

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP****10 June 2021****Report of the Chief Executive****Part 2 - Private****Matters for Consideration****1 BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW – WARDING PATTERN OPTIONS**

This report provides an overview of Part 2 of the Boundary Commission Review process, and provides a number of possible options regarding future warding patterns for the consideration of the group.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In early 2020, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) contacted the Borough Council to state that due to electoral imbalances arising in Tonbridge and Malling Borough since the last review in 2011/12, the criteria for triggering a Boundary Review had been met, and as such the LGBCE would look to commence a review.
- 1.1.2 The Electoral Review effectively comprises two distinct parts. Part 1 has now been completed, with the LGBCE being “minded to recommend that 43 councillors should serve Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council”. There is a degree of flexibility with this number in order to ensure that in Part 2 there is scope for any required adjustments when consideration is given to future warding patterns.
- 1.1.3 This report is specifically addressing Part 2 of the review only, which commenced on 11 May 2021 with the launch of a 10-week consultation. The LGBCE are looking to gather opinion, comments and information from the public on where new ward boundaries should be in the borough. As part of this stage in the process, the LGBCE has asked the Borough Council to set up a public meeting on 09 June 2021.
- 1.1.4 Submissions on warding patterns need to be submitted to the LGBCE by 19 July 2021, and details on where to send comments are provided on the LGBCE website. Once all submissions have been received and considered by the LGBCE, they will then undertake a further consultation on their draft recommendations, which is scheduled to take place between 05 October and 13 December 2021. Publication of the final recommendations is scheduled to happen on 01 March 2022.

1.2 Warding Patterns – Considerations

- 1.2.1 When looking at future warding patterns (including the number of wards, names of wards, boundaries and the number of councillors elected to each), there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration:
- 1.2.2 **Electoral Equality:** a fundamental principle of the democratic process is to ensure that any elector's vote is worth the same as another's. On this basis, an average Councillor/elector ratio is used by dividing the forecast electorate in 2027 by the recommended future number of Councillors – 106,828 divided by 43 = 2,484.4. Using this average ratio, it is then possible to measure the extent to which each proposed ward deviates from this average. The further that electoral equality deviates from the average, the stronger the evidence needed to justify any proposals.
- 1.2.3 However, the LGBCE do not expect wards to be of mathematically the same size, as there are other variables that also need to be given consideration, such as community identity or the effective running of local government.
- 1.2.4 **Community Identity:** this is often difficult to measure and can mean different things to different people, and as such it is important that any submission that has a case built around community identity can clearly identify what the community is and mark it out as distinct from others, for example, a community identity might link to local facilities, history and traditions, or be defined by physical barriers such as major roads, rivers or railway lines.
- 1.2.5 **Effective and Convenient Local Government:** the impact of any proposals should look at the impact on individual councillors as a ward could be so large in terms of physical extent or the number of electorate (link to electoral equality) that it prevents that councillor from effectively representing the people in it. Also, if there are a large number of parish councils in a ward, it can create demands that are difficult to meet.
- 1.2.6 **Number of Councillors in Each Ward:** there is no upper limit to the number of councillors per ward, although the LGBCE state that more than 3 creates a dilution of accountability to the electorate and as such they would not normally recommend a number above that figure.
- 1.2.7 **Detached and Doughnut Wards:** the LGBCE take the view that the use of detached wards, other than to recognise particularly unusual circumstance (such as offshore islands) is undesirable and they will not normally recommend them. Likewise, in the case of Doughnut wards (where one ward is completely surrounded by a rural ward), the LGBCE will not normally recommend such a pattern unless it can be demonstrated that it would better meet their criteria than any other alternative pattern.
- 1.2.8 **Rurality:** generally the LGBCE do not consider the rurality of a ward when considering variance from the councillor/electorate average ratio, although there may be exceptions where local topography may lead to an acceptance of a

particular variance for one or more wards. However, in the case of Tonbridge and Malling, it is unlikely that such a consideration would come in to play.

1.3 Proposed Ward Names:

1.3.1 The LGBCE state that most often the names of ward are those proposed by Councils and communities that know their area well. Where wards remain unchanged, the existing name should normally be retained. Where a change is required, then the names need to be as distinct and short as possible. Compass point names can be used but only when they are relative to another compass point name (for example, Tonbridge North and Tonbridge South, or Kings Hill East and Kings Hill West).

1.3.2 The names for proposed wards used in this paper are purely for ease of reference and explanation rather than being names that are being proposed to the LGBCE.

1.4 Warding Patterns

1.4.1 At this stage in the process, it is considered helpful to provide a wide range of options for Members to consider in order to gauge views on what is deemed acceptable when establishing warding patterns.

1.4.2 Appendix 1 sets out 6 possible options for the future warding patterns in the borough in tabulated form. The first 4 options look at options with 43 Councillors and the last two options look at options with 'in the region of 43 Councillors', with Option 5 looking at 42 Councillors and Option 6 at 44 Councillors.

1.4.3 In addition to the tabulated information, there are also a number of maps provided in appendices 2-7 that show the layout for each option.

1.5 Possible Options with 43 Councillors

1.5.1 Initial Work has been undertaken to start looking at possible warding patterns with 43 councillors, in order to give members an opportunity to share their thoughts on what works and what doesn't work. Obviously, there are likely countless options when undertaking an exercise such as this, but the options shared in this report are those that have been identified that most closely meet the LGBCE criteria.

1.5.2 As the fundamental principle of establishing warding patterns is ensuring each elector's vote carries the same weight, the first efforts were guided solely by electoral equality.

1.5.3 **Option 1:** In purely numerical terms, this pattern provides an option where all wards are within 10% variance of the average ratio, with the greatest variance being seen in 'Aylesford, Blue Bell Hill and Walderslade' ward (9.8%). It also has the following benefits:

- All wards are represented by 2 or 3 councillors.

- There are no detached or doughnut wards – although the ‘Kings Hill East and Wateringbury’ ward is only just contiguous.

However, whilst a number of the wards represent areas that have a cohesive identity there are a sizeable number of wards that split up parishes, such as in Kings Hill, Ditton, East Malling and Larkfield, Aylesford and Snodland. This could also potentially have an impact on ‘effective and convenient local government’.

1.5.4 **Option 2:** Again, in purely numerical terms, this option provides an acceptable level of variance, although there are two wards that go beyond the 10% variance (‘Hildenborough and Shipbourne’ with an 11.2% variance; and ‘Kings Hill West’ with a 10.4% variance). In addition, as with Option 1, all wards are represented by 2 or 3 councillors and there are no detached or doughnut wards.

However, this option does still cut across parishes and also creates a ward (‘Higham and Hadlow’) which links an area of Tonbridge with the wider rural area.

1.5.5 Having created the first two options, further work was undertaken to look at the warding patterns by giving greater consideration to parish boundaries and community identity where feasible. This led to a number of further options for consideration:

1.5.6 **Option 3:** This option has the following strengths:

- Electoral Equality – only one ward (Ditton and East Malling) goes beyond 10% variance.
- There are no detached or doughnut wards.
- The number of wards that split up parishes has been reduced a fair amount, with part of Aylesford Parish (the Parish Ward of Eccles) joining Burham and Wouldham; most of Snodland Town joining Birling in order to achieve an electorate within the 10% variance; and East Malling Parish Ward linking with Ditton.
- Most of the wards have a coherent identity (as illustrated by the more simplified names given to the wards), with many of the larger settlements forming self-contained wards.

Despite these benefits, there is one ward with a single Member – Snodland East.

1.5.7 **Option 4:** This option is similar to Option 3, although it keeps Snodland self-contained into one ward of 3 members and another of 1 member. In doing so, the patterns for much of the rural are altered. Hildenborough, Shipbourne and Plaxtol are grouped together, however, Kings Hill is split into two different wards.

1.6 Possible Outcomes with 'in the region of 43 Councillors'

1.6.1 In an effort to find the best possible outcome with regards warding patterns, options involving 42 and 44 councillors have also been looked at briefly. These should not be required should there be deemed a workable solution for 43 Councillors, but given that the Council submission on Council Size approved 'in the region of 43 Councillors' and that the LGBCE also use a certain degree of flexibility on numbers when considering warding patterns, it seems prudent to give consideration to such options.

1.6.2 **Option 5:** This option sets out a warding pattern for 42 councillors. It has the following strengths:

- Good electoral equality, with just one ward (Tonbridge South) falling outside the 10% variance (10.9%).
- There are no detached or doughnut wards.
- It broadly respects Parish Council boundaries, with a few Parish Council areas split into two wards.
- All wards are 2 or 3 councillors wards.

1.6.3 However, obviously with this option, the number of electors per councillor has increased from around 2,484 to 2,544 electors.

1.6.4 **Option 6:** This options sets out a warding pattern for 44 Councillors and has the following strengths:

- Good electoral equality, with just one ward falling outside the 10% variance (Ditton and South Aylesford)
- There are no detached or doughnut wards

1.6.5 However, the solution for the area of the borough to the east of the River Medway leaves Aylesford parish stretching over three different wards, and the creation of a single member ward in Walderslade. In addition, Kings Hill is split into two different wards.

1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 The LGBCE has functions under Part 3 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Under S56(1) of the 2009 Act, the LGBCE must, from time to time, conduct a review of the area of each principal council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements. In this regard, "electoral arrangements" means:

- The total number of members of the Council;

- The number and boundaries of electoral areas for purposes of the election of Councillors;
 - The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral area in that area;
 - The name of any electoral area
- 1.7.2 The 2009 Act does not set out how many councillors each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the LGBCE's responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority.
- 1.7.3 In making its recommendations, Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act requires the LGBCE to have regard to:
- (a) The need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council;
 - (b) The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and, in particular
 - (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
 - (ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any localities
 - (c) The need to secure effective and convenient local government.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 None at this stage.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 Not Applicable

1.10 Equality Impact Assessment

1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 That the report **BE NOTED**.

1.11.2 That preferred options and patterns **BE IDENTIFIED** so that officers can work up amended or new options for the consideration of the group at the next Electoral Review Working Group.

Background papers:

None

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APPENDIX 1: OPTIONS**Option 1: Following the Numbers (Part 1)**

Proposed Ward	Polling Districts	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 43	Variance
Hildenborough, Shipbourne and Plaxtol	THA, THB, TAD, TAC	5333	2	2666.5	2484.372	107.3%
Wrotham, Ightham, Stansted, Trottiscliffe, Addington	TRA, TRC, TRB, TDF, TDA	4861	2	2430.5	2484.372	97.8%
Borough Green and Platt	TAA, TAB	4783	2	2391.5	2484.372	96.3%
Hadlow, Peckhams and Mereworth	TDC, TDG, TFC, TFB, TKC, TFA	7080	3	2360.0	2484.372	95.0%
West Malling, Offham and Kings Hill West	TDD, TQC, TKB	7071	3	2357.0	2484.372	94.9%
Kings Hill East and Watringbury	TPA, TKA	5154	2	2577.0	2484.372	103.7%
East Malling and Ditton South	TEA, CDB	6888	3	2296.0	2484.372	92.4%
Aylesford, BBH and Walderslade	CAD, CAB, CAA, CBA	8184	3	2728.0	2484.372	109.8%
Eccles, Burham and Wouldham	CCB, CCA, CAC	5388	2	2694.0	2484.372	108.4%
Snodland East and North Larkfield	CGA, CGB, CEA	7692	3	2564.0	2484.372	103.2%
Larkfield South and Ditton North	CFA, CDA	5047	2	2523.5	2484.372	101.6%
Snodland West	CHA	5152	2	2576.0	2484.372	103.7%
Birling, Ryarsh and Leybourne	TDE, TDB, TQB, TQA	4886	2	2443.0	2484.372	98.3%
Tonbridge South	TJB, TJA, TJC, TNB	6796	3	2265.3	2484.372	91.2%
Tonbridge West	TMA, TCA, TCB	7580	3	2526.7	2484.372	101.7%
Tonbridge East	TLA, TNA, TLB	7174	3	2391.3	2484.372	96.3%
Tonbridge North	TBA, TBB, TGA	7759	3	2586.3	2484.372	104.1%
TOTAL		106828	43			

Option 2: Following the Numbers (Part 2)

Proposed Ward	Polling Districts	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 43	Variance
Hildenborough and Shipbourne	THA, THB, TAD	4414	2	2207.0	2484.372	88.8%
Wrotham, Stansted, Ightham and Plaxtol	TRA, TRC, TAC, TRB	4631	2	2315.5	2484.372	93.2%
Borough Green and Platt	TAA, TAB	4783	2	2391.5	2484.372	96.3%
Higham and Hadlow	TGA, TFC, TFB	7091	3	2363.7	2484.372	95.1%
Peckhams, Mereworth and Wateringbury	TDC, TDG, TPA, TFA	5349	2	2674.5	2484.372	107.7%
Kings Hill West	TKC, TKB	4450	2	2225.0	2484.372	89.6%
East Malling and South Ditton	TEA, CDB	6888	3	2296.0	2484.372	92.4%
Aylesford, BBH and Walderslade	CAD, CAB, CAA, CBA	8184	3	2728.0	2484.372	109.8%
Burham, Eccles and Wouldham	CCB, CCA, CAC	5388	2	2694.0	2484.372	108.4%
Snodland East and Larkfield North	CGA, CGB, CEA	7692	3	2564.0	2484.372	103.2%
Larkfield South and Ditton North	CFA, CDA	5047	2	2523.5	2484.372	101.6%
Snodland West	CHA	5152	2	2576.0	2484.372	103.7%
West Malling, Kings Hill East, Offham and Addington	TDA, TDD, TQC, TKA	7041	3	2347.0	2484.372	94.5%
Leybourne, Birling, Ryarsh and Trottscliffe	TDF, TDE, TDB, TQB and TQA	5335	2	2667.5	2484.372	107.4%
Tonbridge South	TJA, TJC, TNB	5377	2	2688.5	2484.372	108.2%
Tonbridge West	TJB, TCA, TCB	5197	2	2598.5	2484.372	104.6%
Tonbridge East	TLA, TNA, TLB	7174	3	2391.3	2484.372	96.3%
Tonbridge North	TBA, TBB, TMA	7635	3	2545.0	2484.372	102.4%
TOTAL		106828	43			

Option 3: Greater Consideration to Parishes and Community Identity (Part 1)

Proposed Ward	Polling Districts	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 43	Variance
Larkfield	CEA, CFA	7430	3	2476.667	2484.4	99.7%
Leybourne and Ryarsh	TDB, TDE, TQA	4506	2	2253	2484.4	90.7%
Snodland West and Birling	CHA, CGB, TDB	7005	3	2335	2484.4	94.0%
Snodland East	CGA	2421	1	2421	2484.4	97.4%
Burham, Wouldham and Eccles	CCB, CCA, CAC	5388	2	2694	2484.4	108.4%
Aylesford, BBH and Walderslade	CAD, CAB, CAA, CBA	8184	3	2728	2484.4	109.8%
Ditton and East Malling	CDA, CDB, TEA	8303	3	2767.667	2484.4	111.4%
Hadlow, East Peckham and Wateringbury	TFB, TFC, TFA, TPA	7577	3	2525.667	2484.4	101.7%
West Malling, Mereworth and Downs	TQC, TDF, TDA, TDD, TDC, TKC	4900	2	2450	2484.4	98.6%
Wrotham, Stansted, Ightham and Plaxtol	TRB, TRC, TRA, TAC	4631	2	2315.5	2484.4	93.2%
Borough Green and Platt	TAA, TAB	4783	2	2391.5	2484.4	96.3%
Hildenborough, West Peckham and Shipbourne	TAD, THA, THB, TDG	4729	2	2364.5	2484.4	95.2%
Kings Hill	TKA, TKB	7662	3	2554	2484.4	102.8%
Tonbridge North	TBA, TBB, TGA	7759	3	2586.333	2484.4	104.1%
Tonbridge West	TMA, TCA, TCB	7580	3	2526.667	2484.4	101.7%
Tonbridge East	TLA, TNA, TLB	7174	3	2391.333	2484.4	96.3%
Tonbridge South	TJB, TJA, TJC, TNB	6796	3	2265.333	2484.4	91.2%
TOTAL		106828	43			

Option 4: Greater Consideration to Parishes and Community Identity (Part 2)

Proposed Ward	Polling Districts	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 43	Variance
Larkfield	CEA, CFA	7430	3	2476.7	2484.4	99.7%
Leybourne, Ryarsh and Birling	TDB, TDE, TQB, TQA	4886	2	2443.0	2484.4	98.3%
Snodland West	CHA, CGB	6625	3	2208.3	2484.4	88.9%
Snodland East	CGA	2421	1	2421.0	2484.4	97.4%
Burham, Wouldham and Eccles	CCB, CCA, CAC	5388	2	2694.0	2484.4	108.4%
Aylesford, BBH & Walderslade	CAD, CAB, CAA, CBA	8184	3	2728.0	2484.4	109.8%
Ditton and East Malling	CDA, CDB, TEA	8303	3	2767.7	2484.4	111.4%
Hadlow, Peckhams and Mereworth	TFB, TFC, TFA, TDG, TDC	7080	3	2360.0	2484.4	95.0%
West Malling, Kings Hill East and Offham	TQC, TKB, TDD	7071	3	2357.0	2484.4	94.9%
Wrotham, Stansted, Ightham, Addington and Trottiscliffe	TDF, TRB, TRC, TRA, TDA	4861	2	2430.5	2484.4	97.8%
Borough Green and Platt	TAA, TAB	4783	2	2391.5	2484.4	96.3%
Hildenborough, Shipbourne and Plaxtol	TAD, THA, THB, TAC	5333	2	2666.5	2484.4	107.3%
Tonbridge North	TBA, TBB, TGA	7759	3	2586.3	2484.4	104.1%
Tonbridge West	TMA, TCA, TCB	7580	3	2526.7	2484.4	101.7%
Tonbridge East	TLA, TNA, TLB	7174	3	2391.3	2484.4	96.3%
Tonbridge South	TJB, TJA, TJC, TNB	6796	3	2265.3	2484.4	91.2%
Kings Hill West & Wateringbury	TKA TPA	5154	2	2577.0	2484.4	103.7%
TOTAL		106828	43			

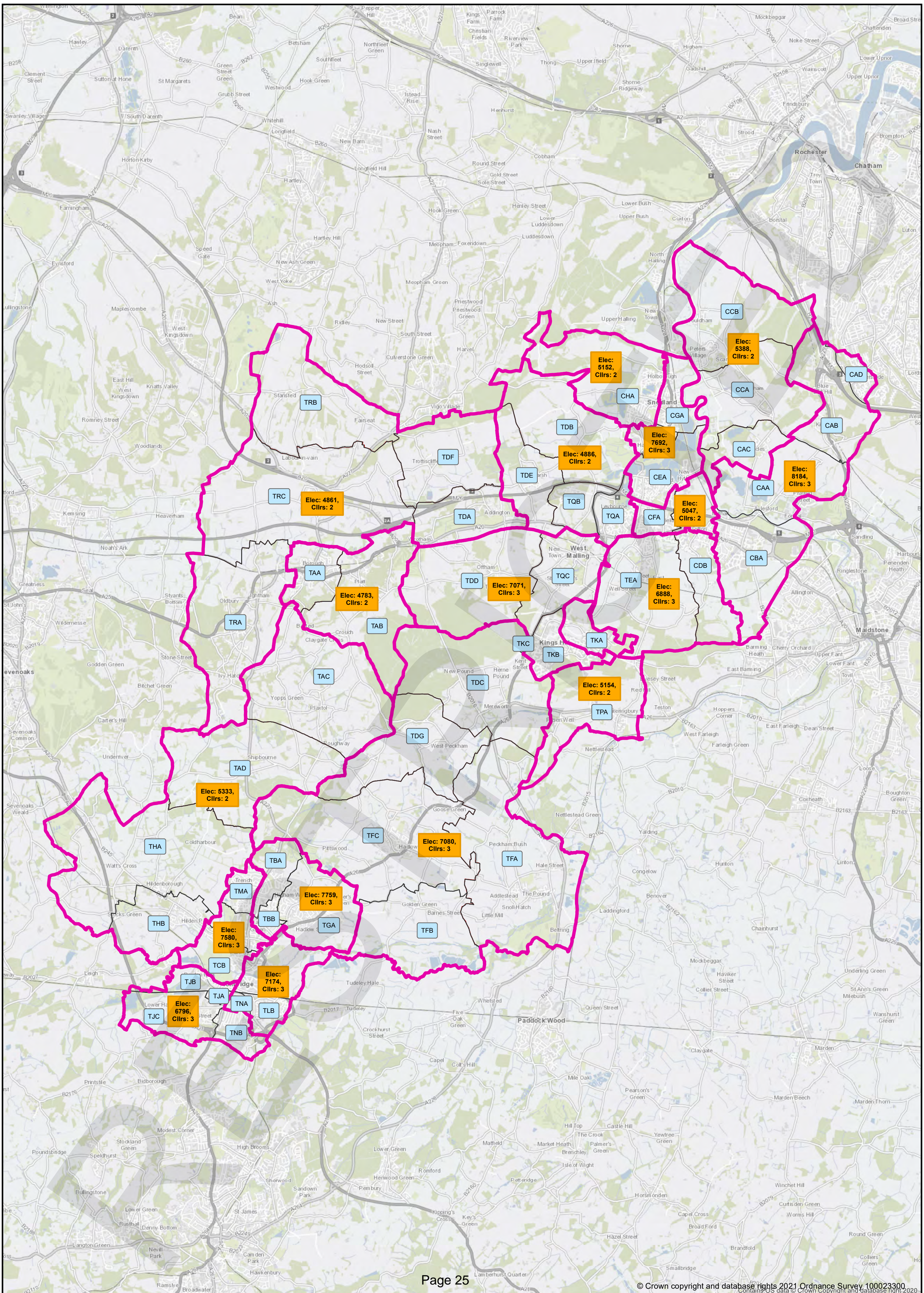
Option 5: 'In the region of 43 Councillors' (Part 1) – 42 Councillors

Proposed Ward	Polling District	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 42	Variance
Larkfield	CEA, CFA	7430	3	2476.7	2543.52	97.4%
Snodland East, Ryarsh and Birling	TDB, TDE, CGB, CGA	4974	2	2487.0	2543.52	97.8%
Snodland West	CHA	5152	2	2576.0	2543.52	101.3%
Burham, Eccles and Wouldham	CCB, CCA, CAC	5388	2	2694.0	2543.52	105.9%
Aylesford, BBH & Walderslade	CAD, CAB, CAA, CBA	8184	3	2728.0	2543.52	107.3%
Ditton and East Malling	CDA, CDB, TEA	8303	3	2767.7	2543.52	108.8%
Hadlow, Peckhams and Watringbury	TPA, TFB, TFC, TFA, TDG	7892	3	2630.7	2543.52	103.4%
West Malling, Leybourne, Mereworth and Offham	TQC, TKB, TDD	7557	3	2519.0	2543.52	99.0%
Kings Hill	TKA, TKB	7662	3	2554.0	2543.52	100.4%
Wrotham, Stansted, Addington, Trottscliffe and Platt	TDF, TRB, TRC, TAB	4618	2	2309.0	2543.52	90.8%
Borough Green and Ightham	TAA, TAB	5026	2	2513.0	2543.52	98.8%
Hildenborough, Shipbourne and Plaxtol	TAD, THA, THB, TAC	5333	2	2666.5	2543.52	104.8%
Tonbridge North	TBA, TBB, TGA	7759	3	2586.3	2543.52	101.7%
Tonbridge West	TMA, TCA, TCB	7580	3	2526.7	2543.52	99.3%
Tonbridge East	TLA, TNA, TLB	7174	3	2391.3	2543.52	94.0%
Tonbridge South	TJB, TJA, TJC, TNB	6796	3	2265.3	2543.52	89.1%
TOTAL		106828	42			

Option 6: 'In the region of 43 Councillors' (Part 2) – 44 Councillors

Proposed Ward	Polling District	Number of Electors 2027	Proposed Ward Councillor Numbers	Electors per Councillor	Average Electors per Councillor - 44	Variance
Kings Hill West, Wateringbury and Mereworth	TPA, TKB, TKC, TDC	6760	3	2253.3	2427.909	92.8%
Hadlow, Peckhams and Plaxtol	TFA TFB TFC TDG TAC	7123	3	2374.3	2427.909	97.8%
Shipbourne and Hildenborough	TAD THA THB	4414	2	2207.0	2427.909	90.9%
Borough Green and Platt	TAA TAB	4783	2	2391.5	2427.909	98.5%
Ightham, Wrotham, Stansted, Trottiscliffe and Addington	TRA TRC TRB TDF TDA	4861	2	2430.5	2427.909	100.1%
Kings Hill East and East Malling	TKA TEA	7663	3	2554.3	2427.909	105.2%
West Malling, Leybourne and Offham	TDD TQB TQA TQC	6681	3	2227.0	2427.909	91.7%
Snodland East, Ryarsh and Birling	CGA CGB TDB TDE	4974	2	2487.0	2427.909	102.4%
Snodland West and Holborough Lakes	CHA	5152	2	2576.0	2427.909	106.1%
Larkfield	CEA CFA	7430	3	2476.7	2427.909	102.0%
Ditton and South Aylesford	CDA CDB CBA	8241	3	2747.0	2427.909	113.1%
Three Villages, BBH and North Aylesford	CCB CCA CAB CAC CAA	7169	3	2389.7	2427.909	98.4%
Walderslade	CAD	2268	1	2268.0	2427.909	93.4%
Tonbridge North	TBA TBB TGA	7759	3	2586.3	2427.909	106.5%
Tonbridge West	TMA TCA TCB	7580	3	2526.7	2427.909	104.1%
Tonbridge East	TLA TNA TLB	7174	3	2391.3	2427.909	98.5%
Tonbridge South	TJB TJA TJC TNB	6796	3	2265.3	2427.909	93.3%
TOTAL		106828	44			

