

## **DRAFT SUBMISSION**

### **Wokingham Borough Council Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review**

#### **Background**

On the 30 August 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) launched a public consultation inviting proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards for Wokingham borough.

The LGBCE is minded to recommend that 54 councillors should be elected to the Council in future. The LGBCE is now inviting proposals from the Council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral wards based on that number of councillors.

In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, the LGBCE seeks to:

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors;
- Reflect the electoral cycle so that each ward is represented by three councillors;
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities; and
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances.

#### **Approach**

The Council established a cross party working group in February 2022 to respond to the LGBCE's electoral review which includes a Council response to future warding arrangements. The group has sought to establish consensus on the warding arrangements. Where consensus was not possible, we have outlined the different proposals.

The group felt that due to the changes in the borough since the last review in 2002 that the Council's proposals should reflect the communities as they exist today rather than base our submission on the warding arrangements from 2002. The ERWG agreed that the principle of the approach was to keep communities together rather than divide them between wards.

Where possible we have sought to ensure that Town and Parish Council boundaries are reflected in the proposal but where significant development has occurred, we have been unable to achieve this in its entirety.

We have considered the proposed changes in the Parliamentary Boundaries that effect the borough.

## Overall proposal

There are maps included in the submission but there is an online version that enables users to zoom in and out to identify the exact boundaries this is found here [Boundary Review \(arcgis.com\)](http://arcgis.com). The map references are in alphabetical order.

The borough is bisected east to west by the A329(M) with, historically, its main population along this corridor. With Woodley and Earley towns in the west, Winnersh in the middle and Wokingham in the east of the Borough. The Council has used this to divide the Borough into the North, Central and Southern areas. The other notable geographical boundary is the river Loddon that runs from the south west of the borough until it meets the Thames south west of Wargrave. The Loddon forms the eastern boundary of Shinfield, Earley and Woodley.

The majority of the working group supported the idea of uniform three member wards across the borough. The majority felt that 3 member wards enabled the electorate to render their verdict on the Council performance every 3 out of 4 years and having a one-member ward would create unfairness for those in that ward. The minority view held that there were unique areas of the borough that would only be effectively represented in one member wards. These areas were in Hurst and Swallowfield discussed below.

## North

The North of the borough comprises the parishes of Sonning, Charvil, Twyford, Remenham, Wargrave, Ruscombe and Hurst. Twyford is the largest village.

### Northern Ward

The working group considered two main options. The communities of Sonning, Charvil, Remenham and Wargrave are rural communities located on the banks of the river Thames. The group felt that although each of these communities were different that they held shared interests and were able to have a shared identity. All but Sonning and Charvil are part of the green belt. This ward we have labelled "Northern" ward. We did discuss names and were conscious of the need not to have the same ward names as neighbouring authorities so ruled out Thames (Reading) and Riverside (RBWM). We have labelled this ward "Northern" with the expectation that the community will identify a suitable name. Map reference 9.

### Twyford and Hurst

Twyford is the largest village in the north and represents a hub for services to all the rural communities. The group was divided on the parish of Hurst. Hurst is a rural area being quite sparsely populated with the village itself being a focus of the community. The challenge for the working group was how to incorporate this into the warding arrangement. The current arrangement is that a part of Twyford (polling district TBM) is included within the boundaries of the Hurst ward to support a one-member ward. The working group agreed that this polling district should form part of a future Twyford ward.

A ward that combined Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst would enable a three-member ward. This was the majority view of the working group who felt that Ruscombe, although a separate parish, looked to Twyford and represented a good fit. Ruscombe is designated as part of Twyford for planning and highways purposes. There are no shops, schools or public buildings in Ruscombe. Community groups span both i.e. Twyford and Ruscombe share a Community Association and Horticultural Society. The majority felt that amalgamating the three parishes enabled the community links to be respected. Map reference 14a

A proposal supported by the minority of the working group was to combine Ruscombe and Hurst to form a single member ward and for Twyford to be a two-member ward. The rural nature of the wards and that commonality of the issues shared between the areas of Ruscombe, and Hurst were felt to be significant. The majority of the land is owned by one estate that straddles the two parishes. Map reference 14b and 14c

The working group were agreed on the external boundary of the ward(s) and so this did not have a wider impact on the overall submission.

## **Central**

The central area comprises Woodley, Earley, Winnersh, and Wokingham.

The working group could not reach consensus on the Whitegates area of Earley Town Council. A view majority was that the area was a part of Earley Town Council and that residents should be part of the Earley wards. Another minority felt that the physical links with Earley were weak, and residents looked to Woodley.

The working group could not reach consensus on the current Shinfield North ward. A view majority was that the area was a part Shinfield Parish Council, and the community did not consider themselves part of Earley. A minority view felt that the physical barrier of the M4 with only pedestrian access to the rest of Shinfield mean that this area should be considered part of Earley.

Notwithstanding the disagreements above Woodley and Earley would both support 3 three member wards. The majority view would have the advantage of being wholly within the Town Council boundaries.

Both Woodley and Earley have a strong sense of community with district centres, shared community facilities (including libraries, doctors and dental surgeries), and schools. The boundaries within these communities are therefore less well defined.

### Earley

There was unanimous agreement on the proposed warding pattern for Earley. Map References 7, 12 and 16.

### Woodley

Woodley has two proposals. The proposed warding arrangement supported by the majority of the working group is based on the major roads in the ward and has the advantage of keeping the airfield development in a single ward. Map Reference 2a, 8a and 13a. The warding arrangements supported by minority view is based on the minimum amount of change to the existing polling districts in town. Map Reference 2b, 8b and 13b.

### Winnersh.

The working group agreed that the current wards of Winnersh, remained an accurate reflection of the community and would be unchanged. Map Reference 17.

### Wokingham

The working group agreed that the current wards of Evendons and Emmbrook remained accurate reflections of the communities and would be unchanged. Map Reference 3 and 4.

The Wescott-Norreys' boundary was difficult to resolve. The working group felt that the boundary of Wescott should be extended into the new development in Keep Hatch as there was affinity with the new development across the road and the Montague Park Primary School acted as a focal point for this new community. This would be moved from the Norreys ward.

This left the Wescott ward underrepresented. The working group considered several options but felt that the best option was to include the Beanoak Estate, south of the Binfield Road into Wescott ward. This then required the adjustment of the boundary in the town centre: moving the Norreys' boundary from Rose Street to Peach Street. Map Reference 15.

This had the result of all four Wokingham wards being coterminous with the boundaries of the town council.

### **South**

The South comprises Shinfield, Swallowfield, Arborfield, Barkham, Finchampstead and Wokingham Without parishes.

The south of the borough presents the largest challenge for the warding arrangements of the Borough. This area has seen significant develop in two Strategic Development Locations (SDL's) since the last review. These have been based in Shinfield to the west and Arborfield Garrison in the central area. This has resulted in significant population centres in these areas, plus Finchampstead and Barkham, with sparsely populated areas across the rest of the south.

### Wokingham Without

The working group agreed that Wokingham Without should remain with its current boundaries as this provides a good fit for the existing community. The development in the north of the ward would be limited by 2028 and not have a major effect on the

character of the ward. Although the group noted plans for future development in this area. The working group discussed the possibility of the inclusion of the triangle created by Hollybush Ride and Heath Ride but felt that was unnecessary given the known development in the ward prior to 2028. Map Reference 18.

#### Finchampstead

The group agreed that Finchampstead should be represented by a single ward. In order to reduce the size of this ward the area around the Arborfield Garrison and Eversley was ceded to the South ward to the west to give sufficient population to comprise a three-member ward. Map Reference 5.

#### Arborfield with Barkham

The group agreed that the SDL at Arborfield Garrison should be represented in a single ward. This development currently sits at the meeting point of four separate parishes. It was therefore not possible to represent the community at Arborfield Garrison without cutting across parish boundaries. The Council has worked hard to develop a sense of community in this development, and this has been effective. The proposal is therefore to combine this with the Arborfield and Barkham parishes areas to form a single ward. Map Reference 1.

#### Shinfield

As noted above in the discussion about Earley the working group could not reach agreement on location of Shinfield North. The minority view was that it should form part of a ward with the Shinfield element of the current Shinfield South element.

Notwithstanding the disagreement around the location of Shinfield South the group were faced with the challenge of splitting the current ward of Shinfield South as the SDL in that area would result in poor electoral equality. This was the case even if Shinfield North was removed to form part of the Earley wards. The majority view was that the centre of Shinfield would form a three-member ward Map Reference 10.

#### Southern Ward

The majority view was that the Ryeish Green, Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood, Hyde End Farm area would form part of a wider Southern ward incorporating Grazeley, Swallowfield, Farley Hill and Eversley. These are all small rural communities with their own characters and sense of community. However, the majority of the working group felt that they had a common character. Map Reference 11a.

There was a minority view that Swallowfield was a unique community and should be represented by a single member ward. Map Reference 11b. The remaining area around Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross represented by a two member ward. Map Reference 11c

Map Ref	Ward Name	Description	Justification	Agreement
<b>Central</b>				
3	Emmbrook Ward (Wokingham)	The northern boundary is provided by the A329(m) and follows the Town Council boundary. The western boundary follows Old Forest Road and Simons Lane to the green space of Bob's Copse. The southern boundary cuts through the town centre. The eastern boundary follows the Twyford road and Cantley Park green space. The Ward is based on Community focused on the Emmbrook Primary and Secondary Schools and the Northern part of Woosehill.	The ward is based on the existing ward boundary and comprises a stable community. The ward is entirely within the Wokingham Town Council area.	Yes
4	Eventons Ward Wokingham	The ward is in the South West element of Wokingham. In the east it is bounded by Finchampstead Road, and the southern boundary is the edge of Wokingham town. The northern and western boundary follow roads that divide the ward from Emmbrook ward.	The ward is unchanged and is entirely within the boundaries of the Wokingham Town Council. The community is centred on the local primary school.	Yes
6	Norreys Ward (Wokingham)	The ward is in the North East of the town of Wokingham. In the north it is bounded by the A329m. The west is bounded by Milton/Twyford Road and to the South by London Road as far as the Binfield Road incorporating the Bean Oak Estate and the new development in Keep Hatch. This development has more in common with Wescott ward.	The ward is largely unchanged except in the eastern boundary south of the Binfield Road and an adjustment in the town centre. The ward is entirely within the Wokingham Town Boundaries. The community is well established and focused on the All Saints and Keep Hatch Schools.	Yes
15	Wescott Ward (Wokingham)	In the east the ward is bounded in the North by the London Road and the railway line in the South. It then incorporates Chapel Green and follows the railway line south until it reaches the edge of the Gorrick plantation and comes back north along the Finchampstead Road. The new element of the ward is in the far east of the ward where it follows the new development south of	The ward is entirely within the boundary of Wokingham Town. The ward is largely unchanged except for the addition of its North-East Boundary south of Binfield Road and moving the boundary from Rose Street to Peach Street in the town centre. The	Yes

		the M4 to Keep Hatch nature reserve and along the Binfield Road to the junction with London Road.	keep hatch area is a new development that mirrors the development on Montague Park and residents look to the primary school there for their sense of community. The Bean Oak estate has an established community and should be kept together.	
17	Winnersh Ward	The ward is bounded in the North by the A329m and in the West along the river Loddon. The boundary to the south incorporates Sindlesham and is bounded to the east by Camellia Way.	The ward is un-changed and the boundary of the ward is completely coterminous with the boundaries of the parish council. There are strong community links through the three primary schools.	Yes
	Woodley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Woodley comprises three wards (named the same with different boundaries along major roads. Loddon Bridge Road, Woodlands and Headley Road).</li> <li>2) Woodley comprises three wards. All of the town council is covered by these three wards. The divisions are based on the exiting ward boundaries.</li> </ol>		No
8a	North Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley in the north (railway line that separates it from Sonning parish) and in the east and west. The southern boundary of the ward runs along Woodlands Avenue around the town centre and along Headley Road and Headley Road East before following Tippings lane and following the course of a stream to the edge of the town boundary.	The ward forms the Northern part of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
8b	North Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley in the north (railway line that separates it from Sonning parish) and east. The southern boundary runs along Headley Road and Spitfire way. In the west the boundary runs along Crockhamwell Road and Warren Road.	The ward forms the Northern part of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing coronation ward so entails moving fewer residents into new wards.	Minority

13a	West Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the east along the river Loddon and the A329(M) in the south. The boundary in the west is formed by Loddon Bridge Road until it meets Headley Road East before following Tippings lane and following the course of a stream to the edge of the town boundary.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
13b	West Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the north (railway line), west and south (railway line). The eastern boundary largely follows the boundary of the internal parish divisions.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing Loddon ward so entails moving residents into new wards.	Minority
2a	East Woodley	The wards follow the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the South (Railway Line and A329(m) and west. In the east the boundary is formed by Loddon Bridge Road and the northern boundary is formed by Woodlands Avenue and Headley Road.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is bounded by the major roads in the town.	Majority
2b	East Woodley	The ward follows the parish boundary of Woodley Town in the north, east (river Loddon) and south (A329m). The western boundary follows Loddon Bridge Road, the edge of the town centre and Headley Road.	The ward forms the west of Woodley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council. The ward is based on the existing South Lake ward so entails moving fewer residents into new wards.	Minority
	Earley	Earley comprises three wards. All the town council is covered by these three wards	Rushey Way provides a convenient east to west split across the town. Laurel Park is a significant green space that separates houses. The university is a distinct area. The remaining divisions are along roads.	Yes
7	North Earley	The northern spur of the ward follows the Parish/Borough boundaries, the rest of the ward follows main roads Mill Lane, Beech Lane, Wilderness Road and green space Laurel Park	The ward forms the North of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes



16	West Earley	The ward runs along Borough Boundaries in the north and east and the parish boundary in the remainder of the east. The southern boundary is formed by a main road Rushey Way that forms a boundary that separates the two communities. The west boundary is separated by Laurel Park and Wilderness Road.	The ward forms the West of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes
12	South East Earley	The ward runs along the southern boundary of the town boundary along the main Lower Earley Way Road. The boundary to the east is also the town boundary and follows the course of the river Loddon. The northern boundary is that formed by the Wokingham Road and Rushey Way. The ward is separated from North Earley by Mill Lane road.	The ward forms the southeast of Earley and is entirely within the boundaries of the town council.	Yes
<b>North</b>				
14a	Twyford and Hurst	This ward combines all of Twyford Parish Council with Ruscombe to the east and Hurst to the South.	The ward is largely focused on Twyford. With community facilities in the village, shops and library and cross rail. The current Hurst ward incorporates part of Twyford Parish.	Majority
14b	Twyford	This ward combines all of Twyford Parish Council and would comprise a two member ward.	The ward comprises the whole of Twyford Parish	Minority
14c	Hurst and Ruscombe	This ward comprises the rural wards of Hurst and Ruscombe to form a single member ward.	The ward comprises Hurst and Ruscombe. There is closer affinity with rural Hurst and the village of Twyford	Minority
9	Northern	This ward combines the existing parishes of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning.	The current Sonning Ward includes part of Woodley and we have taken this opportunity to reflect the Town boundaries in the belief that residents identify with Woodley and have stronger links to this part of the borough. The communities	Yes

			represented by this ward have distinct separate identities but would view themselves as distinct from both Woodley and Twyford.	
<b>South</b>				
10	Shinfield	This ward combines both the Shinfield North and the settlements of Shinfield village centre. The new eastern boundary is formed by the break in the settlement between Shinfield and Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green. Following the Hyde End Lane and before following the field boundaries to the river Loddon.	The existing Shinfield South ward is too large. The proposal is to incorporate Shinfield North and Shinfield village and move the significant populations in Three Mile Cross and Spencers Wood into a new South ward.	Yes
18	Wokingham Without	This ward is bounded in the west and south by the Borough boundary. To the east the ward is bounded by Lower Wokingham Road and the railway line as far as Luckley Road. The northern boundary is formed by the railway line.	The ward is un-changed and the boundary of the ward includes the whole of the parish council. There are strong community links focused on the Pinewood Community Centre.	Yes
5	Finchampstead	This ward combines Finchampstead North and South wards and the North, East and Southern boundaries are unchanged. In the west the area in the North becomes part of the Garrison, in the South the area around Eversley is moved to the Southern ward.	Finchampstead has a strong sense of community.  Due to major development in the Garrison area this area is over-represented and forms a different community to the rest of Finchampstead. This includes California Country Park which is central to the identity of Finchampstead.	Yes
1	Arborfield and Barkham	The ward is bounded to the north by Winnersh and Wokingham parish and town councils respectively. The east boundary of the ward is the river Loddon. The southern boundary follows the	This ward combines the established communities of Barkham, Arborfield and Arborfield Cross with the new Arborfield development at the Garrison. All of	Yes

		Arborfield parish boundary until it meets Eversley Road where it encircles the new development at the Garrison.	Barkham and Arborfield parish councils are included in the ward.	
11a	South	This ward is bounded in the south and west by the borough boundaries. To the east the ward is bounded by the break in the settlement between Eversley and Finchampstead. The northern boundary follows the boundary with Arborfield Parish except where it skirts around the new Garrison development.	This ward is largely rural in nature. The communities are separate; Three Mile Cross, Ryeish Green, Grazeley, Swallowfield, Riseley, Farley Hill and Eversley each having its own identify but they share a commonality of concerns.	Majority
11b	Grazeley Swallowfield and Eversley	This ward is bounded in the south and west by the borough boundaries. To the east the ward is bounded by the break in the settlement between Eversley and Finchampstead. This ward contains the entire parish of Swallowfield and incorporates Eversley in the South. The northern boundary follows the parish boundary along the Loddon and Back Lane as far as Beech Hill Road where it follows Whitehouse Lane as far as the A33 where it follows this major road to the Borough boundary.  This ward constitutes a single member ward.	The South ward as proposed under option a is too large to be represented by three councillors. The residents of Swallowfield have little affinity with Spencers Wood/ Three Mile Cross.	Minority
11c	Spencers Wood/Three Mile Cross	This ward is bounded to the South by the river Loddon and the Shinfield Parish boundary to Beech Hill Road where it follows Whitehouse Lane as far as the A33 where it follows this major road to the Borough boundary. The boundary in the east is determined by the break in the settlement between Shinfield village.  This ward comprises a two-member ward	The South ward as proposed under option a is too large for three councillors to be able to service. The residents of Swallowfield have little affinity with Spencers Wood/ Three Mile Cross.	Minority

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