



**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
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Leaders of Reigate and Banstead Borough
Council and Crawley Borough Council

17 June 2025

Dear Leaders,

Thank you for submitting your joint supplementary submission asking the Government to consider a cross-boundary option and for sharing with officials in your subsequent discussion with them your view that this was a formal proposal that the Secretary of State should consult upon.

I carefully considered your joint submission, but I have concluded that your joint submission regrettably cannot be included in this Surrey Local Government Reorganisation consultation.

This is for a number of reasons. First, I conclude that the submission does not meet requirements under relevant legislation, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). This is because the 2007 Act only permits principal authorities to make one proposal, and Reigate and Banstead Borough Council is (as acknowledged within the submission) a signatory to the three unitary proposal.

Second, the 2007 Act requires that a proposal either be “for the area which is the county concerned” (in this case Surrey) or that it specify the area that it covers. The submission does neither, instead setting out a range of options which cover different areas.

Third, apart from the statutory requirements, I consider that the submission does not seek to meet the criteria specified in the guidance. The invitation letter itself (including the guidance criteria), and subsequent feedback on interim plans, were clear that councils could each submit a single proposal which covered the whole of the invitation area and provided a single geography. Your submission did not achieve this, instead referring to alternative possibilities and geographical areas for further discussion. I appreciate this was in pursuit of a novel proposal, but it is important in a statutory process that the criteria is properly referenced against.

Fourth, there is no financial assessment nor consideration of transitional costs and savings for alternative options in the submission; and in requesting flexibility for future devolution geographies, there is limited detail of the impact on the proposed Sussex and Brighton CCA and potential future devolution to Surrey. This, in my view, is a further basis on which the submission does not meet the criteria specified in the guidance.

I acknowledge that you were seeking a way in which your submission could be considered as part of the Surrey Local Government Reorganisation consultation. However, the guidance set out in the invitation letter was clear that it was open to Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to submit a proposal which included Crawley Borough Council (rather than being a joint signatory to the three unitary council proposal) and which accorded with the 2007 Act and the guidance.

The Surrey councils that submitted their proposals in accordance with the statutory process and the guidance by the deadline of 9 May have a reasonable expectation that their proposals should be taken forward in a way that supports the ambitious timetable established, whereby the Government expects new unitary authorities to be elected in May 2026 to allow new authorities to go live in April 2027.

I understand this will be disappointing; however, this consultation process allows for consultees to comment on whether the Secretary of State should implement one or other of the two proposals received, including the proposal co-signed by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. It will also be open to consultees to contend that the Secretary of State and I should not implement either of the proposals, potentially by reference to Reigate and Banstead and Crawley's joint submission. If, in the future, there remains an interest in changing the boundary between Surrey and West Sussex, there are other mechanisms for doing so and this process does not prevent that.

I also note your desire for the Gatwick Diamond economic area to be within the area of one Strategic Authority so as to best provide for economic growth. I want to make clear that the decision not to include your proposal in the consultation does not pre-empt devolution options for the wider area, including establishing or expanding a Strategic Authority that includes all councils making up the Gatwick Diamond. Again, while I cannot pre-empt this, I encourage councils in Surrey to continue to engage with their neighbours as they consider options in the short and medium term to secure devolution and the advantages it brings.

I am copying this letter to the Leaders of councils in Surrey and West Sussex, Woking and Spelthorne Commissioners, council Chief Executives, local MPs, and the Police and Crime Commissioners.

Yours sincerely,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution