

## **Electoral review of Test Valley Borough Council**

### **Response to draft recommendations**

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#### **1. Introduction**

In June 2017, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (hereafter referred to as “the Commission”) published their “Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Test Valley Borough Council”. This report outlines the Commission’s proposed new electoral arrangements for Test Valley Borough Council (hereafter referred to as “the Council”).

The draft recommendations comprise of 20 wards represented by 43 councillors, which is a reduction of four wards and of five councillors from the current arrangements. These draft recommendations largely correspond with the proposals submitted by the Council under the first round of consultation on warding patterns, and the Council is therefore pleased to support the majority of the recommended warding arrangements.

However, the following draft recommended wards differ substantially from the wards proposed by the Council:

- Romsey Abbey
- North Baddesley and Halterworth
- Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams

For the reasons given below, the Council does not support these changes, and therefore has agreed alternative proposals for the Commission’s consideration. The Council’s alternative proposals seek to strike a more harmonious balance between the Commission’s three principles of electoral equality, community identity, and effective and convenient local government.

Additionally, the Commission's "Draft recommendations report for Test Valley Borough Council" invites further submissions in relation to the following proposed wards:

- Charlton and the Pentons / Grasslands
- Ampfield and Braishfield.

This report reaffirms the Council's original proposals in these areas, which are reflected in the Commission's draft recommendations.

## 2. Proposed changes to the draft recommendations

### 2.1 Table of proposed changes

A description of the proposed changes to the Commission's draft recommendations is provided in the table below, followed by an explanation of the reasoning behind each proposal. Maps illustrating the proposals are contained in Appendix 1.

Proposed ward name	Proposed no. of cllrs	Proposed 2022 electors	Proposed variance	Proposed changes to draft recommendations by polling district			
				Add / remove	Code	Name and description	2022 electors
Romsey Abbey	2	5248	+8.8%	Add	VV	Romsey Extra No. 5 – Whole polling district	+41
				Add	UJ	Romsey Extra No. 2 – east of A3090, north of Spaniards Lane	+58
Romsey Tadburn	2	5144	+6.7%	Add	VI	Romsey Extra No. 3 – Highwood Lane, Feltham Close and east side of Halterworth Lane	+192
Valley Park	2	4855	+0.7%	Remove	VQ	Valley Park No. 3 – Sandringham Close, Tristram Close and Percival Road	-366
Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams	3	6733	-5.3%	Add	UJ	Romsey Extra No. 2 - Lee area east of A3090, south of Spaniards Lane	+120

				Add	VI	Romsey Extra No. 3 - 'fishtail' south of Whitenap development	+13
North Baddesley	3	6525	-9.8%	Add	VQ	Valley Park No. 3 – Sandringham Close, Tristram Close and Percival Road	+366
				Remove	UJ	Romsey Extra No. 2 - Lee area east of A3090, south of Spaniards Lane	-120
				Remove	VI	Romsey Extra No. 3 - 'fishtail' south of Whitenap development	-13
				Remove	VI	Romsey Extra No. 3 – Highwood Lane, Feltham Close and east side of Halterworth Lane	-192
				Remove	VV	Romsey Extra No. 5 – whole polling district	-41
				Remove	UJ	Romsey Extra No. 2 – east of A3090, north of Spaniards Lane	-58

## **2.2 Romsey Abbey**

The Commission's recommended Romsey Abbey ward largely follows the same boundaries as the Council's proposed ward, but has excluded Broadlands House, its surrounding dwellings and the Mainstone area, all of which fall within Romsey Extra parish.

The identity of Romsey is inextricably entwined with Broadlands.

Firstly, it is famous as the seat of the Mountbatten dynasty, reflected in a range of place names in Romsey such as The Mountbatten School, Edwina Mountbatten House care home, and Mountbatten Avenue.

The House was home to Louis Mountbatten, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Mountbatten of Burma and last Viceroy of India, whose body was laid to rest in Romsey Abbey. He was uncle to the Duke Edinburgh with the result that, for many people, Romsey is synonymous with the location of the honeymoon of Her Majesty The Queen. Broadlands House is now home to the Countess Mountbatten of Burma, who is the High Steward of Romsey. This honorary role, which is bestowed by Romsey Town Council, has been an integral part of Romsey civic society since 1607.

Furthermore, Broadlands was formerly home to Lord Palmerston, twice Prime Minister and Lieutenant-Colonel Commander of the Romsey Volunteers during the Napoleonic Wars. The town centre is dominated by his statue in the Romsey Market Place.

Additionally, the Mainstone area (which is included in the Abbey ward of Romsey under the current warding arrangements) is contiguous to Romsey town, rather than North Baddesley. The residents who live in the area surrounding The Cromwell Arms live a few minutes' walk from the centre of Romsey, but a ten minute drive from the village of North Baddesley.

As detailed in the table on p.3, the Broadlands and Mainstone areas combined will be home to 99 electors by 2022, falling one short of the Commission's recommended minimum electorate of 100 for the viability of a parish ward. However, given the inseparable nature of the relationship between Broadlands House and Romsey, and the status of Mainstone as an area indistinguishable from the rest of Romsey town, the Council urges the Commission to be flexible and pragmatic in considering the areas' inclusion in the ward of Romsey Abbey. We believe that this will preserve the strong sense of community identity shared by the occupants of Broadlands and the town of Romsey.

## **2.3 Romsey Tadburn**

Following the Council's submission of its proposed warding arrangements, the Commission requested advice from the Council in order to address a discrepancy in allocating predicted electorate to proposed wards. That advice allowed the

Halterworth Lane area to be included in the Romsey Tadburn ward, as demonstrated in the table on p.3.

This area, which includes all the houses on Halterworth Lane, as well as Highwood Lane, Feltham Close and Stroud School, is part of the settlement of Romsey. The area is covered by the Romsey Town Design Statement; residents of Romsey attend the Stroud School, and the area is connected to the town via the A3090, Botley Road, Saxon Way, and the Bluestar 35 bus route. Therefore, this proposed change to the Commission's draft recommendations would better reflect community identity whilst also adhering to the principles of electoral equality and effective and convenient local government.

#### ***2.4 Valley Park***

In order to provide electoral equality, it is proposed that the area of the Valley Park settlement covered by Sandringham Close, Tristram Close and Percival Road (which was historically part of the North Baddesley parish) be allocated to the North Baddesley ward.

#### ***2.5 Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams***

The Commission's recommended Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams ward largely follows the same boundaries as the Council's proposed ward, with the exclusion of the Lee area. The Commission has recommended that the Lee area be included in the North Baddesley ward.

As detailed in the table on p.3, it is estimated that as of 2022 the Lee area will be home to 133 electors. The Commission's minimum required electorate for the viability of a parish ward is 100 electors, meaning that the inclusion of Lee in the Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams ward would not violate the Commission's guidance on this matter.

Residents in Lee look towards Nursling and Rownhams for shops and services, with children living in the settlement attending Nursling Church of England Primary School. Feedback from local ward members suggests that Lee residents have a much greater affinity with Nursling and Rownhams than they do with North Baddesley. Additionally, the inclusion of the Broadlands and Mainstone areas in Romsey Abbey ward (as proposed above) would mean that Lee would not be geographically contiguous with the rest of the North Baddesley ward. Therefore, the Council requests that the Commission include the Lee area in the ward of Chilworth, Nursling and Rownhams, in accordance with the principles of community identity, electoral equality, and effective and convenient local government.

## ***2.6 North Baddesley and Halterworth***

The proposed changes outlined above would result in a North Baddesley ward which better represents community identity, whilst maintaining electoral equality and providing for effective and convenient local government.

As such, it is proposed that the new ward be named “North Baddesley”, as it describes the main settlement within the ward.

## **3. Responses to the Commission’s request for additional submissions**

### ***3.1 Ampfield and Braishfield***

The Commission has invited submissions of more detailed evidence with respect to the inclusion of the Jermyns Lane area in the Ampfield and Braishfield ward.

The Commission’s recommended Ampfield and Braishfield ward is based upon the Council’s proposed ward boundaries. The Council would like to reaffirm its original submission in respect of this ward boundary, as it mirrors the new Hampshire County Council division boundary on the south-western edge around the Straight Mile which was consulted upon and put in place prior to the May 2017 local elections.

### ***3.2 Charlton and the Pentons***

The Commission has invited alternative proposals regarding the warding arrangements for the settlement of Charlton.

The Commission’s recommended Charlton and the Pentons ward is based upon the Council’s proposed ward boundaries. This warding arrangement reflects the fact that Charlton’s identity and sense of place is separate to that of Andover. Whilst the village of Charlton is contiguous with Andover, it is felt that Charlton stands apart from the town with its own separate, individual identity. The Andover Vision partnership’s work to create a 20 year vision for Andover does not include the village of Charlton, and Charlton is currently undertaking its own Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, the Council would like to reiterate its support for Charlton’s inclusion in a ward with the Pentons, as this best reflects Charlton’s community identity.