

Clerk: Mr Simon Bold



Review Officer (Tandridge)  
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10 July 2023

Dear LGBCE

**Whyteleafe Village Council - response to draft recommendations for Tandridge District Council (TDC) ward boundaries**

Whyteleafe Village Council ("the Council") has reviewed the draft recommendations on ward boundaries and acknowledges the need for proposals to reflect a balance of councillor representation, community identity, local opinion and needs.

It has been noted that a single councillor exception has been made for Woldingham. The Council is content to accommodate this and would, in fact, extend this single councillor ward approach to include Tatsfield and Chaldon.

The proposed boundary changes would place Whyteleafe Recreation Ground within Warlingham and assign Portley Wood into Whyteleafe. The Council opposes both these recommendations. The Council's detailed response follows.

**Representation**

The Council is concerned by the underlying democratic deficit present in the northern areas of Tandridge. The draft recommendations reveal insufficient representation in this region, with variances from the average that are significantly higher than in other parts of the District. The proposed wards, with variances ranging from 2% to 11%, clearly indicate a disparity in representation that must be rectified to ensure fair and equitable democratic processes.

Highlighting the severity of the situation, all the wards with variances above the average are situated north of the M25 (except for Burstow, Horne & Outwood). This northern area is the most built-up within Tandridge with a likelihood of speculative development which, if successful, would further exacerbate this disparity over time. To address this issue, the Council strongly recommends allocating additional councillors to the northern region to ensure adequate representation and uphold democratic principles.

It is also the Council's view that the recommendations for Whyteleafe have been compromised due to proposals relating to other areas. For example, the resultant Whyteleafe and Portley ward would be too big with a relatively large population of Tandridge residents (8%).



The recommendation to keep Woldingham separate and a single member ward – contrary to previous advice – is inconsistent with what is proposed for the rest of the District (where most Wards will be represented by three councillors).

However, the Council is not opposed to Woldingham remaining a separate ward but it believes that the same logic should also apply to Tatsfield and Chaldon, which are similarly distinct. The creation of two additional single-member wards would ensure that residents in these areas have dedicated councillors who can effectively address their unique needs and concerns, while taking the balance of members from wards to the south of the District. The Council would encourage the Boundary Commission to increase the number of councillors in more urban areas as a matter of urgency.

### **Community Identity**

The proposed boundary change to the north-east of Whyteleafe, particularly east of the Godstone Road and the adjacent side roads, including Downsway, Maple Road, Maple Close and Hillview, is unacceptable. The character and identity of this area is strongly wedded to Whyteleafe including the readily accessible multi-sports recreation facility of Whyteleafe Recreation Ground ("The Rec"). This facility includes the only children's play area in Whyteleafe and is popular with Whyteleafe residents given its broad appeal and location at the bottom of the (Bourne) valley. It is relatively inconvenient to the majority of Warlingham residents who have to travel up and down long arterial roads or footpaths to reach the park – indeed, Warlingham has several alternative parks and play areas within its own settlement. As a result, the Rec is a fundamental part of Whyteleafe's identity and plays a key role in meeting the needs of this community.

The Council firmly believes that all these areas rightfully belong to Whyteleafe ward and should not be included within the Warlingham ward.

With respect to the recommendation to include Portley within Whyteleafe, this is an area of large properties and low density whereas much of Whyteleafe is much more densely populated with a greater mix of housing types including terraced housing and apartment blocks. The character of these two areas differs greatly.

Back to the east and the residents of Hillbury Road and its adjacent roads, namely Westhall Road, Oakley Road, Court Farm Road and Tithepit Shaw Lane (all on the Warlingham side of the Oxted railway line) have an affinity with Warlingham. As do the residents directly to the south of this area in Stuart Road and Succumbs Hill. All these areas would be suited to transfer into Warlingham West and eventually into Warlingham Parish. Court Bushes Road which is comprised predominantly of apartment blocks should remain within Whyteleafe.

The Local Government Boundary Commission recommendations, as they stand, for the areas above require further review to ensure that the aims of building upon character and community identity are properly met.

### **Wider and salient points to consider**

Whyteleafe is one of four local Parishes behind the adopted Neighbourhood Plan covering Caterham (Valley and Hill), Chaldon and Whyteleafe. This extensive

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document, informed by the views of residents passed its public referendum in May 2021 and was subsequently 'made' by TDC. It now forms part of TDC's development plan.

The proposed boundary changes contradict many of the tenets of the Neighbourhood Plan including the stated priority to protect green open spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan area. To this end, Whyteleafe Recreation Ground is designated as a Local Green Space having been identified by the Whyteleafe community as being of significant value to them and needing to be safeguarded for future generations. The proposed boundary changes would remove the responsibility for its protection (and any future enhancements) away from the community's elected representatives.

Other examples of how the Neighbourhood Plan reflects the wishes of this community and, therefore, the context in which decisions about boundaries should be taken are:

- Any proposal that would result in the loss of community and leisure facilities will only be supported if alternative and equivalent facilities are available (*reference "Policy CCW14: Community Hubs"*)
- The need to protect and improve open spaces...community facilities...to encourage and maintain a healthy population...public access and increasing enjoyment (*reference "Leisure and Community 8.1"*)
- To define and protect neighbourhood character (reference "Neighbourhood Plan Objective no.1") and to encourage the development of infrastructure and services...including a range of community, leisure, cultural and educational facilities in locations that are accessible to the local population (*reference "Neighbourhood Plan Objective no.4"*).

It is clear that the Neighbourhood Plan's vision, objectives and policies could be compromised by the proposed boundary changes, given that elected representatives would no longer be stakeholders to the Plan. We stress again that the Whyteleafe Recreation Ground is the only recreation and leisure facility, and children's play area in Whyteleafe and is, therefore, critically important to the community as cited in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Furthermore, The Bourne Society publication "Village Histories, no.9 Whyteleafe" (ISBN-13 978-0-900992-67-4, pages 10 and 185 refer) states that Sir William Jones (1866-1938) headed a subscription in 1924 to purchase the land from Mr. Balch for the inhabitants of Whyteleafe. It is now a park protected by Fields in Trust in perpetuity.

Given the comments above and objections raised, the Council asks that you reconsider your recommendations in respect of Whyteleafe and make appropriate modifications before announcing your final proposals later in the year.

Yours faithfully

Simon Bold

Clerk, for and on behalf of, Whyteleafe Village Council

# Tandridge

## Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** Whyteleafe Village Council (Representative of a local organisation)

## Comment text:

Dear Review Officer (Tandridge),

Please find attached the comments of Whyteleafe Village Council with respect to the draft recommendations for Tandridge District, Surrey.

A copy has also been sent by post.

Best regards

Simon Bold

Clerk, for and on behalf of, Whyteleafe Village Council

[REDACTED]

## Attached Documents:

- Response of WVC to Boundary Commission proposals July 2023.pdf