

# The Walton Society

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015

The Review Officer (Elmbridge),  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England,  
14<sup>th</sup> floor,  
Millbank Tower,  
Millbank,  
LONDON SW1P 4QP

Dear Sir,

## **Boundary Review for Elmbridge Borough Council**

We have carefully looked at the draft recommendations for new ward Boundaries for Elmbridge Borough Council as set out in attachments to the Boundary Commission's letter to the Elmbridge Chief Executive dated 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Although we still do not consider there is a need for a reduction in the number of Councillors from 60 to 48, and there are clearly problems in drawing up boundaries that respect long established communities in other parts of the Borough, we accept that as far as Walton is concerned, the proposed reduction in Councillor numbers can be managed without unacceptable upheaval following the boundary changes necessitated by having Wards that are on average 25% larger in terms of the number of electors.

Given therefore that the LGBCE seem to have decided that a reduction in the number of Councillors to 48 is appropriate, we support the boundaries that are proposed as far as they relate to Walton and its electors. We note that the LGBCE has adopted – in general outline - the scheme suggested by the Residents Group of Councillors – in its submission dated 30<sup>th</sup> March. Key similarities are that the existing external boundaries of the Walton Wards are kept the same except for the new proposal that approximately 200 electors living on Oatlands Drive and two roads off of Oatlands Drive are to be included in the Walton Central Ward rather than becoming part of the new Oatlands and Burwood Park Ward. The key boundary along the railway line between Hersham and Walton is maintained and the boundary between Molesey and Walton - as it relates to existing electors – is also maintained. Much of the boundary between Oatlands and Walton is also kept as it is.

As regards boundaries between the proposed three Walton wards, we support there being a Walton Central ward, a Walton North ward, and a Walton South ward, which are largely formed from the existing wards with those same names. This seems a very sensible way to minimise disruption. The re-allocation of electors from the present Walton Ambleside ward such that those living on the St Johns Estate join Walton North ward and the bulk of the remaining electors become part of Walton South ward also has our support.

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We have looked closely at the proposal that some 200 electors from Oatlands Drive and two of the small cu-de-sacs leading off it should be moved into the new Walton Central Ward rather than become part of the new Oatlands and Burwood Park ward. While this means that these electors would have a different Member of Parliament from all the other electors, which will be administratively more complicated for the Council's Electoral Services Officers and slightly confusing at first for those electors, we are of the view that many of these electors are clearly physically closer to the centre of Walton than they are to the centre of Oatlands Village and a number of them are – to our knowledge - actively involved in activities in central Walton. We also recognise that the Elmbridge Liberal Democrat submission to the LGBCE shows that these electors were part of Walton in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and so there would also be historical justification for these electors becoming part of Walton Central ward again as a result of these boundary changes. Accordingly we support the Boundary Commission's proposals in respect of the electors.

We were somewhat surprised that only the North West side of Stuart Avenue is to be included in the new Walton Central ward with the South East side of this road becoming part of the new Walton North ward. Given that the new Walton Central is expected to be slightly smaller than average in terms of number of electors and the new Walton North is expected to be slightly larger than average, we would have thought it would have made sense to include all of Stuart Avenue in Walton Central and thus reduce further the potential electoral inequality.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Mills Chairman