

## Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

### Personal Details:

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**Organisation Name:** Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

### Comment text:

Please find attached my comments on your warding proposals.

### Uploaded Documents:

**Download ([https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1665330324\\_LGBCE+Submission-+Cllr+Luke+Everitt.docx](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1665330324_LGBCE+Submission-+Cllr+Luke+Everitt.docx))**

Submission to LGBCE consultation.

I am very proud to have been a Borough Councillor for Southborough and High Brooms since 2019 and would like to make my objections to the wards proposed.

I appreciate the work you have undertaken to produce the draft proposals, but they do not fulfil your criteria of producing a good pattern of wards for the deeply rooted identities of Southborough and High Brooms. There are significant flaws in the proposals, which fail to reflect or advance the community interests and identity of Southborough and High Brooms. Furthermore, the adoption of the current proposals will weaken the ability of both the Borough and Southborough Town Council to deliver effective and convenient local government.

As detailed in the LGBCE consultation submission made by Southborough Town Council, since splitting from nearby Tonbridge in 1871. The medieval settlement Southborough, evolved to be identified in tandem with High Brooms, a historical community that developed around the 19<sup>th</sup> century brickworks and is reflected in the many late Victorian redbrick homes across the area. This community is historically served by a rail station that has in its time carried the name of both Southborough and now High Brooms.

This shared past forged a distinct historical identity from those of the surrounding areas. This is evidenced by the highly engaged Town Council, huge range of unique community groups, a host of well attended area specific community events (eg , Southborough and High Brooms Festival 2021 and a Mayday festival to name a few- <https://www.southboroughstreet.co.uk/festival> ) and shopping areas with excellent independent shops that are found nowhere else.

The location and usage of facilities in the Southborough and High Brooms effectively map the community they serve. It is not by chance that the local facilities including greenspaces, cemeteries, playgrounds, public toilets and sports facilities are administered by STC. These locally used facilities are paid for by the residents of Southborough and High Brooms via their parish precept. The new Southborough Civic Centre builds upon this, holding a further host of local facilities for the residents of Southborough and High Brooms with the STC council offices, a well used local library, St Andrew's medical centre and a chemist.

In addition to having the common public transport link of being served by High Brooms rail station, other public transportation links create a cohesion within Southborough and High Brooms. Having grown up and lived in both the eastern and western parts of the area, if you are looking to take a bus the vast majority of routes are centred on London Road A26. As a result, those living in Southborough and High Brooms will head to centre of Southborough, not Tunbridge Wells, for their transport needs. This is equally the case for active travel, with a cycle path commencing at the junction of Speldhurst Road heading into Tunbridge wells.

The current borough wards of Southborough North and Southborough and High Brooms effectively deliver local government representation. From Borough Council meeting minutes, you will note that points raised, and matters debated by the five Borough councillors who represent these areas are consistently centred on their distinct areas. Southborough and High Brooms has one of the most deprived areas within the wider Borough and resources to address this must be hard fought given that the focus of TWBC can so often be on the Tunbridge Wells itself. Those living in these wards have a range of unique concerns and challenges facing them. They would suffer should the representation currently available to them be weakened by boundaries proposed at this time.

The residents of Southborough and High Brooms have a strong distinct identity and rightly consider themselves separate to the other areas within the Borough. By including parts of what is clearly Tunbridge Wells, the current proposals fly in the face of your aim to reflect the community interests and identities in your new wards. Please reconsider your current proposals.

### **Revised Wards**

From studying other boundary reviews, I can see that you do amend boundary proposals upon submitted evidence that demonstrates your criteria for a good pattern of wards has not been achieved. I hope from considering the above information and from the many other consultation submissions rejecting the current proposals that you will take the same steps to amend your proposed boundaries for the distinct historical community of Southborough and High Brooms.

I would urge you to adopt the boundary positions advocated by Southborough Town Council, that the boundary of Southborough and High Brooms should remain within the existing parish boundary. Given the projected 2027/8 electors of 9,185, this would allow for the creation of a two 2 member wards of good electoral quality. With the naming of these wards to be as per the consideration of Southborough Town Council- Southborough North and Southborough and High Brooms. This would also allow for creation of a two member Speldhurst and Bidborough Ward within its existing boundaries, which would more greatly serve those parish areas.