

Surrey County Council Division Boundary Review Submission

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Summary of Proposals

This submission covers suggested alternative arrangements for county division boundaries in the Reigate and Banstead area. Specifically, this covers:

- An alternative proposal for Horley, Salfords and Sidlow that will enable more convenient and effective local government, as well as better electoral equality between the two divisions (if not electoral equality between the divisions and the rest of the county). The proposed names for these divisions are Horley West and Sidlow and Horley East and Salfords.
- An alternative proposal for Reigate, Meadvale, and West Redhill, bringing together communities with common interests. The proposed names for these divisions are Redhill West and Wray Common and Reigate and Meadvale.

It has been put together using my experience as a town councillor, a lifelong borough resident and a long-running officer in the local party.

Horley, Salfords and Sidlow

The draft proposal for Horley, Salfords and Sidlow has board similarities to the current arrangement, with some boundaries moving to reflect changes in ward boundaries in the intervening period. This gives a Horley East division with +9% variance and a Horley West, Salfords and Sidlow division with +1% variance.

To achieve this the draft proposal makes the currently very small Horley Upper North ward (HRE4) of the town council even smaller, and by my calculations it would be at least 45% below a hypothetical quota for town council wards in 2028. Whilst I understand that the commission does not see optimal town council ward arrangements as their responsibility, this arrangement would create a very awkward barrier for any community governance review that sought to optimise the warding arrangements of the town council. I would therefore like to explicitly object to this part of the draft proposal as well as positively endorsing my area wide alternative proposal below.

Primary Proposal

I am proposing a two-division pattern of Horley West and Sidlow and Horley East and Salfords, reflecting the east-west split that exists at borough level. Horley West and Sidlow would contain all voters from the Horley West and Sidlow borough ward (9064) and Horley East and Salfords would contain all the voters from Horley East and Salfords ward (7697), HRC1 (1286) and HRC3 (2795). HRC3 in particular has links to much of the rest of eastern Horley, sharing a local school (Langshott) and being separated from the rest of the town by the railway line with road crossings only at Victoria Road and higher up the Balcombe Road (which provides a link for the Upper North area). This leaves HRC2 to be split between the two divisions, with approximately 25% going to East and 75% going to West. This could be achieved by placing Victoria Road, its cul-de-sacs and the broader High Street Area in East (and in an extended Horley Central North) with the rest of the current polling district transferring to West. By my calculations this would leave approximately 12828 electors in Horley East and Salfords (+7%) and approximately 12219 in Horley West and Sidlow (+3%). This proposal would also bring together the whole (growing) town centre community in one division where it has previously been split between divisions. It will also mean that the historically 'left behind' parts of the town (Court Lodge and Riverside) will both be represented by the same councillor, making it harder for the representative to ignore those areas with a history of deprivation and (especially for Riverside) limited local facilities.

Figure A – proposed boundary between Horley East and Salfords and Horley West and Sidlow

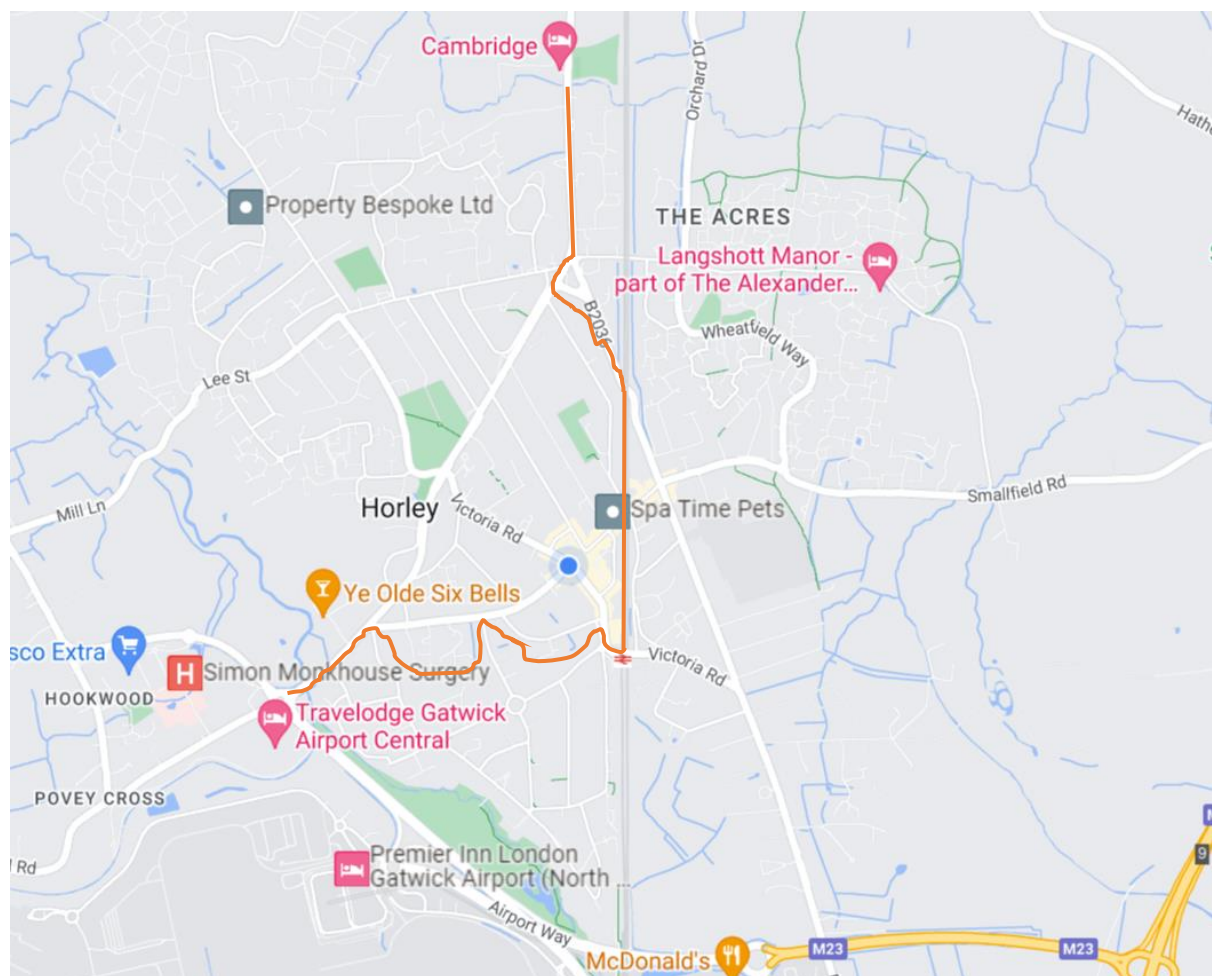


Secondary Proposal

Depending on the strength of local feeling the commission may also wish to consider proposals that keep both sides of Horley Row, Chequers Drive and Southlands Avenue in the Western Horley centred division. In such a scenario it would make sense to also include much of the town centre in Horley West and Sidlow to avoid creating awkwardly shaped town council wards.

In this situation it would make sense to include HRC1 in Horley West and Sidlow alongside the borough ward, with HRC3 remaining in the eastern Horley division. This would then mean you'd be looking to split HRC2 roughly 50/50. To achieve this whilst maintaining a sensible distinction for the town council wards, I would suggest including the broader Riverside Gardens area in East and the Town Centre and extended Massetts Road area (the conservation area here indicates a distinctive community) in the West. By my calculations this would result in approximately 12405 electors in Horley West and Sidlow (+4%) and 12592 in Horley East and Salfords (+6%). Whilst I back my primary proposal due to the commonalities between the communities around the town centre and north east Horley (Surrey commuter belt) in contrast to some of the more left behind areas of Riverside and Court Lodge (and, if the developer consortium don't sort their act out, Westvale Park in future), the commission may also wish to consider this proposal in the event that ties around the Horley Row area are convincingly highlighted elsewhere.

Figure B – proposed boundary between Horley West and Sidlow and Horley East and Salfords



Further Town Council Notes

In addition to my earlier concerns about whether enforcing a town council ward that has an elector number 45% below the town average represents convenient and effective local government, I am also concerned that having 7 members representing one ward with a substantial population doesn't represent convenient and effective local government. It makes it difficult for voters to know who their best local contact is, makes it difficult for representatives who seek to focus on a very particular community (as many of our Residents Association councillors do) to prioritise the area they seek to represent without compromising the level of engagement other parts of the ward have with their councillors, and leads to a very lengthy counting process during contested elections that can test the stamina of older (and sometimes less old) candidates.

In the draft proposals it is suggested that the commission will not intervene in town council boundaries beyond what is necessary to align boundaries with borough wards and county divisions, but the only reason we have a pattern of larger wards is because the commission's 2018 review of Reigate and Banstead replaced the smaller wards that previously existed despite review's recommendations not necessitating such a change. I hope the commission will be open to splitting the larger town wards into smaller wards with this in mind (if only to undo the unnecessary parts of the previous intervention), and I have included an appendix outlining a proposal I believe would effectively do this.

However, should the commission not see this aspect of town council boundary realignment as their responsibility, I would ask at the very least that the commission abolish those wards which only exist due to prior boundary coterminosity abnormalities where these are resolved by this review. Should the commission accept my proposals this might mean extending Horley Central North into a Horley Central ward and abolishing Horley Upper North; should the final proposals be closer to the draft proposals than my proposals this might mean either abolishing Horley Central North or extending it into a Horley Central ward that contains all of the current HRC1 and HRC2 polling districts (which would also promote convenient local government at all levels by permitting greater flexibility as the new polling districts are drawn up).

West Redhill and Reigate

I was glad to see that the draft recommendations highlighted the links between the Redhill West and Wray Common areas on both sides of the railway line, stating that the only reason a Redhill West and Wray Common county division was not recommended was due to the resulting lack of electoral equality in the Reigate division. I also note that the current (and proposed) line between Reigate and Redhill West and Meadvale is very arbitrary, cutting down the middle of a series of affluent suburban roads that themselves form a coherent community north of the heart of Meadvale.

With these two facts in mind, I propose a rearrangement of the divisions in this area into 'Redhill West and Wray Common' and 'Reigate and Meadvale'. The former division would contain all of Redhill West and Wray Common borough ward (7838), polling districts MSJ1, MSJ2 and RGT5 (2397) and the part of RGT4 in the Doods Park Road area which the draft proposals suggest moving into Redhill West and Meadvale (~425), and the part of MSJ4 that lies north and east of Mill Street and Whitepost Hill (~250), adding up to approximately 10910 electors (-8%). This will bring together the communities that have an affinity for Redhill and the communities that form part of the greater Wray Common/Wray Common Road area to all fall within the same ward, as well as uniting communities that rely on the same groups of schools (e.g. Hatchlands Primary and Wray Common Primary, among others).

For Reigate and Meadvale I propose a division made up of RGT1, RGT2, RGT3, MSJ3 and MSJ5 (9159) and the remainder of MSJ4 and RGT4 (~2993), adding up to approximately 12152 electors (+2%). The commission may be tempted to review the areas around the border between these two areas should they wish to improve electoral equality further, but otherwise this division would bring together communities that have schools (e.g. St Johns and Reigate Priory), affluence and historic division ties (Meadvale and Central Reigate were in the same county division prior to 2013) in common, as well as pleasing those residents of Meadvale who would prefer to think of themselves as being part of Greater Reigate rather than Greater Redhill. I hope the commission will also agree that the kinds of dividers used to form these boundaries (e.g. Whitepost Hill and the boundaries around Croydon Road and Blackborough Road) are clearer community dividing lines than down the middle of sparse residential roads such as Ringley Park Avenue and High Trees Road.

Further Notes

The commission may also wish to consider proposals that tie South Park (and maybe also Woodhatch) with Reigate, and Meadvale with South Earlswood. Since this is not an approach I am endorsing I won't suggest any specifics for it, but it might be worthy of consideration depending on the other responses received. I would also suggest renaming 'Earlswood and Reigate South' to 'South Earlswood and South Reigate' – where the term Earlswood is used to refer to an entity other than the two halves together it tends to refer to Northern Earlswood (i.e. hearing references to Earlswood in the north and South Earlswood in the south is common; hearing references to North Earlswood in the north and Earlswood in the south is not). This is reflected in the statistical built-up urban area definitions of local settlements where South Earlswood and Whitebushes are considered distinct settlements, but Earlswood is considered part of Greater Redhill. This might be worth considering if a reference to Earlswood in any form is to be included in the name of the Redhill East division.

Appendix – Horley Town Council Proposal

Horley West

- Westvale Park – HRW4 – 2486 – 2 members
- Horley West – HRW3 & rest of Vicarage Lane + Chantry Close - ~3483 – 3 members
- Horley West-Central – HRW2 minus Vicarage Lane + Chantry Close - ~2608 – 2 members

Horley Central and South

- Horley South East – HRC3 – 2795 – 2 members
- Horley Central North – HRC1 + northern part of HRC2 – 2 members (primary proposal) or 3 members (secondary proposal)
- Horley Central South – rest of HRC 2 – 3 members (primary proposal) or 2 members (secondary proposal)

Horley East

- Horley East – HRE3 + HRE4 – 5227 – 4 members