

Elmbridge District

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name:

Comment text:

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24th August 2015

The Review Officer
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-78 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ref. **Elmbridge Review - Hinchley Wood & Weston Green**

I write to comment on the LGBCE suggestions dated 30th June, 2015, specifically in relation to the proposed new Hinchley Wood & Weston Green ward.

1. I am glad to see that the Commission recognised the important community that constitutes Weston Green and kept together the current ward of the same name that I am elected to represent as one of its two Residents' Association Borough Councillors. The adjustment made to the Hinchley Wood part of the new ward from what had been proposed by Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) following the strength of feeling demonstrated by residents was clearly necessary. However I would like to make the following comments with regard to what is currently proposed for the west of the new ward above.

2. The Commission has seen fit to propose extending the west of the new ward to take in one road and a part of another to 'square off' the ward, namely Blair Avenue and part of Douglas Road in KT10. This is hardly a measure that makes any attempt to 'reflect community'.

3. The community in this geographic area spreads naturally further west than beyond these properties, following the line of the railway. Indeed a glance at a map depicting the newly drawn ward boundary lines shows very clearly how the current Esher ward 'eats' into this geography. (See map in Appendix One).

4. Historically Lower Green was with Weston Green in the much larger ward of Thames Ditton and together in the wider parish of St Nicholas, Thames Ditton.

5. EBC has twice now suggested that this area, known as Lower Green, more properly belongs with Weston Green rather than with Esher ward. As the Conservative majority local authority has three Conservative councillors covering the area of Lower Green, one might reasonably assume that they know how the community relationships work in these roads. One of these Councillors spoke at Full Council about the Commission ignoring the railway line as a natural boundary and recognising the logic of Lower Green and Weston Green being in the same ward.

6. The Esher & Walton Conservative Association have commented, "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."

7. The Chairman of the Residents' Association that encompasses Weston Green has also written on behalf of the Association in support of this move.

8. The local member of parliament, Dominic Raab MP, also wrote to support the addition of this area of Lower Green to the new Hinchley Wood & Weston Green ward.

9. I agree with the EBC proposal regarding Lower Green ie that the area north of the railway line should be included in the new Hinchley Wood & Weston Green ward. The Commission states in its criteria that there is a strong need to respect local community ties and not adopt a purely statistical agenda. The points below are designed to demonstrate the natural identities and interests that Lower Green and Weston Green have in common.

10. My comments fall into two main areas - those that relate to the whole area known as Lower Green, north of the railway line, and separately, Cranmere Primary School.

Cranmere Primary School

The most notable shared facility is Cranmere Primary School, which very much sees itself as serving families from both communities. The challenges – children's safety, increased traffic and parking created by the new, relocated school will need to be addressed by both Lower Green and Weston Green working together.

More children attend Cranmere that live outside the Esher ward than live within it.

The Head Teacher has written to the Commission and other governors agree that the school (when relocated to Arran Way, Esher in 2016) needs to be in the new ward of Hinchley Wood & Weston Green so that the current valuable support and important community links, built over many years, are retained.

The very active PTA and board of governors have always included Weston Green parents and residents, despite being technically in the Esher ward (by a few metres).

Both the long-serving, retiring Chairman of Governors and the candidate that has been asked to stand as her replacement from September 2015, are both Weston Green residents.

There are strong links to the church of All Saints' Weston, situated in Weston Green, where the school has traditionally held services and events and Cranmere governors, parents and children attend.

All Saints' Weston is nominated by Guildford Diocese to provide pastoral care for the school.

The Vicar of All Saints' Weston serves on the Cranmere Board of Governors and was asked to chair the panel to appoint the new Head Teacher.

The school has asked to have a page in the All Saints' Weston Parish Magazine, demonstrating its strong affiliation to Weston Green.

The Lower Green/Weston Green Community

Lower Green and Weston Green share many of the same aims and problems ie. smells from the sewerage treatment plant, low water pressure in the Summer and increased HGV movements which have historically been addressed by Weston Green councillors.

It was councillors from Weston Green who attended the recent Lower Green Community Action Day.

There are shared recreation facilities. Weston Green's only children's playground and sports field is situated in Lower Green and fishermen from Lower Green fish regularly in the River Mole from Emberside Recreation Ground in Weston Green.

Residents from both Weston Green and Lower Green attend both attend the 'Silver and Gold Club' held on Tuesdays at the Lower Green Community Centre.

Elmbridge funding is in place for a new Youth Video and Photography Project starting this September specifically for young people from Weston and Lower Green. This will showcase the two communities, with a screening in April 2016.

As with Cranmere Primary School, there are similarly strong current and historical ties between residents in Lower Green and members of All Saints' Weston. Parents and children attend 'SmAll Saints' (pre-school worship), 'Messy Church' and the new 4pm Family Service and see Weston Green as their natural local church.

