

**Elmbridge Electoral Review 2015**

**Submission to the Local Government  
Boundary Commission for England**

**by Esher & Walton Conservative Association**

## **Elmbridge Electoral Review**

This document is the Official Submission of the Esher & Walton Conservative Association (EWCA) in response to the consultation being held by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on future warding arrangements for Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC).

The Conservative Group that forms the administration of Elmbridge Borough Council asked for this review with an aim to reduce the number of Borough Councillors. We are therefore pleased that the LGBCE is minded to recommend a reduction to 48 Councillors.

The Esher & Walton Conservative Association notes the Commission's guidance in relation to Councils that elect by thirds. Elmbridge Borough Council took the decision on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014 to retain the by thirds electoral system. Considering the Commission's guidance and the law, we consider that all new wards should have three members in order to ensure electoral equality for all voters in the borough. In addition to creating inequality, having a few wards that do not vote when the rest of the borough is voting causes confusion with the electorate.

Elmbridge is made up of a number of towns and villages each with its own identity and, ideally, these would remain separated amongst electoral wards. However, this is not possible under the by thirds electoral system and it would take more than two or three exceptions to keep all the community boundaries. We believe that different communities can join together in electoral wards – like some do in the Surrey County Council divisions that cover the borough – without affecting or damaging the identities of those communities.

EWCA notes that Elmbridge Borough Council agreed, at a Special Full Council meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015, a proposed pattern of future ward boundaries. We largely agree with this proposal, although have five minor suggested amendments. Below we shall comment on the sixteen wards proposed by the Council.

### **Proposed Claygate Ward**

EWCA supports the view of Elmbridge Borough Council and Claygate Parish Council that the existing Claygate ward should remain in its current form under the new arrangements. Claygate is a village with a very strong community identity. It has a vibrant village centre and facilities such as the Centre for the Community, railway station, doctor's surgery, village hall, parish church, primary school and recreation ground. Claygate also has a wide variety of local organisations such as a Gardening Society, an amateur dramatic society, a branch of the WI and a Scout Group.

Claygate is the only community in Elmbridge to have a Parish Council and we believe is essential for convenient and effective local government that the Parish boundary remains coterminous with the ward boundary. Claygate also has an active Village Association.

Claygate is bordered to the east and south by the A3 and the borough's boundary. To the north there is a large physical separation from Hinchley Wood. The western boundary with Esher is marked by River Rythe. Therefore Claygate has clear physical boundaries.

Whilst we recognise under a 48-seat Council, Claygate would be about 11% smaller than the desired average, we believe its strong community and physical location means that, in this instance, this small variance should be allowed and that the boundaries of the current Claygate ward should be retained.

Proposed Oxshott & Stoke d'Abernon Ward and  
Proposed Cobham & Downside Ward

EWCA largely supports the proposal of Elmbridge Borough Council for these two wards that cover the communities of Cobham, Downside, Oxshott and Stoke d'Abernon. These four communities are separated from rest of the borough by the A3 and by open space and commons.

We support the proposed names suggested for the two wards. All four communities have strong identities in their own right and therefore all should be recognised in the ward names.

The Council's proposal has Painshill Park in the proposed Cobham & Downside, as distinct from the Hersham South ward it is currently located in. We support this move as Painshill is an important and recognised feature of Cobham and is physically located in Cobham. We also support moving the New Course of Burhill Golf Course into the proposed Hersham Village as it accessible from that side of the boundary rather than the Cobham side where it currently is located. It would also join the New Course with the Old Course.

EWCA proposes two minor amendments to the Council's proposal.

We recommend that the northern boundary of the proposed Cobham & Downside should run along the A3 from the borough boundary in the west until it goes north just after Covent Lane. The Council's proposal sees the boundary dip southwards to include a small part of Portsmouth Road and Covent Lane below the A3 in the proposed Hersham Village. The very few electors found in this part are served by the Cobham community facilities rather than Hersham and the A3 makes a very strong and clear boundary.

Secondly, whilst both these Wards are within the required electoral variance under the Council's proposal, we believe a minor amendment could allow for better electoral equality and a clearer boundary between the two Wards without affecting community identities. EWCA would therefore like to propose the following roads are moved from the proposed Oxshott & Stoke d'Abernon to the proposed Cobham & Downside:

1. Icklingham Road (62 electors)
2. Icklingham Gate (8 electors)
3. Burstead Close (50 electors)
4. The Barton (46 electors)
5. Grenville Close (11 electors)
6. Beechmeads (17 electors)
7. Leigh Hill Road (part currently in Cobham Fairmile Ward) (14 electors)
8. TOTAL – 208 electors (*electorate figures as of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015*)

These minor amendments would see the electorate of the proposed Oxshott & Stoke d'Abernon decrease to 6,444 electors and the electorate of the proposed Cobham & Downside increase to 6,202 electors.

