

Epping Forest District Council

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Please can you acknowledge receipt. Thanks and Regards. Mark Squire, Town Clerk

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Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Electoral Review of Epping Forest District Council

Loughton Town Council response

I. District Warding

REVIEW OFFICER (EPPING FOREST)

Proposals for the re-warding of the Epping Forest District

Your proposals for a new 3-member ward of BUCKHURST HILL EAST and WHITEBRIDGE

As you say, wards should have a strong community of interest. We wish to refute in the strongest terms that this applies to the proposed new ward of Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge. Your assertion of the community of interest, para. 39, page 9 of your report is false.

It is **totally erroneous** to state that there is continuous housing across the boundary. There is NOT any continuous housing, as a result of official decisions taken 70 or 80 years ago, and now firmly established. There is some, but very limited, common interest in the shops and use of the Roding Valley open space. However, the strength of that argument needs to be considered in the context of it being land that is subject of waterlogging and flooding, and was in part deliberately flooded after the building of the M11.

The Town Council believes Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge have **very little community of interest**.

The current Loughton Roding ward, on the other hand, has a very high degree of community interest. Politically, it has not been represented since 2006 by any political party, although they generally contest it. Independent and Residents Association candidates have been very well supported, gaining up to 83% of the vote. The BH East ward has been represented by Green and Liberal Democrats over the last 20 or so years. The independent component has been entirely lacking south of the "Hundred Foot" gap.

We can do no better than to endorse the reasons given by Cllrs Murray (independent) and Brookes (Residents association) on the issue of the proposed 3 member ward having very little community of interest. These are broadly as follows.

1. There is a **clear physical dividing** line between the Buckhurst Hill (BH) and Loughton (L) parts of this proposed ward, namely the Green Walk (also known as the hundred foot). This was created in the 1940s and early 50s when the Urban District Council built housing. It was put there following the Abercrombie principles to create a deliberate and clear boundary between the two towns of BH and L and to stop them merging. (the previous boundary followed the edges of the water meadows that previously existed). It has been maintained ever since.

2. This **clear distinction** between BH and L is reflected in the postcodes of IG9 and IG10, the different telephone areas of 0208 504 and 508, the old Buckhurst and Loughton exchanges.
3. This **clear distinction** on either side of the Green Walk is also reflected in the change in road names; Valley Hill (L) becoming Loughton Way (BH). Felstead Road (L) becoming Thaxted Road (BH). Greensted Road (L) becoming Bradwell Road (BH). There is **a clear physical divide** between each road pairing in the form of either the green walk or a playground between Felstead Road and Thaxted Road, a playground owned by this council, to which BH does not contribute.
4. As regards **shopping areas** the bulk of residents in the BH part of the new ward look either to the Roding Valley station area, Lower Queens Road, and Queens Road, Waitrose, for their shopping needs, whilst the Whitebridge part of Loughton look to the Valley Hill crossroads, Sainsbury's. and the High Road Loughton for their requirements. Only a very small area of housing either side of the Green Walk may both equally look to the Loughton Way shops.
5. As regards **schooling** again the two parts of the new ward, very largely look in different directions, BH East towards Buckhurst Hill Primary School and West Hatch Secondary School, whilst the Whitebridge part of the proposed new ward towards Whitebridge Primary School and Roding Valley High School for their secondary school provision.
6. **Medical provision.** Both areas of the new ward have their own doctors' surgeries and pharmacy provision and the bulk of residents use the provision based on either living in BH or L.
7. **Faith facilities,** BH has its own Anglican and nonconformist churches (St John's and BH Baptist Church) whilst Loughton has its own (St Michael's, Loughton Baptist, and Loughton Methodist Churches), with attendance once again very largely following the BH and L split. St Michael's Church in Roding Road (Loughton) works extremely hard in developing a community provision aimed at the entire current Roding ward within Loughton, and a daily café provision which has engendered a lot of support from the Loughton Whitebridge area.
8. **Library provision,** once again usage very largely reflects the BH and L divide. Whitebridge residents very largely looking to Loughton Library with BH residents very largely using Buckhurst Hill Library.
9. **Roding Valley Recreation Ground,** which is stated as evidence in your report (page 9, paragraph 39) as having a community of interest between the two parts of the new ward is true but only to a certain extent. Usage of this area also reflects the BH and L separation of community interest. BH families largely use the playground and hard-court area just off Roding Lane IG9, whilst L Whitebridge families very largely use the playground and hard-court area just off Roding Road IG10.
10. **Cricket Club and Football Club provision on the Recreation Ground,** once again this reflects the IG9 and IG10 separate community provision. South Loughton Cricket Club has a square and a pavilion just off Roding Road IG10 and Buckhurst Hill Cricket Club has a square and a pavilion just off Roding Lane IG9. Loughton Football Club lease land from the County Council just adjacent to the recreation ground at the end of Avondale Drive Loughton, whilst Buckhurst Hill Football Club has its ground and headquarters in Roding Lane IG9.

11. **Roding Valley Recreation Ground Management** , although of less importance than the actual patterns of community usage the IG9 / IG10 split is also exactly mirrored in how the recreation ground is actually managed. Loughton Town Council has a 125 year lease on its portion of the area running up to the Green Walk/hundred foot gap , whilst Buckhurst Hill Parish Council chose not to take up this option from EFDC.

These points 1 to 11 above very clearly evidence the virtual lack of strong community ties between the BH and L parts of the newly proposed ward of Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge.

Many of the key building blocks of community and a sense of place, shops, schools, leisure and faith buildings simply do not traverse this existing Green Walk /Hundred Foot divide between two established towns and therefore the newly proposed ward of Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge might exist on a map it simply does not exist in any meaningful sense in the real world, shaped by the daily lives of individuals and their families.

Conclusion

In this Council's view, it **is completely inappropriate** to suggest the creation of a 3-member District ward crossing the Buckhurst Hill and Loughton boundary merely for some predetermined need for three member wards across the district.

On any measure of community interest there should be a 2-member BH East ward and a separate 1-member Loughton Whitebridge ward

II. Town / Parish Warding

LTC suggestion for minor adjustment between Forest and St Johns District and Parish wards and division of St John's Parish wards to ensure community of interest.

The Town Council considers that the proposed Parish Ward of St John's is much too large, electing 5 town councillors, which would be excessive and clumsy to administer. Without access to exact figures for the population of individual streets, the Town Council suggests **the community of interest among the three conservation areas (the concern of the Hills Amenity Society since 1972) is so strong**; the present boundary splits the Conservation Areas, and there is great merit in joining them and that boundary be moved to the rear of the properties in Staples Road, rather than the western side of that road. This would affect about 70 electors to be added to St John's from Forest.

We would suggest that the territory of St John's ward be altered for the Town by taking from it a separate Town ward of 3 seats to comprise streets to the north of Church Lane and east of the A121 right up to the Town boundary . We suggest that the name of the 2-member (c1350 electors) Town ward be Loughton Hills ward, and the 3-member ward (c2000 electors) be Loughton Goldings ward, after the three major streets and a district all named Goldings (Hill, Rise, Road and Manor Estate)

We have stated elsewhere that the use of CofE parishes for District Wards is misleading, and that the name of St John's district ward be Loughton Hills ward.

