

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**Personal Details:****Name:** Raymond Moon**E-mail:****Postcode:****Organisation Name:** Paddock Wood Labour Party.**Comment text:**

Submission on behalf of Paddock Wood Labour Party. Uploaded file on 9th October 2022.

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Submission of Paddock Wood Labour Party (PWLP) to the electoral review of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council October 2022

Introduction:

In line with the original LGBCE submission, with the proposed new Boundary changes for Paddock Wood (PW) in March 2022 the PWLP initially welcomed the reduction from 48 to 39 councillors on the basis that the changes in the ward boundaries would better reflect the communities of the whole borough and improve the electoral equality in the proposed wards without providing any political party with an advantage or disadvantage regarding any previous historical election results in the present wards.

The number of proposed electors per ward being 2,400 was also presented in our first submission concerning the ability of that number to be effectively represented by any Borough Councillor, paying due respect to the geographical area they might have to cover to fairly represent their residents in that ward. The present electorate for PW West is 4117 and for PW East 4084 a predicted total of 8201. The proposed Draft local Plan aims to deliver up to 4,000 new houses over the next 10 years and will effectively make the present proposed changes unworkable for the proposed 3 member ward of PW with far more residents beyond the recommended 2,400 electors per ward across the borough.

With these core objectives we would like to make the following observations, suggestions and objections to the present Boundary Change proposals for Paddock Wood:

1. The present proposals for PW refer to 105 in the report, which concedes that “ **We note that the size of Paddock Wood means that it is too large to form a three member ward as it would have 16% more electors than the average, which we consider is too many. We also note that there is significant development planned in Paddock Wood and Capel both within the five-year forecast period, but also outside of this time period**”. The present proposal still recommends a 3 member ward for PW which clearly does not meet the criteria of the Boundary Commissions goals and aspirations and admits PW is challenging in trying to make the ward fit into 2,400 residents for each councillor, with more planned in the future regarding the present Draft Local Plan.
2. To address this problem the Boundary Commission has recommended that the area south of the Badsell Road a new development consisting of 768 new electors, to be joined with a Pembury or Capel ward. This proposal contradicts 148, In the report “
• **Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.**
• **Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively**”. The report also states, “ **Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.**
• **Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries**”. The closeness of this new development on the Badsell Road to the Goldings and Ringden Avenue, along with now a high element of a Hong Kong community in this location clearly represents the location identify with PW and not with Capel or Pembury. These residents have a clear

connection with PW and indeed the developer at this location used the closeness of Foal Hurst Wood in their advertising material, clearly making the direct link to PW and their addresses also match that connection. The residents clearly identify with PW and not Pembury or Capel. The Boundary Commission (BC) appears to ignore its core aims on this issue and the PWLP asks the BC to reconsider its new proposals.

3. The Rural wards as a whole in the proposals across the Borough including PW clearly have an adverse effect on the existing historical community links and again are not meeting the aims and goals of the BC in moving from 48 to 39 councillors and 13 3 member wards. The driver here must be effective and efficient governance “ • **Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively**” and not on just meeting a number target and mis matching geographical locations to meet these numbers. There is a strong argument to maintain the present ward system with a realigning of the wards residents with the proposed new housing proposed in the Draft local Plan and those still to be completed on the ongoing present developments. One or two member wards will be able to accommodate future growth and still maintain a vibrant community in PW. We note that the present proposals are based on future 1/3s elections in the new 39 wards but consider that the BC should revise its proposals based on an “All Out” elections. On the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council there is an ongoing debate as regard the actual election system to adopt 1/3s or “all out” and we do not wish to engage with this with the BC here but having an “ All Out” election system could significantly alter the proposals being put forward.
4. Adopting a 3 member only ward could work in PW but must include the South of Badsell new development. An additional one or two member ward could be workable for the reasons already stated allowing for future growth in PW and with in its present surrounding Parish boundaries.
5. It was made clear to us that in a few presentations regarding the BCs new proposals that the present proposals were separate from the present parish boundaries. We note that in the report that there is a proposal for the present Town Councils ward system separate from the proposed PW Borough Election wards. There will be 3 wards of PW East 7, PW West 5 and a new PW South 1. Again we consider the inclusion of a new PW South Ward unworkable and unrepresentative of the local community seeing as it includes the Badsell road new development clearly linked with PW on the Town council but linked with a different Borough Ward outside of PW in the BC proposals. Another strong argument to review the present proposals.

Conclusions:

The challenge regarding PW with trying to meet the 2,400 figure with 4,000 proposed future new houses within the Draft local Plan makes the proposal being put forward by the BC illogical, unrepresentative for the residents and electors of PW as whole within the existing community. The present community of PW will be split and would cause confusion during the election process for PW and indeed in many other wards in the Borough.

These changes should not be about saving money but based on effective electoral and workable representation in the democratic election process and clearly going from 48 to 39 councillors within 13 wards is not “ Fit for Purpose” and does not meet these objectives.

Unfortunately we see the new proposals for the present and future residents as detrimental to an effective electoral and democratic system and for that reason object to the present

proposals presented by the BC. We feel there is still scope to amend the proposals for a fairer ward system in PW and would welcome any initiative, that when considering Boundary changes that each ward affected has some form of direct1; 1 input as those conducting the changes on the BC severely lack our local knowledge of the present wards and community connections and historical and geographical links within a particular ward. We know these recommendations have proven to be difficult for PW and its future growth, but there is no second chance it must be “ **Right First Time**”

The PWLP is therefore at present totally opposed to the present BC recommendations submitted in the report for Paddock Wood.

Yours sincerely

Raymond Moon

Chair- Paddock Wood Labour Party.