

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION from Guildford Labour Party

We agree with the commission's approach and proposals. We list here three amendments which would make for more coherent wards in the town. Our remarks are not intended to be for the electoral advantage of the Labour Party, but insights that have been accumulated by years of canvassing and listening to residents.

WESTBOROUGH

We like the way Westborough boundaries have accommodated similar communities and anticipated changes. In particular, the Ashenden Estate now forms a coherent demographic and community within it. We would like to propose two further adjustments along the same lines.

1. Move the Weston Road streets in K2 into Stoughton

We propose moving the 'Weston Road' group from polling district K2 into the proposed Stoughton South ward. By this we mean the area south of the Aldershot Road (Beckingham Road, Weston Road, Deerbarn Road, Parkhurst Road, Bridgehill Close, The Crescent, Woodbridge Hill Gardens, Grantley Road and Gardens). The number of electors moved would be around 760. This would take the electoral variance up to 10% at 2712 electors per councillors which is within tolerances.

This group of streets has much more in common with Stoughton than Park Barn Estate in Westborough. Residents tend to use the facilities in Stoughton South rather than Westborough, specifically the shops on local Woodbridge Hill, Worplesdon Road and Aldershot Road. Residents also gravitate to Stoughton Recreation ground, and use transport links that lie on the two main roads of Stoughton South ward along the two main roads that run through the area. Homes were built at much the same time as homes in Stoughton and draw on a similar demographic so its homeowners identify with Stoughton because they share its civic concerns and housing issues.

2. Move Broadacres area (L1) – or some it - into Westborough

We propose moving the majority of Broadacres polling district (L1) from Worplesdon into Westborough.

Broadacres is an urban area situated on the edge of the Park Barn estate, and includes the north of the estate along Park Barn Drive, and the more recent housing around School Meadow and the Barnwood Flats. Geographically, demographically and socially, they already identify with the estate whose shops, green spaces and transport links they use. These roads are similar to the rest of Park Barn, and very different indeed from the large, rural ward of Worplesdon. Its interests and behaviours merit inclusion in a more urban ward.

If the Broadacres were to move into Westborough, this would allow growing space for the planned expansion of Worplesdon between now and 2027, when it would fall within the 10% tolerance. If the commission does not consider this move to be a viable right now, it would be really helpful to seek alternative ways of ensuring the north of Park Barn Drive, Barnwood and surrounding roads are included in Westborough, even if more recent Broadacre estate cannot.

HOLY TRINITY & CHRISTCHURCH

3. Create a single-councillor town-centre ward to represent the urban streets.

We support the commission's instinct to bring together communities with similar needs, similar patterns of behaviour (such as shopping and recreation) and with an existing sense of community. However, there is one area where this has not been achieved in the very centre of Guildford, and in particular in the new ward that combines Christchurch and Holy Trinity.

Christchurch and Holy Trinity have been combined in an East-West marriage, but this new ward is fractured by significant demographic differences which divide the north from the south. In the north, going uphill to the downs, is a community of people who own large well-kept detached homes; downhill are people who live in flats or in large houses divided into flats, some of them in poor condition and populated in many cases by single people. The uphill community drives to big supermarkets; the other pops round the corner on foot to the corner store. One has garden space, greenery, space to park; the other has busy streets, almost no greenery, sparse parking and a limited number of actual gardens. Instead, the downhill community tend to go to public places to enjoy outdoor time. (The absence of gardens was bemoaned during the pandemic.) Uphill has quiet residential roads and the other lies along busy routes and car-filled streets and all that entails. During coronavirus, those up the hill worked from home; the others largely went out to work.

A sense of civic 'belonging' for these two broad populations is also different. Downhill, people are less likely to be registered, and less likely to vote even if they are registered. Too many do not participate in the political process, which in turn encourages them to see local government as something that is done to them. They are sometimes cynical about local democracy: 'it makes no difference'; 'elections all produce the same result'; 'all politicians are the same'.

"A friend of mine who lives in this area said to me recently that elections seem laughable because the parties are preoccupied by green belt issues and the state of shops in the High Street, when the residents here don't even have a blade of grass in their own road and the state of many houses is worse than the shops. She said: We can't even afford to shop in the shops!" **Sue Hackman**

The overwhelming positive we see coming out of the commission, is making people feel that there is a tighter link between their council and them. We feel a single councillor ward is warranted for this area, because it is a coherent demographic but it has poor visibility, feels alienated from democracy, and lacks a voice. A councillor of their own would recognise and include them, speak for them and help to restore participation.

- Along Sydenham Road and Harvey Road and roads between such as Jenner Road and Oxford Terrace, Addison and Kline Roads
- In the triangle made by Epsom Rd, Cross Lanes and London Rd
- Along the High Street and roads off, especially the top end of the High St above the junction with Stoke Rd
- A considerable stretch of large divided houses along London Rd and Epsom Road moving out of town as far as and including Crossways.

This area would constitute a ward just within the minimum tolerances.

Sue Hackman

Secretary
on behalf Guildford Labour Party