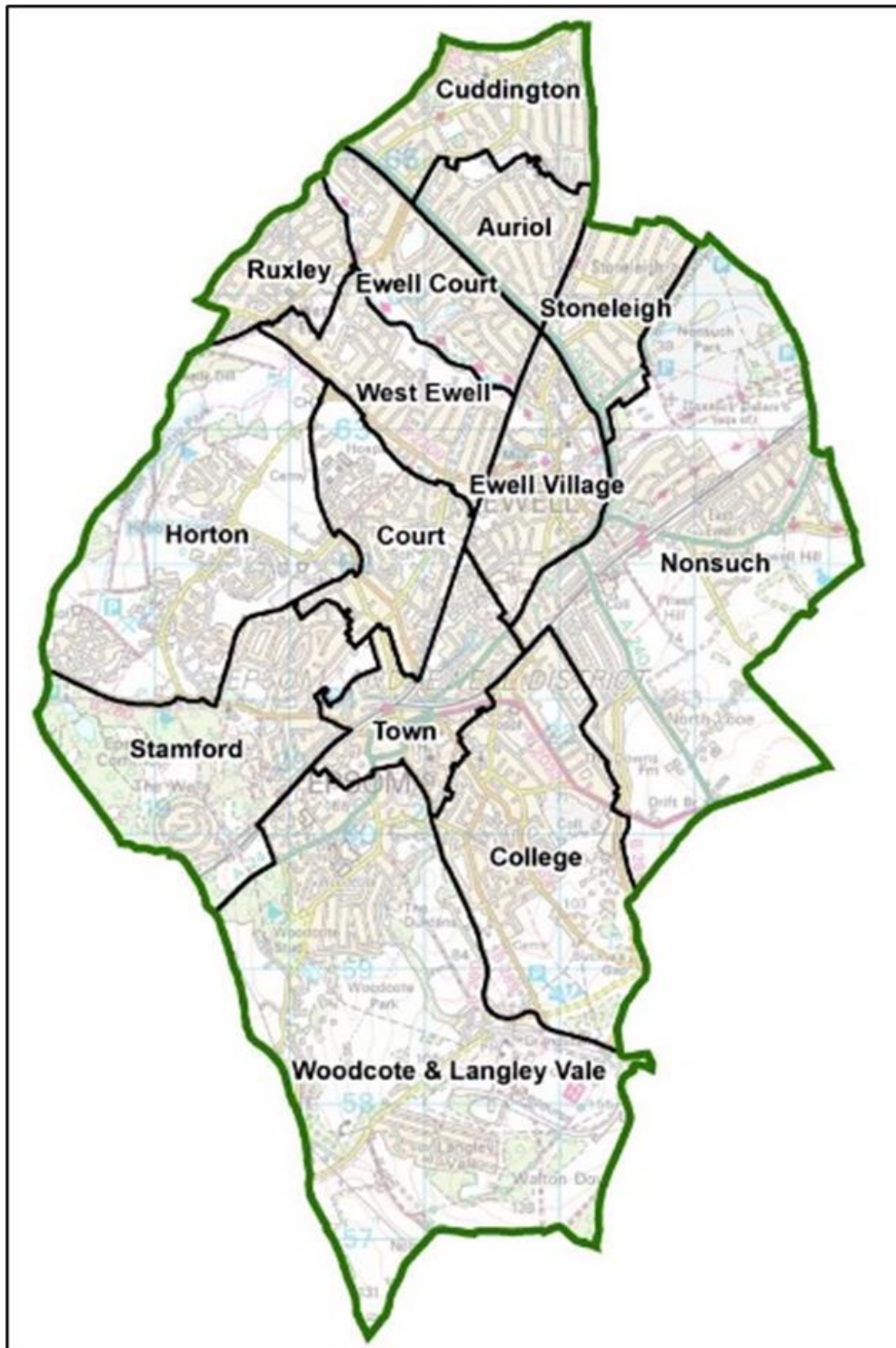
Epsom and Ewell Labour Party welcomes this consultation.

We believe what we set out reflects the modern realities of Epsom and Ewell and thus enables its elected representatives to play a more effective role in the running of the County Council.

