

Dear Sirs,

I am writing as the Chairman of the Sevenoaks District Council Governance Committee, on behalf of this Council, in response to your initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries. The proposals were considered at a meeting of the Governance Committee on 3 November, and subsequently at a full Council meeting on 22 November.

There was broad agreement for the proposals put forward for the Sevenoaks constituency, but with concerns relating to the northern wards of “Ash and New Ash Green” and “Hartley and Hodsoll Street”. The following sets out the main views and details a suggested counter-proposal:

- Clearly the Sevenoaks District area is too large to form a co-terminus parliamentary constituency, so there is acceptance that some areas would need to be in other constituencies.
- The Southern wards of the District covering Edenbridge, Cowden, Hever, Penshurst, Fordcombe, Chiddingstone and Leigh are closely connected in terms of geography and communities and have together been part of the Tonbridge Parliamentary constituency for many years. These parishes were also kept together in the recent review of Kent County Council division boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- It is accepted that these areas are likely to remain outside the Sevenoaks constituency. There was a strong view from one Southern ward member that their links are more with Tonbridge than Tunbridge Wells. Reasons cited included the local infrastructure is better aligned to Tonbridge, including rail, road links and schools and that it would retain stronger links with County Council boundaries.
- Conversely, there was a strong view that the “Ash and New Ash Green” ward should remain part of the Sevenoaks constituency. In addition that, in order to make the Sevenoaks constituency larger (as required by the overall proposals), it would make more sense to include the “Hartley and Hodsoll Street” ward rather than add in the three wards that are part of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
- The Ash and Hartley areas are rural in nature and have strong links to Sevenoaks, and have little in common with Gravesham which is a fast growing urban area.
- The three Tonbridge and Malling wards have no connection with Sevenoaks as their residents naturally look towards the centres of West Malling, Kings Hill and

Tonbridge. There is a clear geographical separation between Sevenoaks and Borough Green by way of the largely unpopulated area of Seal Chart.

- The main concern is that it would not seem sensible to remove two wards of Sevenoaks District Council, only to replace them with three unconnected wards from a neighbouring council. The Sevenoaks Constituency under this counter-proposal would have an acceptable electorate of 74,019, virtually at the mid-point of the required range.
- Clearly, when looking at the wider region, there could be many alternatives to manage the knock-on effects of this counter-proposal. In line with paragraph 62 of your publication “Guide to the 2018 Review of Parliamentary constituencies” the following table and attached map indicate one way in which it could be achieved on a region basis.

	Sevenoaks	Gravesham	Tonbridge & the Weald	Maidstone	Rochester & Strood
Initial Proposal	76,611	76,583	71,575	71,284	78,455
Ash & New Ash Green	4,513	-4,513			
Hartley & Hodsoll Street	4,731	-4,731			
Borough Green & Long Mill	-5,258		5,258		
Downs & Mereworth	-3,305		3,305		
Wrotham, Ightham & Stansted	-3,273		3,273		
Cuxton & Halling		4,384			-4,384
Harrietsham & Lenham			-4,418	4,418	
North Downs			-1,834	1,834	

Counter-proposal	74,019	71,723	77,159	77,536	74,071
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your initial proposals.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Alan Pett,

Chairman Sevenoaks District Council Governance Committee

On behalf of Sevenoaks District Council