MARK SUGDEN, SURREY COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR HINCHLEY WOOD, CLAYGATE AND OXSHOTT, RESPONSE

TO THE LGBCE PROPOSAL ON THE 2023 REVIEW OF SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTORAL DIVISIONS

OVERALL

I write to request that the LGBCE consider amending its proposal for the current SCC electoral Division of Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott. The proposal severs Oxshott in half down the A244 Leatherhead Road moving part into the proposed revised Cobham Division and part into the proposed Esher & Claygate Division and moves Hinchley Wood into a proposed new Long Ditton and Hinchley Wood Division (including Weston Green).

**BACKGROUND**

SCC’s initial electoral boundaries submission, which I supported, along with all the other current Elmbridge Surrey County Councillors proposed very limited changes to the existing Elmbridge electoral Division boundaries. Only one relatively minor change was proposed between the Division I currently represent and the neighbouring The Dittons Division.

For many years Hinchley Wood and Claygate have been part of the same Division. Oxshott was added for electoral equality in the review in 2000 which came into effect for the 2005 SCC elections. The 2010 review maintained this with one change - around 900 electors were added to the Division from Long Ditton in essence on either side of Manor Road North, for electoral equality.

These three settlements have much in common. They are distinct communities, defined urban villages and not towns like Cobham and Esher.

As the current Surrey County Councillor for Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott, elected in 2021, I work closely and effectively with all three distinct communities in the current Division – the respective Elmbridge Borough Councillors, Claygate Parish Council (the only Parish Council in Elmbridge), Hinchley Wood Residents Association (HWRA) and FEDORA (The Federation of Oxshott Residents Associations).

I recognise the key guidelines of:

1.Coterminosity: trying to match as best possible the borough wards with the county divisions

2.Electoral equality

3.Community identity and interests

4.Effective and convenient local government

It is my perspective that community identity and interests are not served by the proposals.

**OXSHOTT**

The LGBCE proposal will split Oxshott in two down the A244 with the area to the West being combined with Cobham and the area to the East being combined with Esher and Claygate. The name of Oxshott being expunged from the name of either of the proposed new Divisions.

FEDORA is opposed to dividing the Oxshott community based on what they and I regard as an arbitrary line down a main road. I am aware that FEDORA has submitted their own response.

Recent successes in Oxshott requested by FEDORA in conjunction with Oxshott residents and the County Council, to obtain a 20mph limit on Oxshott High Street and an overnight HGV ban through Oxshott could have been jeopardised with two County Councillors representing different divides of the same road depending on competing priorities between Oxshott Village and the larger town of Cobham.

While it is accepted that internal road access provides a form of divide between Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott, I would assert that this is only one factor to consider. The main line railway service from London Waterloo to Guildford after leaving Surbiton stops at Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott railway stations in succession.

It is my view that as much of the Oxshott community must be kept as a whole.

The IA Elmbridge Oxshott and Stoke D’Abernon East polling district is projected to have 2,831 electors in 2029. It appears that c1,600 electors have been moved to the proposed revised Cobham Division and that c1,200 remain in the proposed Esher and Claygate Division.

The LGCBE proposal shows the proposed Division of Cobham including part of Oxshott as +8% versus the electoral equality target and the proposed Division of Esher and Claygate including part of Oxshott at +10% versus the electoral equality target.

If the whole of the IA polling district was moved into the proposed Cobham Division then that would take Cobham to c +18%. If the whole of IA was moved into the proposed Esher and Claygate Division that would take that proposed Division to c +23%. These options to keep the Oxshott community together are well outside the +/-10% electoral equality tolerances.

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HINCHLEY WOOD

While the double width section of the A309 Kingston By-pass bisects Hinchley Wood, Hinchley Wood is a distinct, coherent and identifiable community. Arguably the key road divide between Hinchley Wood and Claygate is not the A309 but the Portsmouth Road.

The HWRA was established in 1931. Hinchley Wood is more akin to Claygate and Oxshott -independent shops and businesses centred on Manor Road North around Station Approach and the War Memorial Gardens. In 1999 McDonalds was rebuffed in an attempt to turn the local pub into a drive through fast food outlet in a campaign by residents.

Telegraph Hill southwest of Hinchley Wood joins Claygate and Hinchley Wood and is the largest nearby walking spot and the public footpath from Old Claygate Lane, Claygate that leads to Claygate Lane, Hinchley Wood is well used.

Adding Hinchley Wood to the proposed Esher and Claygate Division as has been suggested in the past would well exceed the electoral equality target.

CLAYGATE

Appears in the Domesday Book of 1086, surrounded by Green Belt and bounded by the A3 provides a distinct community with independent shops on The Parade and restaurants in the Old Village by The Green.

The Claygate Village Association, the precursor to the Parish Council, has just succeeded in a residents’ campaign to prevent an M&S being imposed on it by Elmbridge Borough Council in a council owned car park, a key factor being the potential adverse impact on local independent businesses.

CONCLUSION

While recognising the competing factors that the LGBCE has to take into account and that the present arrangements may not be perfect, they have and are working in practice. I would assert that residents are familiar with them and that the original proposal from SCC to maintain the current boundary for Hinchley Wood, Claygate and Oxshott with only minor amendments is adopted.