

Submission to the Boundary Commission for England third period of consultation: **South East**

INTRODUCTION

The Liberal Democrats support the vast majority of the Boundary Commission for England's second draft in the South East, and thank the assistant commissioners for taking on board many of our criticisms of the first draft. We believe this draft better reflects the communities in the South East and provides a more coherent structure for reorganisation of their parliamentary boundaries. We therefore limit our response to this second draft to the small proportion of seats where we feel improvement can still be made. This is limited to seats in Kent, Hampshire and Portsmouth.

HAMPSHIRE COUNTER-PROPOSALS

While we believe the Commission's second set of proposals produce a stronger Hampshire, particularly in the restoration of a Romsey seat and an Eastleigh constituency on existing boundaries, there are some minor tweaks that can be made to improve community links within constituencies and better respect local government ties physical geography and existing boundaries. The changes we suggest to the Commission's second draft are:

SEAT / (Ward)	CHANGE IN ELECTORATE
Winchester	-4481
Add The Alresfords	+5073
Remove Denmead	-5389
Remove Boarhunt and Southwick	-1033
Remove Shedfield	-3132

Justification:

- *The Alresfords have a stronger affinity to Winchester than Denmead. Denmead has a stronger affinity to Fareham urban area than to Winchester*

Fareham	+580
Add Shedfield	+3132
Add Boarhunt and Southwick	+1033
Add Titchfield	+5683
Add Denmead	+5389
Remove Portchester East	-8857
Remove Portchester West	-5800

Justification:

- *Portchester is a distinct community within Fareham BC and its two wards are kept together, both moved into Portsmouth North with which it is closely connected by land*
- *The wards from City of Winchester DC are part of Fareham's natural hinterland*
- *This restores Titchfield to the Fareham constituency in which it currently resides*

Gosport **-5683**
Remove Titchfield -5683

Justification:

- *Moves Titchfield back into the Fareham constituency and leaves Gosport unchanged*

East Hampshire **+1649**
Add Hart Plain +7529
Remove Ropley & Tisted -1763
Remove Selborne -1811
Remove Binsted & Bentley -2306

Justification:

- *Hart Plain has close affinity to Cowplain and the Horndean area and has been in the same constituency since at least the Reform Act of 1832*
- *Ropley, Selborne and Binsted have a stronger affinity to Alton than to Whitehill or Petersfield*

North East Hampshire & Alton **+807**
Add Ropley & Tisted +1763
Add Selborne +1811
Add Binsted & Bentley +2306
Remove The Alresfords -5073

Justification:

- *The Alresfords have a stronger affinity to Winchester than NE Hampshire*
- *Ropley, Selborne and Binsted have a stronger affinity to Alton than to Whitehill or Petersfield*

PORTSMOUTH COUNTER-PROPOSALS

Bearing in mind the specific and unique circumstances of Portsmouth (labelled as 'unusual' in the revised proposals) and the precedent now set in the Gloucester area in splitting two wards – both with electorates less than half the size of Baffins ward – because of a desire to not to break local ties, create satisfactory constituencies and promote geographical coherence; we make no change in our counter proposal for the Portsmouth area.

In addition to our reasons set out in the initial consultation we add the following: In the revised proposals it was accepted that both the initial and revised proposals for constituencies in the Portsmouth area would split communities (Southsea was specifically mentioned but North End and Mainland Portsmouth are both distinct communities that would also be split), however the one area that seemed to be given credence with this was Portchester, which under our counter proposal would not be split. There was also notice given to the argument that 'if it's right to split one ward, it must be right to split others' as a reason not to split a ward. As this precedent has now been set, that cannot be used as an argument against splitting a ward.

In conclusion, we believe that there has not been the level of understanding and realisation of the unique circumstances of Portsmouth (there is no other urban location with the level of heavy and dense population, with part of the area being on an island with there being only one way constituencies can expand out of the city) and its surrounding area that was given to the Gloucester/Forest of Dean/Tewkesbury area. To create 'satisfactory constituencies' (as has now been achieved in the Southampton area for example) requires the one split large ward to reintroduce a decades old constituency boundary and unite numerous area of Portsmouth.

NB this is what we submitted on Portsmouth to the first Boundary Review consultation:

Portsmouth East BC

We disagree with the BCE's initial proposal for Portsmouth East and West BCs. Our proposal for the city is to retain a Portsmouth South and North split, which reflects natural communities, with minimal changes to both. However this does involve a split ward, which we believe to be merited.

The BCE proposal splits the core of the city on Portsea Island in an unprecedented manner and results in a very artificial and disjointed Portsmouth East seat in particular: Purbrook is separated from the rest by the major geographic feature of Portsdown Hill; and Drayton & Farlington – as well as Purbrook - are connected to the rest of the seat by only a single bridge over the sea.

Here we detail our proposal for a slightly amended Portsmouth South constituency, because the Ward we split falls entirely within Portsmouth East in BCE's proposal.

Our proposal:

To add the polling districts HC, HD and HE of Baffins Ward to the existing Portsmouth South constituency, using Tangier Road as the boundary and retaining the name.

Portsmouth South BC		
Central Southsea		10823
Charles Dickens		11754
Eastney & Craneswater		9440
Fratton		10384
Milton		10183
St Jude		8631
St Thomas		10732
Baffins (HC, HD & HE only)		7063
	ELECTORATE	79,010
	No of split wards	1

Justification:

- Our proposal involves the least possible change to the Portsmouth South seat, while keeping natural communities together.
- Tangier Road was the ward boundary from at least 1950 up until 2002 and also the constituency boundary until the last general election.
- Baffins Ward consists of parts of several communities (Milton, Kingston & Copnor) that are divided by the current ward boundaries and which, in our proposal to split Baffins Ward, would be united but not at the cost of splitting other communities in the city and Portchester, as proposed by the BCE proposal.
- Purbrook is divided from Portsmouth, by the natural geographic feature of Portsdown Hill and should remain in the Havant constituency where it is integral to providing links to the two parts of that constituency on either side of the A3(M).
- Drayton & Farlington and Purbrook are separated from the rest of the BCE proposed Portsmouth East (which is on Portsea Island) by the sea, over which there is only a single bridge. There is also a major dual carriageway to cross at the end of this bridge (A27) before getting into Drayton & Farlington.

- Our proposed Portsmouth South unites Southsea, Portsmouth's biggest suburb and a Royal Mail post town, rather than split it down the middle.
- Since at least 1885, no island off the coast of the UK has been split between more than one constituency where all the constituencies involved also have parts on the mainland, as with what is being proposed by the BCE for Portsea Island. Where an island has been split between constituencies there has always been one constituency wholly contained on the island.
- Our proposal allows both current Portsmouth constituencies to remain within quota and to be even more geographically coherent than they are now.

Portsmouth West BC

We disagree with the initial proposal for Portsmouth East and West BCs. Our proposal for the city is to retain a Portsmouth South and North split, which reflects natural communities, with minimal changes to both. However this does involve a split ward, which we believe to be merited. The BCE proposal for Portsmouth West involves splitting North End community down the middle in a very ugly and disruptive fashion, as well as splitting the whole of Portsea Island – the heart of the city - and Portchester.

Here we detail our proposal for a slightly amended Portsmouth North constituency, which includes Portchester and we propose is called Portsmouth North and Portchester BC.

Our proposal:

To add the two wards of Portchester (in Fareham BC) to the existing Portsmouth North constituency and split Baffins Ward along the former ward and constituency boundary of Tangier Road, with all except polling districts HA & HB going into a slightly enlarged Portsmouth South.

Portsmouth North and Portchester BC		
Copnor	Portsmouth CC	10098
Cosham	Portsmouth CC	10002
Drayton & Farlington	Portsmouth CC	10267
Hilsea	Portsmouth CC	10227
Nelson	Portsmouth CC	10095
Paulsgrove	Portsmouth CC	9992
Baffins (HA & HB only)	Portsmouth CC	4054
Portchester West	Fareham	5800
Portchester East	Fareham	8857
	ELECTORATE	79,392
	No of split wards	1

Justification:

- Our proposal involves the least possible change to the Portsmouth South seat, while keeping natural communities together
- We respect the natural geographic features of Portsea Island, Langstone Harbour, Portsdown Hill and Portsmouth Harbour in creating the boundaries of both Portsmouth seats. They are what created the communities to be represented in Parliament
- Of all the directions in which it is possible to look to bring Portsmouth's two seats both into quota, NW is best: Portchester 'fits' alongside Paulsgrove seamlessly and shares most

amenities. Putting both Portchester wards into the North seat keeps Portchester united too.

- Baffins Ward consists of parts of several communities, some of which are divided by the current (very recent) ward boundaries. Our split of Baffins Ward unites some parts in this ward with their neighbours but not at the cost of splitting other communities in the city and Portchester, as proposed by the BCE proposal.
- We reunite Drayton and Farlington with the rest of the mainland portion of the City of Portsmouth, with which it shares close community links and amenities, instead of isolating it via the sea and a major dual carriageway (A27) from the rest of a Portsea Island based Portsmouth East constituency as the BCE's proposal does.

KENT COUNTER-PROPOSALS

The initial proposals for Kent and Medway contained a number of major changes to West Kent to accommodate two new constituencies: Tonbridge CC, and the cross-county The Weald CC. These changes exacerbated existing mismatches between communities, constituencies, and local authority boundaries - particularly for electors in Sevenoaks CC, Tonbridge and Malling CC, Tunbridge Wells CC, and Maidstone CC - rather than addressing them.

The revised proposals recommend a number of minor changes to those initial proposals.

Some of these changes do make some improvements under the criteria, as in Sevenoaks CC Maidstone CC, and Tunbridge Wells CC, and these are steps in the right direction.

Better attention is generally given to the match between local authorities and constituencies across the South East. The report states (AC 104) "We note that our recommendations for the remaining 23 constituencies in the sub-region draw wards from no more than two local authorities."

However, for residents of the 24th, The Weald CC, there something of an administrative and identity disaster: that The Weald CC should be drawn from no less than four separate local authorities, across two counties and an extended geographical area. This is even worse than initially proposed, and it has been shown to be unnecessary. (AC88) "The Liberal Democrats' counterproposals for this area are strong"

The Weald CC does not contain the administrative centre for any of the local authorities from which it is drawn. Those pithy complaints made at Maidstone by Egerton Parish, about the remoteness of Tonbridge, might now seem with hindsight to be about a distant golden age.

With just two wards, it seems unlikely The Weald would be administered from Ashford. When very tight electoral deadlines approach, those same Egerton residents would have a cross-country journey of 22 miles to Tunbridge Wells, or 32 miles to Hailsham to register changes, or obtain or replace documents. The same difficulties would apply to a Herstmonceux resident who has not received Postal Vote documents posted from Tunbridge Wells, or between Horsmonden residents and Hailsham.

The Weald highlights the deficiencies inherent in cross-county constituencies. It is necessary to demonstrate a fair approach to electors across the region, and for that reason alone this "24th" constituency is not fit for purpose.