The All Saints' Missioner works closely with families in Lower Green.

Recognising these ties, Paul Bryer as the Archdeacon of Dorking is currently exploring the transfer of the roads in Lower Green from the parish of Christchurch Esher to the parish of All Saints' Weston.

The Foodbank that operates from All Saints' Weston primarily serves Lower Green.

The Surrey Police Authority neighbourhood area scheme puts Lower Green and Weston Green together in the same area. The two share the same Police Community Support Officers and Panel Meetings. (See map in Appendix One).

People from Weston Green work in Lower Green and vice versa.

The bus route links Weston Green and Lower Green and access to the nearest railway station for Lower Green is via Weston Green.

Once the new Co-op opens, Lower Green and Weston Green will have a shared local supermarket on the Hampton Court Way (former site of The Ewe pub) to add to the other shops.

For all the above reasons I urge the Commission to adopt the proposal voted by Elmbridge Borough Council whereby the area known as Lower Green, to the north of the railway line, is incorporated into the new Hinchley Wood & Weston Green ward where it most closely fits. The statistical composition still falls within the bounds of the +/- 10% requirement.

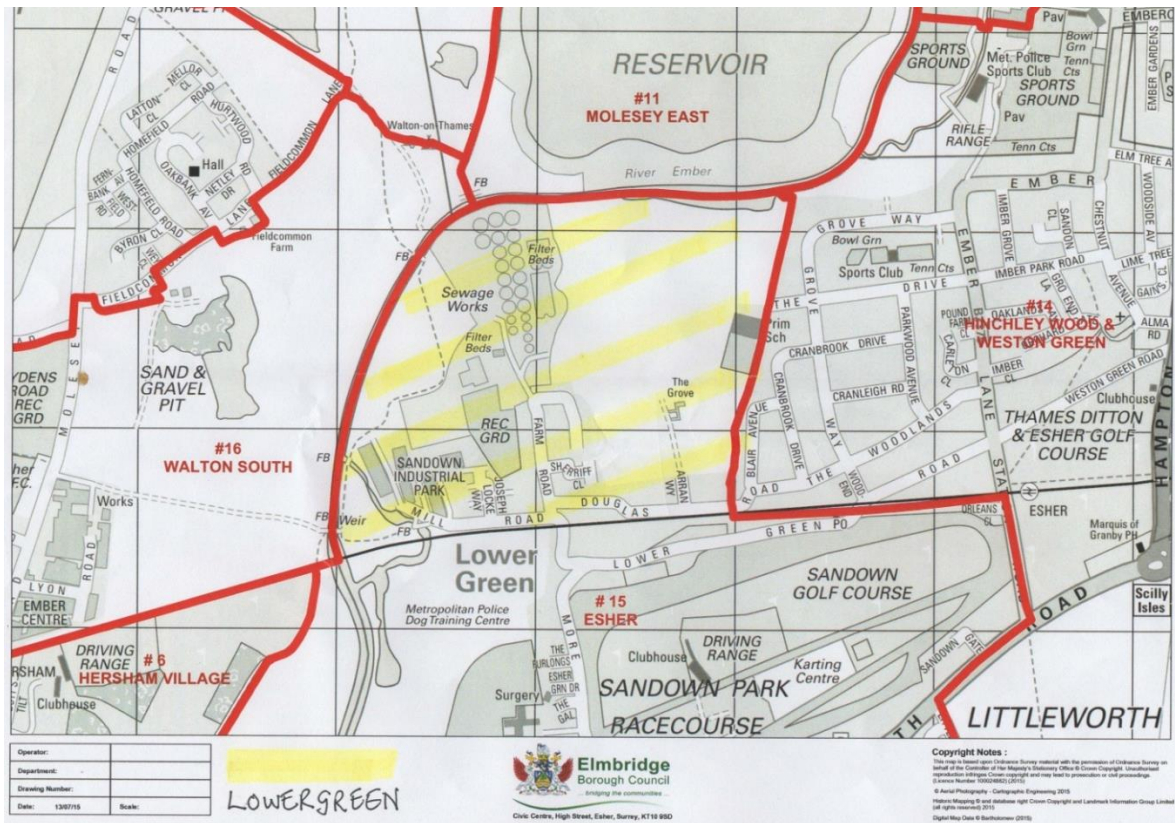
I trust all is clear and that you will add this to the submissions on the LGBCE website.

Yours faithfully,

Ruth M Bruce
EBC Councillor, Weston Green Ward
24th August, 2015

APPENDIX ONE

1. Map showing area of Lower Green north of the railway line.



2. Map showing Police Neighbourhood Area including both Lower Green and Weston Green.



Surrey Police Neighbourhood Boundaries shown in blue.

Lower Green and Weston Green area circled in red.