

New electoral arrangements for Mole Valley District Council Final Recommendations

September 2022

Amendments and version updates:

This is the most up-to-date version of the Final Recommendations Report.

This report was amended on 28/09/2022 to add paragraphs 59 and 60 on Page 14.

Translations and other formats:

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

Contents

Introduction	1
Who we are and what we do	1
What is an electoral review?	1
Why Mole Valley?	2
Our proposals for Mole Valley	2
How will the recommendations affect you?	2
Review timetable	3
Analysis and final recommendations	5
Submissions received	5
Electorate figures	5
Number of councillors	6
Ward boundaries consultation	6
Draft recommendations consultation	7
Final recommendations	8
Ashtead	9
Leatherhead	11
Bookham & Fetcham	13
Central & Eastern Mole Valley	16
Southern & Western Mole Valley	20
Conclusions	23
Summary of electoral arrangements	23
Parish electoral arrangements	23
What happens next?	25
Equalities	27
Appendices	29
Appendix A	29
Final recommendations for Mole Valley	29
Appendix B	31
Outline map	31
Appendix C	33
Submissions received	33
Appendix D	35

Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Peter Maddison QPM
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Mole Valley?

7 We are conducting a review of Mole Valley Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 1998, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.² Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Mole Valley are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the district.

Our proposals for Mole Valley

9 Mole Valley should be represented by 39 councillors, two fewer than there are now.

10 Mole Valley should have 13 wards, eight fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of all wards should change.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Mole Valley.

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the district or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Mole Valley. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the district. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
21 September 2021	Number of councillors decided
28 September 2021	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
6 December 2021	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
24 March 2022	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
6 June 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
6 September 2022	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

18 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

19 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2021	2027
Electorate of Mole Valley	68,654	75,732
Number of councillors	39	39
Average number of electors per councillor	1,760	1,942

20 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Mole Valley will have good electoral equality by 2027.

Submissions received

21 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2027, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2022. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 10% by 2027.

23 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our final recommendations.

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Number of councillors

24 Mole Valley Council currently has 41 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that decreasing by two will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 39 councillors.

26 As Mole Valley Council elects by thirds (has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation⁵ that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

27 We received no submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore maintained 39 councillors for our final recommendations.

Ward boundaries consultation

28 We received 56 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included one district-wide proposal from Mole Valley Liberal Democrats ('Liberal Democrats'), together with a supplementary proposal for a 41-councillor warding pattern; and proposals covering the southern section of the district from Mole Valley Conservative Association ('the Conservatives'). The Council offered comments on the majority of areas without making specific proposals for full wards, and Councillor H. Watson proposed a scheme covering the majority of the district, which in many areas was very similar to that proposed by the Liberal Democrats. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the district.

29 The district-wide schemes provided uniform three-councillor wards for Mole Valley, while also suggesting areas where we could depart from the principle of three-councillor wards. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

30 Our draft recommendations also took into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the

⁵ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

31 We visited the area in order to look at the various different proposals on the ground. This tour of Mole Valley helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

32 Our draft recommendations were for 13 three-councillor wards. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

33 We received 113 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included proposals for changes to a number of wards, particularly in the north of the district.

34 A number of submissions argued, on principle, that a uniform, or broadly uniform, pattern of three-councillor wards was inappropriate for Mole Valley, noting that the review undertaken by our predecessors in 1999 had proposed a mixed pattern of wards despite Mole Valley electing by thirds at that time, and since. However, the previous review was conducted under a different statutory framework, under which there was no presumption in favour of three-councillor wards. We are required to have regard to the desirability of three-councillor wards, which allow every elector across the district to influence the political composition of the Council at every election.

35 Several submissions referred to the fact that the Council, prior to the start of this review, had considered whether to adopt a system of all-out elections which would allow greater flexibility with regard to warding patterns, but had decided to retain a pattern of election by thirds. This decision is a matter for the Council rather than us, and we have no view on the desirability of all-out elections as opposed to election by thirds.

36 Cllr P. Kennedy, as well as offering comments on specific wards, suggested that the entirety of the review be postponed until 2027, citing uncertainty around the draft Local Plan, and the desire for more extensive consultation with parishes. As outlined above, this review has been undertaken on a standard timescale, with a total of 20 weeks of consultation. A delay until 2027 would mean Mole Valley continuing to elect on boundaries drawn up in 1999 for a further four years. We do not consider that this is compatible with our statutory duty to review the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England 'from time to time'. We are therefore not persuaded to abandon or postpone this electoral review.

37 The Conservative Group submission, as well as offering comments on individual ward proposals, queried the omission of some proposed developments from the overall forecast figures, suggesting that some areas highlighted within the Local Plan were likely to be started by 2027. For the purposes of this electoral review, the key point is not when development commences on a given site, but the date at which any such development will be completed and occupied by registered electors. While inevitably there is uncertainty in any projection of electorate numbers into the future, we remain satisfied that the forecasts provided by Mole Valley Council are the best available, and we do not consider it appropriate to re-start the review based on a revision of electorate data.

38 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with a modification to the wards across the Bookham & Fetcham area based on the submissions received. We also make minor modifications to the boundaries between Dorking North, Dorking South and neighbouring wards.

Final recommendations

39 Our final recommendations are for 13 three-councillor wards. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

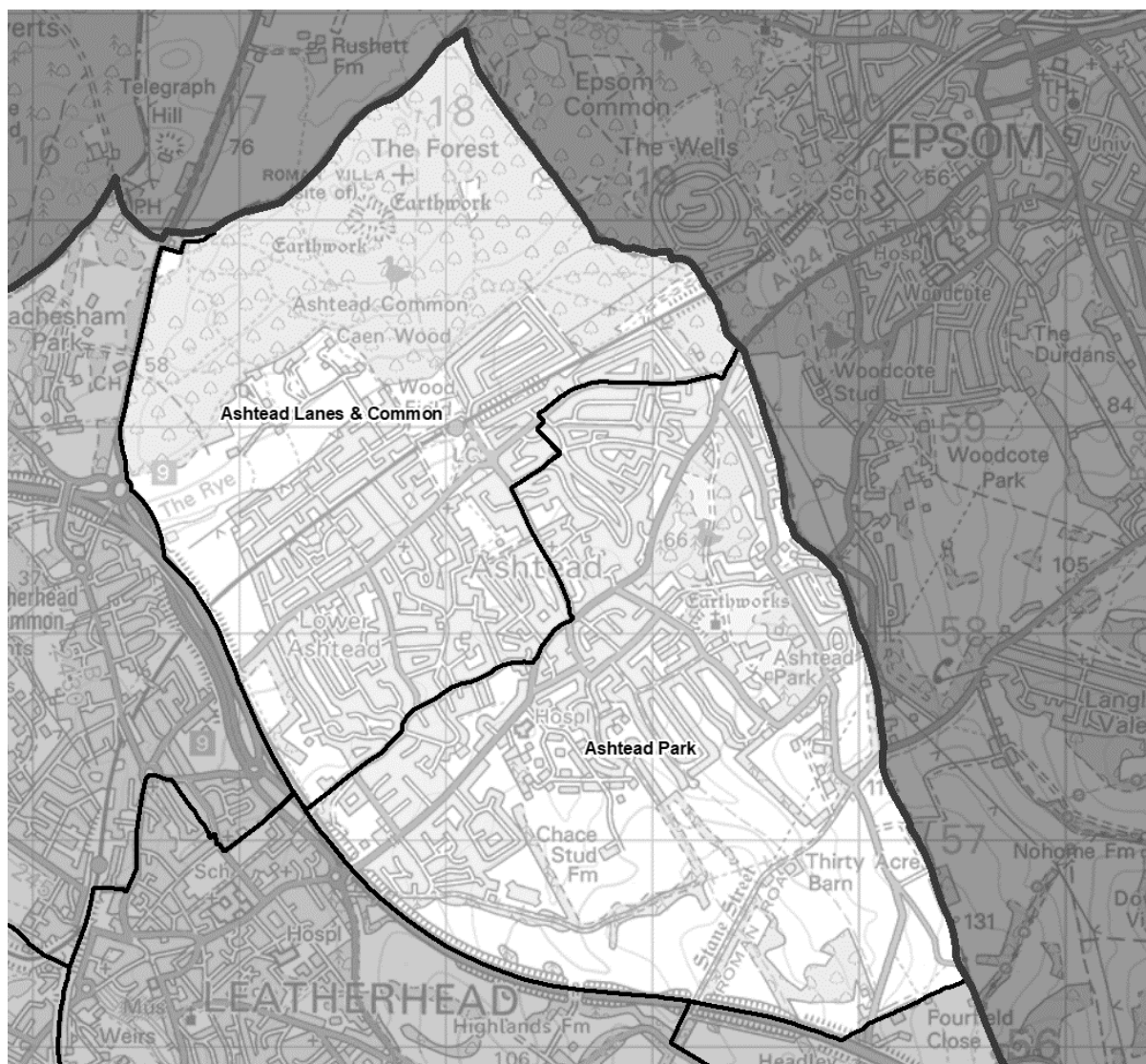
40 The tables and maps on pages 9–22 detail our final recommendations for each area of Mole Valley. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁶ criteria of:

- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

41 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 29 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁶ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Ashtead



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Ashtead Lanes & Common	3	10%
Ashtead Park	3	8%

Ashtead Lanes & Common and Ashtead Park

42 We received broad support for our decision, as part of our draft recommendations, to retain the M25 as the boundary between Ashtead and Leatherhead. The number of electors within Ashtead, thus defined, is just able to accommodate two three-councillor wards, albeit with variances at the high end of the range of electoral equality.

43 Ashtead Residents' Association proposed that, rather than two three-councillor wards, Ashtead should be covered by a three-councillor and a four-councillor ward. Even without the constraints imposed by the statutory presumption of three-

councillor wards, we consider that four-councillor wards unacceptably dilute electoral accountability, and we will not recommend them other than in exceptional circumstances which, in our view, do not exist here. We have therefore not adopted this proposal.

44 Ashtead Independents, while also commenting on the relative desirability of three-councillor wards as opposed to a mixed pattern, offered comments on the names and boundaries of the Ashtead wards. They suggested that it would be helpful for all residents on Cray Avenue to be in a single ward, which is the case in our draft recommendations (while Cray Avenue itself forms the boundary for a short distance, all electors with an address on Cray Avenue are in the southern of our two Ashtead wards).

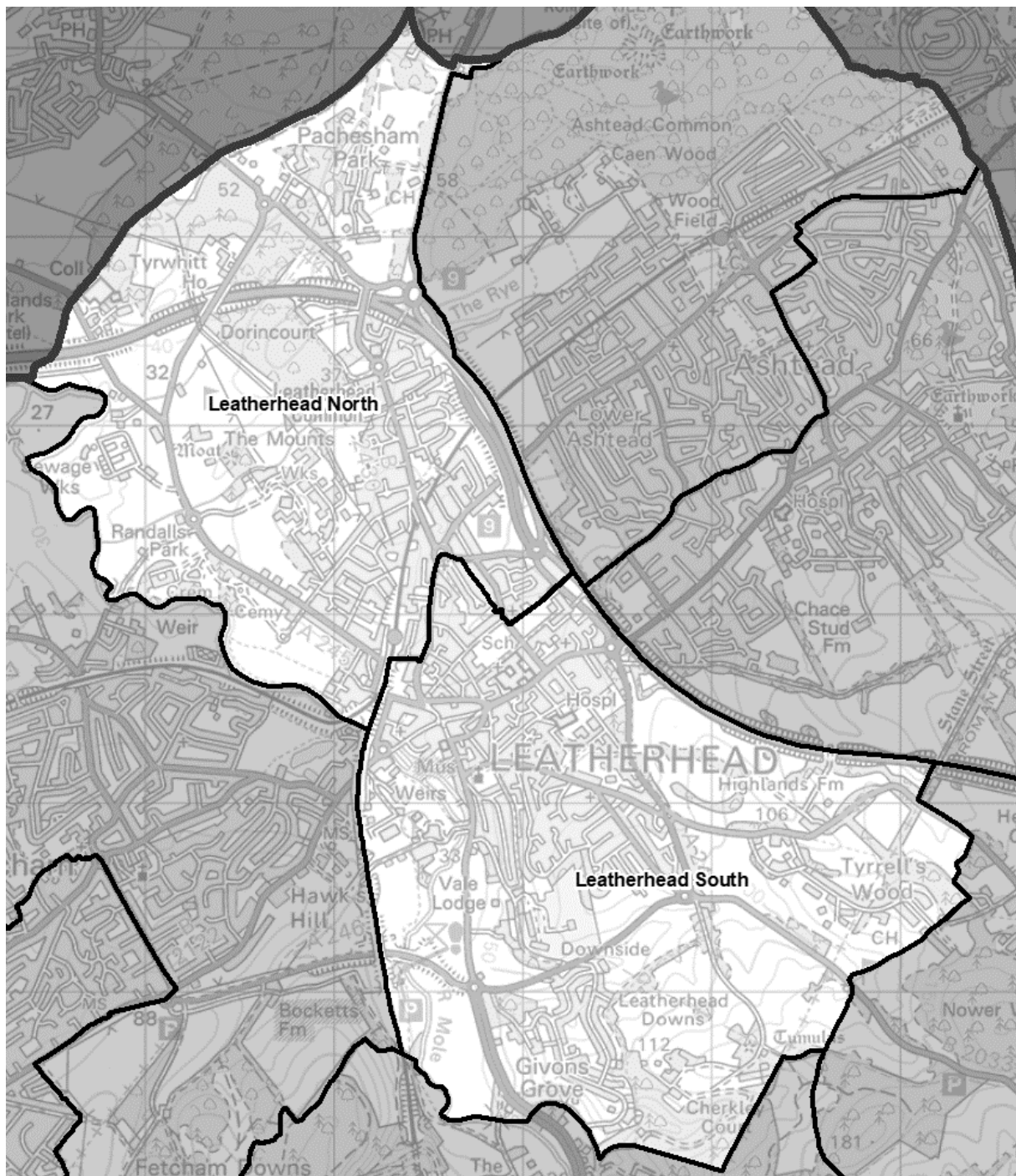
45 Ashtead Independents also suggested that the names of the two Ashtead wards should change, from 'Ashtead North' and 'Ashtead South' in our draft recommendations to 'Ashtead Lanes & Common' and 'Ashtead Park', arguing that these names were more descriptive of how residents described the areas they lived in. This suggestion was replicated in the Council submission, and we have adopted it and propose to alter the names of the two Ashtead wards as part of our final recommendations.

46 Cllr D. Harper commented on our use of forecast electorate data, and suggested that we should place greater weight on data for current electors, which show Ashtead North (now Ashtead Lanes & Common) with 20% more electors than average. However, this would be inconsistent with other electoral reviews that we undertake, as well as our statutory duty to consider the electorate forecast for five years after the conclusion of our review. A 20% current variance is not unusual across our reviews, which sometimes show very high levels of deviation from current electoral equality where (for example) a series of developments are projected to bring a very large number of new electors into a ward. We are therefore not persuaded to alter our calculations on the basis of the evidence provided.

47 The Conservative Group did not propose any amendments to boundaries in this area, but suggested that, as Ashtead was growing, it did not make sense for this area to have fewer Councillors (seven under the existing warding pattern as opposed to our proposed six). As the overall size of the Council is reducing from 41 to 39 councillors, it is inevitable that some areas will be represented by fewer councillors than previously, and we are not persuaded to amend our draft recommendations on this basis.

48 Subject to the name changes detailed above, we confirm our draft recommendations for the wards of Ashtead Lanes & Common and Ashtead Park as final.

Leatherhead



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Leatherhead North	3	-5%
Leatherhead South	3	-8%

Leatherhead North and Leatherhead South

49 We received relatively few comments on our proposed Leatherhead wards. Cllr P. Kennedy noted that both Leatherhead wards had relatively high negative electoral variances, but did not offer a proposal for improving these. Ashted Residents' Association noted that there was significant variation between the electorates of the two Ashted and the two Leatherhead wards.

50 While it is true that the Leatherhead wards (total projected electorate of 10,838) are significantly smaller than our two proposed Ashted wards (total forecast electorate 12,697), we consider that this discrepancy is mitigated in terms of balancing our statutory criteria by the very strong boundary of the M25, and the desire to reflect the identities of communities on each side of this boundary. As discussed above (paragraph 42), we received broad support for our proposed boundary along the M25 rather than including the Ermyn Way area in a Leatherhead-based ward. We also received no specific proposals for altering the western boundary of our proposed Leatherhead wards with Fetcham, other than that of Cllr E. Daly (discussed below at paragraph 59-60).

51 Cllr J. Friend suggested that Mickleham parish could be added to Leatherhead South ward, as part of a number of linked changes proposed. However, Mickleham Parish Council provided evidence that their community identity lay with other rural villages and areas. Although the proposal by Cllr Friend would improve the electoral equality of Leatherhead South ward (to a -2% variance) we do not consider that it would reflect the community identity of Mickleham. We have therefore not adopted it.

52 The Conservative Group suggested that residents of Leatherhead might be concerned about the entirety of the Town Centre being placed in Leatherhead South ward, although they did not suggest any specific amendments to ameliorate this situation.

53 The Liberal Democrats proposed a modest change to the boundary between Leatherhead North and South wards, in order to not split Copthorne Road, on the grounds that this street has a single identity. This suggestion was replicated in the Council's submission. We have adopted this proposal, and included a boundary running behind houses on Copthorne Road, so that electors with addresses on Copthorne Road are within Leatherhead North ward. We considered further extending Leatherhead North ward to include Kingscroft Road, but this would leave Leatherhead South ward with 11% fewer electors than average – a variance which we do not consider is justified by the evidence of community identity received.

54 Subject to this change, we confirm our draft recommendations for the remainder of Leatherhead North and South wards as final.

Bookham & Fetcham



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Bookham East & Eastwick Park	3	-10%
Bookham West	3	-6%
Fetcham	3	4%

Bookham East & Eastwick Park, Bookham West and Fetcham

55 We received numerous comments suggesting improvements and changes to our proposed wards covering the villages of Bookham and Fetcham. Comments were received regarding the boundaries and names of the proposed wards, particularly the central ward of the three covering these villages.

56 Cllrs P. Kennedy and M. Weller opposed all changes to the existing boundaries of these wards. We note that, in addition to the existing wards not reflecting an electoral cycle of election by thirds, the existing Bookham South ward is forecast to have 18% fewer electors than average by 2027. We are therefore not persuaded to revert entirely to the existing warding pattern.

57 Both Bookhams and Fetcham Residents' Associations offered comments and evidence as to our draft recommendations. The Fetcham Residents' Association, and the Conservative Group, proposed moving a relatively large area into a Fetcham-based ward, with all streets to the east of Eastwick Drive being placed with Fetcham. This would leave the central ward in this area with a variance of -20%. We have therefore not adopted this proposal in its entirety. However, based on evidence from the residents' association and a resident, we are persuaded to amend our draft recommendations to place electors on the west side of Kennel Lane and The Glade, including those on Barclay Close, Hill Road, Bushy Road, The Copse and The Oaks, in Fetcham ward. We were persuaded that these streets have a greater community outlook towards Fetcham, and that our proposed boundary along Kennel Lane and The Glade did not accurately reflect a division of communities.

58 Cllr E. Daly provided evidence that Bell Lane is a part of Fetcham, and that all properties on this street should be in Fetcham ward. This involves only a minor change from our draft recommendations, and we have adopted this proposal and adjusted our proposed boundary accordingly.

59 In addition to specific comments on the draft recommendations, Cllr E. Daly proposed two broader alternatives. Her first proposal involved retaining the two existing two-councillor wards for Fetcham, and altering our proposed Bookham wards to a three-member and a two-member ward, thus retaining nine councillors across this area. We considered this proposal carefully, but did not consider that the evidence provided was strong enough to justify departing from the principle of three-member wards.

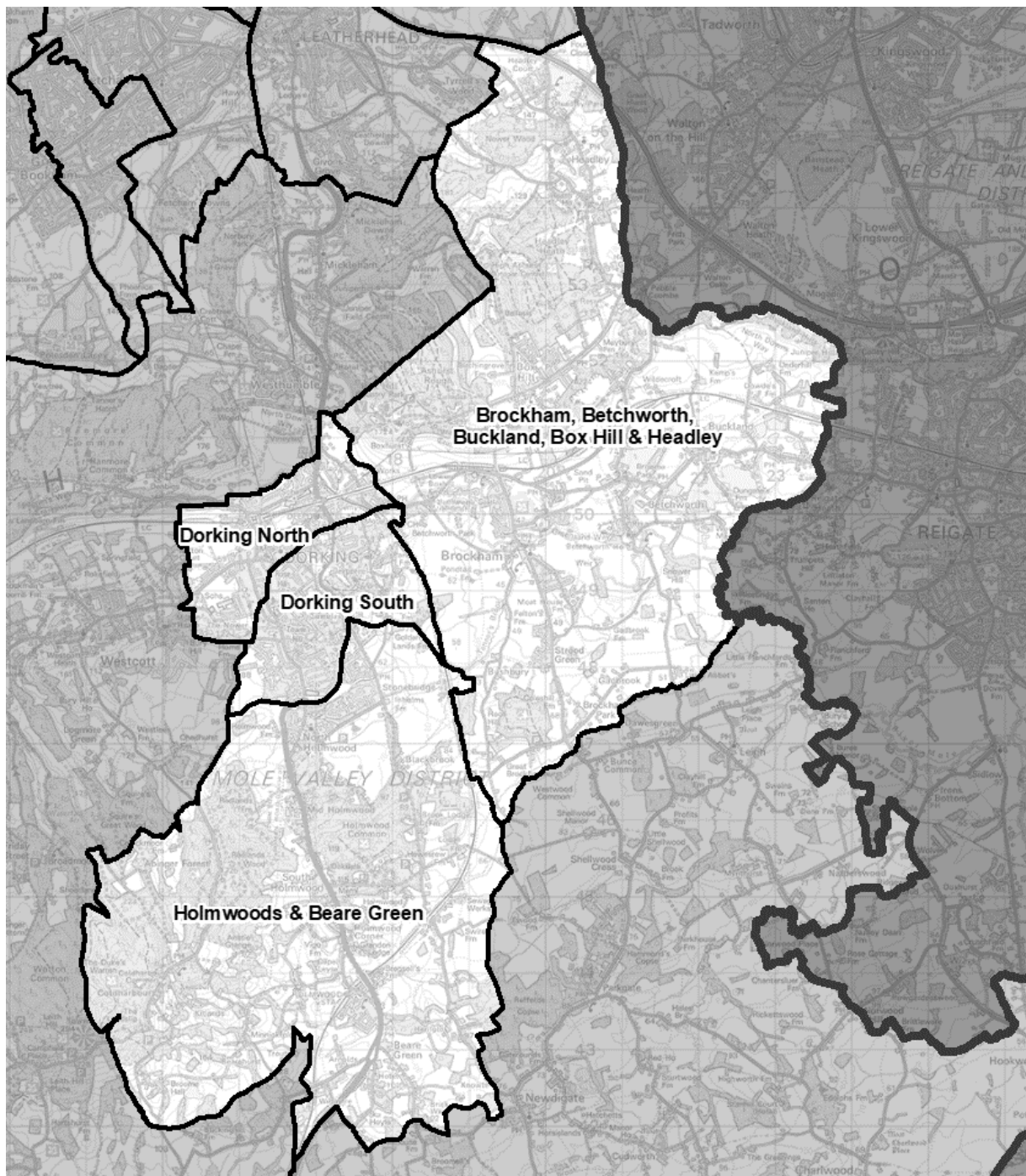
60 Cllr Daly's second proposal was for Sunmead Close, Elmer Mews, and neighbouring streets to be placed in a Leatherhead ward, rather than in a Fetcham ward. This would allow Fetcham ward to retain its existing western boundary with good electoral equality. We carefully considered this proposal, but note that the area in question is covered by Fetcham Residents' Association, and that we consider it to be a part of Fetcham. We received no other evidence that the community identity of these streets looks towards Leatherhead rather than Fetcham. Cllr Daly noted that issues surrounding the Guildford Road railway bridge might be easier to resolve if a single set of councillors were responsible, but we consider that this is outweighed by the benefits of using the railway line in this area as a strong, clear, and recognisable boundary.

61 The Bookhams Residents' Association proposed dividing the area of the Bookhams and Fetcham into four wards, comprising a three-councillor ward and three two-councillor wards. Specific boundaries were not proposed, but the residents' association noted that our draft proposals placed St Nicholas Church, seen as the hub of Bookham, into Eastwick Park ward.

62 A resident suggested that our proposed boundary along Bookham High Street could lead to confusion, and did not promote effective and convenient local government. Although we did not have the opportunity to visit this area during our in-person tour of Mole Valley, we have viewed this area virtually, and consider that the High Street does not offer a particularly strong or clear boundary. We have therefore adjusted our draft recommendations, based on the proposals of the residents' association and local residents, and propose to unify the High Street within Bookham West ward.

63 A number of residents, together with Cllr N. Goodacre, suggested that the name of our proposed 'Eastwick Park' ward was not a full description of the area covered. While it is often impossible to fully describe an area in a relatively brief ward name, we are persuaded that 'Bookham East & Eastwick Park' is a better description of the area covered, as a number of residents of the ward in question made it clear that they considered themselves to live within the Bookhams area. We therefore propose to amend the ward name as part of our final recommendations, with the ward previously named 'The Bookhams' being altered to Bookham West in consequence.

Central & Eastern Mole Valley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley	3	0%
Dorking North	3	9%
Dorking South	3	10%
Holmwoods & Beare Green	3	-7%

Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley

64 We received few proposals for alternative three-councillor wards for this area. The Liberal Democrats and Headley Parish Council noted that retaining the existing single- and two-councillor wards in this area would continue to offer good electoral equality, but accepted that our draft recommendations offered the best balance of the statutory criteria for a three-councillor ward.

65 Mickleham Parish Council suggested that Mickleham might fit better in a ward with Box Hill than in our proposed Leith Hill ward. We considered this suggestion carefully. Alone, Mickleham parish could be placed within Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley ward while retaining acceptable electoral equality (7% more electors than average). However, we were mindful of evidence provided in both consultations about the close links between Mickleham and Westhumble villages, and we do not consider that it would be reflective of community identity to split these villages between separate wards. Adding Westhumble village to a ward with Mickleham and the remainder of our proposed Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley ward would result in a variance of 17%. In our view, this is well beyond the bounds of good electoral equality. We have therefore not adopted this proposal.

66 We received several representations on the proposed name of this ward. Our draft recommendations were for a name of 'Brockham & Box Hill', identifying the two largest settlements within the ward. We received various suggestions for names, with the largest number suggesting that it would be unfair to exclude any of the principal settlements or parishes from the ward name.

67 We are persuaded by the evidence provided that the name of 'Brockham & Box Hill' does not adequately describe the variety of communities in this ward. Rather than resort to a generic name of 'Eastern Villages' or similar, we are persuaded that a longer name, of 'Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley', encompassing the names of each parish and area included, would be the best reflection of community identity. Several respondents noted that the ward name might be abbreviated in practical use. We also note that, if it is felt that this (or any) ward name is inconvenient in practice, it can be altered at the initiative of Mole Valley Council, using the provisions of Section 59 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

68 Subject to the name change outlined above, we confirm our draft recommendations for the boundaries of Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley ward as final.

Dorking North and Dorking South

69 We received relatively few proposals for major changes to our draft recommendations for Dorking wards. In terms of the names of the wards, the Liberal Democrats suggested that, as the proposed boundary runs at a steeper angle than the existing one, the suffixes of North and South may not be appropriate, with proposed replacements of Dorking Meadowbank and Dorking Cotmandene. In contrast, Cllr N. Wright suggested that the existing names were acceptable, noting that relatively few boundaries in any sphere precisely follow lines of longitude or latitude.

70 We have considered the options carefully, and consider that the names of Dorking North and Dorking South are clear, and effectively describe the areas covered by the wards in question. We are not persuaded to amend our draft proposals with regard to the names.

71 Two residents suggested that Pixham was a separate community from Dorking, and should be placed in a ward with villages such as Westhumble and Mickleham. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats supported our proposed Dorking North ward, subject to minor amendments discussed below (paragraph 74). As well as our observations of the links between Pixham and Dorking on our tour of Mole Valley (discussed in our Draft Recommendations report at paragraphs 63–66), we note that to place Pixham in the same ward as Mickleham and Westhumble would increase the variance of this ward to 12%, beyond the bounds of good electoral equality. We have therefore not adopted this proposal.

72 The Liberal Democrats, and one resident, proposed that the Goodwyns area be transferred from Dorking South to the Holmwoods ward. The Liberal Democrats offered little evidence of community identity between Goodwyns and Holmwood, other than noting that the change would remove a ‘socially deprived’ area from Dorking South ward. The resident offered some evidence of community identity, citing links between Rough Rew and North Holmwood.

73 We considered this proposal carefully, but are not minded to alter our draft recommendations in this area. We consider that the presence of the A24 as a strong and clear boundary outweighs the limited evidence of community identity provided, and note that it is not part of our statutory criteria to balance the number of affluent, or less-affluent, areas between wards.

74 Cllr H. Watson, supported by the Liberal Democrats, made several proposals for minor adjustments to the boundaries of Dorking North and South wards. Specifically, she proposed that electors in the Milton Heath area on the western edge of Dorking are transferred to the proposed Leith Hill ward; that the Denbies estate be placed in the same ward as Westhumble village, and that one property to the south of the Nower be placed with neighbouring properties in Dorking South ward rather than Dorking North. All of these proposals were argued on the grounds of community

identity, and ensuring that rural-facing electors were placed in rural wards rather than in an urban-facing Dorking ward.

75 We have carefully considered the changes proposed by Cllr Watson, and have adopted them as part of our final recommendations. The number of electors directly affected by the change is relatively small, and we consider that the changes will offer an improved reflection of community identity with a negligible effect on electoral equality.

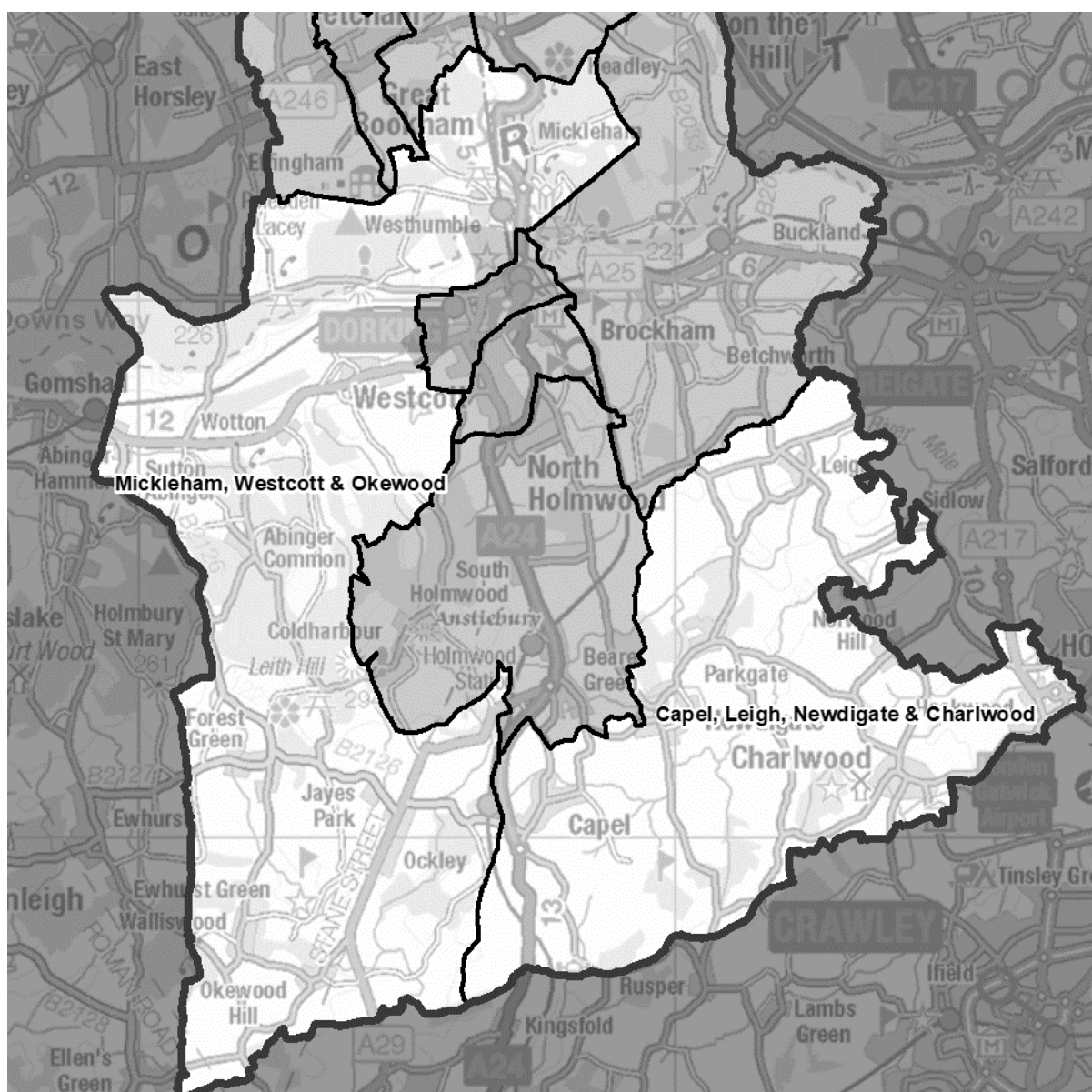
Holmwoods & Beare Green

76 Evidence provided for this ward centred around the question of whether the Coldharbour area should continue to be in this ward, or whether this area was a better fit for our proposed Leith Hill ward. Apart from this, and a suggestion for adjusting the northern boundary with Dorking (discussed above at paragraph 72–73), there was broad support for the proposed boundaries for this ward.

77 Cllr C. Salmon provided mixed evidence for the inclusion of Coldharbour within Holmwoods & Beare Green ward, indicating that local representatives had no strong objection to Coldharbour being included. In contrast, Cllr P. Kennedy and the Liberal Democrats suggested that the rural nature of Coldharbour meant that it was a 'poor fit' with the remainder of this ward.

78 We have carefully considered all the evidence in this area, and consider that this decision is particularly finely balanced. On balance, we are not persuaded to alter our draft recommendations, and propose to retain the Coldharbour area with Holmwoods & Beare Green ward. Removing this area would reduce Holmwoods & Beare Green ward to a -10% variance – at the outer limits of good electoral equality. Additionally, adding this area to our proposed Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood ward would increase the geographic size of an already large ward, as well as mean that Capel parish was split between three rather than two district wards. We consider that retaining our draft recommendations in this area offers the best available balance of the statutory criteria, and we confirm these recommendations as final.

Southern and Western Mole Valley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2027
Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood	3	-2%
Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood	3	-2%

Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood

79 We received no proposals for changes to the external boundaries of this ward. Comments on this area focused on the possibility of breaching the principal of three-councillor wards, by retaining the existing single-councillor ward for Charlwood parish, and a two-councillor ward for the remaining sections of this ward covering the parishes of Leigh and Newdigate, and the southern section of Capel parish. Such an arrangement would offer good electoral equality.

80 Charlwood Parish Council objected to our draft proposals, noting that historically this parish has had separate representation, with a focus on issues arising from Charlwood's proximity to Gatwick Airport. The parish council also commented on the potential environmental implications of a larger ward potentially requiring more travel from councillors. This latter point was reinforced by Cllr L. Bushnell, who also commented on the requirement to attend four separate parish council meetings.

81 We consider that this decision is particularly finely balanced, and that in the absence of the statutory presumption of three-councillor wards there would be a strong case for Charlwood parish to retain a single-councillor ward covering the parish. However, as a coherent three-councillor ward can be proposed, we consider that joining Charlwood with neighbouring parishes offers the best balance of our criteria, and are consequently not persuaded to alter our draft recommendations.

Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood

82 This ward (named Leith Hill in our draft recommendations) attracted significant comment regarding its geographic size. However, other than the suggestion that Mickleham parish could be attached to an alternative ward (discussed above at paragraph 65), we received no alternative proposals for the boundaries of this ward as a three-councillor ward.

83 Ockley Parish Council proposed the retention of the existing single-councillor Okewood ward. They raised various concerns regarding three-councillor wards, which are applicable to any multi-member ward in any area. The parish council also raised concerns that the views of political parties had been taken into account, stating that the process of the review should be 'completely apolitical'. While we consider that it is important to ensure that members of the council (inevitably members of political parties) are consulted on potential wards, the Commission is entirely independent and takes decisions in an apolitical fashion. Views of councillors, or political groups, carry no additional weight based on their status.

84 The Westcott Village Association and Westcott Village Hall Trust welcomed the fact that Westcott would remain in a separate ward from Dorking, but again suggested that it would be difficult for residents to know whom to contact with regard to local issues. We note that the principle of multi-member wards is not uncommon across local authorities, and that the details of how elected councillors choose to represent their wards are a matter for them, and ultimately the electorate.

85 We received several suggestions for splitting this ward into three single-councillor wards. We note that the existing Westcott ward would inevitably continue as one of these single-councillor wards, meaning that the remaining area could be split into at most two wards with good electoral equality.

86 We carefully considered various options for splitting this ward, and consider that the decision is finely balanced. With the exception of minor changes on the

fringes of Dorking (discussed at paragraph 74–75), we are not persuaded to alter our draft recommendation boundaries for this ward. We appreciate that there is limited community identity between those at the northern and southern extremes of the ward, but consider that combining separated rural communities within a single ward offers a better reflection of our statutory criteria than arbitrary splits or combining rural areas with urban ones.

87 Several residents suggested that the name ‘Leith Hill’ was not appropriate for our proposed ward, as it reflected only a part of the ward. We have accepted this point, and propose to re-name the ward ‘Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood’, selecting significant communities from north to south while accepting that it is impossible to include every community within a ward name. Again, if it is felt that this name is capable of improvement, such a change can be proposed locally.

Conclusions

88 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality in Mole Valley, referencing the 2021 and 2027 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2021	2027
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	13	13
Average number of electors per councillor	1,760	1,942
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	3	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendations

Mole Valley Council should be made up of 39 councillors serving 13 wards representing 13 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Mole Valley Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Mole Valley on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

89 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

90 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Mole Valley Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

91 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Capel parish.

92 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Capel parish.

Final recommendations

Capel Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Beare Green	4
Capel	4
Coldharbour	1

What happens next?

93 We have now completed our review of Mole Valley. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2023.

Equalities

94 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Final recommendations for Mole Valley

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashtead Lanes & Common	3	6,005	2,002	14%	6,388	2,129	10%
2	Ashtead Park	3	5,467	1,822	4%	6,309	2,103	8%
3	Bookham East & Eastwick Park	3	4,963	1,654	-6%	5,222	1,741	-10%
4	Bookham West	3	5,096	1,699	-4%	5,497	1,832	-6%
5	Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley	3	5,283	1,761	0%	5,848	1,949	0%
6	Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood	3	5,356	1,785	1%	5,700	1,900	-2%
7	Dorking North	3	5,505	1,835	4%	6,330	2,110	9%
8	Dorking South	3	5,808	1,936	10%	6,390	2,130	10%
9	Fetcham	3	5,676	1,892	7%	6,033	2,011	4%
10	Holmwoods & Beare Green	3	5,079	1,693	-4%	5,441	1,814	-7%

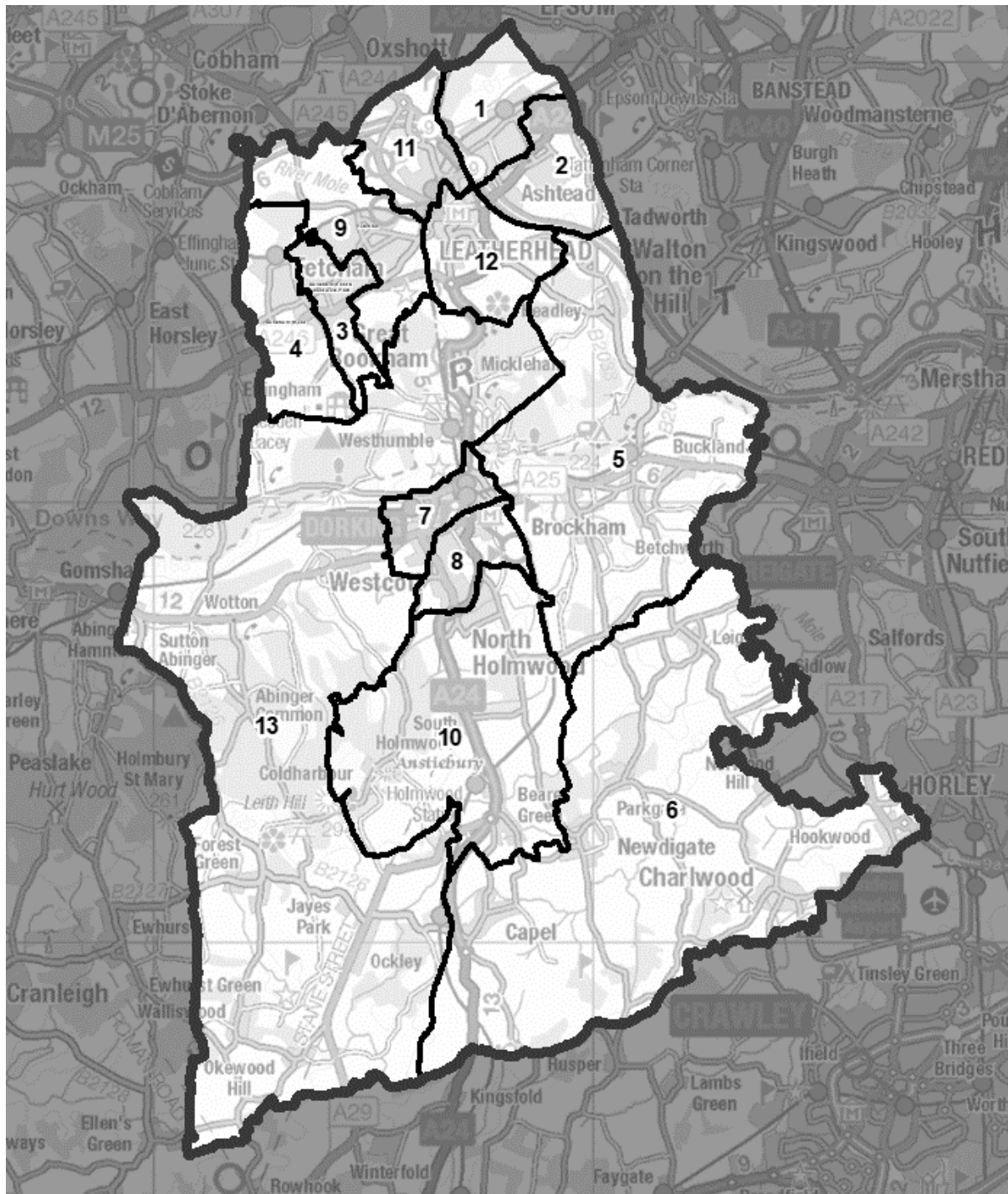
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2027)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Leatherhead North	3	4,511	1,504	-15%	5,507	1,836	-5%
12	Leatherhead South	3	4,537	1,512	-14%	5,331	1,777	-8%
13	Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood	3	5,368	1,789	2%	5,736	1,912	-2%
Totals		39	68,654	–	–	75,732	–	–
Averages		–	–	1,674	–	–	1,942	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Mole Valley Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name
1	Ashted Lanes & Common
2	Ashted Park
3	Bookham East & Eastwick Park
4	Bookham West
5	Brockham, Betchworth, Buckland, Box Hill & Headley

6	Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood
7	Dorking North
8	Dorking South
9	Fetcham
10	Holmwoods & Beare Green
11	Leatherhead North
12	Leatherhead South
13	Mickleham, Westcott & Okewood

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/surrey/mole-valley

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/surrey/mole-valley

Local Authority

- Mole Valley District Council

Political Groups

- Ashtead Independents (2 submissions)
- Mole Valley Conservative Association
- Mole Valley Conservative Group
- Mole Valley Liberal Democrats (2 submissions)

Councillors

- Councillor L. Bushnell
- Councillor H. Clack
- Councillor E. Daly
- Councillor J. Friend
- Councillor N. Goodacre
- Councillor T. Hall
- Councillor D. Harper
- Councillor P. Kennedy
- Councillor C. Salmon (2 submissions)
- Councillor H. Watson
- Councillor M. Weller
- Councillor N. Wright

Local Organisations

- Ashtead Residents' Association
- Bookhams Residents' Association
- Fetcham Residents' Association
- Informal Boundaries Group
- Westcott Village Association
- Westcott Village Hall Trust

Parish and Town Councils

- Betchworth Parish Council
- Brockham Parish Council
- Buckland Parish Council
- Charwood Parish Council
- Headley Parish Council
- Mickleham Parish Council (2 submissions)
- Newdigate Parish Council
- Ockley Parish Council

Local Residents

- 78 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority.
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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