

New electoral arrangements for Wokingham Borough Council Draft Recommendations

January 2023

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Wokingham?

7 We are conducting a review of Wokingham Borough Council ('the Council') as some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Wokingham are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

Our proposals for Wokingham

9 Wokingham should be represented by 54 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Wokingham should have 18 wards, seven fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of 22 wards should change; three will stay the same.

How will the recommendations affect you?

12 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 31 January 2023 to 10 April 2023. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

15 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 10 April 2023 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 31 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

17 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Wokingham. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
23 August 2022	Number of councillors decided
30 August 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
7 November 2022	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
31 January 2023	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
10 April 2023	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
4 July 2023	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

20 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

21 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2021	2028
Electorate of Wokingham	130,690	132,562
Number of councillors	54	54
Average number of electors per councillor	2,420	2,455

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Wokingham are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2028.

Submissions received

23 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2028, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2023. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 1% by 2028.

25 Wokingham Without Parish Council expressed concern that the forecasts did not consider developments that are expected to occur after 2028. A number of residents also expressed concerns that the forecasts in various parts of the borough

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

³ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

do not take into account all the expected development. One resident expressed concern that the electorate in EFW polling district is forecast to decline by 253 between 2021 and 2028. We note the concerns about developments beyond 2028, but under the legislation we must only have regard for developments forecast to be completed and occupied five years from the end of the review. Therefore, we cannot consider developments beyond this.

26 We note the concerns about EFW polling district and queried this with the Council who believe an issue had arisen around the volatile levels of voter registrations in the area of Reading University Campus that falls within the borough. The Council therefore revisited its projections and concluded that the fall in electorate resulted from the changing levels of registration in the university area and that these had been carried through into its forecasting methodology. It did not consider this an accurate reflection, so revised its forecasts for this area.

27 Having considered the evidence received, we considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures, subject to the amendment to EFW polling district, are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

Number of councillors

28 Wokingham Borough Council currently has 54 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that keeping this number the same will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

29 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 54 councillors. As the Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation⁴ that it have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. We will only move away from this pattern of wards should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of wards will better reflect our statutory criteria.

30 In response to the warding patterns consultation we received a number of submissions making general comments about the number of councillors. However, there was no significant new evidence. Therefore, we have based our draft recommendations on a 54-councillor council.

Ward boundaries consultation

31 We received 146 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included two borough-wide proposals. The Council put forward

⁴ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

proposals for a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. In a few areas it put forward 'minority proposals' for a mixed pattern of wards. A resident also put forward proposals for a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. A number of their boundaries mirrored the Council's proposals and other wards were broadly similar, except where polling districts were split. However, the resident did not provide specifics on how to divide these areas. On the basis of the similarities with the Council's proposals, and the fact their proposals split the same polling districts, we have read their proposals together with the Council's, albeit noting that the resident did propose alternative ward names. These are discussed in the sections below.

32 A number of respondents put forward proposals that would require changes to the external boundary of the borough, including transferring or including areas of neighbouring districts like Bracknell Forest and Reading. However, we are unable to do this as part of this review. It can only be addressed by a Principal Area Boundary Review, which is a separate process.

33 There were some objections to proposals for a uniform pattern of three-member wards, with some respondents proposing alternative multi-member proposals. However, as stated in paragraph 29, we need compelling evidence to persuade us to move away from a uniform pattern. We did not consider these respondents put forward sufficient evidence to persuade us to move away, particularly in light of well-argued three-member proposals.

34 One resident objected to the division of Twyford parish for parish council elections. However, where a borough ward divides a parish, we are obliged under the legislation to divide the parish into parish wards.

35 Councillor Cowan argued against the current electoral cycle, stating his preference for all-out elections. However, changes to the electoral cycle fall within the Council's powers, so we cannot recommend such changes as part of this review.

36 We received a number of general comments or requests for no change to the existing wards. We also received comments about links to parliamentary boundaries. However, these are considered by a different body under a different review process.

37 Our draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

Draft recommendations

38 Our draft recommendations are for 18 three-councillor wards. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

39 The tables and maps on pages 9–25 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Wokingham. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁵ criteria of:

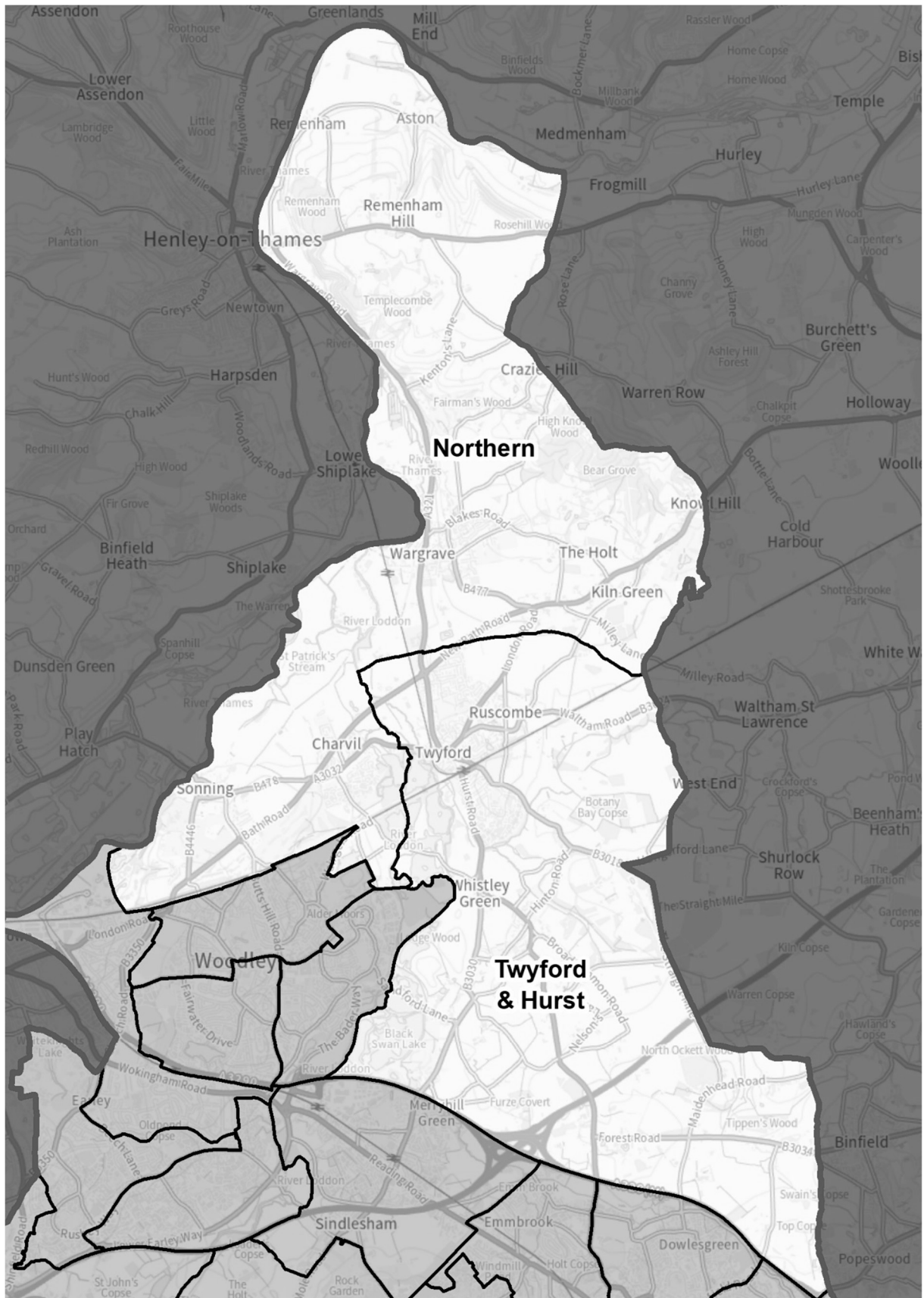
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

40 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 37 and on the large map accompanying this report.

41 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries, and the names of our proposed wards.

⁵ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

North



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Northern	3	-3%
Twyford & Hurst	3	7%

Northern

42 The Council proposed a three-member Northern ward comprising Charvil, Remenham, Sonning and Wargrave parishes. It acknowledged that these are different communities, but that they are rural and located on the bank of the River Thames, so share some issues. The Council rejected any names with 'Thames' or 'Riverside', arguing that this would cause confusion with wards in neighbouring authorities. A resident proposed an identical ward which they named 'Thames Quartet'.

43 Councillor Firmager expressed concern about merging rural communities, arguing that they have complex issues and would lose their identity. He objected to removing single-councillor wards, requesting no change to the existing wards. Councillor Halsall also objected to a move away from a mixed warding pattern, but argued that if three-member wards were to be adopted they should respect parish boundaries. He put forward comments on the name of a ward comprising Charvil, Remenham, Sonning and Wargrave parishes, suggesting 'Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil & Sonning' or 'the Northern Parishes'. Charvil Parish Council accepted the need to be in a ward with other parishes, but stated that it should not be in a ward with Twyford or Woodley, favouring links to Sonning, Wargrave or Hurst.

44 A resident stated that they live in Sonning, but use facilities in Twyford and Charvil, so it would make sense to be linked to them. There was support for a single-councillor Sonning ward, but objections to the inclusion of parts of Woodley in the ward. There was also support for the existing two-councillor Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe ward.

45 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the arguments for retaining the existing wards or wards based on single or two councillors. However, as stated in paragraph 29, there is a presumption in legislation that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards, unless there is compelling evidence to move away. We do not consider there to be compelling evidence and note the Council has provided evidence for a three-councillor ward with good electoral equality which joins parishes with some shared interests. This ward also reflects some of the community links that other respondents mentioned.

46 We are therefore adopting the Council's three-councillor Northern ward. This would have 3% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028. We note that there was some suggestion of a different ward name, but no agreement on what this

should be, with the exception of wards with 'Northern' in the title. We do not consider that having wards that include 'Thames' or 'Riverside' in neighbouring authorities should preclude it here. However, we are proposing using 'Northern' as the ward name. We would welcome further local views on the most appropriate name.

Twyford & Hurst

47 The Council proposed a three-councillor Twyford & Hurst ward comprising Ruscombe, St Nicholas Hurst and Twyford parishes. It stated that Twyford is a hub for rural communities and this proposal removed the inclusion of part of Twyford in a ward with St Nicholas Hurst. It argued that Ruscombe, while separate, has no services and looks to Twyford. The Council also put forward proposals that received minority support for a two-councillor Twyford ward and single-councillor ward comprising St Nicholas Hurst and Ruscombe parishes, noting that these rural parishes share issues. A resident put forward an identical three-councillor ward, which he called Twyford.

48 Councillor Smith, Councillor Halsall and St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council objected to the creation of a three-councillor Twyford & Hurst ward, supporting a two-councillor ward comprising St Nicholas Hurst and Ruscombe parishes. They noted that, as rural parishes, they are different to a small town like Twyford and joining them would 'dilute' the relationship between councillor and community.

49 A number of residents cited links between Twyford and Ruscombe parishes arguing they should be in a ward together, while rejecting any proposal to place them in ward with Remenham and Wargrave parishes. Another resident argued that Twyford should be a two-councillor ward, while Ruscombe and Wargrave should be a single-councillor ward.

50 A number of residents argued that the south area of Twyford should be in ward with Twyford, not St Nicholas Hurst parish. A resident argued that Hurst should remain a single-councillor ward.

51 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the arguments for retaining a separation between Twyford and Ruscombe and St Nicholas Hurst parishes. However, we also note that there is evidence of links between these parishes and Twyford. In addition, as stated in paragraph 29, there is a presumption in legislation that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards, unless there is compelling evidence to move away. We do not consider there to be compelling evidence and note the Council has provided evidence for a three-member ward with good electoral equality that joins existing wards with some shared interests. This proposed ward also reflects the community links that some respondents mentioned.

52 We are therefore adopting the Council's three-councillor Twyford & Hurst ward. This would have 7% more electors than the borough average by 2028. We note the suggestion of calling the ward 'Twyford', but consider that the Council's proposal that contains the name of another constituent part provides a good reflection of the area covered.

Earley and Woodley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
East Woodley	3	-9%
North Earley	3	9%
North Woodley	3	-9%
South East Earley	3	5%
South West Earley	3	-1%
South Woodley	3	-2%

East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley

53 The Council put forward proposals for three three-councillor East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards for this area, entirely contained within Woodley parish. Under the revised electorate forecasts discussed in paragraph 24–27, its North Woodley ward would have 11% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, rather than 10% fewer as under the initial forecasts. The Council stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Whitegates area should remain in an Earley ward or be in a Woodley ward. However, the majority view was that it is part of Earley parish and should therefore be in an Earley ward, with the minority stating that the physical links to Earley are weak and that it looks to Woodley. The Council stated that these wards used major roads as boundaries and kept the airfield development in a single ward. It also put forward alternative proposals for three-councillor East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards, which were based on a ‘minority’ that sought to minimise change to the existing wards.

54 Councillor Baker supported the creation of three-councillor wards within Woodley parish. However, he expressed support for the Council’s minority view, along with different ward names, his Coronation ward mirroring the Council’s minority view North Woodley, Loddon mirroring East Woodley and South Lake identical to West Woodley. He stated that his Loddon ward matches the existing ward, except for a small area in the north-east, which is transferred to Coronation ward. He added that this means Loddon Bridge Road does not have a boundary running along it. The councillor’s South Lake ward comprises the existing ward with the addition of the west Bulmershe area and avoids the current boundary along Woodlands Road. Finally, his Coronation ward reflects elements of the existing Coronation ward, but with the addition of east Bulmershe area and part of Loddon, discussed above. A resident put forward similar proposals to the Council’s ‘minority’ pattern, but proposed calling the wards Woodley Loddon, Woodley North and Woodley South.

55 A resident objected to the current inclusion of the Whitegates area of Earley parish in a Woodley ward. Another resident accepted that Whitegates is in a different parish, but that given the ‘population, it is a good mix’ and they should be in a Woodley ward. They rejected putting Whitegates in a ward with Sonning or putting in the existing Maiden Erlegh ward as they are separated by the A3290.

56 A resident expressed concern about the inclusion of the Mannock Way area in the existing Coronation ward, arguing they would be better served in Loddon ward – or East Woodley under the Council’s proposals. Finally, a resident stated that School Drive should be in South Lake ward, not Loddon, reflecting its access.

57 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the comments about the Whitegates area, but this area cannot be included in Woodley without moving away from the uniform pattern of three-member wards. In addition,

there are objections to including this area in a Woodley ward. Therefore, we are placing Whitegates in an Earley ward, as discussed below.

58 We note that the Council's proposals secure good electoral equality with the exception of the -11% for North Woodley. They also address issues of access around School Drive and Mannock Way under the existing wards that were raised by residents.

59 We have also considered 'minority view' proposals, as supported by Councillor Baker. However, we have a number of concerns, particularly the boundary between Coronation and Loddon wards, which as flagged by a resident results in the Mannock Way area having no direct access into its ward. Hurricane Way is divided under the proposal. We do not consider these suggestions provide for effective and convenient local government, and these concerns are not offset by avoiding ward boundaries along Loddon Bridge Road and Woodlands Avenue. Indeed, we believe these roads make clear boundaries. In addition, Councillor Baker stated that his proposal places the east and west areas of Bulmershe communities in separate wards, while the Council's proposal keeps these together with the town centre at the centre. We consider the Council's proposal to use the town centre as a focus provides a stronger warding pattern than proposals that divide it.

60 Therefore, we consider that the Council's proposals provide the best basis for the draft recommendations in this area. We do, however, propose a small amendment to secure better electoral equality in North Woodley ward by transferring Hartigan Place to North Woodley. This road has access directly into the ward and would improve electoral equality in North Woodley to 9% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028.

61 We note that there was not agreement on the names for these wards, with a resident putting 'Woodley' at the front, while the Council used it at the end. The resident also retained the Loddon name for the Council's Woodley East ward. We have no particular view on the use of Woodley as a name at the front or end, but note that with two of the wards using compass points in their name, it would be unusual to have one with a geographical name, i.e. Loddon. We are therefore using the Council's names as part of our draft recommendations, but would welcome local views on the most appropriate names for these wards.

62 Our East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards would have 9% fewer, 9% fewer and 2% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively.

North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley

63 The Council proposed three-councillor North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley wards for this area. As discussed above in the East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley section, the Council stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Whitegates area should remain in an Earley ward or be in a Woodley ward. However, the majority view was that it is part of Earley parish and should therefore be in an Earley ward, with the minority stating that the physical links to Earley are weak and that it looks to Woodley. The Council also noted that by respecting the Earley parish boundary it was possible to secure a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards.

64 The Council also stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Shinfield North area should be in an Earley ward, with a minority considering the M4 a barrier to the rest of Shinfield. A resident put forward similar proposals to the Council, but proposed calling the wards Earley North, Earley South East and Earley South West.

65 Earley & Shinfield Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Council's proposals for this area, but proposed a number of small amendments between North Earley ward and South East Earley and West Earley wards to provide a stronger boundary along Gipsy Lane, Mill Lane and Wokingham Road.

66 Parish Councillor Chopping expressed support for the existing wards. A resident proposed transferring an area to the south of Lower Earley Way to Winnersh. However, this area only contains a few electors and would not make a viable parish ward within Earley parish. In addition, there is no other evidence of support for such a change. Therefore, we are not adopting this proposal.

67 One resident provided good evidence for including part of Shinfield North in an Earley ward. He argued that Shinfield North is separated from the rest of Shinfield by the M4 and that the Shinfield Rise estate has footpath links into the Whitegates area of Earley. He also pointed out that Ryhill Way has no direct access into Shinfield North ward or indeed Shinfield parish and only access into Earley. As a result, the resident argued that the area to the east of Shinfield Road should be included in Earley. A number of respondents proposed transferring the Ryhill Way area to Earley, citing a lack of direct access to Shinfield and use of services in Earley.

68 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As discussed in the Woodley section (above), we note that there is not total agreement on where the Whitegates area sits best, but putting it in a Woodley ward means moving away from the three-member pattern of wards. Therefore, we are placing Whitegates in an Earley ward, as suggested by the Council. Doing this means moving away from the existing Earley wards, as they need to be adjusted to accommodate the Whitegates area, as well as improve electoral equality of the existing wards.

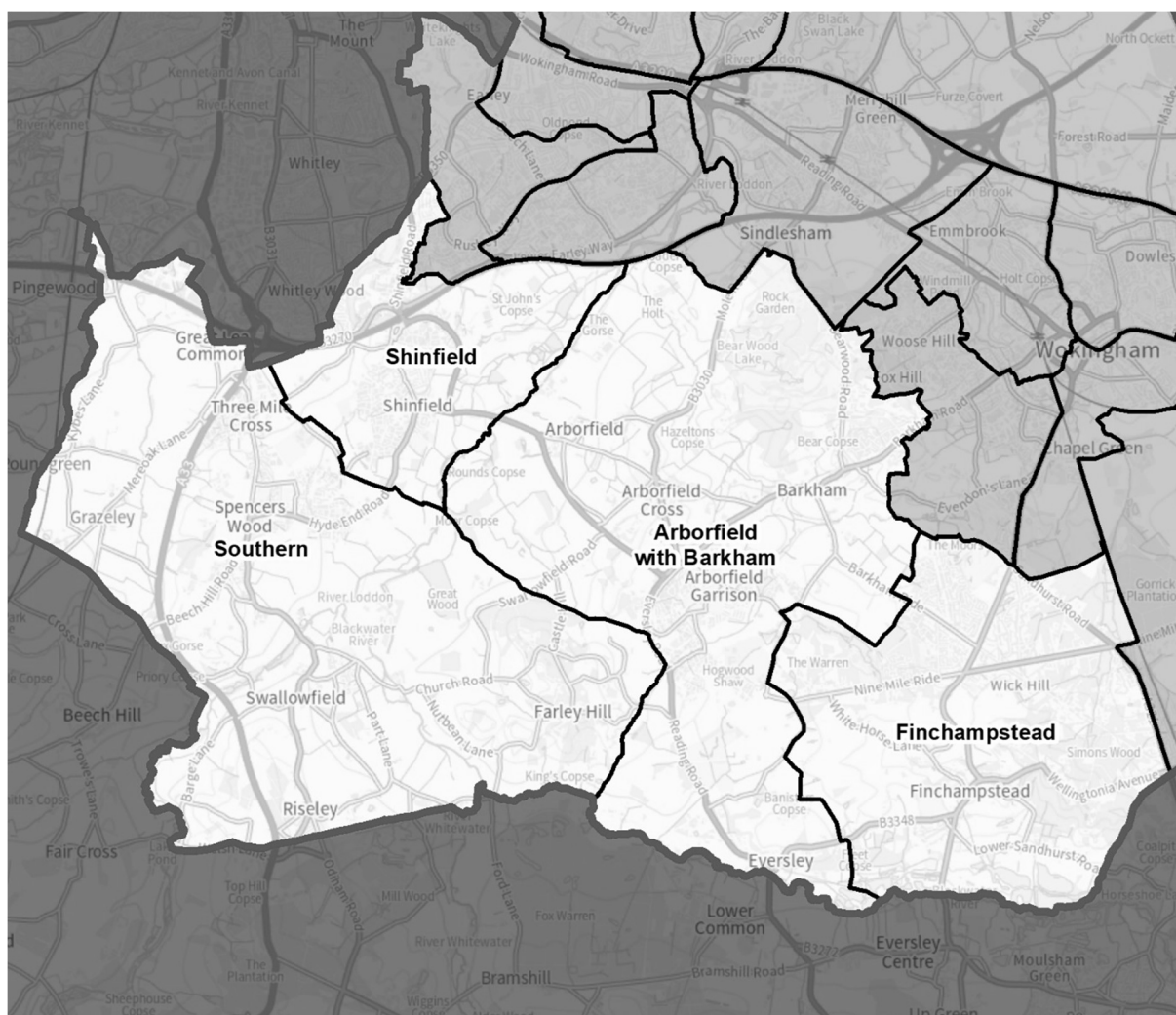
69 We consider that the Council's proposals provide a good basis for the draft recommendations. We note the concerns about the Shinfield North area. Given the number of electors, moving this area would mean departing from the three-member ward pattern. Even just including the area to the east of Shinfield Road in an Earley ward, as suggested by a resident, would worsen electoral equality in Shinfield ward to over -10%, which we do not consider acceptable. In addition, we note that the Shinfield Rise area does have direct access into Shinfield, via Shinfield Road, even if it is closer in proximity to parts of Earley. However, we note that the Ryhill Way has no direct access into Shinfield (except for a single footpath) and that its links are directly into Earley. Transferring this area would require the creation of a parish ward of Earley parish and worsen electoral equality in Shinfield ward (discussed below) to 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2023. It would, however, improve in the Council's West Earley ward to 1% fewer, rather than 3% fewer. We consider that this amendment should be adopted because of the improved reflection of community identity.

70 We have considered the proposal from the Earley & Shinfield Liberal Democrats for an amendment to North Earley ward. This provides a good boundary, reflecting the access of the electors on these roads, albeit while moving away from the centre of road boundaries. However, we consider this a good boundary. While this arrangement worsens electoral equality in North Earley ward from 7% to 9% more electors than the borough average by 2028, it improves it in South East Earley ward from 8% more to 5% more. Therefore, on balance, we are persuaded to adopt these amendments.

71 We note that there was not agreement on the names for these wards, with a resident putting 'Earley' as a prefix, while the Council used it as suffix. The resident proposed a 'South West' ward, rather than 'South'. We have no particular view on the use of Earley as a suffix or prefix, but consider the use of South West sensible given that the two wards south of the A3290 contain south areas of Earley parish. We are therefore adopting the 'South West' element of the resident's ward name, but would welcome local views.

72 Our draft recommendations are for three-councillor North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley wards which would have 9% more, 5% more and 1% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively.

