

# Tandridge

## Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]  
Postcode: [REDACTED]  
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

## Comment text:

FAO Tandridge DC Boundary Review - Consultation Response

I am writing as a retired Tandridge District Councillor, now Alderman, and also as a retired Caterham-on-the-Hill Parish Councillor. I have lived in Caterham for over fifty years, so I know the area intimately.

I am greatly concerned about the Commission's draft proposals for Caterham-on-the-Hill and Caterham Valley, and also for Whyteleafe and the northern part of Tandridge District generally.

The Commission's ward proposals for these areas are in my view confusing and impractical. They take no account of the natural landscape of the area or of the generally accepted divisions of this part of the District. They also cut across Parish Council and long-established community boundaries. Some of the details of the ward areas proposed will be incomprehensible to residents. Voter turnout - often disappointing in local elections - is likely to be reduced by these proposals.

Caterham-on-the-Hill and Caterham Valley are distinctly different communities, and this is reflected in the boundaries of the two Civil Parish Councils. They are divided by a steep (and mostly wooded) hillside. This may not be obvious from perusal of a map, but the division is clear in reality. Whyteleafe is also a quite separate area from Caterham - both Hill and Valley - again with its own Parish Council. Chaldon Village is also a largely distinct area with its own Parish Council.

The Commission's present proposals for this area seem to have arisen because of a wish to divide much of Tandridge District into three-seat wards. Although this idea may have some theoretical merit, I suggest that it does not work in Caterham and the surrounding area (which the Commission refers to as the north-west of the District). The electorate numbers indicate that Caterham-on-the-Hill and Chaldon need seven Councillors between them, Caterham Valley four and Whyteleafe two. There is some flexibility to adjust detailed boundaries to create similar electorates, but for democratic fairness the total should be thirteen and not twelve.

I attach a short document setting out an alternative proposal based on the existing Parish Council areas. I hope that you will give it careful consideration.

In suggesting these changes to the Commission's proposals, I note that the 'three-seat wards' proposal is not to be applied throughout the District, with Woldingham as a single-seat ward and Warlingham East, Chelsham & Farleigh as a two-seat ward. As the Commission has put forward those exceptions, then others too can be and should be made. The 'three-seat' objective should not take precedence over well-defined and distinct community neighbourhoods.

I also have a specific point about Parish Council elections. In Caterham, these are held every four years and concurrently with some District Council elections. The Commission's proposals would mean that many electors would be in differently named voting areas for the two elections, which would be very confusing.

I have not commented on proposals for the north-east or south of the District as I am not sufficiently well acquainted with the detailed community priorities for these areas. However, I see some obvious problems in parts of these areas too.

In a News Release, the Commission Chair said: "We want our proposals for new electoral arrangements to reflect communities. We also want them to be easy to understand and convenient for local people." I suggest that the present proposals fail these tests and that a revision should: be easier for residents to comprehend; remain close to existing Parish and community boundaries; and for democratic fairness allocate an additional councillor to the north-west of the District.

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## **Attached Documents:**

- North West Tandridge Proposal.docx

## North West Tandridge -

### Proposal for District Ward Boundaries based on existing Parish Council areas

It is understood that the Commission is seeking to divide up Tandridge into three-seat Wards in line with its overall objective for Councils where elections are held each year (other than when there are County Council elections). However, in the North West part of the District this proposal leads to Wards which fail to respect community and Parish areas. The Commission accepts (report, para 28) that other criteria must also be taken into account, and these should take precedence in this case.

The long-standing and cohesive community areas in North West Tandridge are well defined by the existing Parish Council boundaries, which should be used as the basis for the allocation of thirteen – not twelve - District Council seats.

The proposal below does respect existing communities and Parish areas.

<i>Parish Council Area(s)</i>	<i>Existing Wards</i>	<i>Electorate 2028</i>	<i>Proposed Number of Councillors</i>	<i>Electors per Cllr</i>	<i>Deviation from District Average (1692)</i>
Caterham-on-the-Hill plus Chaldon (1)	Chaldon, Portley, Queens Park, Westway	12,286	7	1,755	+3.7%
Caterham Valley	Valley, Harestone	7,054	4	1,763	+4.2%
Whyteleafe	Whyteleafe	3,548	2	1,774	+4.8%

- (1) Chaldon Parish area does not have enough electors to justify a separate Councillor. Chaldon has closer links with the southern part of the present Queens Park Ward than with Westway Ward. The Ward boundaries within Caterham-on-the-Hill should be adjusted to provide the combined Hill and Chaldon area with two two-member Wards and one three-member Ward. The new boundaries should be sensitively chosen in consultation with the Parish Councils.