

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Personal Details:

Name: Bjorn Simpole

E-mail:

Postcode:

Organisation Name: Bjorn Simpole, Policy Officer on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party

Comment text:

Please find enclosed attached the response of the Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party. Maps of the 14 wards that form our proposal will be sent separately. Please refer to these for details of where boundaries are proposed to be for each ward.

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1665397001_TWCLP+Final.pdf)

Overview

Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party encloses a Borough wide alternative proposal for the Commission's consideration. We believe that this proposal provides a coherent alternative approach to establishing new boundaries and improves upon the commission's draft recommendations in a number of ways but in particular: -

- Focusing on keeping local communities together in wards whilst ensuring that a great deal of care was taken to achieve as great electoral equality as possible
- Reducing the variances in elector numbers from the draft proposals bringing all wards within a 10% variance based on 2028 elector forecasts
- Retaining the best elements of the Commission's draft proposals, focusing on improving boundaries based on local knowledge and better respecting parish and town council boundaries.

We believe that overall the Commission's proposals as drafted are not acceptable for Tunbridge Wells. There is too little attempt to deliver electoral equality and a number of communities have been divided in order to maintain a three member ward scheme. We do not believe that this is appropriate or desirable. While the Council has made a decision to continue to elect in thirds rather than in all out elections, this does not in our view preclude the inclusion of 1 or 2 member wards in a new warding scheme. **Our boundaries should reflect the real communities of the Borough** and it is clear that by sticking to a 3 member ward scheme this objective cannot be met. **We urge the Commission to think again and listen to the weight of objections being made against their draft proposals.**

Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party recognise that the council took a decision that there should be 39 Councillors. Our proposal is based on a 39 councillor scheme.

Instead of the Commission's proposed 13 three member wards scheme, we propose that there are 11 three member wards and 3 two member wards. Such a scheme would enable the entirety of the Southborough Town Council area to be represented at Borough Council level by 4 members in 2 two member wards and avoid dividing this coherent community by pairing it with parts of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Bidborough Parish.

Under the current scheme of election in thirds, two member wards can be retained as they are indeed incorporated under our current arrangements. Our scheme would mean that there would still be 13 members elected three years out of four following all out elections in May 2024.

Our proposals are based on the terms of the existing consultation which is an expectation that the Council would continue to elect in thirds. Should a decision be made to move to all-out elections at any point during this process we would propose an entirely different scheme and wish to make this clear to the commission.

We do not believe huge variances in excess of 10% is an acceptable outcome from a boundary review where electoral equality is a key factor as stated by the Commission. Details of the boundaries we propose for each ward are on the attached maps and the narrative below supports our submission.

Southborough Town Council area

Our major objection to the Boundary Commission proposals is the division of the Southborough Town Council area into two 3 member wards that do not respect the town status of Southborough, its history and separateness from Royal Tunbridge Wells and neighbouring rural communities. It should be noted that Southborough is described separately and discretely within the submitted Local Plan currently with the Planning Inspector. The description throughout is of 'Tunbridge Wells and Southborough', clearly reinforcing their separateness.

The proposals divide the community of High Brooms and place many of the residents in a Royal Tunbridge Wells North ward, a town in which they not reside. The community will be ill-served by the Commission's proposals and we strongly believe that the Southborough Town Council area can and should be treated as an area in its own right for Borough Council representation. To achieve this we propose two 2 member wards for the area.

The forecast electorate of 9,185 is ideally suited for two 2 member wards. The boundary to the current 3 member and 2 member wards would be adjusted to evenly divide voters between two wards. One ward is centred around High Brooms stretching west to include part of the Southborough West polling district. One called Southborough North based on the existing ward with the inclusion of parts of Southborough West Polling district (currently in Southborough and High Brooms).

We propose

- a two member ward called **Southborough and High Brooms** – forecast electorate 4650, - 0.4% variance.
- a two member ward called **Southborough North**, forecast electorate 4526, -3% variance.

As reflected in the submission from Southborough Town Council we reject the commission's proposals for the area.

- High Brooms and Southborough have been regarded as a single entity since medieval times, see for example the Wikipedia entry, which opens with '*Southborough is a town and civil parish in the borough of Tunbridge Wells in Kent, England. It lies immediately to the north of the town of Tunbridge Wells and includes the district of High Brooms*
- High Brooms has always formed a distinct community, its characteristic buildings of top-quality red brick from the eponymous brickworks springing up as a company town over a relatively short period between 1880 and 1900.
- The Commission's proposals divide a distinct community with a history of its own. Contrary to the opinion derived from a tour by LGBCE personnel, there is not ambiguity in this area about '*where Southborough [or, more accurately, High Brooms] ends and RTW starts*'. The perceived area of High Brooms actually extends beyond the boundary and forms part of the Grosvenor and Hilbert ward that we recommend below
- All the local amenities, from the playgrounds in High Brooms to the cemetery and Common in Southborough, are administered by STC, and the residents of High Brooms pay the parish precept for the upkeep and maintenance of the entire parish. As such, they regard all of these as 'their' town amenities, making full use of the Civic Centre, library and GP surgery. Placing these voters in a Tunbridge Wells North ward undermines their sense of identity and loosens their ties to their local community in Southborough and High Brooms.
- Children from High Brooms generally attend St Matthew's CE Primary School, on the west side of Powdermill Lane. (Southborough children go to Southborough CE Primary School).

Under the draft recommendations, the school building stays in 'new Southborough', while the parents and the linked parish church move into 'TW North'. There is no logic or benefit to this at all.

- High Brooms is the fourth most deprived ward in the borough, and its residents are disproportionately elderly, on benefits, disabled and users of the Friday 'community larder' at the Bethel Chapel on High Brooms Road. They need Borough councillors who are primarily interested in their concerns, their financial struggles, their access to services and amenities.

In conclusion, we hope that the commission will be minded to reconsider the proposals for Southborough and to listen to the representations from the local community. This is a distinct separate town from Royal Tunbridge Wells, with its own history and community and any proposal which divides High Brooms will serve to undermine its cohesion and identity to the detriment of residents.

Rural wards

We propose alternative warding arrangements for our rural wards which achieve better electoral equality and reduce the number of parishes that will be divided in the Commission's proposals. While not proposed below we would be supportive of any further proposals for 1 and 2 member wards where this is desired by local communities, is within 5% variance of electoral equality and there is strong evidence that it improves representation and keeping close communities together.

Speldhurst and Bidborough

We propose

- to retain the existing **Speldhurst and Bidbrough** ward in its entirety as a 2 member ward. forecast electorate 4840, 3.7% variance

This enables the existing communities under the two respective Parish Councils to retain their existing representation which is distinct and highly rural in nature, very distinct from neighbouring communities such as Rusthall and Southborough.

We object to the Commission's proposal to combine Speldhurst and Rusthall as a 3 member ward. We note that Rusthall Parish Council's submission was opposed by both of their Borough Councillors (Labour and Lib Dem) who also sit as parish councillors.

The proposed Rusthall and Speldhurst ward in the Commission's proposal is far too large at 14% variance and places the most affluent part of the Borough with Rusthall which has 1 in 3 children living in relative poverty.

Paddock Wood

We reluctantly agree with the Commission's proposal for a **Paddock Wood** ward (forecast electorate 7407, 5.8% variance) where the vast majority of Paddock Wood residents are served by 3 councillors. It makes logical sense to remove the division of west and east particularly where new developments are often arbitrarily divided under the current electoral map.

While we believe that it would have been preferable to keep the whole of Paddock Wood Town Council area together in warding arrangements, we don't believe that there is a viable alternative given the projected elector numbers. We note that the voters in the Foals Wood area relates to future development rather than (on the whole) existing residents.

One concern that we wish to register is that the projections for future development in Paddock Wood by 2028 may be understated and prove insufficient.

Pembury and Capel

We agree with the Commission's proposal for a Capel and Pembury ward (forecast electorate 7374, 5.3% variance) but note that with the proposed development for Tudeley Garden Village it is likely that numbers of electors will grow rapidly beyond 2028 necessitating the need for a further boundary review in the near future.

Lamberhurst, Hawkhurst and Sandhurst

This would be a large geographical ward along the southern and eastern boundary with Wealden Council area. The main advantage is that this would enable Hawkhurst and Sandhurst to be retained together in a ward which has excellent electoral equality.

Lamberhurst, Hawkhurst and Sandhurst ward would have a forecast electorate 7065, 0.9% variance.

Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Brenchley and Matfield

This ward retains the existing Brenchley and Horsmonden ward together in its entirety, pairing it with the village of Goudhurst and some rural areas to the west of Cranbrook.

Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Brenchley and Matfield ward would have a forecast electorate 6462, - 7.7% variance.

Cranbrook, Benenden and Frittenden

This ward is centred on the town of Cranbrook, taking in all of the area to the east and north to make a coherent 3 member ward. To improve electoral equality we have proposed that rural areas to the West of Cranbrook be placed in the neighbouring Goudhurst, Benenden and Frittenden ward.

Cranbrook, Benenden and Frittenden ward would have a forecast electorate 7233, 3.3% variance.

Royal Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall

Our proposal is for 6 three member wards for Royal Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall. This can be achieved with a good level of electoral equality and ensures no encroachment onto any part of any other town or parish area outside of Royal Tunbridge Wells (and Rusthall). It respects the distinct history and identity of Southborough and High Brooms.

Our proposal ensures that communities within the Royal Tunbridge Wells area are kept together in terms of representation.

Rusthall and Broadwater

We have explored ways in which Rusthall might be able to retain its own representation in our proposals but have concluded that the best approach in order to retain an effective scheme that works for the whole Borough is to combine the entirety of Rusthall parish with the vast majority of the current Broadwater ward.

Rusthall only became a parish in 2012 and as a result there are anomalies in the boundaries with Speldhurst which means that some Rusthall residents reside in Speldhurst Parish. We suggest that the Commission remedies this by making amendments to parish boundaries to bring the section of Southwood Road currently in Speldhurst parish into Rusthall parish and the section of Lower Green Road opposite the Red Lion also into Rusthall Parish. This is reflected in our proposals.

This would be a coherent 3 member ward which has excellent electoral equality of 1%. In comparison the current proposal from the Commission is for Rusthall Parish to be combined with Speldhurst to form one over-sized (12% variance) three member ward. We oppose this for a number of reasons including: -

- The oversized number of electors is not justified by the criteria of keeping distinct communities together in warding arrangements
- The challenges of representing a huge ward for any representative who lives in the urban part of it (Rusthall and Langton Green) and is reliant on public transport.
- Rusthall would form only around 40% of the new ward and may not have any Borough councillors who live in the parish.
- There is a huge disparity in the needs and challenges of Rusthall and that of Speldhurst, Langton Green and the wider rural area that this ward would cover. Speldhurst has amongst the lowest levels of poverty in the Borough whilst Rusthall has a high concentration of social housing and low income residents living in the parish.
- Our fear is that this could be in effect be a 'takeover' by Speldhurst Parish with its high concentration of wealthy residents who are unlikely to properly understand and appreciate the needs of Rusthall Parish

Instead we propose that the current Rusthall ward is paired with the vast majority of the current Broadwater ward.

This would

- Reunite Rusthall parish with St Paul's Church and historic areas of Rusthall south of the A264 currently located in the Broadwater ward.
- Be a coherent ward that stretches down towards High Rocks
- Combine areas which demographically share many similar characteristics and challenges with Rusthall, which wouldn't be the case with Speldhurst.
- Be the right size electorally being ideally sized for a 3 member ward

There are no easy solutions for Rusthall given the elector numbers being too small for a distinct two member ward on its own. We believe this represents the best compromise solution available which will best serve residents in both the current Rusthall and Broadwater wards.

Rusthall and Broadwater ward would have a forecast electorate 7053, 0.7% variance.

Sherwood and Knights Wood

We largely accept the Commission's proposal for a 3 member ward called Tunbridge Wells North Woods but believe the ward name is confusing. We propose instead Sherwood and Knights Wood (would have a forecast electorate X, X% variance) – both areas recognisable to local people.

In addition to the Commission's proposal to add the area east of the railway line around Addison Road from polling district BB, we also propose to add the western part of the southern end of Sandhurst Road to the ward and the roads off it that currently sit in Park ward including Grampian, Quantock and Willicombe Closes. As well as making more logistical sense it would also raise the number of electors in this ward and with benefits for electoral equality as it is currently under-sized. We also propose to bring the property the Coach House and adjacent buildings off the A21 into this ward from Pembury ward.

It is important that a Sherwood ward is retained (as it is) in the Boundary Commission proposals. The Sherwood estate was largely constructed in the 1950s as new post-war Council housing. It has the highest levels of poverty in the Borough and specific challenges and needs that require strong local representation. We urge the commission to not to divide this community in its final proposals.

Sherwood and Knights Wood ward would have a forecast electorate 6606, -5.7% variance.

Royal Tunbridge Wells East

This 3 member ward would be made up of the polling districts HH and II in Park ward and the majority of electors in polling districts JJ and KK. This would provide a coherent ward that includes the majority of households located in the east of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Royal Tunbridge Wells East ward would have a forecast electorate 6402, -8.6% variance.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town and the Pantiles

Current ward boundaries for TWBC and those proposed by the Commission do not take the opportunity to create a single ward for the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells. We believe this is a missed opportunity and a mistake.

This ward would be made up of the town centre polling districts of existing Park, Pantiles and St Marks and Culverden Wards as well as take in some electors from a number of neighbouring polling districts to make a coherent central ward comprising the main retail, hospitality and leisure areas of the town.

Currently the town centre and its residents are badly served by ward boundaries which cut through the middle of it. We do not have ward councillors to focus on town centre issues given that 3 existing wards intersect at various points of the core retail and cultural centres of the town. When problems arise residents often do not know who their councillors are with boundaries running down major thoroughfares, placing residents who live metres from each other in entirely different wards which stretch out to the far west (Culverden ward) and far east (Park ward) of the town. The Council is also unable to report on crime figures for the centre of RTW as all data is collected and presented by existing ward boundaries. This makes no sense and we believe the opportunity must be taken to rectify it.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town and the Pantiles ward would have a forecast electorate 6522, -6.9% variance.

Culverden and St John's

This ward includes the existing Culverden and St John's wards west of the A26 and all of the area around St John's church excluding areas closest to the town centre which move to RTW town ward and around 1000 electors in TT (St Lukes) polling district who would be placed in Grosvenor and Hilbert ward.

This proposed ward unites areas of the west of the town which are currently divided particularly the arbitrary boundaries between the existing Culverden and St John's wards.

Culverden and St John's ward would have a forecast electorate 7488, 6.9% variance.

Grosvenor and Hilbert

This ward comprises the majority of the current St James Ward with the addition of the Grosvenor polling district and the electors from St Lukes TT polling district adjacent to High Brooms, Stephens Road and Upper Grosvenor Road to the WW polling district boundary. Geographically it reflects the north of Royal Tunbridge Wells to the Southborough boundary with Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, its focal point with most residents living within 10 minutes walk.

We propose retaining the name given by the Commission - **Grosvenor and Hilbert** ward which would have a forecast electorate 7395, 5.6% variance.

[REDACTED]

From: Bjorn Simpole [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 October 2022 12:26
To: reviews
Subject: Tunbridge Wells review TWCLP - Appendix 1 - No 1
Attachments: TWCLP Proposed Borough Map.pdf; Southborough North.pdf; Southborough and High Brooms.pdf; Rusthall and Broadwater.pdf; Speldhurst and Bidborough.pdf

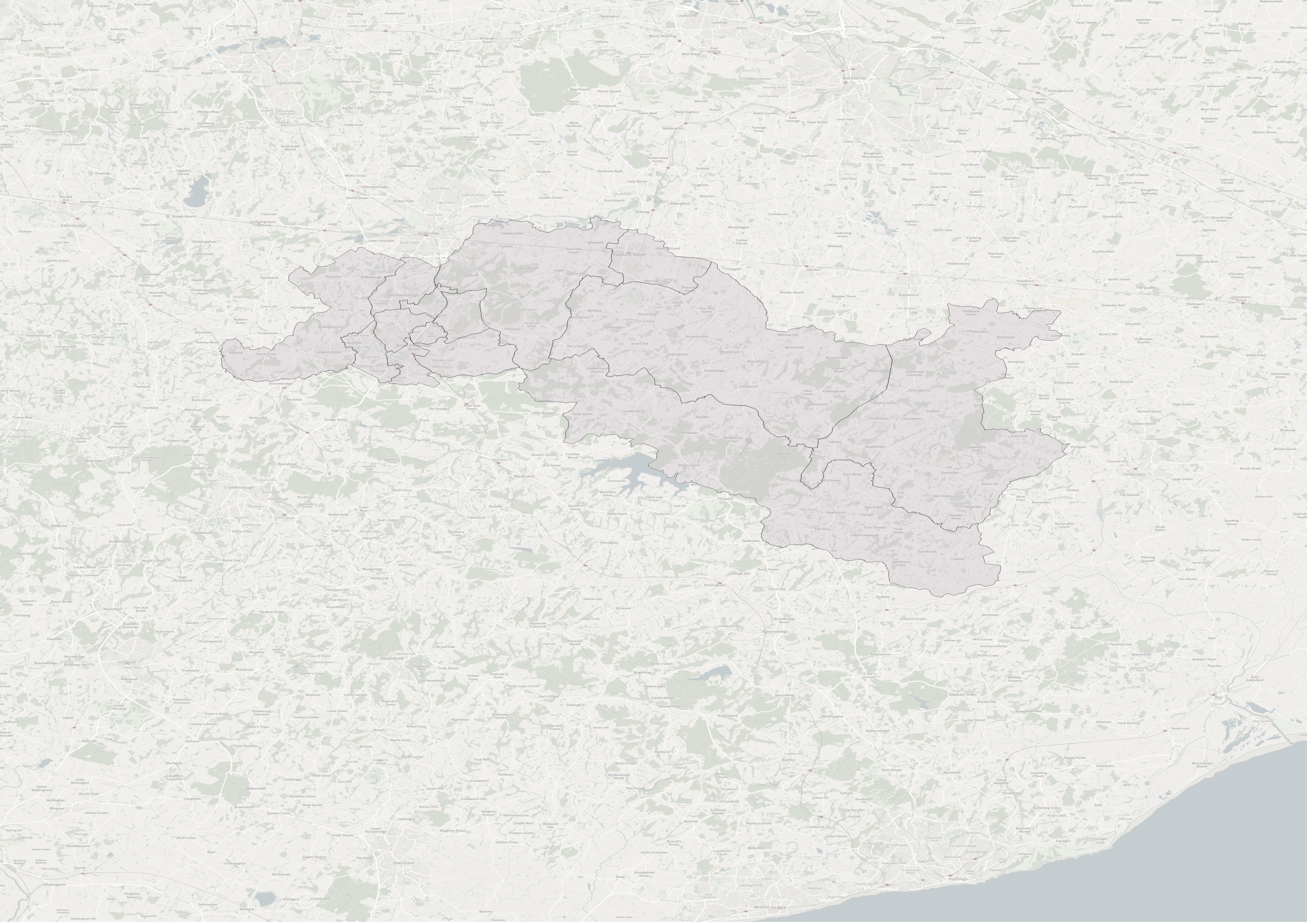
Dear LGBCE

Please find attached first attachment with maps to support the Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party submission.

Further attachments follow on further emails.

Kind regards
Björn
Tunbridge Wells Constituency Labour Party

Sent from my iPhone



Southborough and High Brooms

Council wards 2

Property count 2663

Total Electorate 4650

Clean election 2325

Election Status **Balanced**

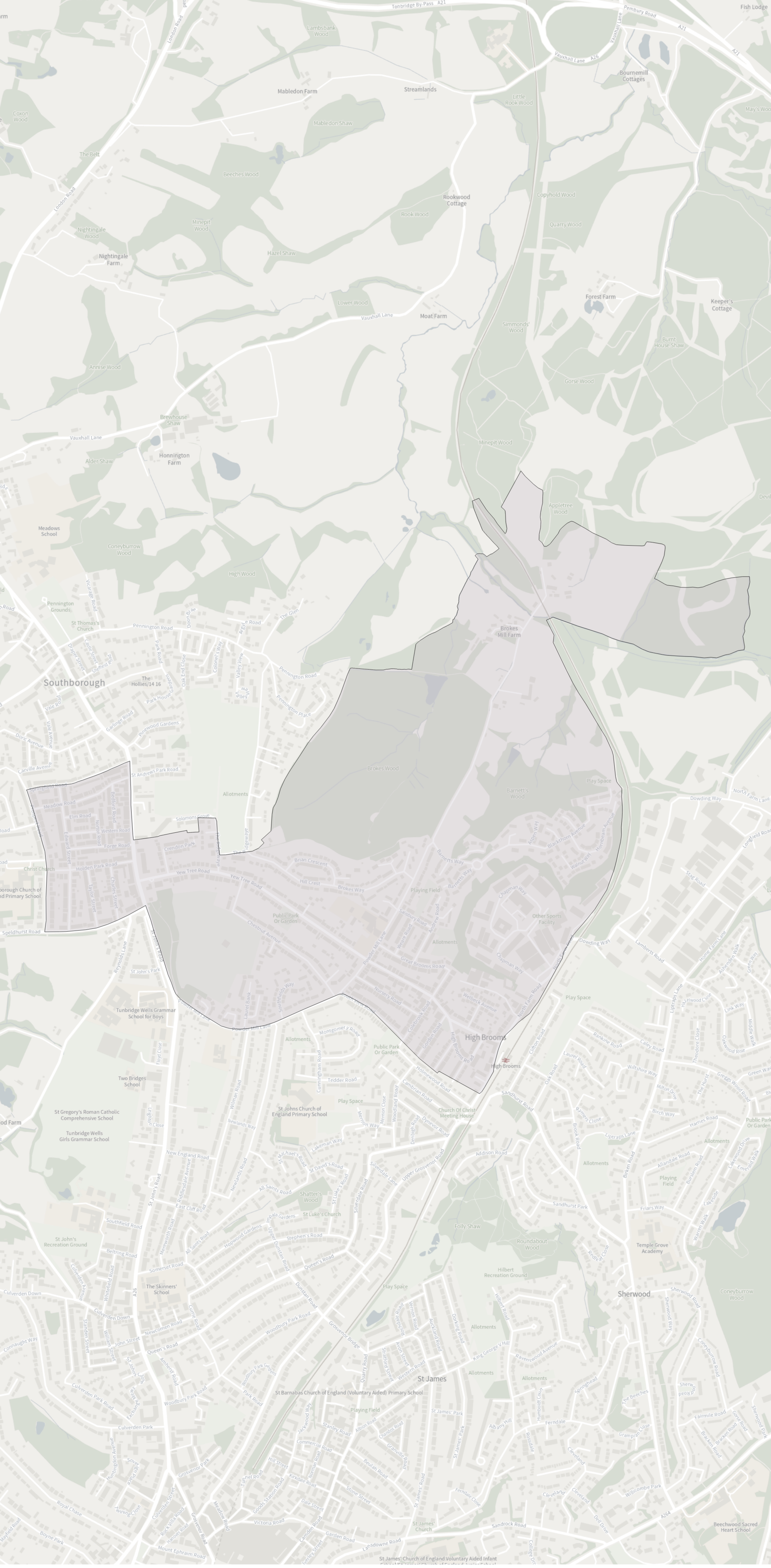
Election target

Deadline 2117 - 2587

Submitted 05 10 2022 17 12

Planning status

A St Matthews Church



Speldhurst and Bdborough Ward

Councilors 2

Property count 2352

Total Electorate 4840

Cleaner 2420

Economic Status **Balanced**

Economic Age

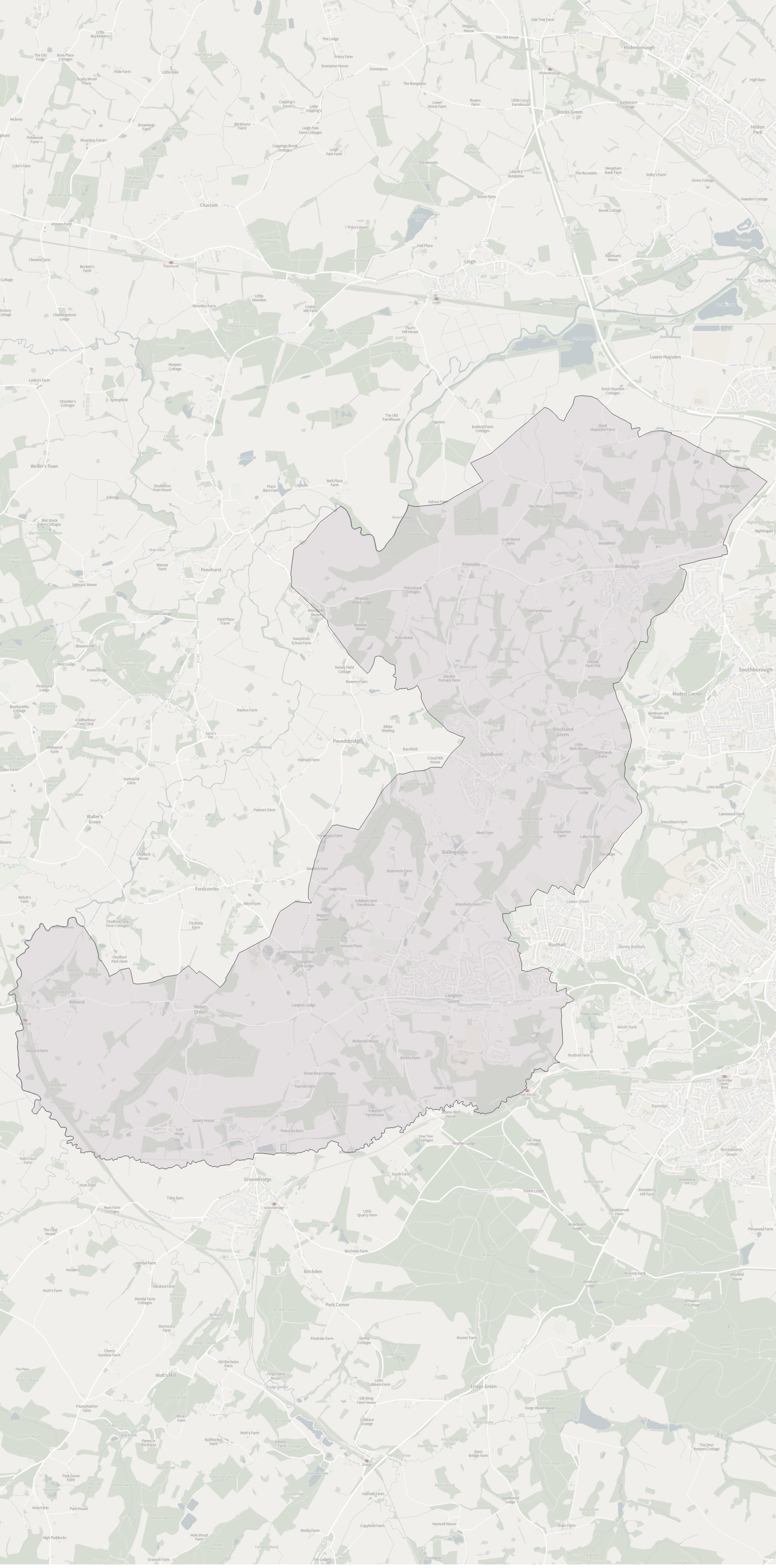
Date 2117 - 2587

Submitted 05 10 2022 17 12

Planning stations

Environment Village Hall Langton Green

Development Village Hall Bidborough F Village Hall Speldhurst





Southborough North

Council wards 2

Open spaces 2542

Total electorate 4526

Clean election 2263

Election status **Balanced**

Election target

Date 2117 - 2587

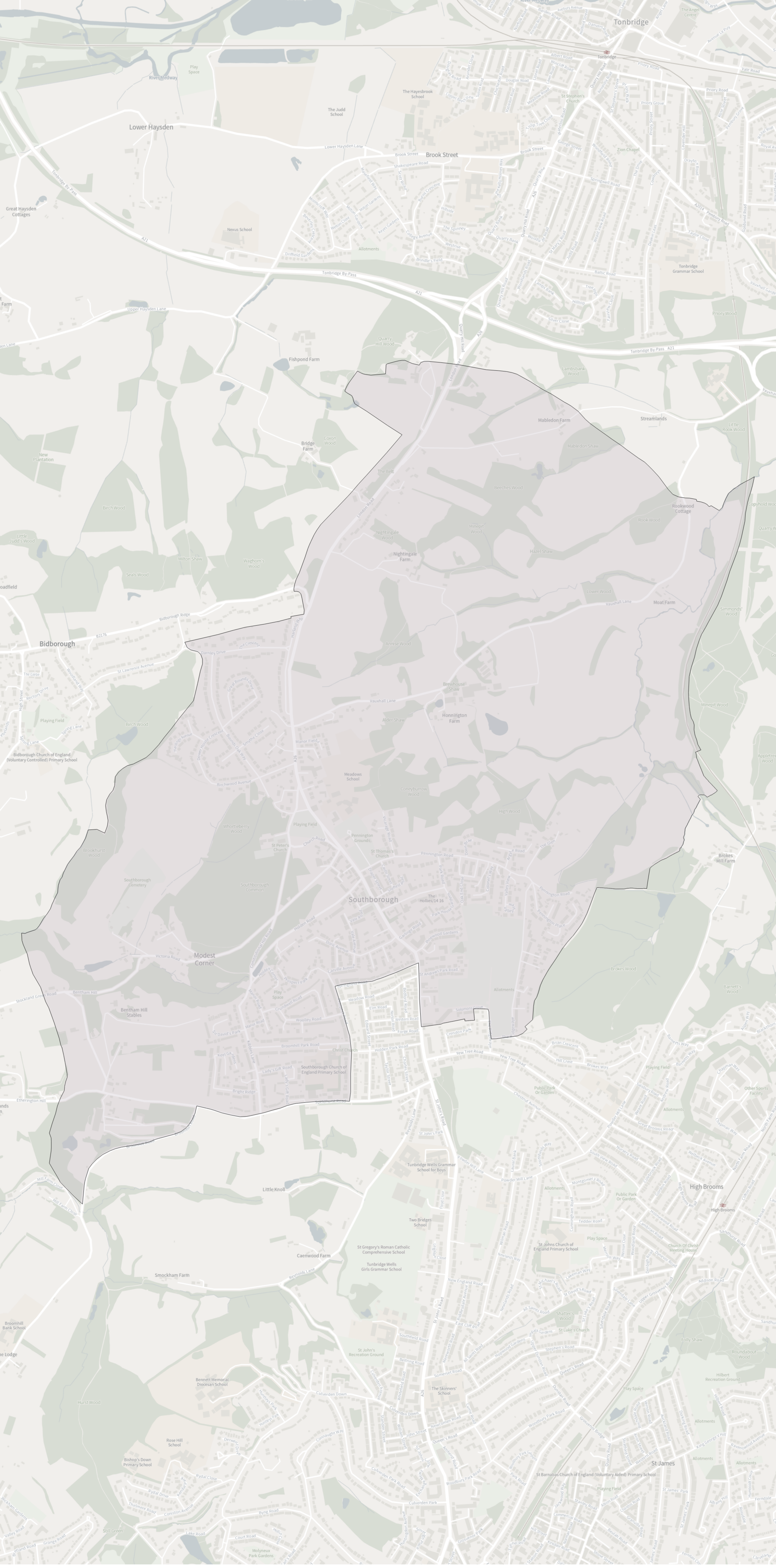
Submitted 05 10 2022 17 12

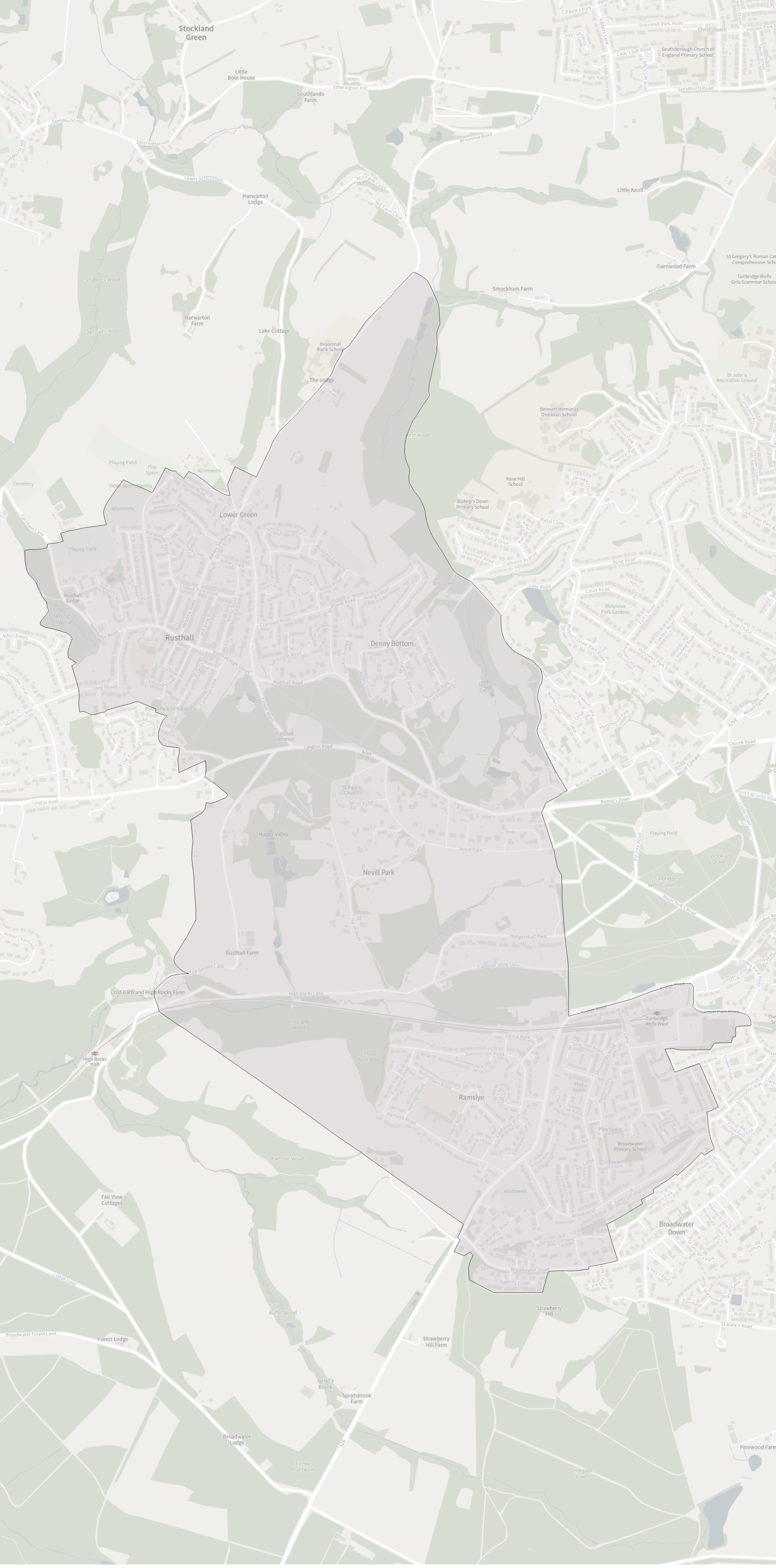
Other wards

C St Thomas Church

B Community Centre

Cundwell Rd





Rusthall and Broadwater

Council wards **3**

Property count **4124**

Total Electorate **7053**

Council seats **2351**

Economic Status **Balanced**

Economic Regeneration

Date of Review **2117 - 2587**

Submitted **05 10 2022 17 12**

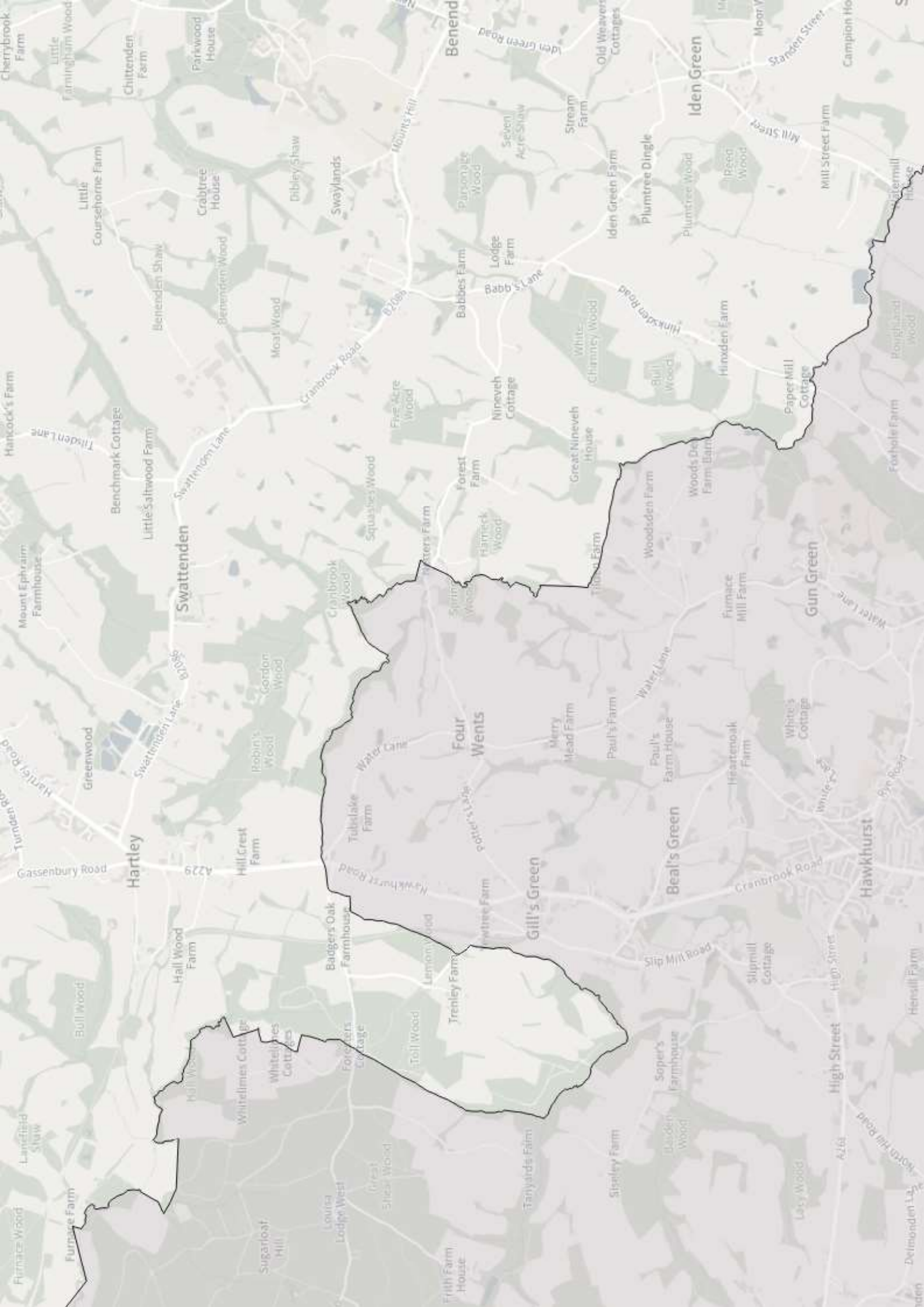
Planning statistics

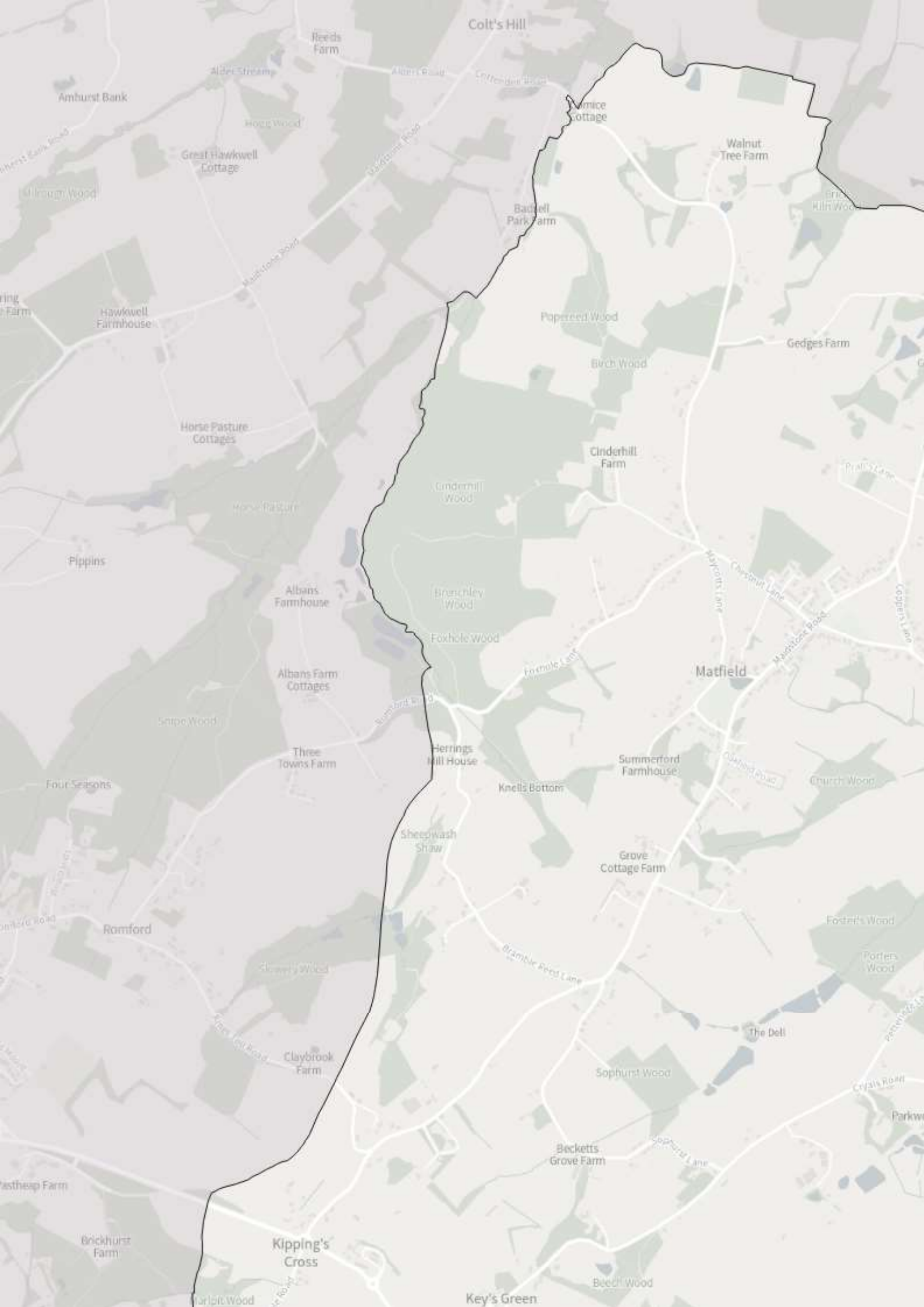
NN St Marks CE Primary

MM Number One

Community Trust

PP Rackish Centre Rusthall





Colt's Hill

Reeds Farm

Amburst Bank

Alde Stream

Hogg Wood

Great Hawkwell Cottage

Althorn Wood

Hawkwell Farmhouse

Horse Pasture Cottages

Horse Pasture

Pippins

Albans Farmhouse

Albans Farm Cottages

Serp Wood

Four Seasons

Romford

Slowers Wood

Claybrook Farm

Kipping's Cross

Brickhurst Farm

Harlip Wood

Key's Green

Beech Wood

Becketts Grove Farm

Sophurst Wood

The Dell

Crystal Road

Parkway

Porters Wood

Ford's Wood

Church Wood

Grove Cottage Farm

Summerford Farmhouse

Knells Bottom

Sheepwash Shaw

Herrings Hill House

Foxhole Wood

Brunchley Wood

Cinderhill Wood

Cinderhill Farm

Birch Wood

Papered Wood

Badell Park Farm

Amice Cottage

Walnut Tree Farm

Brick Kiln Wood

Geddes Farm

Pratt Lane

Maycock Lane

Christine Lane

Maycock Road

Matfield

Quarried Road

Bramble Pond Lane

Turnford Road

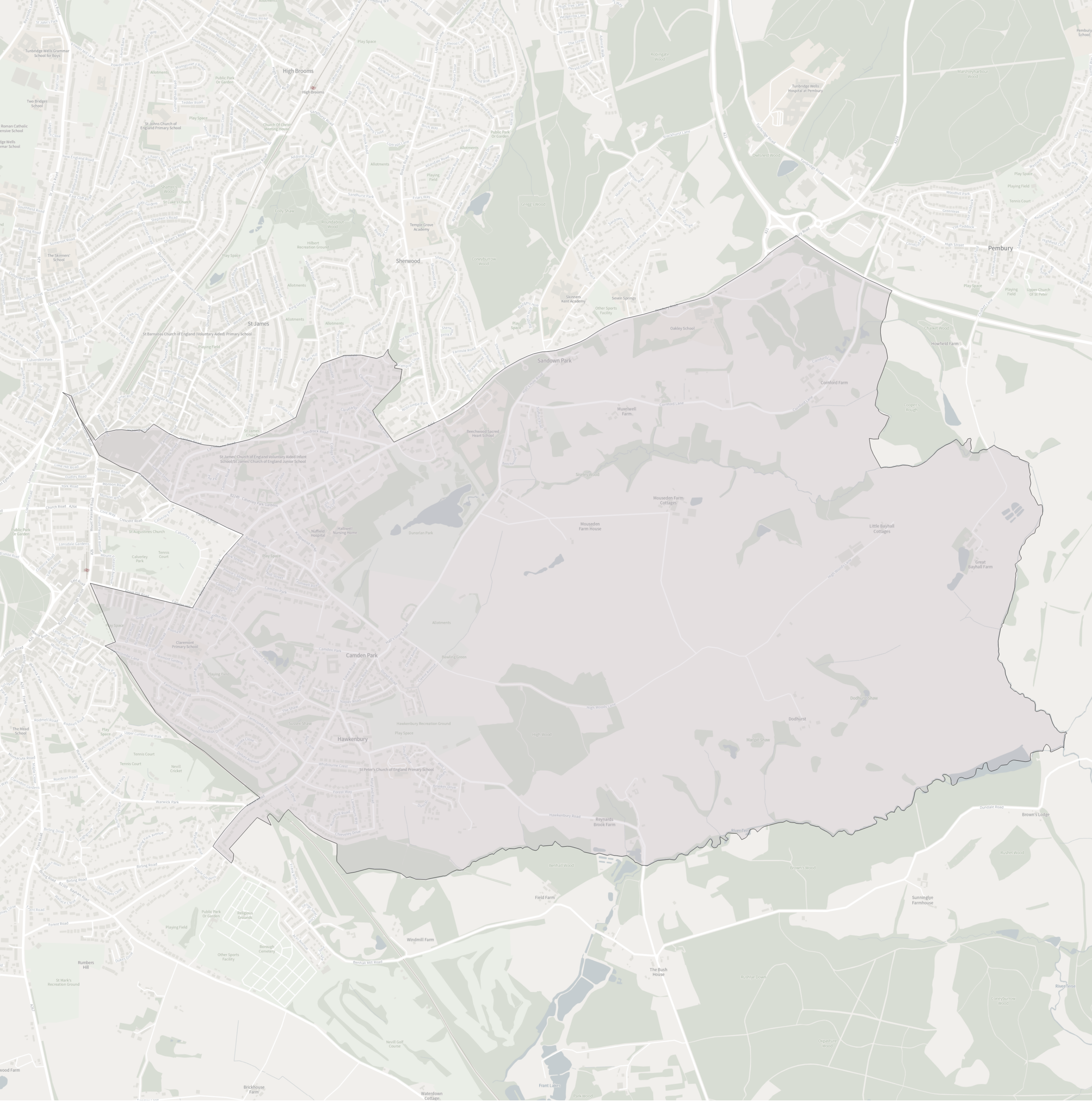
Madingley Road

Alde Road

Chiffenden Road

Whit Bank Road

ing Farm



RTW East

Councilors	3
Property count	3769
Electoral	6402
Cll electorale	2134
Electoral Status	Banded
Electoral range	2117 - 2587
Date submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

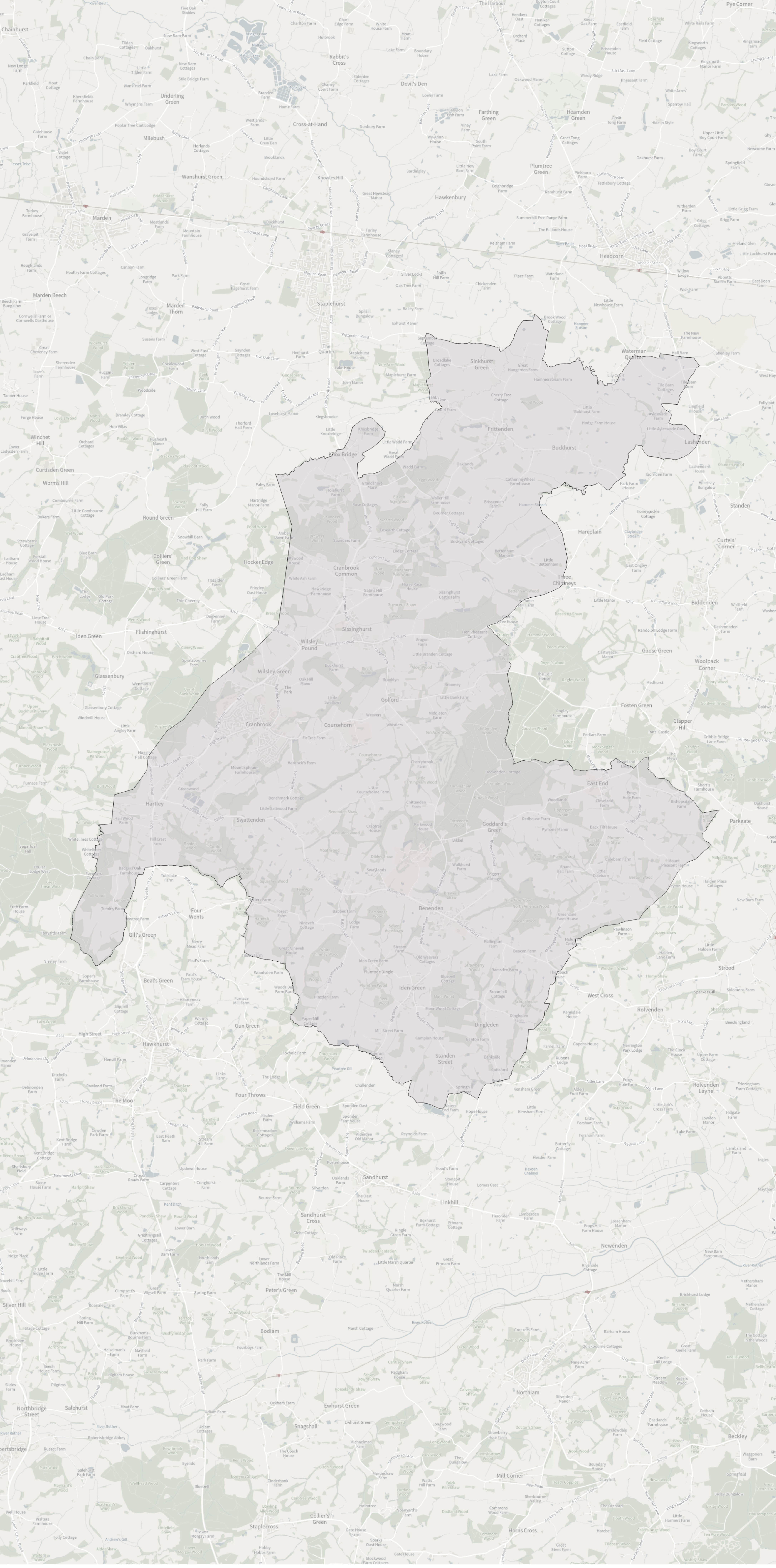
- ol ing stat ons
- United Reformed Church
- KK Clement
- HH Salvation Army

Cranbrook, Benenden and Frittenden

Councillors	3
Property count	3980
Total Electorate	7233
Cleaned	2411
Election Status	Balanced
Election Date	2117 - 2587
Submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

polling stations

- T Frittenden Memorial Hall
- S Sissinghurst Parish Hall
- R Vestry Hall Cranbrook
- Q The Pavilion on the Green
- O Benenden Village Hall



Goudhurst, Horsmonden and Matfield

Council	3
Population	3333
Electoral	6462
Electoral	2154
Electoral Status	Banded
Electoral	2117 - 2587
Date Submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

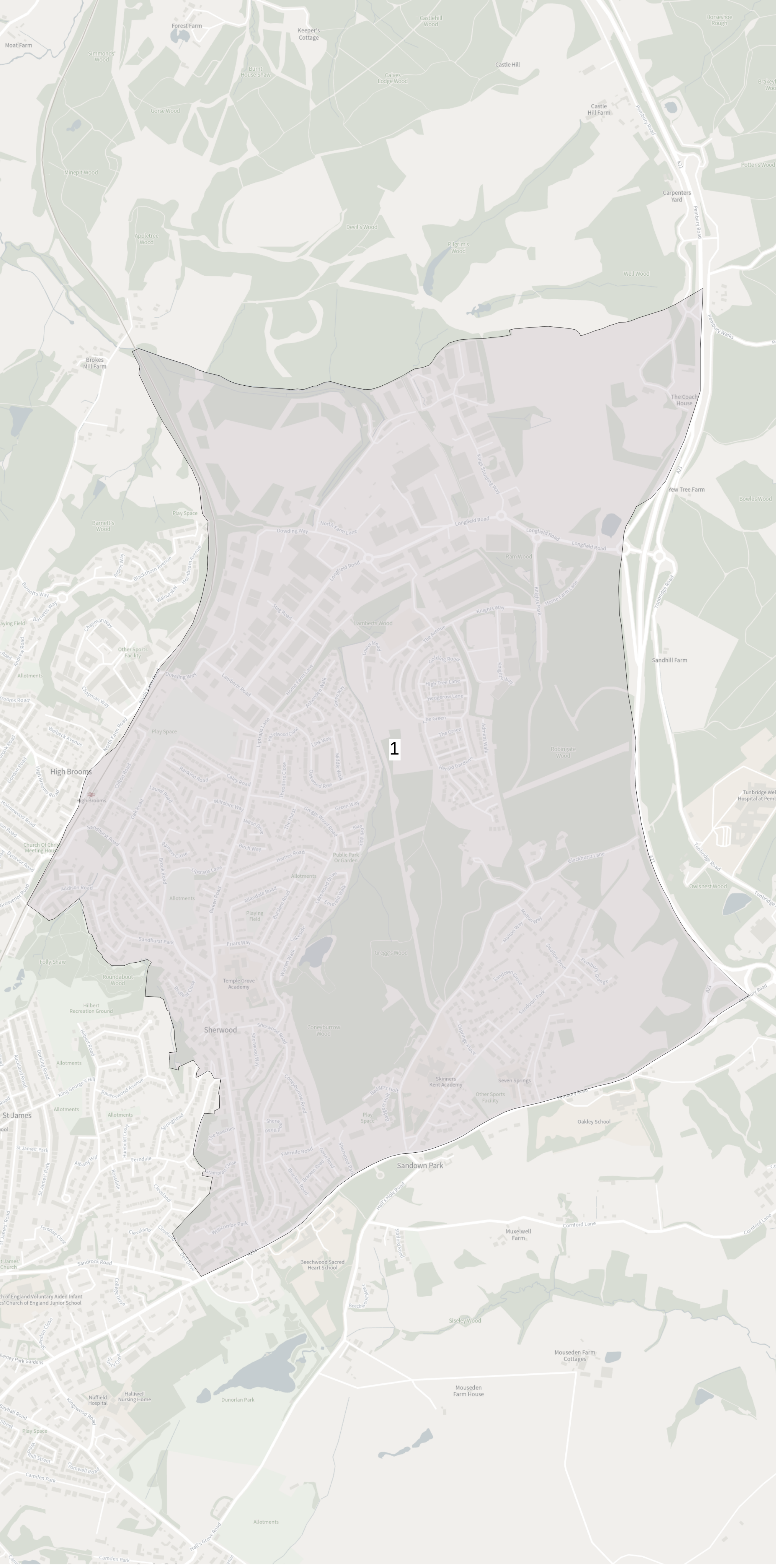
Planning

Memorial Hall Bench

Hill Village Hall Matfield

Kiln Village Hall Horsmonden

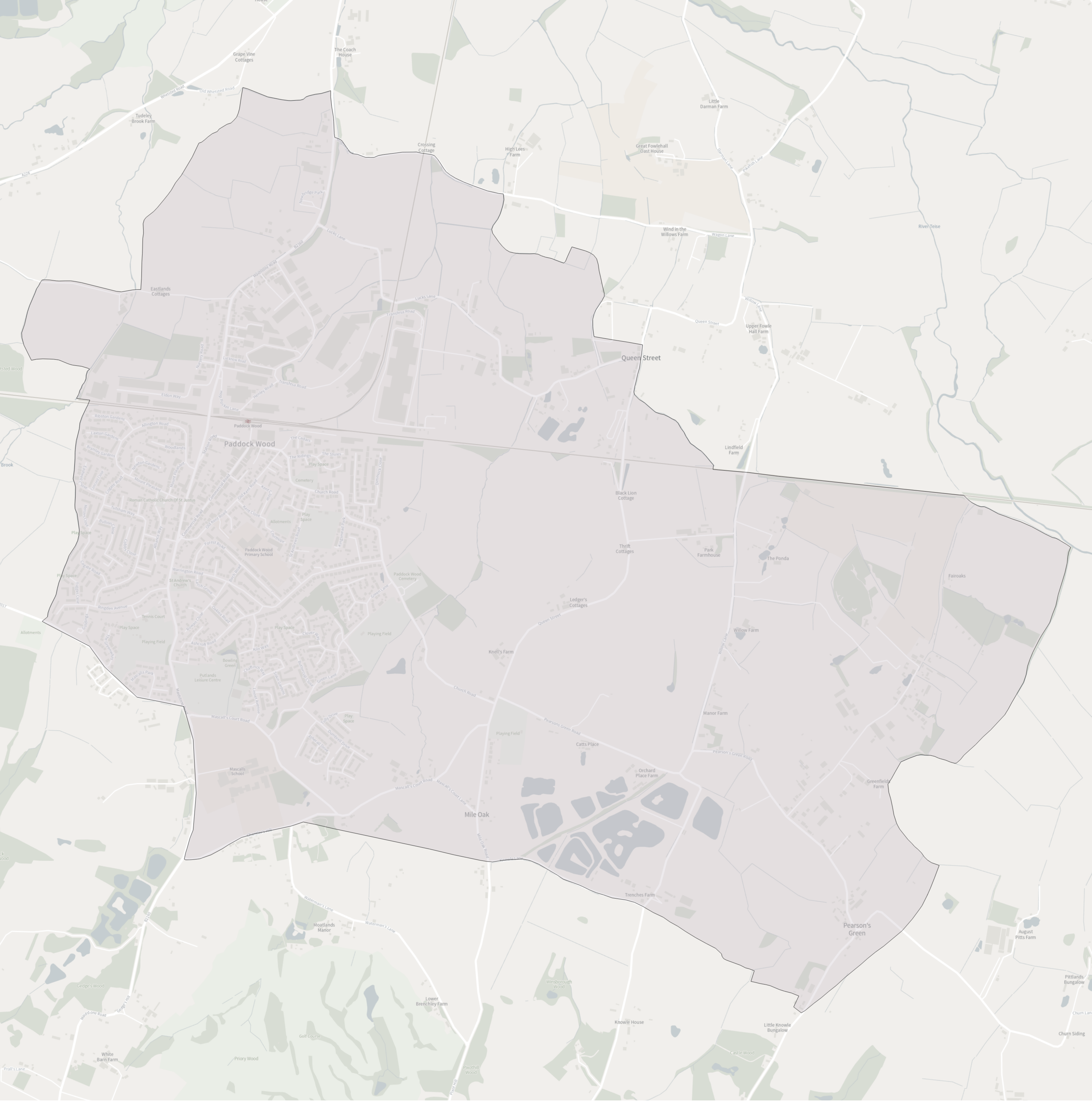
Village Hall Goudhurst



Sherwood & Knights Wood

Council wards	3
Property count	4014
Total Electorate	6606
CLEEC vote	2202
Election Status	Balanced
Election target	
Date time	2117 - 2587
Submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

- olling stations
- DD St Philip's Day Centre
- EE TN2 Centre
- CC Skinner's Primary School



Paddock Wood

Council wards	3
Population	3583
Electoral ward	7407
Cll electorates	2469
Electoral Status	Banded
Electoral range	2117 - 2587
Date submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

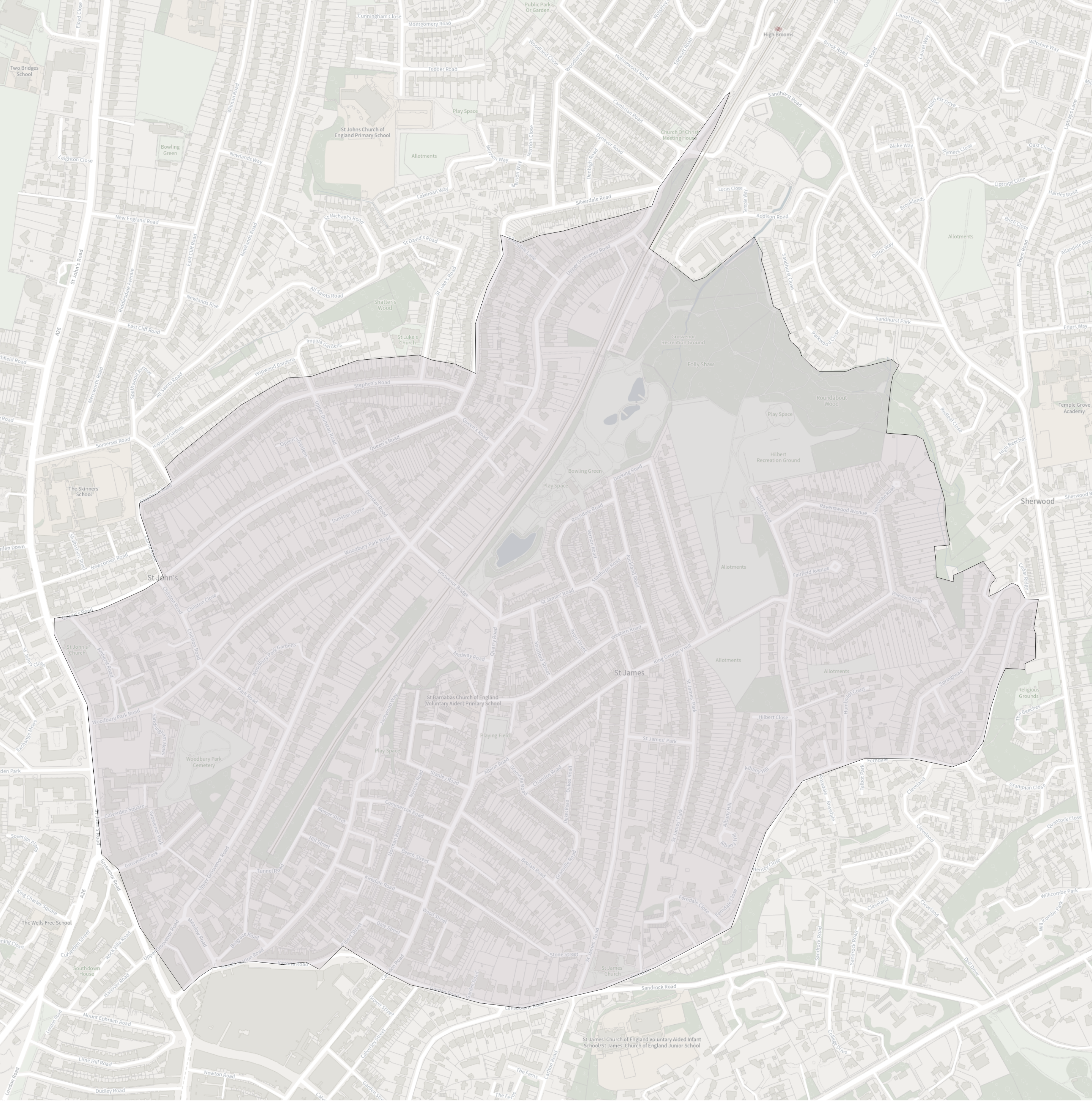
- Planning status
- MA Dowding House Paddock Wood
- M St Andrews Church Paddock Wood



RTW Town & Pantiles

Councilors	3
Open spaces	4492
Electoral wards	6522
Cll electorates	2174
Electoral Status	Banded
Electoral range	2117 - 2587
Date submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

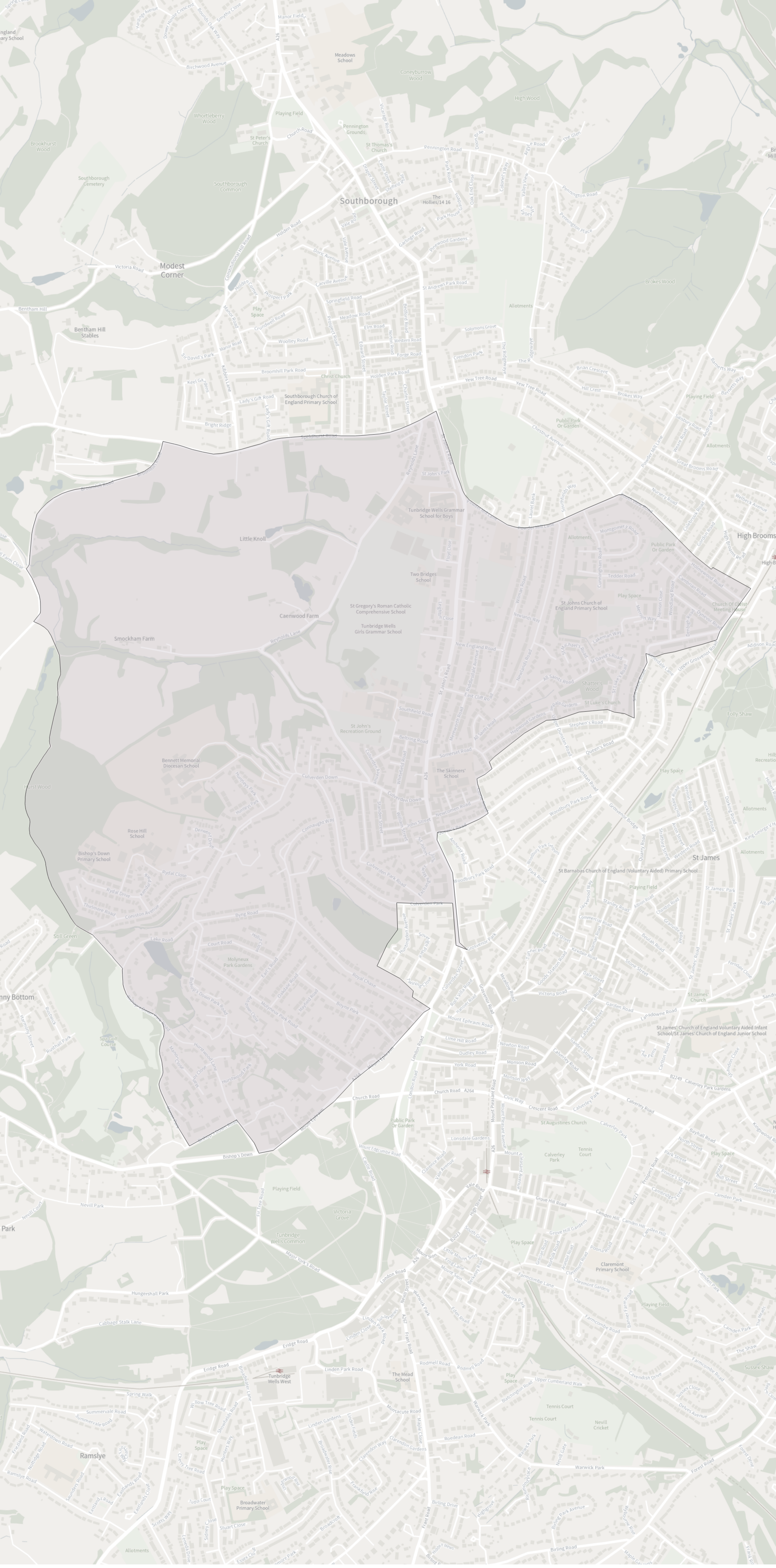
- Planning status
- UU 3 Culverden Park
- Church Church Conference Room
- JJ St Marks Hall
- VV Trinity



Grosvenor and Hilbert

Councilors	3
Property count	4894
Electoralate	7395
Cll election	2465
Electoralate Status	Banded
Electoralate range	2117 - 2587
Date submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

- polling stations
- BB The Hub Grosvenor and Hilbert
 - AA St Barnabas Church
 - GG St James Church
 - WW St John's Church Hall



Culverden and St Johns

Council wards	3
Population	4271
Total Electorate	7488
Councillors	2496
Election Status	Balanced
Election Year	
Date	2117 - 2587
Submitted	05 10 2022 17 12

- Other wards
- RR St John s Bowling Pavil ion

TT St Luke s Chu ch

QQ Bishop s Down P ma y