

Kingsley, Paul

From: Mayers, Mishka on behalf of reviews
Sent: 16 May 2016 11:35
To: Kingsley, Paul
Subject: FW: boundary review for crawley

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 May 2016 14:18
To: reviews <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>
Subject: boundary review for crawley

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I was very surprised and disappointed to hear that the Boundary Commission has decided to change its mind and review the draft arrangements for Crawley in West Sussex, completely overturning its original decision. I fail to see a good reason given for this, late in the day, change of mind.

One of the Commission's stated guidance aims is that it does not favour huge changes, in the redrawing of existing boundaries, as this causes understandable confusion and upheaval for residents, who are accustomed to their longstanding community borders. Yet the Commission is now considering a plan that makes major changes to voting patterns, all over the town.

Crawley was designed on the 'neighbourhood principle'. Each of its 13 areas was planned as an independent 'village', with its own shops, schools, religious buildings and medical facilities, circled around the town centre. Each ward on the whole is separated by an arterial road, entering or leaving the town.

Crawley's residents are very attached to and strongly identify with their individual wards. Each of those wards has its own very definite character which has developed over the past years. For County Council electoral purposes some of these wards are combined, but careful thought has to be given as to how and with whom they are joined.

Comments on new proposals:

Combining Langley Green and most of Ifield:

Langley Green is a large ward with a very definite character. It has a high concentration of residents from an ethnic minority background. There are two mosques, two Hindu temples, one Sikh Gurdwara, one Catholic and one Pentecostal Church, within its boundaries, all well attended and with vibrant and active communities. The local primary school has recorded 53 separate languages being spoken by its pupils. The local shopping parade is a microcosm of a truly cosmopolitan community. It also contains Gatwick Airport, which is on its own, a huge responsibility.

Ifield is another large ward and also has a very definite character. An older, more settled area, many of its residents are original settlers into the New Town and their children. It has a much more rural feel, with its direct access to the countryside, through its much loved and well regarded conservation area, round what was the original ancient village of Ifield, mentioned in the Domesday Book. Its community revolves around the two local Church of England churches, one dating from the 13th Century. With its popular traditional May Fayre and historical buildings, the whole area has a very different 'feel' to Langley Green.

The only way to combine Langley Green and Ifield as one division numerically, is by cutting off a large chunk of the bottom of the ward and lumping it in with Ifield West. Ifield West is a relatively new development a mile away up a steep hill. There is no way that the residents of roads like Rusper Road and the Millbank, have ever, or are ever likely to regard themselves as connected to Ifield West. A mile might not be far in a rural setting, but in a more urban area, it makes a lot of difference.

Joining these two large areas together, that are separated by a busy arterial road, Ifield Avenue, is not appropriate and will not be well received by local residents.

Gossops Green and Southgate

Gossops Green is one of the older, more established areas of Crawley. It has a close community, centred round the local Church of England church, St Albans and shares a small railway station with Ifield, on its borders.

Southgate is based very much round the town centre and the original area of 'old Crawley, with its conservation area and historic buildings. This is an area that is constantly changing and expanding, with all the new office conversions into flats, under 'permitted development', and new builds of purpose built, blocks of flats, that are happening now and in the near future around the town centre.

These two areas are completely separated by the largest road, through Crawley, the A23. There is no logical connection between these two residential areas.

Part of Pound Hill and Three Bridges.

Where these two have been joined, there is no access between the two, due to the main railway line and has merely been drawn to balance numbers with out any logic.

When we look at the figures their are wide discrepancies between wards.

On the east side of the town the number of new developments, and therefore likely future population figures, is known down to single figures, Forge Wood, for example. Yet tolerances of -6% in Pound Hill, and -5% in Maidenbower and Worth, are being put forward as acceptable.

In central Crawley, where so much development is happening, +8% in Gossops Green and Southgate, and +6% in Northgate are deemed acceptable.

On the western side of Crawley, Langley Green and Ifield +4% is suggested, with all the new developments coming on stream on the outskirts of Ifield, where developers are showing considerable interest in expanding, Ifield Golf Course, for example.

This new draft plan for County Council division boundaries was thought up by a leading member of the Crawley Conservative party, a borough and county councillor. Its one and only aim is to reduce the number of opposition seats at County Council. At present there are nine county councillors representing Crawley.

Six of them are adamantly against this draft proposal (Peter Lamb, Michael Jones, Brenda Smith, Brian Quinn and Sue Mullins) and only three support it (Duncan Crow, Bob Lanzer and Richard Burrett). The Boundary Commission working party, at West Sussex County Council only had one Labour representative on it, so naturally its recommendations were endorsed, by the Conservative controlled administration.

With the future boundary reviews due shortly for Borough elections, as well as a review of constituency boundaries, I have a concern that by accepting these draft proposals at this late stage, could leave the boundary Commission open to accusations of political bias and of not following its own policies, in making decisions.

I and my colleagues would welcome a return to the original draft proposals, made in February, this year, as the most sensible and least disruptive and divisive way of moving forward with any publically acceptable, boundary changes for Crawley. Co-terminosity with ward boundaries is good and recognition given to natural and man made boundaries, such as main roads and railway lines. It is not always possible to make decisions purely on numbers, the feelings and identities of local residents must be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely

County Councillor Sue Mullins