



7th May 2018

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England,
Windsor & Maidenhead Review,
14th Floor,
Millbank Tower,
Millbank,
LONDON,
SW1P 4QP.

Dear Sirs,

Windsor & Maidenhead Review

1. I write as an experienced and very active Old Windsor Residents Association Councillor who has served on Old Windsor Parish Council for 42 years and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead for 23 years.. These have both been over an unbroken period and in all cases except the last two Parish periods were won as an independent against strong national political party opposition.

I chaired the RBWM Parish Councils Association for many years, represented the RBWM on the Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee for 17 years and the Local Authorities Aircraft Noise Council (20 members) for longer and have been its Chairman for over 10 years.

As such I have an in depth knowledge of the Royal Borough and its Windsor Parishes in particular.

2. Alternative Proposals for Old Windsor and adjoining communities.

While I appreciate and respect the heavy and difficult workload of the LGBCE, I regret that I and a very large part of the population of Windsor and its nearby communities are disappointed and oppose the Commission's proposals regarding the Old Windsor area.

It is worth repeating that I was one of many who objected to the initial reduction in the number of Councillors from 57 to 43 (subsequently reduced by yourselves to 42) because of the geographical constraints of the Wards to the south east of Windsor due to being bounded on each side by Bracknell Forest and Runnymede Councils and in the case of Old Windsor additionally by the River Thames at the north and Virginia Water within the fringe of Windsor Great Park at the south.

The fact that a minority suggestion that the number of Councillors should not be reduced so drastically, i.e. to around 47 was not adopted by RBWM or the Commission, has reduced the options for flexibility and creates the reasoning for a "Special Case" consideration of the Old Windsor Ward proposed by Old Windsor Parish Council – which I wholeheartedly support as a modification of the latest RBWM proposal.

It is noted that although the Commission seeks the number of electors per Councillor in each Council to be within a 10% tolerance, there are instances of far greater tolerances being quoted in the RBWM response and in the Commission's current proposals now under discussion.

3. The emphasis on Wards being shaped to include a number of electors closely within the overall RBWM Electoral Tolerance totally conflicts with the Commission's other fundamental electoral principles of (B) a geographical and community association and (C) offers good governance.

It is an indisputable fact that the public "turn out" in elections is almost always less than 50% of those on the Electoral Rolls (and those of us who know their communities know that there are significant voids in the Rolls) so it is absolutely essential that a bond of voters with their Ward is promoted. Unfortunately what may appear from afar to be logical on your map is impractical for many reasons and would create huge disenchantment with local government under the Commission's current proposals.

The separation of Windsor Great Park from Old Windsor village is very strongly opposed for many reasons:

1. The strong historical association of Kingsbury, the Saxon Royal Palace on the banks of the Thames adjacent to Old Windsor village, was the base for hunting forays into Windsor Great Park and far beyond. Edward the Confessor held Parliament there at times before the arrival of William the Conqueror who built his Castle above nearby Windsor. That town was officially known as New Windsor until the reorganisation of local government in 1974.
2. Windsor Great Park and associated land belongs to and is managed by the Crown Estate from its office in the Great Park, so it is logical to include the adjacent open land with the Great Park. The Crown Estate obviously has strong ties to the Castle, not to Ascot.
3. Many Crown Estate workers retire to Crown Estate property in Old Windsor village, and also use its shops, medical centre and other facilities.
4. Many Old Windsor children start school at The Royal School alongside Park children, and progress under the unusual three tier Windsor system to Old Windsor and ultimately Windsor schools. The age related change of schools conflicts with that of the Ascot schools.
5. The Royal School participates in Old Windsor's Carnival procession. Old Windsor's Councillors have a long standing association with and understanding of the Great Park and things such as its bus service to Windsor, Virginia Water Lake isolates the area from most of Ascot. Ascot Councillors are not familiar with the Great Park and do not have a convenient access to the small village within the park where most of its workforce live.
6. The long established understandings between the Crown Estate electorate (residents and management) and Old Windsor Councillors would be destroyed, and good governance would be severely diminished.

The addition of part of Windsor Town ("The Boltons") with Old Windsor village is also very strongly opposed for significant reasons:

1. There are no shared geographical OR community ties between these communities whatsoever. While the A308 Albert Road may appear to be an appropriate link it is in fact a such a busy, often traffic jammed road (the busiest in the Borough due to its nearby connection with the busiest part of the infamous M25) that it is a two mile deterrent.
2. The communities are entirely separate and do not share facilities, services or social activities. One is a rural village with a strong community bond, the other is an edge of town mixed suburban one which looks to the town for a greater choice of services. The different environments generate a different outlook on many neighbourhood matters.
3. There is no common first or middle school for the children, so there is no related common interest among children of the separate communities in their formative years, or of their parents.
4. The large differences in these communities would be in total conflict with the Commission's principles of close geographic and community association with the Ward boundaries and should therefore not proceed in the manner currently proposed by the Commission.

5. The third principle sought by the Commission, the provision of good governance would be very challenging if not impossible to achieve as with the roughly equal division of the proposed electorate between the two communities, it is likely that both of the elected Councillors would have a stronger association with one community than the other. It would be extremely difficult for them to effectively represent and fully serve both communities. That would be detrimental to the democratic expectations and service of the remote community, and would not ensure good governance.
6. The above is especially relevant in the Borough's proposed linkage of these two different communities to find something within reach of an electoral numbers balance, as its less than forceful plea that a preference for a geographical and community based Ward of Old Windsor deserves far more emphasis as a "Special Case" which would give far better good governance than a more electorally balanced one.
The reality of the many special reasons for this have been given above. I and many colleagues hope that the Commission will ensure that the proposal to link these different communities will not fuel a sneaking suspicion that the ruling majority political party engineered the reduction in the number of Councillors at a time of increasing challenges and responsibilities to disadvantage the active but geographically confined Old Windsor Residents Association in the manner noted above.

Conclusion

I respectfully request and urge you to follow the proposals and detailed Old Windsor Ward map which has been submitted by my colleagues on Old Windsor Parish Council.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Malcolm Beer.