

5th December 2017

Dear Sirs

I am responding on behalf of The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum concerning the Boundary Commission for England's 2018 Revised Proposals for New Parliamentary Constituencies in the South East.

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of 50,000 residents in the unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is very concerned that the effect of these proposed changes is to split the town from the rest of the Borough causing both confusion amongst the electorate and marginalisation of the town's issues across three constituencies and two counties.

Your revised proposals for Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South East continue to leave the Borough of Tunbridge Wells at a significant disadvantage - in particular its main centre of population, Royal Tunbridge Wells. Your proposals will change what was formerly largely one Parliamentary Constituency and split it between three MPs. Furthermore, Royal Tunbridge Wells will be separated into a constituency a different county – East Sussex.

To summarise, our concerns are as follows:

1. Royal Tunbridge Wells is the only part of the Borough to Tunbridge Wells to be assigned to a constituency in a different county - East Sussex. It would appear that in your review covering Kent and Sussex, the constituency of Tunbridge Wells is unique in being split up in such a significant way.
2. The communities that make up Tunbridge Wells now fall into three constituencies – Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough, Tonbridge and Mid Kent and Ticehurst - and into two counties rather than one. Furthermore, it is on the extreme geographical edge of each constituency and each county. We feel that these changes will not serve the interests of the constituents allocated to any of the three constituencies and their concerns will be marginalised.
3. Royal Tunbridge Wells is an integrated community which has very close links with its various constituent communities through transport, education, history, employment, commerce and geography. These changes will affect the integrity of Royal Tunbridge Wells as a community if Southborough, Pembury and Langton Green are assigned to the constituency of Tonbridge, and the rural hinterland comprising the larger part of the Tunbridge Wells Borough, is assigned to the Mid Kent and Ticehurst constituency.
5. These division make no sense to the population of Tunbridge Wells Borough, and to Royal Tunbridge Wells in particular. There is potential for confusion on behalf of the electorate when parliamentary elections will be administered by one authority, while Borough and Ward/Parish elections by will be administered by another. The administrative cost of elections could increase unnecessarily to cover these changes
6. There are some synergies between Royal Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough and Wadhurst, the other centres of population in the proposed new constituency of Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough, particularly in respect of employment, education, retail and transport. However, we have little connection with some communities in the new constituency such as Forest Row which looks primarily to East Grinstead to its north, and several others in the south of the proposed constituency which look to Uckfield and Eastbourne for the same reasons rather than Tunbridge Wells or Crowborough.

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of 50,000 residents in the unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alex Green (Deputy Chair); Alastair Tod (Leisure & Tourism – acting); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Linda Lewis (Culture); Mark Booker (Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

7. Finally, we suggest that the current proposals for housing and population growth in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells will place it close your target range for constituency size within just a few years. The latest projections are for around 16,000 additional homes which, with an occupancy of around 2.4 per home , will increase our population by 38,400. To avoid revisiting these constituency boundaries in future, we also urge you to consider this growth in population when resetting Parliamentary Constituency boundaries in this area.

Yours sincerely



Adrian Berendt
Chair, Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum