

Mole Valley District Council

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Comment text:

This response is provided on behalf of Ashtead Residents' Association (ARA), whose membership spreads across the whole of the geographically delineated conurbation of Ashtead. It is important to remember that, as stated in the Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan: "Ashtead is separated from Epsom to the east by areas of woodland and from Leatherhead to the west by a small strip of grazing land and the embankments of the M25 motorway: it is bounded to the north by the strong landscape setting of Ashtead Common and to the south by a rolling landscape of pasture, hedgerows and woodland". Ashtead is a recognisable single entity with clear dividing lines between it and neighbouring communities and ARA operates on behalf of residents across the whole. Ashtead is currently split into 3 wards with a total of 7 District Councillors who represent the largest settlement in Mole Valley. The wards are: Common (2 Councillors), Park (2 Councillors) and Village (the most populous ward with 3 Councillors). ARA has serious concerns that the proposed reduction in the number of Mole Valley Councillors will lead to Ashtead's representation being reduced to 6 Councillors shared across only 2 wards. If it is to be the case that Ashtead is to be reduced to 2 wards, it is very difficult to see how best to create the boundary lines between them. Ashtead is a thriving community with many, many, many volunteer-run local organisations and sports clubs, a great many of which are centred in Village ward. Village ward contains the majority of our local amenities: most of the three shopping areas, 2 primary schools, a GP surgery, dentists, opticians, the library, churches of different denominations and their accompanying community facilities, the Youth Centre, the community recreation ground and our much-used Village Hall. Park ward has a church, with community facilities, a primary and an infant school and it houses our one state secondary school and also the private City of London Freeman's school. Common ward has one infant school, one GP surgery and a few shops on the northern side of one of the shopping areas. Without an in-depth knowledge of how these matters are assessed and decisions made, It is very difficult to recommend how new ward boundaries should be drawn; the current boundaries run east/west and that is perhaps the best way to continue when creating 2 wards out of the three existing ones, although we would of course prefer to keep the wards as they are and gain 2 Councillors, not lose one. The important thing is to ensure that Ashtead remains as one entity that is represented by Councillors working in wards located within its boundaries so that the existing level of cohesive representation in respect of highways, transport, education, primary healthcare, planning matters and environmental issues is not lost. Glynis Peterkin Chairman, Ashtead Residents' Association 19th November 2021

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded