

BOUNDARY REVIEW SUBMISSION

CHALDON VILLAGE COUNCIL

Approved and submitted under delegated authority.

Introduction

Chaldon Village Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of Tandridge District. The case for the proposed changes to the existing ward boundaries is not supported, for the reasons we have stated, and Chaldon's status must be retained as a single Councillor ward, recognising the history, environment, topography and distinct character of the Village.

It is vital that Chaldon has strong support from a district councillor who knows, and is focused on, Chaldon and its residents, cares about its future and who can be held to account by residents. A fundamental flaw in the current boundary proposal is that Chaldon could be represented by 3 district councillors from outside the area who do not understand the unique character of the area and challenges faced.

The Westway Ward in Caterham is urban with different priorities and challenges to Chaldon. It is essential for the commission to understand the varying needs of Chaldon residents in comparison to those residing in Westway and Queens Park wards. This is explained further below.

A distinct village - Chaldon

Chaldon is a Village in its own right, with a long history, rural landscape, strong community identity and clear boundaries that are not mere lines on a map but a reflection of a community, with its own character and a sense of self-reliance and self-containment.

Chaldon Village Council echo the feelings of Natural England in that the area has special qualities which are rare in the national context. The consultation document on the Surrey Hills Boundary Consultation summarised well that "It is recognised that this landscape abuts areas of significant population, but retains a high degree of tranquillity, especially in the heart of the area which can only be accessed on foot."

1. Chaldon history – a strong sense of identity

Chaldon holds significant historical importance, being founded in 1086 AD and appearing in historical documents like the Domesday Book. Chaldon has maintained many of its fine historic buildings. The medieval church of St. Peter and St. Paul has an outstanding wall painting dating from 1200. Major houses listed in the Chaldon Hearth Tax Return for 1664 and still surviving are Chaldon Court, Tollsworth Manor, Fryern and Willey Farm, Rook Cottage, Rook Farm and the Parsonage (Glebe House). Many of these are within a protected Conservation Area.

2. A distinct environment

Chaldon's environment is an important asset and sits within the Green Belt. There are miles of public footpaths, the North Downs Way and the Sustrans International Cycle Route. The chalklands, ancient hedgerows, woodlands and meadows are home to some of England's

most special wildlife, including dormice, purple emperor butterflies and endangered wildflowers.

A major feature of recent times has been the vigilance with which the people of Chaldon have protected the tranquillity of Chaldon. They have campaigned against developers and resolutely defended the conservation area, footpaths and bridleways so that Chaldon remains a rural landscape within reach, but not part of, Caterham and increasingly built-up environments.

The recent proposal to extend the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to areas of Chaldon beautifully describes the area: "the scale and drama of the valley and its areas of chalk grassland and ancient woodland – creating scenic compositions and unfolding views. The water tower at Netherne-on-the-Hill and Chaldon Church punctuate the skyline and add interest reflecting the history of the area."

As part of community engagement during the making of the Chaldon Caterham and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan extensive research undertaken on the priorities for Chaldon. Preserving the unique essence of the village and safeguarding the Green Belt emerged as the foremost priorities voiced by the community. These priorities continue to hold huge significance.

3. The Chaldon community identity

There is ongoing work to increase community identity and the Community respects the ideas raised by the current Ward Councillor.

a. Chaldon's strong sense of identity is evident in the community groups that exist, including:

- the Chaldon History Group,
- the Friends of Chaldon Church,
- the Chaldon Community Trust
- Chaldon Village Council
- Chaldon Badminton Club
- Chaldon Cricket Club
- Chaldon Scouts

b. Chaldon community events and activities.

- The Chaldon Village Fete
- Chaldon Fireworks
- Bi-annual footpath walks
- Community litter picks
- History talks
- Annual Village Meeting

c. A deep sense of community - volunteers working together for the benefit of our village

Volunteers help maintain footpaths, attend working parties to maintain the former St Lawrences burial ground, regularly litter pick, and help with events.

d. Chaldon's own facilities

Although predominantly a rural community, Chaldon is well served by facilities in the Village. These include:

- C of E church and a graveyard – St Peter and St Paul's
- Village Hall
- Scouts Hut
- Cricket pavilion
- Six Brothers Field
- Two primary schools – one private and one Church of England
- Golf Club
- The Harrow public house

The long list of local groups and facilities is testament to the deep sense of community and internal engagement amongst the residents of Chaldon. Alongside this is the fact that Chaldon is a rural community with a keen sense of enjoyment from the beautiful surroundings in which it is set.

4. Boundaries

Because of the rural nature of the Village and the protection afforded from Green Belt status, none of the Chaldon Parish Boundaries touch a built-up area. The boundaries are therefore not mere lines on a map but really a reflection of Chaldon, a community, with its own character and a sense of self-reliance and self-containment.

5. Broadband

Broadband speeds in Chaldon, especially in rural areas, pose an issue that is not prevalent in Caterham. The Chaldon, Caterham and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood plan states that data from Ofcom reveals that some rural areas, including parts of Chaldon, are only able to access 10Mbps.

6. Electoral numbers and recommended boundary change

Currently, the number of electors (1,421) in Chaldon is slightly below the desired figure of 1,559 as of 2022, resulting in a variance of 8.85%, which is a slight over representation. To address this, we suggest extending Chaldon's boundary to include Heath Road from the Queens Park ward. This adjustment would bring us closer to the desired number of electors now and looking ahead to 2028. Chaldon Village Council believes that maintaining clear and efficient boundaries for the ward of Chaldon outweigh the drawbacks of incorporating more residents.

7. Future challenges – why Chaldon needs its own dedicated District Councillor

Chaldon currently faces some serious threats to its character in the coming years.

- The Surrey National Golf Course is undertaking topographical surveys for a pre planning application which it is very possible will be for hundreds of new homes.
- The local primary school is expanding significantly and although the Village Council welcomes this parking, traffic and safety will be an important issue that requires addressing.

- The natural environment is continually under threat and the Council has respect for the detailed analysis undertaken as part of the AONB extension consultation in which key areas were accurately identified including: the loss of field boundaries due to hedge removal; the compaction of chalk grassland; high traffic volumes and verge erosion; the extension of garden curtilage and domestic clutter into woodland resulting in the loss of the semi natural character through gradual urbanisation.
- Flooding, that now seems a regular occurrence, with homes again being flooded in May 2023.
- Concerns with parking and traffic speeding through the Village
- Poor road conditions

We repeat that for these, and future issues Chaldon needs to have strong support from a district councillor who knows, and is focused on, Chaldon and its residents; cares about its future and who can be held to account by residents. A fundamental flaw in the current boundary proposal is that Chaldon could be represented by 3 district councillors from outside the area who do not understand the unique character of the area and challenges faced. The Village Council and a single Ward Councillor can work more effectively to optimise the benefits to the community.

Summary – why Chaldon should remain a single councillor ward

Chaldon is a distinctive, self-contained community. Residents and the ward Councillor are able to navigate and participate in activities. Chaldon Village Council considers that the single Councillor ward has successfully enabled it to focus on the priorities of Chaldon ward residents.

We understand that some flexibility in ward sizes is necessary to reflect changes in local communities and interests. We are concerned that prioritising electoral numbers over other criteria weakens the democratic process. **Chaldon Village Council therefore strongly recommends reconsideration of the ward pattern with Chaldon remaining a one councillor ward.**

Tandridge

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

Dear Boundary Commission,

Please find attached a response from Chaldon Village Council to the Tandridge boundary review recommendations.

This has also been submitted via the website.

Kind regards

Helen Broughton

Clerk to Chaldon Village Council

Attached Documents:

- BOUNDARY REVIEW SUBMISSION Approved.docx