

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 June 2021 14:55
To: reviews
Subject: Electoral Ward Review - Tonbridge and Malling

Categories: Submissions

Dear Sir/Madam,

Electoral Ward Review - Tonbridge and Malling

I am writing in a personal capacity in connection with the above.
[REDACTED]

I give below my preferred option for new electoral wards in the parished area of Tonbridge and Malling. (I rarely visit Tonbridge, and have no feel for the location of its communities). 12 councillors are required for Tonbridge to have electoral equality.

My initial calculation for the ward distribution in the whole Borough was based on 43 councillors, but the distribution of wards chosen actually resulted in 44 councillors being distributed amongst them. I have therefore re-calculated the variances based on 44 councillors. All the proposed wards have variances of less than 10%.

My approach has been based on the following :

1. Parish Councils are the building blocks of Local Government and every effort should be made to identify ward boundaries which relate directly to them.
2. As far as possible, the number of Parish Councils to whom a councillor relates should be minimised to achieve their most effective and efficient representation.
3. As far as possible, the new wards should be as geographically small as possible to enable councillors to visit all parts without spending too much time travelling.
4. The larger urban areas should not form wards with their neighbouring parishes as their needs are different. This is especially true of Tonbridge (the largest urban area in TMBC, with its electoral population of over 29,000), Snodland (which has its own Town Council), Larkfield, and Kings Hill (which is a newly developed urban area on the site of the former West Malling airfield). The latter should not be combined with the historic town of West Malling.
5. The new wards should, as far as possible, replicate the existing ward pattern since they were devised to reflect community interests. This will enable councillors to build upon their existing knowledge of the area and maintain their relationships with residents and organisations, thus enabling effective representation. The only wards where this has not proved possible is in Aylesford parish, where a combination of Ditton and South Aylesford gave a 2027 variance of 13.1%. Appendix 1 shows, by altering the boundary between Aylesford South and Aylesford North to follow the M20 motorway instead of the River Medway, 754 electors would transfer from South Aylesford to North Aylesford. The variance then becomes less than 10%.

I also suggest that the area between Walderslade Woods road and the M2 motorway should perhaps be in Walderslade Woods ward rather than Bluebell Hill as it is to the east of the M2 motorway. This would mean about 276 electors transferring between the two (see Appendix 2) and provides improved electoral equalities, which are nevertheless below 10% without the suggested change in boundary.

Although the Mereworth Airfield Estate is currently in Kings Ward, it is actually in Mereworth parish and, if included as such in my suggested ward joining it with Watlingbury, would have a 2027 variance of +5.6% for a single member ward, with the 3-member Kings Hill Ward having a variance of +5.2%. However, as the name implies, it has a strong historic relationship with Kings Hill and its road names all reflect this. It is a small self-contained estate of 254 electors (in 2027) off the A228, with the sprawling urban area of Kings Hill - with its supermarkets, shops, restaurants and businesses - accessed across the A228. The polling station for the estate is at the TMBC offices in Kings Hill. I feel that it is therefore more appropriate for the estate to continue in the Kings Hill Ward.

I have not attempted to name any of the new wards since I believe that local residents are best placed to suggest appropriate ward names. I would, however, suggest that use of the ward name of 'Medway' in Tonbridge attracts confusion with the Medway Towns, a conurbation of some 250,000 residents adjoining Tonbridge and Malling.

My proposed ward distribution is thus as follows :

<u>Ward.</u>	<u>No of.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No.of.</u>	<u>Variance.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No. of</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>See</u>
	<u>Cllrs.</u>	<u>(2021).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>	<u>(2027).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>	<u>Note</u>
			<u>per Cllr.</u>			<u>per Cllr.</u>		
Walderslade 1.		2,340.	2,340.	4.7.	2,544.	2,544.	4.8.	1
Burham & Wouldham		2,841.			3,963.			
Eccles.		1,330.			1,425			
Bluebell Hill.		834			884			
Aylesford North		<u>1,287</u>			<u>1,375</u>			
3.		6,292.	2,097.	-6.1	7,647	2,549.	5.0.	2
Aylesford South.		3,137			3,381			
Ditton.		<u>3,843.</u>			<u>4,106</u>			
3.		6,980.	2,327.	4.1.	7,487.	2,496.	2.8.	3
Larkfield North.		3,558.			3,798			
Larkfield South.		<u>3,408.</u>			<u>3,632</u>			
3		6,966.	2,322	3.9.	7,430.	2,477	2.0.	4
East Malling.		3,870.			4,197			
West Malling (TQC)		2,018.			2,214			
Offham.		<u>614.</u>			<u>661</u>			

	3	6,502.	2,167	-3.0.	7,072.	2,357	-2.9.	5
Leybourne (TQA).		2,343.			2,508			
Leybourne (TQB).		1,271.			1,298			
Birling.		359.			380			
Ryarsh.		<u>660.</u>			<u>700</u>			
	2	4,633.	2,317	3.7	4,886.	2,443	0.6.	6
Snodland (CGA)	1	2,274.	2,274	1.8.	2,421.	2,421	-0.3.	7
Snodland West (CHA).		4,929.			5,152			
Snodland (CGB).		<u>1,375.</u>			<u>1,473</u>			
	3	6,304.	2,101	-6.0.	6,625.	2,208	-9.0.	7
Borough Green.		3,158.			3,340			
Platt.		<u>1,356.</u>			<u>1,443</u>			
	2	4,514.	2,257	1.0.	4,783.	2,392	-1.5	
Addington.		657.			700			
Trottiscliffe.		421.			449			
Wrotham.		<u>3,485.</u>			<u>3,712</u>			
	2	4,563.	2,282	2.1.	4,861.	2,431	0.1	
Kings Hill.	3	6,509.	2,170	-2.9.	7,916.	2,639	8.7.	8
Mereworth.		568.			622			
Wateringbury.		<u>1,564.</u>			<u>1,688</u>			
	1	2,132.	2,132	-4.6.	2,310.	2,310	-4.9.	9
West Peckham.		292.			315.			
Hadlow.		5,498.			5,889			
Plaxtol.		<u>854.</u>			<u>919</u>			
	3	6,644.	2,215	-0.1.	7,123.	2,374	-2.2	
Hildenborough.		3,756.			4,000			
Shipbourne.		<u>398.</u>			<u>414</u>			
	2	4,154.	2,077	-7.1.	4,414.	2,207	-9.1	
Tonbridge.	12.	27,520	2,293.	2.6	29,309	2,442.	0.6	
Total.	44.	98,327.	2,235.	-	106,828.	2,428.	-	

Total averages.

2,233.

2,428

Notes

1. Walderslade Woods is north of the M2 motorway and part of the conurbation of the Medway Towns and has no affinity with Burham and Wouldham, Eccles or Aylesford.
2. Bluebell Hill Ward, (apart from that part to the east of the M2 motorway which I propose should be in Walderslade Woods ward anyway - see Appendix 2) is west of the M2 which forms a physical barrier between Bluebell Hill and the urban area of the Medway Towns. The southern part of the ward which embraces Kit's Coty and the Lower Bell pub are directly connected to Aylesford village by Rochester Road. The proposed ward recognises these relationships, and incorporates the suggested change in ward boundary within Aylesford parish - see Appendix 1.
3. This incorporates the suggested change in ward boundary within Aylesford parish - see Appendix 1.
4. The existing wards of Larkfield North and South comprise a single community, with schools which are in the South ward and Village Hall playing fields which are in the North ward used by residents of both. Holy Trinity Church is the only Anglican Church in Larkfield. Residents' Groups such as the Larkfield Community Group serve residents in both wards.
5. As implied by their names, East and West Malling have close links, both being historic settlements dating back over a thousand years. West Malling Abbey was granted extensive surrounding lands, both in the town itself, and in East Malling, which which supported the Abbey and the townsfolk of West Malling through their produce. East Malling village centre has an hourly bus service to West Malling until mid-afternoon.

West Malling is a market town for the local area, Offham being one of its nearest villages and has a bus service to West Malling roughly every 90 minutes until mid-afternoon. The Anglican vicar holds church services in both West Malling and Offham.
6. Although geographically close, a previous Review did not join Birling with Snodland as it was felt that Birling would be overwhelmed by Snodland, which has its own Town Council. Ryarsh is connected to Birling by a direct rural road (Birling Road/Ryarsh Road).
7. Snodland is a separate community and is best served by councillors whose wards are wholly within the Snodland Parish Council area.
8. Kings Hill was created in 1990 as a place to live and work, although many commute to London from West Malling Station (re-named 'West Malling for Kings Hill') to which it is connected by the A228 West Malling bypass. Kings Hill is projected to have 5,000 houses, has its own Parish Council, supermarkets, shops, pub and businesses and is best served by councillors with a Kings Hill ward area.

9. Wateringbury is only connected by road to Mereworth and East Malling and, as a small village with direct road access to it, has more in common with Mereworth than with the historic East Malling.

I do not know why TMBC chose to develop their preferred option in a series of private meetings of councillors; I would be happy to be involved in any further discussion should the Boundary Commission find that helpful.

I shall be grateful if you will acknowledge receipt of this email and the two accompanying maps.

Many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

APPENDIX 1

Proposed change in ward boundary between Aylesford South and Aylesford North

It is suggested that the new boundary is the M20 motorway instead of the River Medway (see map below). This would result in the following roads transferring from Aylesford South to Aylesford North :

No. of
 dwellings

Bridge Place.	24
Carmelite Road.	49
Coldharbour Lane (part).	7
Friars View.	57
Hall Road (part).	8
Heathcote Close.	45
Hengist Drive.	32
Kings Crescent.	52
Medway Court.	59
Milhall.	42
Sedley Close.	34
Station Road (part).	<u>52</u>
	461

Source : Google street view
Royal Mail postcode finder

TMBC have advised that there are 1.7 electors per dwelling, with a 3.8% vacancy rate.
This implies 754 electors.

Aylesford North becomes $621 + 754 = 1,375$ electors in 2027
Aylesford South becomes $4,135 - 754 = 3,381$ electors in 2027

The number of electors in 2021 is calculated as 1,287 in Aylesford North and 3,137 in Aylesford South, assuming the same percentage change as the current two wards

APPENDIX 2

Proposed change in ward boundary between Bluebell Hill and Walderslade Woods wards (both part of Aylesford parish)

It is suggested that the new boundary is the M20 motorway instead of Walderslade Woods road. This is a more easily identifiable boundary (see map below). This would result in the following roads transferring from Bluebell Hill to Walderslade Woods ward :

	<u>No. of dwellings</u>
Hallsfield Road.	68
Maidstone Road (part).	31
Robin Hood Lane (part).	39
Saddlers Close.	<u>31</u>
	169

Source : Google street view
Royal Mail postcode finder

TMBC have advised that there are 1.7 electors per dwelling, with a 3.8% vacancy rate.
This implies 276 electors.

Walderslade Woods becomes $2,268 + 276 = 2,544$ electors in 2027
Bluebell Hill becomes $1,160 - 276 = 884$ electors in 2027

