

Abbots Langley Parish Council



Mr. T. Perkins, Clerk to the Council

www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

Review Officer (Three Rivers)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
3rd Floor Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

11th January 2013.

Dear Sirs,

Electoral Review of Three Rivers

With reference to your letter of 23rd October 2012.

The Parish Council has discussed the current electoral review at its Council meeting in November. The following is its resolved opinion.

Members of the Parish Council were pleased that the Commission had agreed that Three Rivers District Council should be reduced to 39 elected members, electing by thirds.

The Parish Council does not wish to make specific proposals regarding the warding of the District. However, it would wish to make the following observations regarding the ward boundaries and the communities within Abbots Langley and Three Rivers as a whole.

1. Around 80% of the Three Rivers area is parished. These parishes have been in place for many years; Abbots Langley Parish Council itself has been in existence since the 19th century. The parishes cover areas that have strong community ties and in many cases have community groups which cover all of that parish council area. At present, none of the District Council wards cross parish council boundaries, with the exception of part of the boundary between the unparished area and Chorleywood, where the boundary does not follow a logical path. In every other area there is a natural break between parishes which includes areas of Green Belt and other undeveloped land.

Due to the community ties within individual parish council areas and the physical separation of many parish areas from each other, the Parish Council proposes that the new warding arrangements maintain the existing position of only crossing parish council boundaries between the unparished area and Chorleywood.

2. The Civil Parish of Abbots Langley comprises almost a quarter of the population of Three Rivers. The Parish has a boundary with only one other parish - that of Sarratt - and is surrounded on three sides by the Borough council areas of Dacorum to the north, St. Albans to the east and Watford to the south. The two parishes are separated by a large area of Green Belt, with very few homes and no schools, shops or other community facilities. Residents of Abbots Langley do not go to Sarratt to shop, work, schools or any community group or facility. We believe that the same is true for residents of Sarratt parish. Certainly

the Parish Council has no evidence of residents of Sarratt booking the council's halls in Abbots Langley, using our allotments or running local groups.

Due to the lack of any tie between the communities and parishes of Abbots Langley and Sarratt, then notwithstanding any other wards and boundaries elsewhere in Three Rivers, the Parish Council strongly believes that no part of Abbots Langley and Sarratt Parish Council areas should be combined into new Three Rivers wards.

3. The Abbots Langley parish area had an electorate of 15,000 in 2012. This equates to nine councillors of the thirty nine proposed, and is just 4% below the District average. Planning permission has been given for a new development of 450 homes within the parish and these homes are currently being built. This will increase the population to over 16,000 by 2018, leaving the parish area within 3% of the District average. We believe that this is close enough to maintain the separation of wards within Abbots Langley Civil Parish from other parts of Three Rivers, which would retain the community ties within Abbots Langley.

The Parish Council therefore proposes that in order to retain community cohesion and maintain electoral equality, the Abbots Langley Civil Parish area should be represented in its entirety by nine dedicated District councillors, comprising three wards of three councillors.

4. The area of Abbots Langley parish is situated between the larger towns of Watford and Hemel Hempstead. The main road, rail and other transport links run north-south between Watford and Hemel Hempstead, through the Abbots Langley area. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission has just confirmed that three of the existing District Council wards will remain in Watford constituency, with the fourth (Bedmond and Primrose Hill) in Hemel Hempstead. There was no support for these wards to move into South West Hertfordshire constituency, where it would have been with Sarratt and most of the remainder of Three Rivers.

The Abbots Langley Parish Council area is separated in many other ways from the remainder of Three Rivers. Its residents mostly identify with Watford and would use leisure, sporting, shopping, social and educational facilities in Watford if they were not available in Abbots Langley. A small number of residents in the north of the Parish identify with Hemel Hempstead. No residents would identify with Sarratt, Croxley Green or Rickmansworth.

The post codes of residents are mainly WD5, with some WD4 and a small number of WD25 and HP3 on the fringes of Watford and Hemel Hempstead respectively. These post codes are not found anywhere else in Three Rivers. The majority of social housing in the Parish is owned and managed by Watford Community Housing Trust, a Watford Council stock transfer, at Boundary Way and Hillside. Watford Community Housing Trust does not currently manage homes elsewhere in Three Rivers.

There are many community groups, organisations and charities which serve the greater Abbots Langley community, but do not reach outside the area. These include

- Abbeyfield Abbots Langley
- Abbots Langley Arts Club
- Abbots Langley Baby & Toddler Group
- Abbots Langley Baptist Church
- Abbots Langley Bowls Club
- Abbots Langley Children's Centre
- Abbots Langley Community Orchard
- Abbots Langley Cricket Club
- Abbots Langley Evergreens (*social group for senior citizens*)

- Abbots Langley Flower Arranging Society
- Abbots Langley Gardening Society
- Abbots Langley Gilbert & Sullivan Society
- Abbots Langley Guides and Brownies
- Abbots Langley Health Walks (*depart weekly from village centre*)
- Abbots Langley Local History Society
- Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Watch
- Abbots Langley Orchestra
- Abbots Langley Players
- Abbots Langley Red Cross
- Abbots Langley Royal Air Force Association
- Abbots Langley Royal British Legion
- Abbots Langley Scouts Group
- Abbots Langley Singers
- Abbots Langley Tough Ten (*charitable fundraising road race*)
- Abbots Langley Transition Town Association
- Abbots Langley Women's Institute
- Abbots Langley Youth Project (*weekly traditional youth club*)
- Abbots Youth Football Club
- Bedmond Sports and Social Club
- Bedmond Women's Institute
- BJ Academy Taekwondo
- Breakspeare Community Pre-School
- Church of England Parish of Abbots Langley
- Evergreen Football Club
- Heart for Abbots Langley (*weekly coffee mornings*)
- Langleybury Cricket Club
- Leavesden Hospital History Association
- Luncheon Club (*run by church on Sundays for isolated residents*)
- Monday Club (*social club for adults with learning disabilities*)
- Village Moonlighters (*theatre group*)

There are also a number of other organisations which are active across the Watford area, but include Abbots Langley in their catchment. The remainder of Three Rivers tends to form its own groups. These include: Lions Club of Watford, National Childbirth Trust - Watford

The Ark Community Church, The Centralian Players, Watford Credit Union, Watford Food Bank.

The Parish area is self-sufficient for primary schools, with four maintained schools and two church schools. The parish contains one partially selective secondary school (Parmiter's) . The two non-selective schools to which the vast remainder of pupils attend are in Watford and Dacorum respectively (Francis Coombe Academy and Kings Langley School).

The centre of Abbots Langley has a bustling High Street, with a range of over 30 retail premises (including a butcher, baker, main Post Office, small supermarket, pharmacy, florist and electrical retailer) banks, a funeral director, hairdressers, cafes, restaurants and

a pub. There is a large village GP surgery, which offers a number of extended health services, a Children's Centre and four well-attended churches (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic). There are three community halls for hire from the parish council, plus the Abbots Langley Community Centre, recently refurbished. The Parish has its own police station (opened in 2005 after community action), its own Citizen' Advice Bureau and library. The main ecclesiastical parish is within the Watford Deanery, unlike the vast majority of Three Rivers. Each year the community runs the Abbots Langley Carnival, Fireworks Display and open-air Carol Concert. An Abbots Langley Festival of the Arts is organised biennially and last year village traders organised a huge street party for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

We believe that all of the above shows that the Abbots Langley Parish community has strong community links and cohesion and should not share District wards with other areas of Three Rivers.

5. As stated above, we do not wish to suggest exact warding. However we would prefer the current Parish wards to be used as building blocks as far as possible, ensuring that as many existing communities are kept together and residents retain familiar polling stations to encourage turnout.

This would see the core of the old Abbots Langley village kept together (the current Abbots Langley ward), no splitting of the Hillside estate (an area of former local authority housing which forms the majority of the current Tanners Wood ward), the community of Hunton Bridge or village of Bedmond and the grouping together of the areas of new housing in Leavesden ward built since 1995, as these also form a coherent mini community.

We therefore submit that the new wards within the area should mean as little disruption as possible to existing community and electoral arrangements, which have served local residents well.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Perkins
Clerk to the Council

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