

Observations on the Surrey County Council Draft Recommendations on the new electoral arrangements.

Thank you for your appraisal of the options for Elmbridge boundary changes to County Councillor divisions.

In General

I summarise the “pattern of divisions” you have selected in the Proposals for analysis as follows:

Criterion 1 Electoral equality
Criterion 2a Transport links
Criterion 2b Community groups
Criterion 2c Facilities
Criterion 2d Interests
Criterion 2e Identifiable boundaries

In general, although you provide a verbally reasoned summary of your conclusions, it is impossible to systematically identify how you arrived at them, particularly how you attached relative importance to the above criteria when looking at the various options available. This means that the Report is relatively obscure compared with an option appraisal technique such as lexicographic multi criteria ordering.

Specifically, what priority would you give to Criterion 1 in relation to Criterion 2 and its components? For example, if for one option of boundary changes, Criterion 1 scored very high in relation to the scores for Criterion 2, how would the conclusion and recommendation go?

Observations specifically on the Draft Recommendations for Elmbridge Divisions designated as West Molesey (WM), Thames Ditton & East Molesey (TD/EM), Long Ditton & Hinchley Wood (LD/HW).

Criterion 1

Apart from LD/HW at 0%, the remainder have “Variances” of -10% and -11% in representation by population numbers. Also it is noted that Esher and Claygate have a Variance of +10%. This indicates the range of variances that are considered permissible.

Although population *densities* for areas in each option are available, actual *populations* from the tables I have available would take an inordinate length of time to synthesise, so observations on alternative boundaries proposed following are necessarily qualitative.

Criterion 2

The existing social and spatial integration of East and West Molesey has been ignored, and the proposed split should be abandoned.

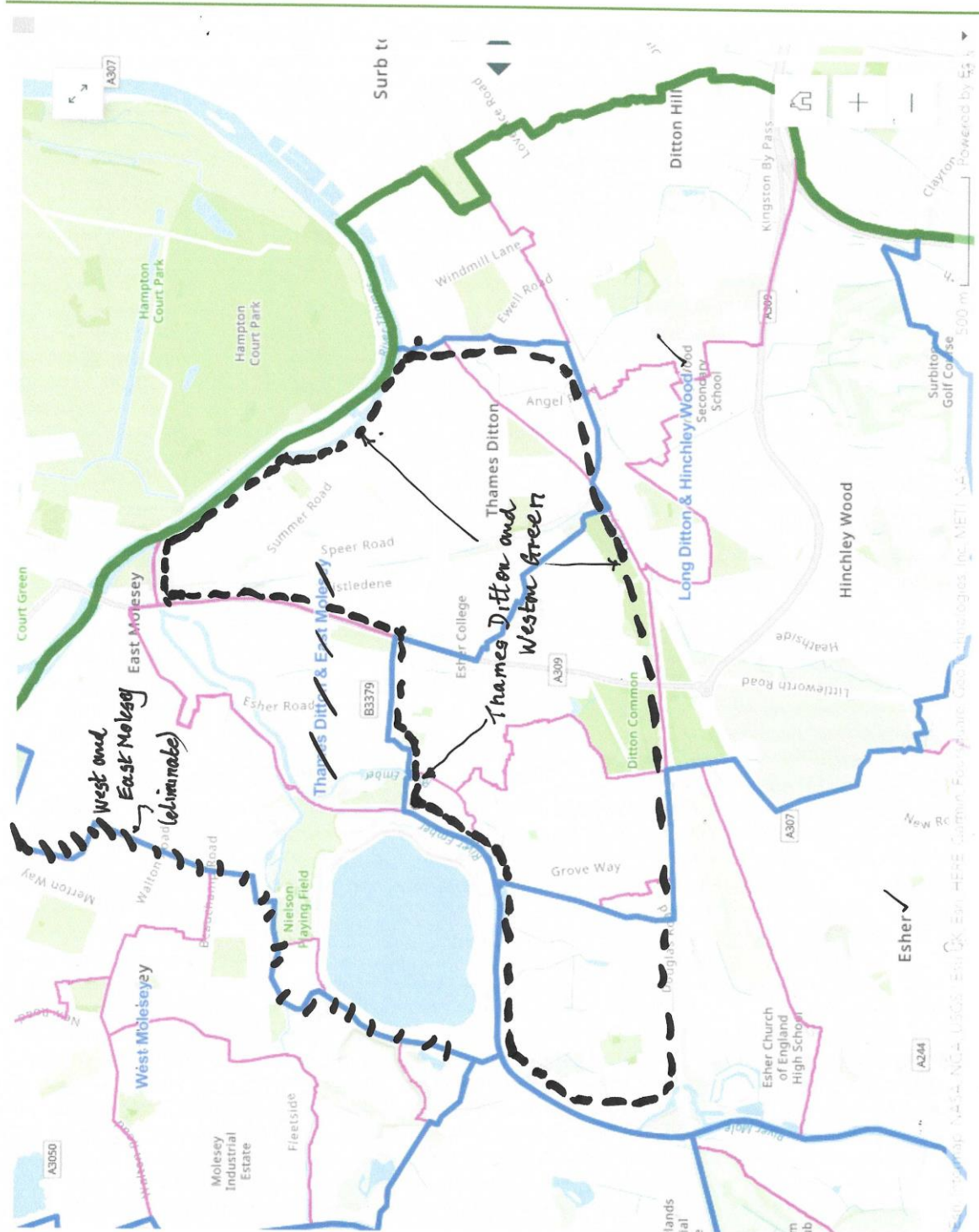
Similarly, the close association of Weston Green with Thames Ditton to the East seems to have been completely overlooked.

In summary, Weston Green and Thames Ditton should be retained as an entity and comprise the following elements: CA, CB, DA, DB, DD, and as an option AB up to the railway line.

The following observations on the boundary change proposals indicate that the linkage of Weston Green with Hinchley Wood into a new Division should be abandoned and the existing links between Weston Green and Thames Ditton be retained and marginally

supplemented as needed by the addition of parts of area AB to balance population aims. It is anticipated that the result will be a population redistribution that lies within the variances indicated for the draft proposals. It is, therefore, suggested that the following factors should be taken into account when justifying the aggregation of the above elements CA to AB above.

1. Hinchley Wood emerged as a newly established urban town with the advent of a train station. Consequently, it lacks the historical architecture found in Weston Green and Thames Ditton, both of which are mentioned in the Domesday Book. These two latter settlements contained grand estates owned by affluent individuals throughout history, resulting in a diverse mix of architectural styles, often marked with blue plaques. A rural village atmosphere is common to both Weston Green and Thames Ditton.
2. Being located just across the River Thames adjacent to Hampton Court Palace, Thames Ditton and Weston Green were thought of as very desirable places to live and work. In comparison, Hinchley Wood is a boring, relatively modern town, with very little variety of housing styles, has basic shops and no nice areas of green open spaces.
3. We cannot easily or pleasantly walk to Hinchley Wood from Weston Green, whereas, with easy access, we can do this to Thames Ditton. There, we can enjoy the good variety of shops, pubs and restaurants and the Vera Fletcher Hall, which holds many theatrical events, talks and exercise classes. Also the library and community centre for the area are located in Thames Ditton within walking distance.
4. The rural style All Saints Church in Weston Green was conceived and built to enable parishioners to worship at a local church when the weather was too bad to walk to Saint Nicholas Church in Thames Ditton. The latter is recognized as the “mother church.” so there are important historic links between them. It is a wonderful, very old church with important graves and artefacts, unlike the modern Saint Christopher’s church in Hinchley Wood, with which Weston Green has no affiliations.
5. There is an excellent Weston Green and Thames Ditton Residents Association represented by good local councillors who regularly keep us informed through the superb, illustrated, free magazine which is delivered to every household by hand and also by email if a matter needs urgent attention. The Association also holds regular meetings and enjoyable social events. The same area is served by a single Surrey County Councillor.
6. The residents in Weston Green and Thames Ditton are very similar people and share the same values and aspirations. Many of the roads link Weston Green and Thames Ditton. That is not the case with Hinchley Wood. In order to get to Hinchley Wood there is often heavy traffic at the notorious “Scilly Isles” traffic roundabouts. This has to be negotiated by car. Otherwise, there is a long unpleasant walk from Weston Green to Hinchley Wood.
7. When the post office in Weston Green was closed, this was justified on the basis that residents could walk to the nearest one in Thames Ditton.
8. Overall, this rearrangement of boundaries is just another stressful and shocking suggestion, particularly for older long-term residents. It will be very upsetting at a time when there has been so much adverse change in the country. Some stability is important and “Community” is everything. For example, the recent Pandemic showed how helpful and kind neighbours can be to those in need.



Suggested modifications to Boundary Proposals