



29.5.16.

To:

The Review Officer (West Sussex)  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
14th Floor Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London  
SW1P 4QP

Dear Sir or Madam

As one of the original New Towns, Crawley is divided into a number of Neighbourhoods which were designed as 'self contained and socially balanced communities'. This pattern of Neighbourhoods (Three Bridges, Northgate etc) is largely reflected in the electoral Wards for Borough elections. Generally and currently, adjacent Neighbourhoods are combined to form County Divisions (eg Three Bridges and Northgate). The present and pattern is largely spatially coherent and reflects the communities which Crawley residents inhabit.

The original draft recommendation seemed to go along with this pattern although I believe the development of flatted developments in or near to the town centre meant understandably that, for instance, the southern part of Northgate was to be amalgamated with Southgate.

The revised recommendations do not provide effective and convenient local government because they pay much less attention to the Neighbourhood principle. For instance, Northgate, on the east side of Crawley is amalgamated with West Green and a small part of Southgate on the west side. A small part of Southgate to the south of the railway line is amalgamated with Northgate and West Green for no obvious reason other than to perhaps to even out the numbers. This Division now stretches north-south and includes the Manor Royal Business District (largely unpopulated in residential terms), Northgate and West Green Neighbourhoods with their 'normal' New Town housing, recent flatted developments near and including the town centre itself and a substantial area of nineteenth and early twentieth century largely terraced housing in West Green and Southgate. So land uses include Industrial/Business, Retail and Office as well as many types of Residential. Does this Division reflect 'community identity and interests? I think not.

The discrete Neighbourhood of Three Bridges is now amalgamated as a Division not with an adjacent Neighbourhood (Northgate) but with small parts of Pound Hill North and Pound Hill South (within Maidenbower and Worth) – the other side of the railway line and separated not only by a railway bridge but a very busy railway station (Three Bridges) and its associated

daily traffic congestion. There was once a time that Pound Hill was its own discrete Neighbourhood. Its growth led to its division into North and South but now Pound Hill South seems to literally disappear into Three Bridges Division.

Ifield in the original recommendation was split (as at present) with what is commonly known as Ifield West amalgamated with Bewbush which is spatially coherent and there are some linkages across the railway line. Also the housing was built at around the same time (1980's) and the homes have much in common with each other. The new recommendation takes a further chunk of Ifield (an area of largely older and substantial detached and semi-detached houses including Millbank) into Bewbush and Ifield West. I suspect the residents of Millbank will need convincing that they share 'community identity and interests' with Bewbush and Ifield West.

As with Northgate and West Green, the Langley Green and Ifield Division stretches considerably (North-South as well as East-West) and includes very diverse land uses from Gatwick airport itself and its associated service industries around Lowfield Heath through the largely 1950's Neighbourhood of Langley Green to Ifield Neighbourhood which, though it contains much new Town housing also has a much celebrated village core dating from Medieval times focussed around St Margaret's Church and Conservation Area as well as the Ifield Brook Meadows. Again, where are the community identity and interests?

Do the new proposals mean that each county councillor represents approximately the same number of electors? The projected figures for 2012/13 admittedly show that there is no variance over 10% but it should be noted that all the eastern Divisions (Maidenbower and Worth -5%, Pound Hill -6%, Maidenbower and Worth -5%, Three Bridges -3% and Tilgate and Furnace Green -2%) are below the average number of voters whilst the western Divisions, with the exception of Broadfield (0%) are above (Bewbush and Ifield West 2%, Langley Green and Ifield East 4%, Northgate and West Green 6%, Southgate and Gossops Green 8%). In other words, there are consistently less electors per county councillor on the east of Crawley than the west.

I would add that the 2015 figures show one huge variance of -29% for Pound Hill which is almost three times what seems to be an 'acceptable' variance.

These changes are bound to lead to considerable confusion for residents used to voting in what they see as 'their' Neighbourhood – for instance, residents of Millbank in Ifield, West Street in Southgate and much of Pound Hill such as St Mary's Drive, The Pasture, Worth Road.

Another consideration is the current system of West and East Crawley County Local Committees. Currently all residents living east of London Road/High Street and Brighton Road can be clear that they are in the East Crawley area and vice versa. The new proposals beg questions such as which County Local area Northgate residents are in if they are amalgamated with West Green which is in West Crawley. Northgate is currently clearly on the eastern side of Crawley.

Finally, one of the positive recent developments in Crawley has been the setting up of Neighbourhood Forums which by definition are Neighbourhood-based. Residents understandably expect not only to speak to their Ward councillor about issues but also to their County councillor. Residents living in, for instance, West Street in Southgate may not be able to attend the Southgate Forum and their County councillor will be the councillor for Northgate and West Green.

I would urge you to reconsider and revert to the original draft recommendations which have the advantage of spatial coherence in harmony with the structure of the New Town and the residential communities living in it and line up well, if not exactly, with the pattern of Ward boundaries.

I write as a 66year old lifelong Crawley resident, a geography graduate with over 30 years of secondary geography teaching experience in Crawley and its environs, as the holder of a Masters degree in Planning Studies and as one of the two borough councillors for Northgate Ward in Crawley.

Geraint Thomas