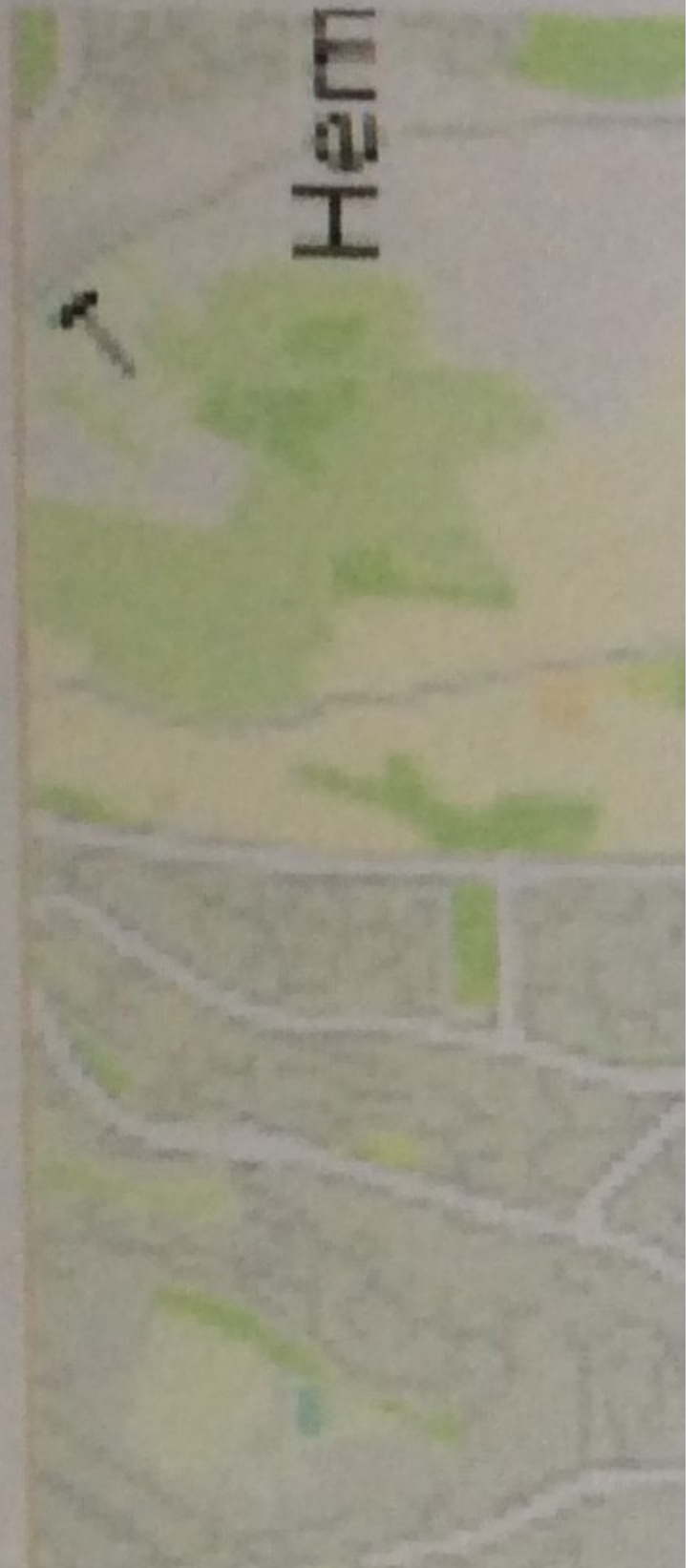
The number of electors in 2021 is calculated as 2,340 in Walderslade Woods and 834 in Bluebell Hill, assuming the same percentage change as the current two wards.

JRD/25 June, 2021.

XIX 1

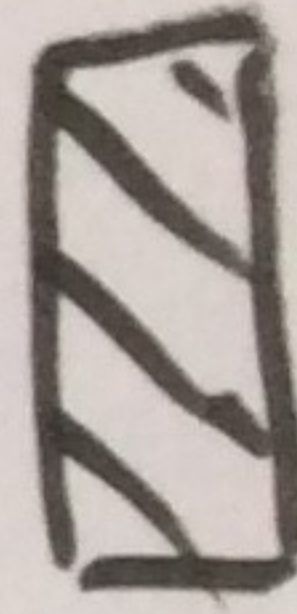


IX 2



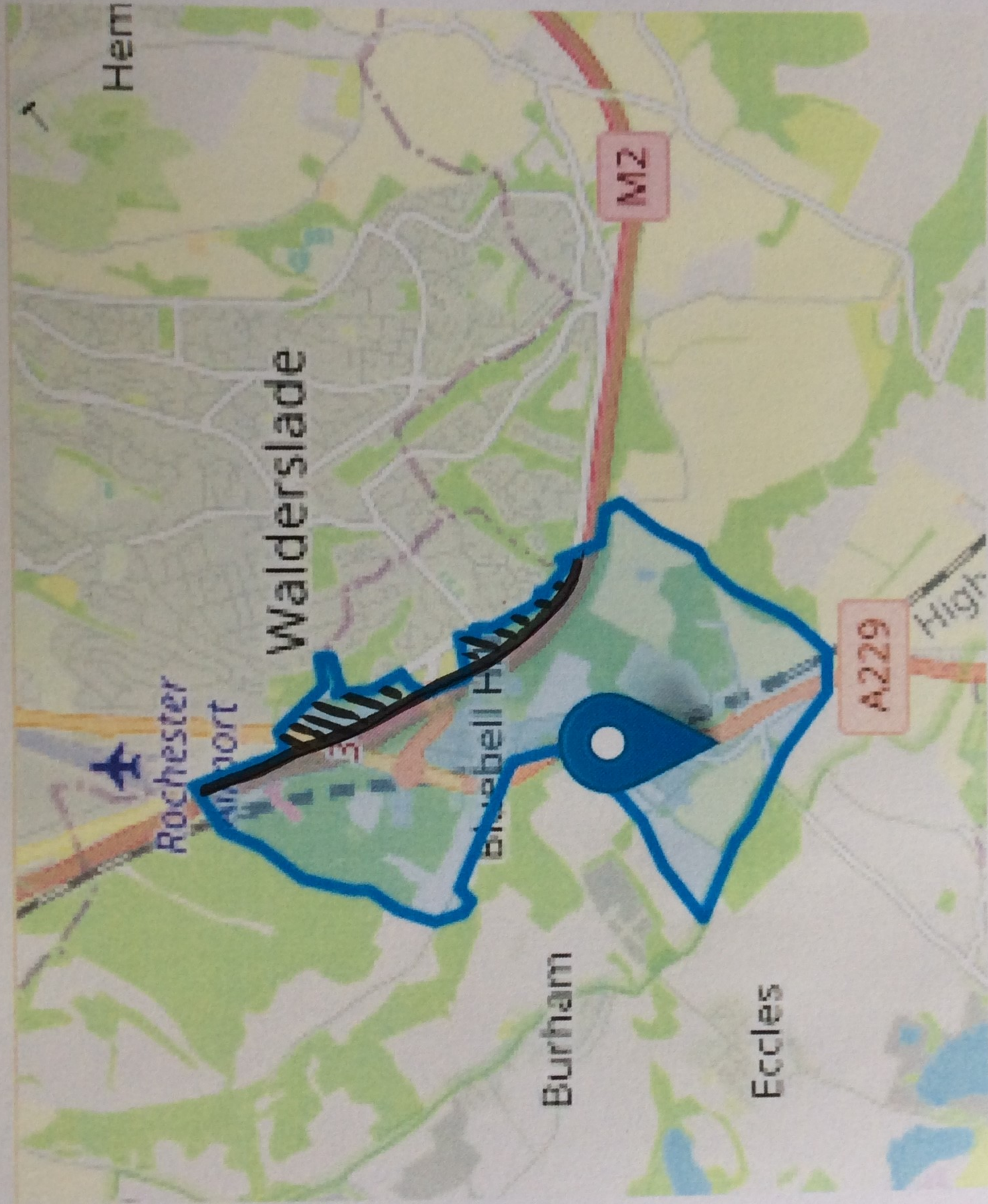
Sent from my iPad

APPENDIX 1

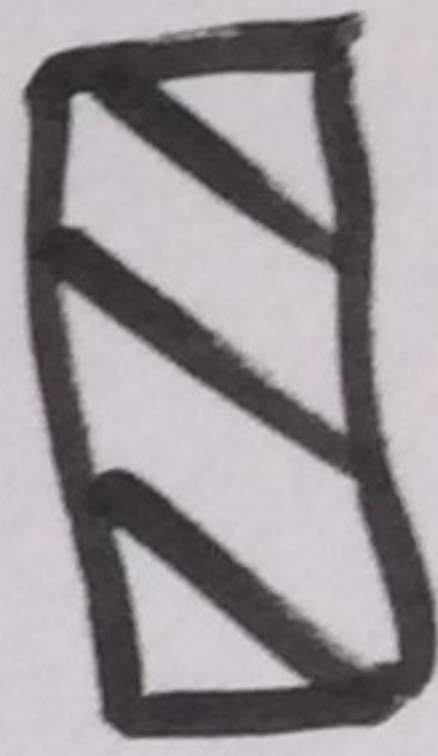


SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGE
AYLESFORD SOUTH / AYLESFORD NORTH

APPENDIX 2



Sent from my iPad



SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGE

BLUEBELL HILL / WALDESLADE

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 18 July 2021 22:21
To: reviews
Subject: Electoral Ward Review - Tonbridge and Malling

Categories: [REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam,

Electoral Ward Review - Tonbridge and Malling

Further to my email dated 30 June, I am again writing in a personal capacity. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

TMBC agreed their preferred warding arrangements at their meeting on 13 July, which was approved by 30 votes to 13, with 1 abstention, all Opposition members voting against. The Agenda papers for the meeting were published on 5 July and included papers prepared for two meetings of the Electoral Review Working Group (ERWG) which hitherto had not been made public.

The report of the Chief Executive to the second meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group held on 28 June states:

1.2.2 The feedback from ERWG has helped to vastly strengthen the considerations regarding 'Community Identity' and 'Convenient and Effective Local Government' and created a number of 'key principles' that have been largely adhered to in order to ensure that a balance is struck between the 3 key considerations set out by the LGBCE. These 'key local criteria' are:

- 1. Parish boundaries should be respected where at all possible.*
- 2. The unparished area of **Tonbridge** along with Snodland, Larkfield and Kings Hill should all be self-contained as they each represent coherent community identities.*
- 3. A number of parished areas have a symbiotic relationship with each other and, where at all possible, should be kept together in any future warding arrangements – these are*
 - *Borough Green and Platt*
 - *Birling and Ryarsh*
 - *Addington and Trottiscliffe*
 - *Hadlow and East & West Peckham*
 - *Burham and Wouldham*

However, TMBC's submission includes a ward which combines the parish of Hildenborough with part of the unparished area of Tonbridge - directly contrary to their key principle that the unparished area of Tonbridge should be self-contained as it represents a coherent community identity. Non adherence to this principle means that the LGBCE's requirement for community identity in Tonbridge is not met. TMBC's proposed ward of Hildenborough and West Tonbridge should therefore be rejected.

In addition, the symbiotic relationship between Hadlow and East and West Peckham is not recognised in TMBC's submission, East Peckham being shown as a separate ward. This is surprising, as a ward containing Hadlow and East and West Peckham would have a variance of only -4% for a 3-member ward.

TMBC proposes a ward boundary change whereby the boundary between East Malling and Larkfield wards artificially and unnaturally goes up Lunsfield Lane to the motorway, including Willow Road in order to create means for both wards below 10%. I submit that ward boundaries should define communities which are recognisable and make sense on the ground; this does not.

(See map below, which shows TMBC's proposed extension to the East Malling Ward - marked 4).



My own submission (written before the report for the 28 June meeting was published) meets all of the key principles set out above and, where it has suggested new ward boundaries, has used the very recognisable physical features of motorways to define them.

The same Report by the Chief Executive to the Electoral Review Working Group also states:

1.2.3 A number of other comments were highlighted which have influenced the proposals as they now stand and these include:

Wateringbury – *linking with Mereworth is feasible, but it then has a knock-on effect meaning that Hadlow and East & West Peckham would need to join with Plaxtol in order to achieve electoral equality, which not only isn't strong on the community identity but also has a knock-on effect for Hildenborough and Shipbourne, which falls below the 10% variance.*

In my submission, Hadlow Village and East Peckham proved to be a particular problem in achieving electoral equality. This could be achieved either on their own as single member wards or joined together as a 2-member ward, but the addition of Golden Green creates an unsatisfactory high variance. The existing Hadlow and East Peckham ward needs additional Parish Council areas to create a three-member Ward. Geography dictates that the choice involves Shipbourne, Plaxtol, West Peckham, Mereworth (and possibly Wateringbury via Park Road and Pizien Well Road). Mereworth and Wateringbury are closely connected communities. My choice of linking Hadlow with West Peckham and with Plaxtol (3.6 miles from Hadlow along rural roads) enables the close links between Wateringbury and Mereworth to be maintained in a separate ward and for the close relationship between Hadlow, East and West Peckham to be recognised in its own ward.

Hildenborough also needs to be combined with another area to achieve electoral equality as a 2-member ward. In my submission, the addition of Shipbourne alone (3.7 miles from Hildenborough) is sufficient to provide a variance of -9% because the mean with a total of 44 councillors is less than that with the 43 councillors used by TMBC. There is thus no knock-on effect in my submission as a result of Plaxtol combining with Hadlow.

TMBC have identified a ward which they call 'West Malling' which comprises Leybourne, Leybourne Chase, Birling, Ryarsh, West Malling and Offham. I suggest that it is more difficult for Borough councillors to effectively represent their constituents if as many as five Parish Councils are involved, covering a large rural area. My submission divides this area more effectively by combining Leybourne, Leybourne Chase, Birling and Ryarsh in one ward, with East Malling, West Malling and Offham in another.

There is no doubt that there is a common community identity between Burham and Wouldham and Eccles. All three villages are close together and are located in a rural area on the south side of the North Downs, which separate them from Bluebell Hill and Walderslade. They used to form a ward before being split after the last Review. In my submission, this was not followed through as it gives an 11% variance with my total of 44 councillors. (TMBC calculate the variance as being 8% with their total of 43 councillors). However, finding that TMBC's submission has four wards with variances of 10%, I suggest that the strong synergy between these three villages is strong enough for the Boundary Commission to warrant a variance over 10% in this particular ward. In that event, the following ward distribution for the six areas east of the river Medway can be adjusted as follows:

<u>Ward.</u>	<u>No of.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No.of.</u>	<u>Variance.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No. of</u>	<u>Variance</u>
	<u>Cllrs.</u>	<u>(2021).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>	<u>(2027).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>
			<u>per Cllr.</u>			<u>per Cllr</u>	
Burham & Wouldham	2,841.				3,963.		
Eccles.		<u>1,330.</u>			<u>1,425</u>		

	2	4,171.	2,086	-7	5,388.	2,694.	11
Walderslade		2,340.			2,544.		
Bluebell Hill.		834			884		
Aylesford North		<u>1,287</u>			<u>1,375</u>		
	2.	4,461	2,231.	0.	4,803.	2,402.	-1

Walderslade and Bluebell Hill are part of the urban sprawl of the Medway Towns; the southern edge of Bluebell Hill Ward is directly joined by Rochester Road to Aylesford village.

In the end, no ward distribution will be perfect, but I respectfully suggest that the Boundary Commission looks closely at my suggested solution for the parished areas within the Borough as reproduced below (including the adjustment shown above):

<u>Ward.</u>	<u>No of.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No.of.</u>	<u>Variance.</u>	<u>Electorate.</u>	<u>No. of</u>	<u>Variance</u>
	<u>Cllrs.</u>	<u>(2021).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>	<u>(2027).</u>	<u>Electors.</u>	<u>%.</u>
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Larkfield South.		<u>3,408.</u>			<u>3,632</u>		
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Leybourne (TQB).		1,271.			1,298		
Birling.		359.			380		
Ryarsh.		<u>660.</u>			<u>700</u>		
	2	4,633.	2,317	4	4,886.	2,443	1

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	2	4,154.	2,077	-7	4,414.	2,207	-9
Tonbridge.	12.	27,520	2,293.	3	29,309	2,442.	1
Total.	44.	98,327.		-	106,828.		-
Total averages.				2,235.			2,428

I would like to participate in any further discussions on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]



18 July, 2021

