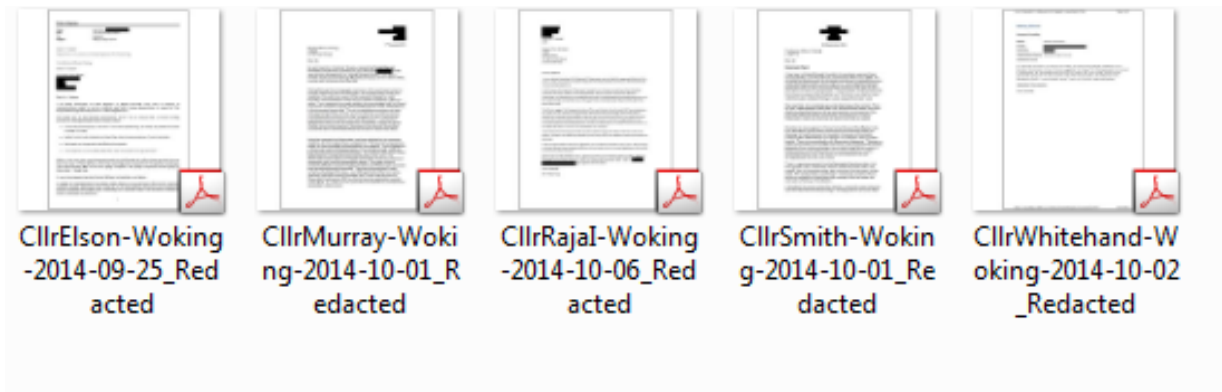


Councillor submissions to the Woking Borough Council electoral review

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Porter, Johanna

From: Gary Elson <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 25 September 2014 14:47
To: Reviews@
Subject: WBC Boundary Review

Dear Sir / Madam

Please remove my previous email and replace with the following:

To the Review Officer (Woking)

Dear Sir / Madam

Councillor Gary Elson



Dear Sir / Madam

I am Ward Councillor for West Byfleet in Woking Borough and write in support of representations made to you by residents and other various associations in respect of the Proposed Borough Boundary Review of Warding Patterns

The stated aim of the Boundary Commission review was to ensure that a revised warding pattern for Woking Borough Council should reflect:

- Good electoral equality, with each Councillor representing, as closely as possible the same number of voters
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links
- Be based on strong easily identifiable boundaries
- And help the council deliver effective and convenient local government

Whilst in the main the overall proposals made by the Borough do reflect these aims this has not been the case in West Byfleet, which has seemingly been erased from the political landscape, with approximately 80% of the ward going to Byfleet, 10% going to Pyrford and 10% going to Sheerwater / Canal Side.

It was at my request that the Ward of Byfleet included the word West..

A number of representations have been made directly to you and your office and to me from residents strongly objecting to the break-up of the West Byfleet Community and complaining that the interests and wishes of the community have not been taken in to account or listened to by the Commission as promised.

In fact there will now be a total of 9 ward Councillors involved with West Byfleet residents, indeed the new warding patterns do not now coincide either with the newly designated Neighbourhood area and a number of committee members including both co-chairmen will now be in Pyrford or Sheerwater wards.

The Residents Association are against it, the Neighbourhood Forum Committee is against it and the Business Association is against it. so it is no wonder that my residents are aggrieved.

Given the criteria set out for the review then I accept that the overall aim in equalising the number of voters per Councillor has been broadly met and I understand the complexities of arriving at the Borough's submission. I am surprised though and greatly disappointed that the Commission, having visited the area has decided to depart from the Councils proposals for certain wards particularly to the north of the railway line meaning that the 3 Avenues will now be in the Sheerwater Ward and not in Pyrford or Byfleet and West Byfleet.

I understand that the roads off Parvis Road and Pyrford Road must be in Pyrford but do not accept the Commissions amendments for this area.

I am sorry to say that this seems to be a slide rule / calculator exercise, with no or little input from residents.

West Byfleet is the only ward in the Borough that has not retained its original form having everything taken away and nothing given. The community feels fractured and disparate.

I urge the Commission to at least accept the original submission from Woking Borough Council and consider residents wishes.

Thank you

Best Wishes

Gary

Gary Elson – FInstSMM FCAPD






1st October 2014

Review Officer (Woking)
LGBCE
London EC1M 5LG

Dear Sir,

As ward councilor, for almost 12 years, representing Horsell East and Woodham I would like to comment on your Draft recom  for the new electoral arrangements for Woking Borough Council. I am also a member of the Council's Borough Boundary task group so have been closely involved with the process from the start.

Woking Borough Council engaged extensively with its electorate during the process of drawing up its own proposals. As ward Councillor I made sure residents of my ward were aware of the proposal to change the ward boundary and directed them to the Council website and display in the town centre. I am unaware of any ward resident who was unhappy with the Council proposal to include the majority of Horsell East and the whole of Woodham in a three member Horsell ward. This is an identifiable community with clear and easy transport links, via foot, car or the three day a week bus service. The Woking Labour Party and our MP Jonathan Lord also supported the proposal for Horsell as stated in your July 2014 report. I was therefore disappointed that you took the decision to substantially change the Horsell Ward by removing the majority of Woodham and an area of Horsell East around The Grove and Ferndale Road to site them in Sheerwater Ward.

Since the proposal for a Sheerwater ward was published in July numerous residents, all of who object, have contacted me. The Council's proposal was based on local knowledge and represented a fair balance. Your suggestion of a Sheerwater ward encompasses parts of five existing borough wards and three (out of seven) County Council wards. The ward runs from close to West Byfleet station in the east and past Woking station in the west. The Sheerwater ward is made up of multiple communities where any evidence of community links would be impossible to discern. This ward would be extremely difficult to represent making the delivery of effective and convenient local government almost impossible. There are also proposals to build numerous dwellings in this area – over 300 apartments in the town centre (planning application already submitted) and a whole redevelopment of Sheerwater creating some 450 new homes (planning application expected winter 2014). In a matter of a few years this ward could be so oversized as to necessitate a further review.

Horsell East - The Grove and Ferndale

This area has always been associated with Horsell. Residents who live here take an active role in the Horsell Residents' Association, belong to community groups in Horsell, have children who attend the Horsell schools and typically use the Horsell shops such as the butchers and often visit the restaurants and pubs in Horsell. The Horsell Scouts and Guides May Fayre is held on The Wheatsheaf common which borders the houses in Ferndale Road. The residents of these roads have no discernable link with Sheerwater, Maybury or the flatted developments within Woking Town Centre. Easy transport links exist within the area with a series of footpaths leading from here to, for example, Horsell Village and Church. Road access is easy and a bus service operates along Brewery Road.

Woodham


The Basingstoke Canal divides Woodham from Sheerwater. There is no access to the canal towpath from Woodham. The canal creates a strong easily identifiable boundary in the same way as the railway line and prohibits connectivity between the two areas. The busy A245, Woodham Lane, is also a barrier to easy transport links between Woodham and Sheerwater. Most of the properties lie to the south of the A245 and a right hand turn, towards Sheerwater on this road is extremely dangerous. Recently, Surrey County Council upgraded the junction of Martyrs Lane with the A245 Woodham Lane to prevent a right hand turn due to safety concerns and frequent collisions in the area. The bus service in the area, which operates on three days a week, travels towards Horsell to the east and Woodham and New Haw (Runnymede) to the west. There is no bus service between Woodham and Sheerwater. Woodham has clear transport and communication links with Horsell – via bus, via car, straight across the six crossroads and by foot either via Horsell Common or the pavements since there are crossing points on all spurs of the roundabout. In fact when my daughter was at school in Horsell, three girls in her class were from Woodham and arrived on foot, by bicycle or by car.

Looking now at the community interests and identity of Woodham. These are closely related to those in Horsell. Property types are similar, Woodham residents actively support the Horsell Common Preservation Society, have friends in Horsell, use the excellent restaurants in Horsell, some children attend Horsell schools, others Runnymede schools and would typically use medical facilities in West Byfleet or Woking/Horsell. Woodham residents do not look to Sheerwater for community events, shopping, medical facilities or schools. There is simply no evidence of community links.

I do hope that you will take note of this and other representations received during this consultation. Residents of Horsell East and Woodham are active in their community and take an interest in local affairs. I urge you to site Woodham and the area in Horsell East around The Grove and Ferndale into Horsell ward to reflect community interest and to assist Woking in delivering effective and convenient local government.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Anne Murray
Horsell East and Woodham



Dated: 05th October
2014

Review officer (Woking)
LGBCE
Layden House
76 – 86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Dear Sir/Madam,



I am an elected member of the Maybury & Sheerwater ward and feel the proposed division of this ward is unfair and unjust. The reason being that the new proposals do not sync with the criteria of 'community identity' at all.

Unfortunately the majority of Sheerwater residents are of a lower social class than Woodham residents and there is little commonality between the two. Also the access links between Sheerwater and Woodham are completely restricted by the Basingstoke canal separating them and the roads that do connect them are a mile apart. One is the Sheerwater Road and the other the Monument Road.

Therefore I suggest that proposed revision of the ward borders should consist of the area between the canal and the railway line lying between Sheerwater Road and Triggs Lane/ Parley Drive. I believe this proposal would be better suited as the communities are more in sync with each other and therefor meet the stated criteria for the electoral wards. I also feel strongly that this ward should be called Central and Sheerwater, and not just Sheerwater, as to deprive the town centre of any clear definition in the list of the new wards is a misnomer.

I also believe that the Maybury Estate would be better merged with Mount Hermon rather than Pyrford, as again, the differences between communities living in the Maybury Estate and Pyrford are extensive.

It will be appreciated if the above suggestions are considered and taken into account. We are happy to further discuss these proposed revisions with you and arrive at a mutual agreement which would suit all communities involved.

Please note that Ms Elizabeth Evans. (elected member for Central and Maybury 1999 – 2000 and following the boundary revisions in 2000, for Maybury & Sheerwater 2000 – 2007, of 
 also agrees with the above.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. M Ilyas Raja



30 September 2014

The Review Officer [Woking]
L G B R C

Dear Sir

Sheerwater Ward

I have been a Woking Borough Councillor for seventeen years and have represented the current Horsell East and Woodham Ward since 2004. It is my belief that the prime duty of an elected councillor is to represent the views of their electorate and this is what I wish to do. I have delayed making my submission until the end of the consultation process so that I may be fully informed of the views of my electorate. They have been vociferous about the Commission's proposal that Woodham and The Grove area shall be linked with Sheerwater and East Woking to create a large Sheerwater ward.

Over one third of my electorate are under this threat at this moment. There are over 1000 Woodham voters and over 100 Grove area voters who will be effectively disenfranchised, so far as local elections are concerned, if the proposals of the Boundaries Commission are enacted and a ward of Sheerwater [which may otherwise be called Canal Side] is created.

Woodham is closely aligned to Horsell to the West and West Byfleet to the East. Woodham looks to these communities for all everyday needs, for shopping, for health services, for education, for leisure and recreation. Looking further afield Woking Town Centre is an attractive and accessible location. There is no communality with Sheerwater whatsoever. There are no public transport links and road links are tortuous and congested. The shortest pedestrian route involves crossing a narrow plank bridge at the junction of Paddock Way and The Riding and then traversing a distance of rather inhospitable common land. The areas are both geographically and demographically like chalk and cheese.

There is a spurious argument that the Basingstoke Canal provides a link. The opposite is true. Sheerwater has the canal to the north with a wide towpath, four formal access points, and many more informal ones, into the estate. The canal provides a useful east - west access conduit on foot or bicycle for residents of Sheerwater both internally within the estate and externally to Woking or West Byfleet.

In Woodham the case is entirely the opposite. Leaving the canal and going north from the Monument Road bridge, travelling past the Six Cross Road

Roundabout into Woodham Lane (the A245) then turning right into Sheerwater Road there is no sight of, or access to, the canal until reaching Sheerwater Bridge; a distance of over two miles. Neither is there any access to the canal from any of the side roads which constitute the residential part of Woodham. It is true that some gardens do back on to the canal. Some residents see this as a benefit, more see it as a nuisance. Most importantly there is no access or crossing point. The barrier to communication is complete.

I therefore submit that the canal presents an impenetrable physical boundary between the communities of Woodham and Sheerwater. This view has been supported by dozens of individual submissions to the Commission [and copied to me] from Woodham residents.

The Canal represents a divisive rather than a cohesive feature.

Woodham residents are unanimous in support of the Council's May submission creating a unified Horsell and Woodham ward. They are appalled and dismayed, as am I, at the Boundary Commission's proposal to sever Woodham from its natural partner, Horsell, and create an utterly artificial ward comprising several manifestly incongruous communities that have no connectivity whatsoever. Woodham belongs with Horsell.

It would appear to me that none of the three councillors for this ward would have any possibility of being able to represent the whole ward, such is the level of diversity within its proposed boundaries. To suggest, as some of my Councillor colleagues have, that individual councillors could represent, separately, the distinct areas goes against the ethos of a three member ward.

Does the proposal satisfy your criteria for a good warding pattern? I suggest it does not.

1. Whilst electoral equality is close at the moment no account whatsoever has been taken of the Sheerwater Regeneration project which will provide some 450 new homes and the new housing in the town centre of more than 300 units. A likely increase in the Ward's electorate of 1500 in the next few years.
2. In no way does it reflect community interests and identities. Links between Sheerwater and Woodham simply do not exist. The disconnection between these communities is exacerbated by the Canal. The only tenuous link, being in the Parish of All Saints' Woodham, is being severed and the Guildford Diocese plan to create a new parish of Sheerwater. Currently Sheerwater has its own medical and dental practices. It has a pharmacy and will soon have a huge Asda store. Woodham has none of these services but does not look towards Sheerwater for them. Instead Woodham residents look west to Horsell and Woking or east to West Byfleet for all these services.

3. The proposal is based on a haphazard boundary to the North, West and East. Only the Southern boundary of the railway is clear and identifiable. The canal could provide a clear, identifiable and strong boundary to the North.
4. It will certainly not help the delivery of good and convenient local government. It will create a ward of wildly differing aspiration and expectation from its four principle constituent parts. It will be neither geographically or demographically cohesive. Neither fish nor fowl.

In terms of boundaries the proposed ward will stretch from West Byfleet Station in the East to the Western fringe of Woking town centre. It is virtually impossible to travel between these points without leaving the ward and travelling through Horsell or Mount Hermon wards.

I hope to have made a persuasive case that Woodham shall remain with Horsell. It is in fact even easier to make a case for the area South of the Wheatsheaf canal bridge [The Grove, Ferndale Road and Broomhall] to remain in Horsell. Residents of these roads have, for generations, regarded themselves as part of Horsell. Horsell outdoor events such as the May Fair take place on the Wheatsheaf common facing their houses. Whilst they may be geographically closer to the Woking shops their hearts and minds are in Horsell. Their disassociation from Sheerwater is complete.

To conclude. I am convinced that to retain the desirable sense of community cohesion, geographic and demographic identity it is imperative for Woodham, The Grove and Broomhall to be joined with Horsell as one three councillor ward as proposed in the Woking Borough Council submission of May 2014.

Yours faithfully

Cllr. Michael Smith. Horsell East and Woodham.

Woking District

Personal Details:

Name: Melanie Whitehand

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Organisation Name: Woking Borough Council

Comment text:

As a Borough Councillor for Woking I am happy to support the proposals suggested by the Boundary Commission with just the one suggestion for change. The Ward proposed to be named as 'Sheerwater' be reconsidered and be known as 'Canal side', The change would be more appropriate and given the area covered under that Ward boundary, the reference to the Basingstoke Canal is a more suitable name. Thank you Councillor Melanie Whitehand

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded