

Waverley Borough Council

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Comment text:

COMMENTS ON DRAFT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REPORT These are the comments of Elstead Parish Council on the draft Boundary Commission report on Waverley Borough. The Parish Council notes that the Commission has proposed that Elstead and Peper Harow parishes should be represented by a single borough councillor (instead of 2 currently), and that Thursley and Brook parishes should be detached from the current ward. Elstead PC contends that this would leave the 2 parishes under-represented to an extent which is both unjustified and discriminatory. Under the Commission proposals, Elstead and Peper Harow would have 2,168 electors per councillor, a variance of +15% against the average for the borough, based on 2020 data. The Commission notes in its report that a variance of greater than + or - 10% should be avoided. For 2027, the Commission expects that the variance would reduce to 8% owing to the faster population growth elsewhere in the borough. This assumption is based on data supplied by WBC which predicts a population growth of 11.6% for the borough as a whole but only 4.75% (103 electors) for Elstead and Peper Harow. Elstead PC has no idea how these population growth figures are calculated. What we do know is that under the Waverley Local Plan Part 1 Elstead and Peper Harow have been required to find sufficient land to accommodate an additional 160 dwellings over the life of the plan. Some of these dwellings were constructed and occupied by 2020, but the majority – in excess of 100 – were not. It can reasonably be expected that the remainder will be built and occupied by 2027, as there is currently intense interest in the sites identified in the ward for development. This is likely to produce an additional 200 or so electors by 2027, which in turn would result in a variance by 2027 of over 12%, compared with the 8% predicted in the report. It would be grossly inequitable to impose such an imbalance in electoral representation on a rural area with a dispersed population. In normal circumstances, such areas are afforded a modest imbalance in the other direction in order to compensate for the problems in representing geographically diverse constituencies. It is significant however that the Commission's proposals would lead to the over-representation of the urban areas of the borough and the under representation of the more rural areas such as Elstead and Peper Harow. Farnham would have 1 councillor per 1,922 electors, Godalming 1 per 1,858 electors and Haslemere 1 per 1,846 electors (2020 figures). By contrast, Elstead and Peper Harow would have a single councillor for 2,168 electors. This is manifestly undemocratic and would be an outcome which could be subject to successful judicial challenge. Elstead Parish Council therefore asks the Commission to reconsider its proposals and to retain the 2 member ward for Elstead, Peper Harow, Thursley and Brook. This could be achieved by including Tilford parish in the ward. Tilford is a parish with close connections to Elstead, in particular in sharing the same Parish Clerk.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded