

Thurrock

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Comment text:

Related subject: Grays/West Thurrock & South Stifford

Please see the attached document.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

[REDACTED]

Attached Documents:

- lgbce.docx

LGBCE Thurrock Draft Proposals

Comments

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft proposals. My comments are restricted to the area in which I live, Grays, specifically Badger's Dene, and therefore relate to paragraphs 50 to 52 of your proposals.

I am disappointed that the submissions referred to in paragraphs 50-52 appear to regard "Badger's Dene" as a place of little account to be attached to whatever area suits the submitters' purposes. There also appears to be at least one error in the submissions which may possibly have led you astray.

By way of background, I was born in Grays and have lived in the town my whole life. For many years I have been resident in the Badger's Dene housing estate but I still consider that I live in Grays, with no connection to Chafford Hundred, South Stifford or West Thurrock.

For avoidance of doubt, "Badger's Dene" should relate only to the 1980s Wimpey development of that name constructed in the south end of the former Grays Chalk Quarry. Originally, it was not regarded as separate from Grays, for example, postal addresses at first included only Grays. That change came later, possibly due to the efforts of one rather determined resident. The streets on the north side of London Road, from Grovelands Way to Askews Farm Lane, predate Badger's Dene, are not part of Badger's Dene and have always been part of Grays. Postal addresses in these streets do not include Badger's Dene.

All the references to "Badger's Dene" in the relevant paragraphs appear to relate to the entire western part of Grays north of London Road and west of Eastern Way/Hogg Lane, but this is not correct. There is no connection between the Badger's Dene estate and the streets mentioned above, principally because Badger's Dene's situation in the old quarry naturally separates it from the immediately surrounding areas.

I have used "Badger's Dene" to refer to the wider area of western Grays that appears to be your definition, and Badger's Dene or Badger's Dene estate to refer to the actual Badger's Dene.

Paragraph 50

I cannot agree with the contention that West Thurrock, South Stifford and "Badger's Dene" are connected other than geographically by London Road. There is no actual connection between the communities of western Grays and South Stifford/West Thurrock. One might as well say that London and Southend were connected because the A13 runs through both of them.

If you were able to move "easily" along London Road you cannot have been there at a busy time, that is, most of the time.

So far as I am concerned, West Thurrock and South Stifford are just places that I pass through heading west towards Purfleet and onwards to London. There is no connection. Grays is not connected with South Stifford/West Thurrock.

Paragraph 50 also refers to the former name of Belmont Castle Academy being South Stifford Primary School. This is not correct. The following brief history will demonstrate that the school never had much connection with South Stifford.

The school in Parker Road has been there since only 1977. Before it was Belmont Castle Academy, it was called STIFFORD COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL. Before 1977 it was located much further to the north-west, in what is now Chafford Hundred, at the junction of Mill Lane, Warren Lane and Pilgrim's Lane, that is, between the original Stifford (what is now the village of North Stifford) and the later development of South Stifford. It was at this site since 1895, and before that it was a parish school attached to the church in North Stifford. The reason for moving to Parker Road was that the buildings were in poor condition and it was considered easier to build a new school elsewhere. I should add that a family member taught at the old school in Mill Lane.

Paragraph 51

I can agree with you that there is "a significant distance" between "Badger's Dene" and Chafford Hundred, although I would not use Devonshire Road, but rather Hogg Lane. Even that reaches only the eastern side of Chafford Hundred. One can also argue that there is "a significant distance" between the east and west of Chafford Hundred as well. Also "a significant distance" between Badger's Dene and South Stifford/West Thurrock.

You have also asked for submissions regarding any connection with Chafford Hundred via the gorges. While there is a physical (but almost unknown) connection via the nature reserve in Grays Gorge, for all practical purposes this is irrelevant. I don't think the people of central and western Grays feel any connection whatsoever with Chafford Hundred.

Paragraph 52

I note you have rejected the Labour submission which would have included "Badger's Dene" in a Grays ward as it currently is. However you appear to have disregarded the easy connections to the town centre, referring only to Crown Road, which is neither the only nor the main way into the town. London Road is more direct, and for those choosing to park in Morrisons car park, they can walk a few steps along George Street to the High Street.

You could still include "Badger's Dene" in a Grays ward while disregarding the rest of Labour's submission.

You should note that the only road entrance/exit from the Badger's Dene estate is in the Grays direction, via Bankfoot into Eastern Way.

I am not a quick walker but I can reach Grays Town Centre on foot in 10-15 minutes, including the shops, bus station, railway station, library, theatre, police station and civic offices.

I note that you have included the streets on the south side of London Road (Wharf Road, Argent Street etc.) in a Grays ward although these are more separated from the town centre, and the western end, especially Florence Close, is almost up to South Stifford. This does not appear consistent.

Conclusion

I would like to emphasise that I consider that the current draft proposals including "Badger's Dene" in a ward with South Stifford and West Thurrock would I believe give rise

to a significant democratic deficit for the residents of “Badger’s Dene”. Looking at your map, regardless of the size of the electorate, the proposed ward covers a huge area and I would submit that the councillors will have more than enough to do with West Thurrock and South Stifford, which means that the small separate community to the east of the ward will be forgotten about.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for inviting this submission and I hope that you can conclude that “Badger’s Dene” should be included in a Grays ward. Also that the arguments for including the Badger’s Dene estate in a Grays ward are even more persuasive.


15 September 2024