



# Slade Green Community Forum

Registered Charity No. 1097246



**To : The Review Officer (Bexley),  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

**From: Slade Green Community Forum**

**Re: Proposed Boundary Changes for Bexley**

Dear Sir

Slade Green Community Forum is a charity with aims of improving lines of communication within the community of Slade Green and the eastern part of Erith and agencies delivering services in our area, and generally benefiting the community. Membership is open to all residents aged 16 or over in the current Northend ward of Bexley Borough.

This response to the proposed changes has been discussed and approved by our Executive Committee but excluded discussion with or input from our ward councillors (including one who is an Executive Committee member), as they will have their say through the Labour Party response.

## **Comment on the current proposals**

We note that one of your three main considerations for the electoral review is to 'Reflect community identity'. We are therefore surprised and somewhat dismayed that your proposals cut our community in half by using the railway line that goes through the centre of Slade Green as a ward boundary. The current proposals similarly cut Erith in half, and we note local speculation that this is because the two communities 'vote the wrong way'.

We note that there may be some confusion about the name and geographic location of Northend (referred to by the current proposals as "North End"). The preferred local spelling is Northend, reflected in the name of the road leading there (now part of the A206), which is Northend Road, as well as the former name of the local primary school (Northend School, now Peareswood School) and the former railway level crossing (Northend Crossing). The destination of the local inter-wars tram system was 'Northend' not 'North End'. Hasted's famous survey of Kent in 1797 (*The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 2*), in surveying Crayford (which Slade Green has traditionally been associated with), refers to 'the two hamlets of Perry-street and Northend'. The use of 'North End' appears to derive from nineteenth century maps, which show that name to the south of the hamlet. Maps have continued to place the name in that location, even though the location of the words now has housing underneath it which the people living there would consider to be part of Slade Green. Northend itself is just a small area, essentially consisting of Boundary Street, Arthur Street, The Nursery, Guild Road, Fairview, Maple Court, and parts of Peareswood Road and Northend Road.

All of the following roads that are currently proposed to be included in a ward named 'Barnehurst and North End' and are roads where residents would consider themselves to be from Slade Green are: Barnett Close, Bridge Road (the part to the south west of the railway bridge), Burns Close, Cloudesley Road, Craydene Road,

Dale View, Ely Close, Howbury Lane, Lincoln Close, Lincoln Road, Masefield Close, Newbery Road, Slade Gardens, Sun Court, and Whitehall Lane. Despite their proximity to Northend, we generally find that residents of Page Crescent and Peareswood Road also consider themselves to be in Slade Green.

We note that the use of the railway line as the boundary also results in the anomaly of the Traveller site close to the railway bridge near the junction of Thames Road and Bob Dunn Way being moved into the Erith & Slade Green ward rather than staying with the rest of Barnes Cray as part of Crayford ward. We note that the site is quite a long way from Slade Green, and even further from the proposed Erith & Slade Green ward.

We are concerned that, in placing half of our community in an Erith ward, and half of our community in a Barnehurst ward, ward Councillors will largely act for the benefit of Erith and Barnehurst respectively, and our community will cease to have a voice.

### **Alternative proposal and variations**

As currently proposed, Barnehurst and North End ward would have 3 councillors and Erith and Slade Green ward 2 councillors. We instead propose that all the above named roads be moved into Erith and Slade Green ward, with the centre of Northend Road potentially forming the boundary between the wards, and that Erith and Slade Green ward should have 3 councillors and Barnehurst ward 2 councillors. If greater numbers were required in our proposed Slade Green ward to ensure an equitable number of electors, further roads that are in the proposed Barnehurst & North End ward and are in the current Northend ward could be added to Erith & Slade Green ward – the west side of Northend Road and the Wessex Drive estate (Chesworth Close, Ranworth Close, Wessex Drive) which faces into Slade Green near a crossing point on Northend Road and has tended to associate with Slade Green (for instance, the current Chair of the Slade Green Big Local Partnership and a former Slade Green parish churchwarden both live there).

For the record, another possibility which we would have found acceptable and you may wish to consider would be that of moving the roads in the current Northend ward that are in the eastern part of Erith (by which we mean Manor Road and all the estates off of it) from the current Northend ward to an expanded Erith ward. (This anticipates that you may also receive objections relating to moving parts of Erith into Northumberland Heath ward).

### **Concluding comment**

It is essential that the final proposals are not divisive, both from the perspective of reflecting community identity, but also to avoid any suspicion of gerrymandering (and consequent view of the elected body as illegitimate) that would result were the current proposals pursued.

for the Slade Green Community Forum Executive Committee

Roy Hillman

Treasurer, Slade Green Community Forum

