

# Surrey

## Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** (District or county councillor)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** The division boundaries within the Guildford borough area

### GUILDFORD EAST

I agree with the proposal for the boundaries of the Guildford East division. The county boundary should, as far as possible, align with borough wards and reflect local communities. Contrary to the argument put forwards by the county councillor for Guildford South East, the Abbotswood area is demographically very similar to, and has strong links to, the rest of Burpham. The Burpham Neighbourhood Forum, which Cllr Davidson references, has just been re-designated by the borough council, including an expansion of its boundaries to align with the new borough council Burpham ward. This was done specifically after consultation with residents associations in the Abbotswood area, who decided that they wished to become part of the area covered by the Burpham Neighbourhood Forum and the Burpham Neighbourhood Plan (which is now about to be updated to include the Abbotswood area).

A cursory look at geography will also show that, while the Abbotswood area is somewhat distinct from the rest of Burpham, it is even more distinct and separate from the rest of the town centre areas, being separated from the town centre by Stoke park and by the leisure centre, and only linked to the town centre communities by a thin ribbon of housing along one edge of Stoke park. The Abbotswood area is a distinctly suburban area, on the outskirts of the town, much like the rest of Burpham, rather than part of the urban centre. As such it makes more sense to place it in Guildford East and to align with borough boundaries. If Abbotswood were not to be placed in Guildford East then the only alternative would be to move the Boxgrove area into Guildford East instead due to that area's strong links with the rest of Merrow, and especially with the Merrow Woods area. In an ideal world the county division would align completely with the borough ward boundaries, but since that's not possible due to the need for electoral equality, the commission should seek to align the Guildford East boundaries with the borough ward boundaries as far as possible.

## GUILDFORD SOUTH EAST AND GUILDFORD SOUTH WEST

I agree with the proposals for the boundaries of the Guildford South East and Guildford South West divisions. Whilst they somewhat partition the Stoke ward, they at least do so with regards to natural community boundaries. York Road and Stoke Road form strong boundaries between communities, and having the boundary lie there is the least worst option for providing the appropriate electoral equality. While other theoretical options may exist, the old C3, C5 and C4 polling districts (under the previous ward boundaries) reflected a largely contiguous community. Splitting the area along the York Road reflects an existing hard boundary, whereas to split the area along the railway line or along Markenfield Road or anywhere further north would be to cut up the strong community that exists between Stoke Road and Woodbridge Road. Keeping that community together is a success of the current proposals, and it should be preserved.

## SHERE, HORSLEYS AND SHALFORD

I disagree with the proposed boundaries for the Shere, Horsleys and Shalford divisions. The existing boundaries are extremely artificial and do not remotely reflect geography or links between communities. As someone who has spent a significant amount of time in all the villages in question, I can attest that the existing boundaries, and the new ones, do not reflect the links between communities and artificially divide them. It would be a grave misstep for the boundary commission to perpetuate this historic mistake.

All of the communities to the east and south of Guildford are characterised by west to east links, not by north to south links. Send and Ripley are divided from the rest of the borough by the A3 and look towards Woking as much as they do to Guildford. Shere (the village) and Chilworth sit within the Tillingbourne valley which runs east to west and look much more to Guildford, Dorking and Godalming than they do towards Woking. A look at the road network will demonstrate that the same is true for every community in the area covered by these three divisions. Road run west to east with villages strung out along them. The north to south links are narrow lanes and are rarely used.

The Tillingbourne valley, in particular, starts west of Dorking and continues all the way down to where the Tillingbourne joins the River Wey at Shalford. The valley is separated from the Clandons and the Horsleys to the north by steep, wooded hills. The Tillingbourne valley also has a strong historic identity from its industrial history of numerous gunpowder mills, all sending their wares down the Tillingbourne to the Wey navigation. The communities in the borough council Tillingbourne ward are strongly linked, therefore, not with West Horsley or East Clandon or Send, but with Shalford and Chilworth (the latter of which is split between two wards at the borough level). Similarly, West Clandon, East Clandon, West Horsley, East Horsley and Effingham are all strung along the A246 which links Guildford to Leatherhead. These communities form a distinct corridor running between the edge of Guildford town and the edge of Great Bookham where the Leatherhead conurbation begins. A look at the two separate railway lines running through these areas, and linking communities together, shows the same east-west linkage. To divide these communities along north-south lines is arbitrary, artificial and unnecessary.

I would strongly urge the commission to redraw the boundaries in this area to respect the strong east-west links. Grouping the borough wards of Send & Lovelace, Clandon & Horsleys and Effingham together into a single division would make much more sense. Similarly, the borough ward of Shalford and the borough ward of Tillingbourne should be grouped together into a single division. If electoral variance should not permit this, then

West Clandon, and potentially even East Clandon, should be grouped with Shalford and Tillingbourne wards. This would far better respect natural communities and links between them than the current proposals. This would also have the advantage of aligning much better with the new parliamentary constituency boundaries, which have similarly recognised that Shalford and Tillingbourne wards sit separately from the Clandons, Horsleys, Send, Ripley and Effingham. When drawing boundaries it should be remembered that Send and Ripley sit strongly together, the Horsleys and Effingham sit strongly together, the Clandons sit strongly together, and the villages of the Shalford and Tillingbourne wards sit strongly together. County division boundaries should be based on these building blocks, and should not just re-use the existing, flawed boundaries for the sake of convenience. This review is an opportunity to correct historic mistakes, and any boundaries adopted will likely remain in place for decades. It makes no sense at all, given that the county council is the highways authority, to have county councillors who have to share responsibility for different sections of the A246 and A25, for instance, rather than having one division following and encompassing each road and the communities which branch off it.

My suggestions would have knock on impacts upon the electoral variance of the remainder of Shalford division, and my suggestion would be that the borough wards of Shalford and Tillingbourne form a single division, perhaps supplemented with West Clandon (and possibly East Clandon) which is linked to it on the A25, whereas the borough ward of Pilgrims be used as the starting point for a new division centred on the Hogs Back. This could include the areas of the Ash area which cannot be accommodated within the Ash division, and which are currently proposed to move into Worplesdon. The advantage of this is that it would also enable Worplesdon division to retain Jacobs Well (which is a distinct rural community, separate from Guildford town with very different needs). If necessary, a new 'Pilgrims' division (named after the pilgrims way along the Hogs Back) could also include the Flexford and Normandy areas to ensure appropriate electoral variance.

It should be noted that the Ash area, along with Pilgrims, Shalford and Tillingbourne wards, have all been placed into the new Godalming and Ash constituency. This recognises that links in that area are west to east along the Tillingbourne Valley and along the Hogs Back, and are north to south in the Ash and Tongham area. It would be preferable, as far as possible, for the county divisions to broadly align with the new constituency boundaries, and grouping Pilgrims ward with the surplus of the Ash urban area would both achieve this and much better match community boundaries than the artificial placement of Pilgrims ward with Shalford ward (which it is separated from by the A3). A look at road maps of the area will also demonstrate that Normandy, Flexford and Wanborough link west to Ash and south to the villages of Pilgrims ward. The surplus of the Ash urban area should indisputably be linked with Tongham, Tongham should go with the rest of the Pilgrims ward, and Normandy parish can go either towards Pilgrims or towards Worplesdon depending on the needs of electoral equality.

## WORPLESDON

As above, I disagree with the proposal to remove Jacobs Well from Worplesdon division. It is separate from the Bellfields area, forms part of Worplesdon parish, and does not have strong links with the communities of Guildford North division.

Conversely, I agree with the proposal to move the Broad Street area out of Worplesdon and into Guildford West. Broad Street is a very clear and strong part of the urban area of Guildford, looking very much towards the rest of Park Barn, and its inclusion within Worplesdon is very much an accident of history rather than a reflection of modern community boundaries, unlike Jacobs Well which is very distinct and separate from the town.

## CONCLUSION

With the above proposals, I have made sure to reference the electoral sizes of the borough wards I have discussed. I believe that where I have made alternative proposals they are in line with the need to ensure acceptable electoral variance as well as reflecting community boundaries better than the current proposals. I would ask the commission to examine the numbers and seek to make them work, especially around the eastern villages, rather than just trying to preserve existing boundaries which artificially divide communities. The numbers add up for an alternative approach, and I hope this can be followed. Thank you.

## Attached Documents:

*None attached*