Proposed Weybridge Brooklands Ward *and*  
Proposed Weybridge Riverside Ward

We support the Council's proposals with regards to these two wards which cover the town of Weybridge. We believe the southern boundary of the proposed Weybridge Brooklands in the form of the Severn Hills Road ensures a clear and identifiable boundary along a major road.

The proposed Weybridge Brooklands covers the part of the town south of the railway line and the areas west of, and including, Heath Road.

Brooklands is a well-known name not only locally but internationally due to the world famous race track. It is also the name of a college, industrial estate, museum and out of town retail centre. All these features are in the proposed ward and we believe are the outstanding single feature that unites the ward. We therefore fully support the Weybridge Brooklands name.

The proposed Weybridge Riverside is very much centred on Weybridge town centre. It also includes the stretch of the River Thames that comes through the town. The Thames is an important feature of Weybridge and we believe the name Weybridge Riverside reflects this fact whilst ensuring it's a recognisable and logical name.

Proposed Oatlands & Ashley Park Ward

EWCA fully supports the Council's proposal in relation to this proposed ward.

Oatlands has a strong community identity, focused around the village centre and the nearby Oatlands Park Hotel. Ashley Park, an area of Walton-on-Thames that currently shares a County Councillor with Oatlands, neighbours Oatlands. There is no barrier – natural or man-made – that separates these two communities. Indeed, going down Oatlands Drive or turning left out of Oatlands Chase onto Ashley Road you go seamlessly from one to the other without realising it. The southern boundary is the railway line and Walton-on-Thames station would serve the ward's residents. The town centres of Weybridge and Walton-on-Thames are both just outside the ward's boundaries and would serve as the main shopping centres for residents. This mirrors the current situation of the Oatlands and Ashley Park communities.

Proposed Walton Central Ward *and*  
Proposed Walton Ambleside Ward *and*  
Proposed Rydens Ward

EWCA largely supports the proposals of Elmbridge Borough Council for these three wards. These cover the majority of Walton-on-Thames and part of neighbouring Hersham.

We support entirely the Council's proposed Walton Central Ward. Importantly this keeps the town centre united in one ward. It also includes the areas immediately to the north-east and south-east of the town centre.

The proposed Rydens Ward takes the part of Walton-on-Thames known as Rydens, an area of Hersham around Rydens School and the Fieldcommon estate. The proposed Walton Ambleside Ward consists of residential areas on the northern and eastern edges of Walton-on-Thames.

Fieldcommon is an isolated community in its own right within Walton-on-Thames. However, we believe it is right that it is situated in the same ward as the area immediately to its south along Molesey Road. Currently, Fieldcommon is situated in Walton North despite being physically separated from the rest of Walton North and it being impossible to reach Fieldcommon from the rest of Walton North without leaving the Ward. We believe the proposed arrangement would be an improvement on the current situation.

The proposed Rydens Ward would also unite all of the Walton-on-Thames section of Molesey Road into one Ward. This is currently split amongst three wards. This section of Molesey Road shares the same issues and concerns – for example in recent times two large planning applications including a proposed new 1000-home development and a new industrial estate have been suggested. The area also has reoccurring issues relating to neighbouring an existing industrial estate. We believe it would lead to more convenient and effective local government if all of this area was in one Ward rather than the current three.

The Walton-on-Thames and Hersham parts of the proposed Rydens Ward are connected by two significant roads – Hersham Road and Molesey Road. The 514 bus runs through Fieldcommon and goes south down Molesey Road. The 461 bus runs down Molesey Road, including outside Fieldcommon, and down Rydens Road until the Ambleside Avenue junction – this unites Fieldcommon with both the Walton-on-Thames and Hersham parts of the proposed Ward.

EWCA would like to suggest two minor amendments for the proposed Rydens Ward.

We believe Rydens Avenue and its cul-de-sacs are important parts of the Rydens community in Walton-on-Thames and therefore we would propose they be included in the proposed Rydens Ward rather than the proposed Walton Ambleside Ward. We would suggest the following are included in the proposed Rydens Ward:

1. Rydens Avenue (251 electors)
2. Gladsmuir Close (33 electors)
3. Brunswick Close (29 electors)
4. Beecot Lane (36 electors)
5. TOTAL – 349 electors (*electorate figures as of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015*)

In addition, we propose move the following from Hersham Village to Rydens. The main vehicular access to both of these roads is from Hersham Road, in the Rydens Ward, and therefore we feel adding them to the Rydens Ward would create a more logical and clear boundary. The two roads are:

1. Cowley Crescent (70 electors)
2. Beech Close (108 electors)
3. TOTAL – 178 electors (*electorate figures as of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015*)

These two changes would give Rydens Ward an electorate of 5,728 electors (as of 2015). Therefore in addition to the reasons outlined above, our proposed changes would ensure Rydens Ward was within the electoral variance and thus ensure electoral equality. At the same time, it ensures the Ward is still on the smaller side due to the large increase in electorate the Rydens Ward will see by 2020.

Our proposed changes above would change the electorate of the proposed Walton Ambleside Ward to 5,938 electors and the proposed Hersham Village Ward to 6,178 electors.

We believe this amendment would strengthen the proposed Rydens Ward and give it a strong community identity including the Rydens parts of both Walton-on-Thames and Hersham, whilst ensuring electoral quality both now and in 2020.

### Proposed Hersham Village Ward

With the exception of the amendments proposed above relating to the boundaries with the proposed Cobham & Downside and the proposed Rydens, we fully support the Council's proposal for this ward.

We strongly believe Whiteley Village is an integral part of Hersham and should remain connected with the village centre. The residents of Whiteley Village, a purpose built community for older people, use the Hersham Centre for the Community located in Queens Road. It is served by one bus service – the 564 – which connects it to Hersham village centre, including the shops and Hersham Centre for the Community Centre. We therefore believe there is a strong community interest in ensuring Whiteley Village, and the neighbouring Burwood Park estate, is in the same ward as Hersham village centre.

The boundary of the proposed Hersham Village and Weybridge Brooklands Wards runs down the middle of Seven Hills Road. We believe this road is a strong, identifiable boundary and marks the boundary of the Hersham and Weybridge communities.

### Proposed Esher & Hersham Riverside Ward

EWCA fully supports the Council's proposal in relation to this proposed ward.

This ward consists of Esher and part of Hersham. These are connected by Esher Road (the A244) and the 458 and 459 buses run along Esher Road into Esher centre.

The Lower Green community currently sits in the Esher Ward. We agree with the Council's proposal to join Lower Green with the Weston Green community. The two communities neighbour each other and share community facilities. The railway line forms a strong and recognisable boundary between the proposed Esher & Hersham Riverside and the proposed Weston Green & Hinchley Wood.

### Proposed Molesey Riverside Ward and

### Proposed Molesey South Ward

EWCA largely supports the proposal of Elmbridge Borough Council for these two wards that cover the majority of the town of Molesey.

The Council has largely sought to split the town via the strong and identifiable boundary of the Walton Road. We agree this is a good, clear boundary and our one minor suggested amendment is to strengthen this boundary. The Council's proposal has a very small portion south of Walton Road between Langton Road and Seymour Road in the proposed Molesey Riverside Ward. We suggest that this small portion should be in the proposed Molesey South Ward so that the boundary runs in the middle of Walton Road.

### Proposed Thames Ditton Ward and

### Proposed Long Ditton Ward and

### Proposed Weston Green & Hinchley Wood Ward

EWCA support the Council's proposal for these three wards which cover the eastern part of the borough.

The proposed Thames Ditton Ward includes Thames Ditton along with adjoining parts of East Molesey. The proposed Long Ditton Ward includes Long Ditton and a small amount of Hinchley Wood.

The proposed Weston Green & Hinchley Wood Ward includes the distinct communities of Weston Green and Hinchley Wood in the same ward. Whilst undesirable, we recognise inevitably a small part of Hinchley Wood would be in the proposed Long Ditton Ward. This is necessary to ensure fair electoral equality and that three-member wards exist across the borough. However, we pleased that the shopping centre, medical practice and Hinchley Wood train station would remain united in the proposed Weston Green & Hinchley Wood Ward. You can travel between the two communities via the A309 (Hampton Court Way/Kingston By-Pass).

The proposed Weston Green & Hinchley Wood also includes the area known as Lower Green, currently in the Esher Ward. As mentioned in the Esher & Hersham Riverside section above, we support this proposal. There is no physical or man-made barrier between the two areas and they share community facilities. Esher railway station also serves both communities as does the 515 bus.

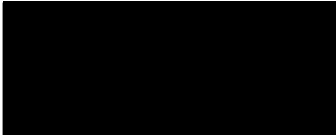
### Conclusion

In summary, we largely support the proposals of Elmbridge Borough Council and, as detailed above, suggest the following amendments:

1. Adjusting the Hersham Village and Cobham & Downside boundary to align with the A3 from the borough boundary in the west to just after Covent Lane
2. Moving Rydens Avenue and its cul-de-sacs from Walton Ambleside to Rydens
3. Moving Beech Close and Cowley Crescent from Hersham Village to Rydens

4. Adjusting the Molesey Riverside and Molesey South boundary to align with Walton Road between Langton Road and Seymour Road
5. Moving Icklingham Road, Icklingham Gate, Burstead Close, The Barton, Grenville Close, Beechmeads and Leigh Hill Road from Oxshott & Stoke d'Abernon to Cobham & Downside

We believe the Council's proposal, with our amendments, recognise the community identities in Elmbridge whilst ensuring the Commission's statutory criteria regarding electoral equality, effective and convenient local government and three-member wards.



John Caton  
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