

Witley and Milford Parish Council

Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Surrey County Council

Introduction

1. Witley and Milford Parish Council covers the villages of Milford, Witley, Brook and Wormley. We note the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Surrey County Council, and note that Brook and Wormley are proposed to be in a different county division to Witley and Milford.
- 1.1. Witley and Milford Parish Council note the main considerations and objectives of the Commission and agree that improving electoral equality is an important objective.
- 1.2. Witley and Milford Parish Council is disappointed that none of our proposals have been adopted by the Commission.
- 1.3. Witley and Milford Parish Council believe there is a strong case for the villages of Brook and Wormley to be included within the *'Godalming South, Milford and Witley'* division, and doing so would strongly meet the Commission's other two considerations on community identity and effective local government.
- 1.4. Witley and Milford Parish Council note the electoral variance challenge removing Wormley and Brook would create in the proposed *'Frensham, Elstead & Hindhead'* ward. We are sympathetic to the challenge the Commission faces in drawing this ward, but there are plenty of other villages with much stronger existing links to these three villages, but that are outside the proposed ward, such as Norney, Eashing, Shackleford.
- 1.5. Witley and Milford Parish Council note the Commission's desire to receive more evidence on the links between Brook and Wormley and Witley and Milford. We provide this below, alongside evidence to meet the Commission's other objectives.

Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity:

2. The Commission's proposals ignore the clear community identity shared by Brook and Wormley with the rest of Milford and Witley.
- 2.1. Brook and Wormley have a long history of being in the same parish as Milford and Witley.
- 2.2. Children in Brook and Wormley attend the same schools as children in Witley and Milford, namely Witley Infant School, Chandler Junior School and Rodborough Technology College. Brook and Wormley sit outside the catchment areas of schools in Frensham, Elstead and Hindhead. Students from Brook and Wormley will also attend Godalming College, also within the *'Godalming South, Milford and Witley'* ward, as their sixth-form.
- 2.3. Residents of Brook and Wormley use the same shops as people living in Witley and Milford. Residents use the Witley Village Store and Post office, and travel to Milford to use the Tesco,

butcher or petrol station. They would not drive through Milford to get to Elstead to use any of these services.

- 2.4. Residents of Brook and Wormley attend places of worship as those in Milford and Witley. Witley and Milford C of E churches are well attended by residents of Brook and Wormley, as are the Baptist Church in Witley and the Roman Catholic Church in Milford.
- 2.5. Residents of Brook and Wormley play for sports teams based in Milford and Witley, most notably Milford Cricket Club and Milford and Witley football club.
- 2.6. Many people in Milford and Witley enjoy the Dog and Pheasant Pub in Brook, and similarly residents of Brook and Wormley enjoy the Star, The White Hart in Witley and The Refectory in Milford. The three pubs strongly contribute to the shared community identity.
- 2.7. Residents of Brook and Wormley are patients of the Witley and Milford Medical Practice.
- 2.8. The Local Facebook group is called 'Milford, Witley and Wormley Village Post', again showing the strong link between the villages. Residents of Brook and Sandhills are also part of this group.
- 2.9. There are no direct transport links between Brook and Wormley and Frensham, Elstead or Hindhead. The two A-roads passing through Brook and Wormley go to Witley and Milford. For someone to drive from Wormley or Brook to Frensham, Elstead or Hindhead, they would have to travel through Witley and Milford. Wormley to Frensham is at least 10 miles and 30 minutes by car.
- 2.10. We are also concerned about the name change of the newly named Frensham, Elstead and Hindhead ward. The name does not reflect the plethora of villages and hamlets in the division (Frensham, Dockenfield, Rushmoor, Tilford, Elstead, Thursley, Churt, Hindhead and possibly Brook and Wormley), so Waverley Western Villages seems far more appropriate.

Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local Government:

3. Witley and Milford Parish Council supported the Commission's recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Waverley Borough Council. We note that in paragraphs 67 and 69 of the final recommendations, the Commission reiterates the value of having "the Parish Council unified within one ward". The Commission also rejected a proposal to move Brook under the '*Western Commons*' ward, because it would "require the division of Witley between borough wards".
- 3.1. Witley and Milford Parish Council are therefore disappointed that, less than six months after finally being represented by the same borough councillors for the entire Parish, the Commission are now proposing to divide the parish again.
- 3.2. All the arguments the Commission itself made in 2022 stand. Having a unified slate of borough and county councillors for the same Parish clearly aides effective and convenient local government. The Commission should reconsider whether it wants to split Witley and Milford

Parish again, having so recently worked hard to unify it.

Conclusion:

4. The links between Wormley and Brook and Milford and Witley are extremely clear. The links between Wormley and Brook and Frensham, Elstead and Hindhead are much less obvious.
- 4.1. After the Commission gave such strong weight to unifying Witley and Milford Parish under the same borough councillors at the 2022 review for Waverley, it is both disappointing and surprising that these arguments have been given such little consideration in the current proposals.
- 4.2. Moving Brook and Wormley back into '*Godalming South, Milford and Witley*' ward would strongly support the Commission's objectives of reflecting community identity and providing effective and convenient local Government. The challenge of the electoral variance for the proposed Frensham, Elstead and Hindhead ward would be better addressed by including other villages with stronger existing links within that ward.
- 4.3. We would wish to see the Waverley Western Villages retain that name, to be more reflective of the villages and hamlets within it.