

Hersham Residents Association

HRA active positive and non-political since 1971

HRA 24/08/15 Boundary Commission submission about ward boundary changes affecting Hersham

By email to

reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Local Government Boundary Commission
for England

Layden House

76-86 Turnmill Street

London EC1M 5LG

David Lock
Chairman
Hersham Residents
Association

24 August 2015

Dear Sir / Madam

Comments on Boundary Commission for Local Government Hersham Ward Boundary change proposals for Elmbridge.

Hersham Residents Association (the HRA) is a non-political organisation whose aims are to promote the interests of Hersham and its residents. We are therefore very keen to engage with the current discussion about the suggested changes to Hersham's ward boundaries.

We were pleased that your current consultation proposals have addressed some of the issues raised in our previous letter dated [31 March 2015](#), for example the return of Hersham station, and the Green to the centre of Hersham. However there still are a number of key points which are of great concern about the current proposals.

General

We are concerned that the significant areas omitted from the proposed boundaries, notably Longmore, Whiteley Village and Burwood Park, would undermine the community of Hersham which has been gradually established within the existing boundaries over many years.

It has been suggested that electoral boundary lines wouldn't necessarily affect the identity of the areas affected, however we disagree. We would highlight the fact that Hersham currently has a shown electorate of

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10,366 – but this would be reduced significantly by the suggested re-drawing of the ward boundaries. This would substantially affect people's perception of Hersham, and its sense of place and status alongside neighbouring settlements of Esher, Walton and Claygate.

The HRA would point out that Hersham is a unique, strong and long established community, and any decisions about boundaries should take this into account. Many of Hersham's limits were established in 1859, and we suggest this historical legacy could justify 2 wards to retain Hersham's continuity with these original boundaries.

Flexibilities and alternative options

We are aware that re-warding is necessary within the Boundary Commission's guidelines (for 'election by thirds' scenarios) to keep the number of residents per councillor roughly even.

Unfortunately compliance with these 'rules' appears to result in breaking another key principle on which the Commission judges the acceptability of a re-warding scheme, namely that existing strong communities should not be broken up.

We therefore still wonder if there is sufficient flexibility available to allow Elmbridge to revisit its decision to retain the current electoral system, and the commission's proposals put on hold until another vote is held. At the time of the re-vote, councillors would be better informed about the implications in terms of boundary changes which would flow from their decision.

If the elections by thirds arrangements have to continue and consequent re-warding is needed, we suggest as much flexibility should be exercised to enable boundaries in Hersham and the whole of Elmbridge to be fixed in a way which respects established communities and accommodates the exceptional circumstances which appear to apply in the case of Hersham.

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Specific

1. We also strongly support the Friends of Hersham Library campaign that the library should of course remain in Hersham.
2. The Longmore Estate is on the north side of Hersham with a boundary on the east with Esher. Moving this boundary to merge part of Hersham and part of Esher makes little sense because the majority of people in this part of the village would not feel they have a shared history or common identity with Esher.

The sense of belonging to Hersham for people living on the Longmore Estate is strong. We also suggest that many in this part of Hersham may feel that their political identity would be overshadowed if they became part of a ward in Esher.

3. We strongly recommend that the area east of Mole Road (Dukes Road etc) which under the current plans would be in Esher –should be retained as part of Hersham by using the logical natural boundaries of the River Mole and the dual carriageway.

4. We suggest that the proposed new boundary to Hersham in the Turners Lane area be shifted westwards so as to include the Burhill golf club area and Whiteley Village. The Burhill area is sparsely populated and would be unlikely to affect the population balance calculation in any significant way.

Whiteley Village should be included because it always has been part of Hersham and the residents there feel very much connected to Hersham rather than St Georges. We understand Whiteley Village residents will be submitting a petition to that effect, and we trust that you will register and take account of their concerns.

5. We know there is also a strong feeling amongst many residents in Burwood Park that they would like to remain in Hersham. The HRA would support them in this, as this area has been part of the village for many years.

6. If in the very unfortunate situation that there will have to be some parts of Hersham 'lost' to other areas we would wish the name 'Hersham' to be strongly reflected in the name of the neighbouring ward

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concerned, for example St Georges and Hersham / Hersham and Esher Riverside etc.

More about the HRA

Our constitution sets out the aims of the HRA as follows:

‘To promote the interests of the residents of Hersham; to foster a spirit of goodwill throughout Hersham; to help the people of Hersham however and whenever possible.’

The HRA would of course want to be fully involved in the continuing debate on this matter, and play a key role in helping to represent and engage with our membership and the wider Hersham community on this important issue.

For more about the HRA and its activities – which provides evidence of Hersham as a community, please see the link to our website below.

Yours faithfully

David Lock
Chairman of the HRA
[Hersham Residents Association](#)

Email: 