

From: Lamb, Peter [REDACTED]
Sent: 09 April 2018 23:59
To: reviews
Subject: Crawley Borough Council Boundary Review

I write with regard to the review of boundaries currently taking place for Crawley Borough Council's pattern of wards.

I was born in Crawley, I went to school in Gossops Green and for the last eight years I have served the community borough councillor for Northgate, for four of which as county councillor for Northgate and Three Bridges and for the last four as Council Leader.

The local authority was disappointed that the commission decided to reduce the number of councillors to 36, particularly given past remarks that there was no general plan to reduce the number of councillors at authorities and we believed we had set out a strong case for a 39 member council. A 39 member council would have enabled us to present a mixed scheme more closely in keeping with the town's traditional pattern of neighbourhoods while keeping to the other requirements the commission has set out for a successful scheme.

Nonetheless, the scheme approved by the council's cross-party Boundaries Working Group, Governance Committee and Full Council, is the best scheme which can be found to deliver on the commission's three requirements while maintaining the town's long tradition of the neighbourhood principle.

Many of us remember in detail the review which recently took place in the town for the county council boundaries, where the commission approved a scheme which broke several natural boundaries on the grounds that it delivered better electoral equality and consequently we have tried to deliver more closely on the basis of that precedent with this scheme which of the options delivers most closely on the requirement for electoral equality.

While the natural boundaries were broken in that past review it now appears the Conservative Group again agrees with us that railways form a natural boundary, or at least that they do for the East of the town, as their scheme for some reason breaks that rule again when it comes to moving the Station Gateway development (which clearly bears more similarity to dense inner-town developments such as the Town Hall site and other housing along the Boulevard, and Pembroke Park) into Southgate when the nearest access into the ward other than the level crossing would be skirting the ward along Southgate Avenue to find access on Southgate Drive, a considerable distance.

We have tried to recognise the natural boundaries formed by the avenues, the demarcation of neighbourhoods built into the town's fabric by the Commission for the New Towns seventy years ago. Crossing these avenues isn't easy and the neighbourhood principle places services at the clear centre of the areas outlined by the avenues, so they form recognisable limits of community interest and identity. In the council's scheme, this is again recognised in the case of creating a northern 'Langley Green and Manor Royal' ward as distinct from the areas south of Crawley Avenue, the town's busiest road which is very difficult to cross. This is similar to one of the Conservative's proposals as part of the West Sussex boundary review, although for some reason they now instead suggest that the boundary is broken three times (moving Windmill Close into Langley Green and Tushmore, moving Manor Royal into West Green and Northgate and moving Tinsley Lane into Three Bridges).

Having represented this area as a county council I attended meetings of the residents association present in Tinsley Lane (detached from that of the main body of Three Bridges) and in none of that time was any issue relating to the neighbourhood portion of Three Bridges raised. What was raised was issues relating to Gatwick Airport, Crawley Avenue and Manor Royal, interests held in common across the whole north of the town but very different to those of the dense inner-town area Three Bridges now includes. Similarly, residents in Tushmore only raised issues in relation to airport parking and Manor Royal and it is interesting that residents of the integral part of the Three Bridges neighbourhood have raised no objection to the council's proposal. In most cases under the Conservative scheme these areas would need to either exit or enter the other part of their ward by going through a separate ward, not a clear sign of a continuous community.

Unfortunately, under a mixed scheme, Broadfield always ends up being divided and with a portion crossing a natural boundary. Unfortunately this is unavoidable under the rules we are required to follow. The council's scheme continues to seek to maintain wards as far as possible by maintaining Bewbush's (again avoiding an exit the ward to re-enter scenario) boundary with Gossops Green and only moving whole housing developments, thereby maintaining the traditional communities and identities of those areas as far as possible while delivering electoral equality.

In summary, of the possible schemes, the council's best meets the commissions' requirements and maintains the traditions of our New Town.

Cllr Peter Lamb
Leader, Crawley Borough Council



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