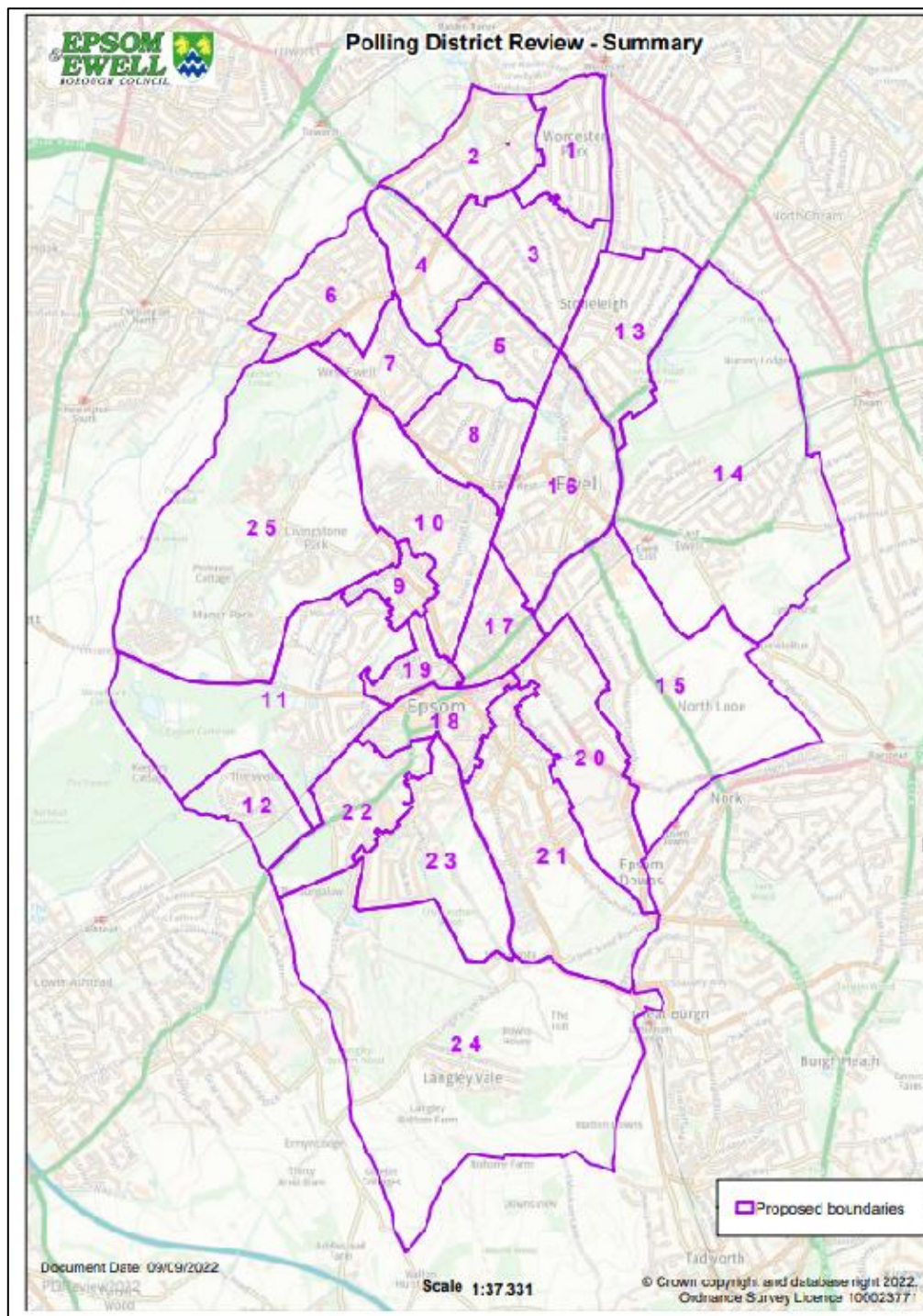
We look forward to engaging with the LGBCE further at the draft recommendation stage.

Appendix 1 – Maps of Wards and Polling Districts used for this submission

Epsom and Ewell Borough Electoral Wards



Epsom and Ewell Borough Polling Districts



Appendix 2 – Proposed List of Divisions

Important Note: Variances are expressed as part of the Surrey County average numbers as that will be the initial overview of the numbers. However the variances are far smaller between the average figure for the 5 Divisions themselves (this is because the Epsom and Ewell has a higher average than Surrey as a whole) and assuming LGBCE are not going to be crossing borough boundaries with their proposed Divisions these figures would, if considered on a borough by borough context, be normally found very acceptable.

Because of the constraints of using Boroughs, Wards and Polling Districts as building blocks for County Divisions compared to being able to build up from road level for borough ward reviews, we assume there will be broader variances in any case.

			2022			2029		
	Ward	Cllrs	Electors	Elector/Cllrs	Variance	Electors	Electors/Cllrs	Variance
1	Epsom Commons & Downs	1	13,059	13,059	+21%	13,992	13,992	+17%
2	Epsom Town	1	9,951	9,951	-8%	12,008	12,008	+1%
3	Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington	1	11,834	11,834	+9%	12,827	12,827	+8%
4	Ewell	1	12,178	12,178	+12%	12,586	12,586	+6%
5	West Ewell & Horton	1	11,854	11,854	+9%	12,986	12,986	+9%
	Totals	5	58,876			64,399		
	Borough Averages			11,775			12,880	

Key Statistics	2022	2029
Average electors per councillor across Surrey	10,820	11,911
Maximum variance	+21%	+17%
Average Variance	+9%	+8%
Number of wards with variance $\geq 20\%$	0	0
Number of wards with variance $\geq 10\%$	2	1
Number of wards with variance $\geq 5\%$	5	4