

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Personal Details:

Name:

E-mail:

Postcode:

Organisation Name:

Comment text:

Rusthall and Speldhurst I live in the Ward of Rusthall which dates back to 765 AD, Saxon times. It has Rusthall Parish Council, a Rusthall Village Association, Rusthall Village School, and three Rusthall Churches. There are community halls, church halls, a full medical centre, a children centre, a library, two pre-schools, brownies, scouts, and cubs, a full high street of a variety of shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes, a Rusthall Community Cinema, community clubs and events, history society, a Rusthall Fete and an annual Bonfire & Fireworks display each year. It has its own football club and stadium Rusthall FC at Jockey Farm and its own cricket club. Rusthall has its own boxing club, and many other sporting facilities. It even had its own fire station which is now the Parish hall. In 1914 it had two VAD hospitals and Rusthall even has its own workhouse. It is a community that predates Tunbridge Wells as much of Tunbridge Wells is built on the Manor of Rusthall. It has a distinct character of its own with its ancient monuments of limestone rocks, standing stones that are currently being excavated by West Kent Archeology to illustrate how unique this area is. It has a bus service to the town of Tunbridge Wells and its own commuter coach to London. It has two recreation grounds, allotments and its own common. And its boundaries are surrounded by woods or common with names that resonate with the past of Rusthall. Rusthall has two Tunbridge Wells borough councillors. It is a distinct and vibrant community and as such it cannot be merged with other communities that it has no connection to. Speldhurst is another community with its own distinct identity. To merge both these communities into one would lose both these communities their identities. There is no public transport between these two different communities and while they look like neighbours on a map they are as different to one another as a circle is to a square. And just as you cannot fit a circle into a square or a square into a circle neither should you try to fit either of these two communities into one another. To do so would bring this new ward above the LGBC own guidelines of 10% voter equality. Whilst I understand that the LGBC wants to split wards into three members wards this does not work in the case of rural wards with regards to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. It makes the wards in many cases too large and especially in the case of Rusthall and Speldhurst and can leave whole communities without any representation. If for example your three borough councillors came from Speldhurst community, a community that had no connection to Rusthall and no transport to Rusthall then the Rusthall community would have for the first time no representation at the borough council whereas at the moment it has two representatives. This is NOT voter equality. And similarly if all Borough representation came from Rusthall so three borough councillors, then Speldhurst community would have no representation whereas at the moment they have three members Borough council as representation. So you can see there is NO voter equality or sure way of guaranteeing voter representation by merging Rusthall and Speldhurst communities into one large ward. Rusthall is made up of socially economically deprived, elderly or disabled residents and they would be especially disadvantaged by creating such a large ward by merging with Speldhurst as they would lose representation and this would be discriminatory towards them. This would effectively destroy democracy not promote it as the LGBC seeks to do and would not be inclusive and in effect would be discriminatory towards disability, age and the social economically deprived. Therefore Rusthall and Speldhurst as it's also illustrated as being higher than the 10% voter equality which is the very LGBC guidelines should be treated as an exception. The best way to encourage voter equality and equals representation, plus not split communities eg parishes up and try to work with the LGBC framework would be not to merge Speldhurst and Rusthall. Therefore can I put a suggestion to the LGBC that Speldhurst is kept as its own ward with two councillors. This ward would comprise of Speldhurst Village, Langton Green, Ashurst and Stone Cross so the ward ends at the Boundary at Langton Green with Rusthall being its own community and ward with the one borough councillor. This then keeps these two very distinct communities intact and preserves their historical identities and community identity. Neither is lost or swallowed up by the other. It lowers the voter equality

ratio more in keeping with the LGBC guidelines and it will ensure that both communities have representation at the borough council thereby promoting democracy, inclusion and equality not discrimination due to socio- economics or disability or age. I therefore ask that the LGBC keep Rusthall as it's own ward with one member councillor and make Speldhurst a separate ward with two member councillors by request of special circumstances. Thank you [REDACTED]

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded