CLAYGATE PARISH COUNCIL’S SUBMISSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION’S REVIEW OF ELMBRIDGE

Introduction
Claygate is a single Ward Parish and has the only Parish Council in Elmbridge. We note from your Technical Guidance 2014 that the Commission “cannot make recommendations to create, abolish or amend the external boundaries of Parishes” (7.1). This constitutes a strong case for leaving the Borough Ward boundary of Claygate undisturbed, especially as the number of electors (5527) is not far off the average number required (6132) by the proposed pattern of 16 three Member Wards for Elmbridge.

Electoral Equality
A proposal for a 48 Member Elmbridge Borough Council, elected by thirds, requires 16 x 3 Member Wards, giving an average of 6132\(^1\) electors per Ward on current electoral populations and 6306 per Ward by 2020, according to Elmbridge’s projections. The existing Claygate Ward undershoots these averages by 11.1% and 11.7% respectively. However an enlargement of the Claygate Borough Ward, while leaving the Parish Council boundary unchanged, would be extremely confusing to those residents who found themselves living in the Ward, but not in the Parish of Claygate; there would also be a high likelihood of administrative confusion.

Community Identity
Claygate residents have a strong sense of identity with the local community and think of themselves as living in a village. This local patriotism was a driving force behind the successful petition to create a Parish Council in 2000. The Parish Council has shown a strong commitment to protecting and enhancing the local distinctiveness of the village by amongst other things publishing its own Village Design Statement in 2010. Elmbridge Borough Council treat Claygate as a discrete settlement for planning purposes, e.g. in formulating Settlement Investment and Development Plans.
Claygate has a vibrant shopping centre (The Parade), conveniently located next to the station and a further group of shops and restaurants on the ‘Old Village’ High Street part of a designated conservation area. There is a Claygate Village Association. The community is served by an active Parish Church, with a large membership, and also has a vigorous cultural life, exemplified by the regular performances of the Claygate Dramatic Society, the Choral Society and a biennial Music Festival. The Claygate Recreation Ground is owned by

\(^1\) EBC Pro Forma statistics, dated Jan. 2015, amended 23 Feb. to 6240.
Elmbridge but unlike all the other recreation grounds in the Borough, it is run by local residents who are Trustees of the Claygate Recreation Ground Trust. Claygate is bounded on the East by the Elmbridge – Kingston borough boundary, along the line of the A3 dual carriageway. On the West, The Rythe stream forms a natural boundary between Claygate and Esher. To the North, Claygate is separated from Hinchley Wood by a narrow, but strategically vital strip of Green Belt, which bounds the Greater London conurbation at that point. To the South, a wide area of Green Belt (and the A3) separate Claygate from the next community, Oxshott. There are clearly defined gateways with vehicular access restricted to three key routes which provides a clear sense of entering and leaving Claygate.

Effective Local Government
Claygate is currently represented by three Ward Councillors. The fact that the Ward covers a single community with a strong sense of its own identity makes for effective representation. Any significant expansion of the Ward would tend to dilute that and would mean, for example, that people who thought of themselves as living in Esher and concerned with Esher’s problems would find themselves represented by Councillors whom they may see as identified with a different settlement.