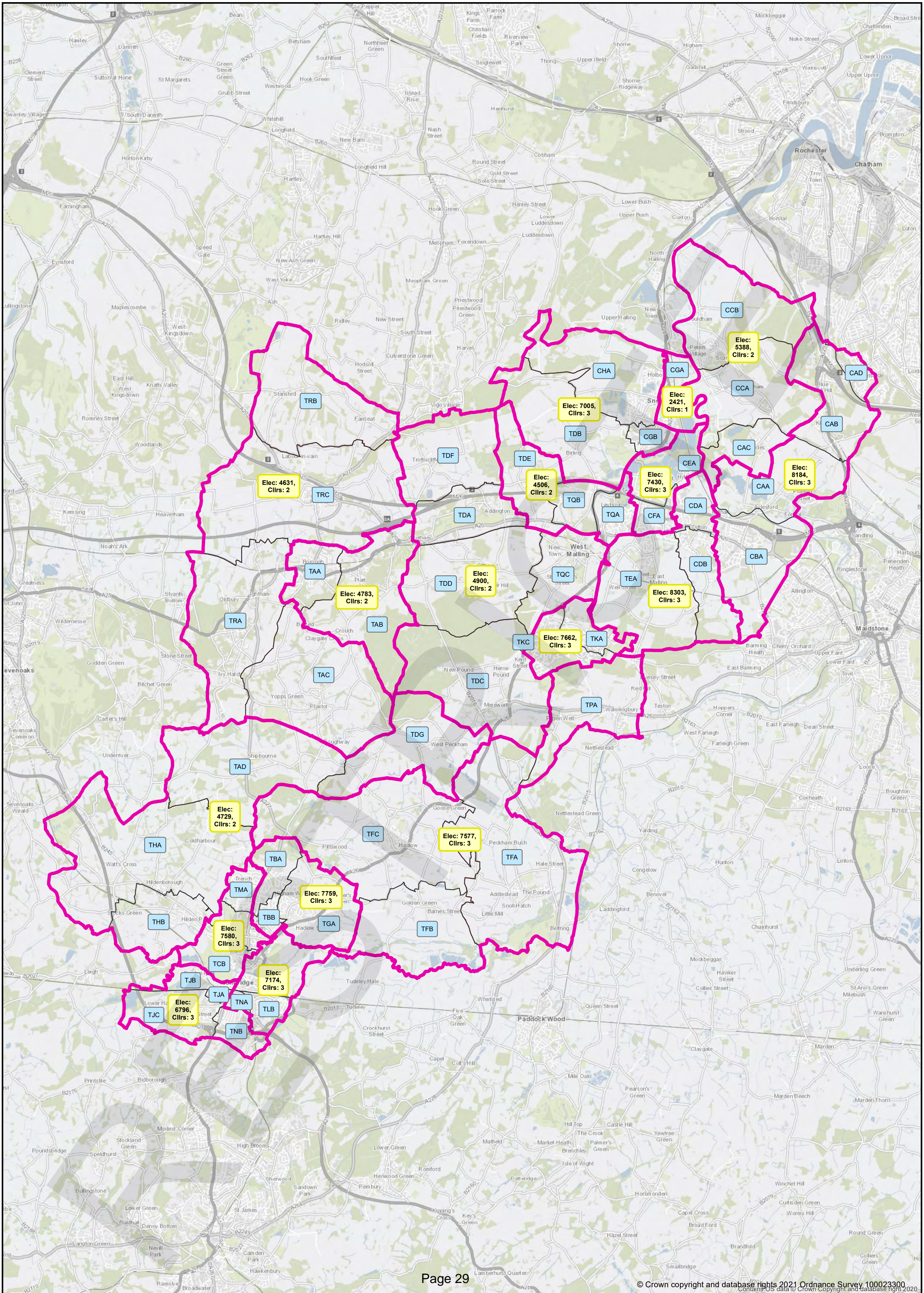
OPTION 1



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OPTION 3



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