South



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Arborfield with Barkham	3	8%
Finchampstead	3	8%
Shinfield	3	-9%
Southern	3	3%

Arborfield with Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Southern

73 The Council proposed three-councillor Arborfield with Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Southern wards for this area. Its Shinfield ward would comprise the north area of Shinfield parish and is centred on Shinfield itself, with the eastern boundary being the break around Three Mile Cross and Ryeish Green. As discussed in the Earley section (above), it stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Shinfield North area should be with Shinfield or Earley.

74 The Council's Southern ward would comprise the southern half of Shinfield parish, along with Swallowfield parish and an area of Finchampstead parish. The

majority view was that Three Mile Cross, Ryeish Green and Spencers Wood villages in the south of Shinfield parish could be joined with the villages in Swallowfield parish and Eversley in Finchampstead parish. The Council stated that while the villages have their own identities, they share common characters. It also put forward a minority proposal that would see the creation of a two-councillor Three Mile Cross & Spencers Wood ward, comprising these areas of Shinfield parish, while also creating a single-councillor Grazeley & Swallowfield ward, comprising the Grazeley area of Shinfield parish, along with Swallowfield parish and the Eversley area of Finchampstead parish.

75 The Council's Arborfield with Barkham ward would comprise Arborfield and Barkham parishes, along with part of Finchampstead parish and a very small area of Swallowfield parish. It argued that this ward would see the whole of the Arborfield Garrison development included in a single ward, while acknowledging that this requires the inclusion of areas within different parishes. The Council's Finchampstead ward would comprise those areas of Finchampstead parish not transferred to Arborfield with Barkham and Southern ward or the area currently in Wokingham Without ward.

76 A resident put forward broadly similar proposals to the Council, but proposed naming the wards Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield East and Shinfield West & Swallowfield.

77 As discussed in the Earley section (above), a resident provided good evidence for including part of the north of Shinfield parish in an Earley ward.

78 A number of respondents argued that the existing Shinfield South ward should be split into two wards or increased to four councillors. A number of others objected to proposals to include Swallowfield with part of Shinfield, arguing that Swallowfield is very rural, while the Shinfield area is becoming more developed and suburban. A number of others put forward comments about the existing Shinfield and Swallowfield wards, particularly around the inclusion of parts the Spencers Wood area of Shinfield parish in the existing Swallowfield ward.

79 Swallowfield Parish Council expressed support for being in a three-councillor ward, but stated that it is very different from Shinfield and more similar to South Finchampstead and Arborfield village.

80 A resident proposed an amendment to the Council's boundary between its proposed Shinfield and Southern wards, arguing that it omitted part of the Ryeish Green area from the communities it links to in Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. The resident also objected to the Council's minority proposal, arguing that it separates Grazeley from its neighbouring villages, placing it in a ward with Swallowfield to which it has limited links.

81 Barkham Parish Council expressed support for its inclusion in a three-councillor ward, as well as keeping Arborfield Green in the same wards as the community centre. Arborfield Garrison Residents' Action Group argued for placing the whole of the Arborfield Garrison development in a single ward, rather than being divided between four wards, as at present. A number of residents also argued that the ward boundaries should reflect the Arborfield Garrison development, while others argued that the existing Barkham ward contains too many electors and should be redrawn or have more councillors. A resident proposed the creation of a Barkham that does not include the Arborfield Garrison development, arguing that as it stands there are too many electors.

82 As discussed in the electorate forecasts section, a number of people questioned whether the forecasts fully reflected the level of development in the Arborfield Garrison development. We note these comments, but can only have regard for growth until 2028, five years from the end of this review. We are satisfied that the Council has provided the most accurate forecasts available at the present time. A resident argued that the Council's three-councillor Arborfield & Barkham ward should be three single-councillor wards, but did not put forward specific proposals.

83 Finchampstead Parish Council suggested combining the existing Finchampstead North and Finchampstead South wards, but acknowledged that this may be too large, requiring four councillors. It also proposed creating a ward based on the Arborfield Garrison development and combining the rest of Barkham parish with Finchampstead North. Finally, the Parish Council observed that part of Wokingham Without ward is a parish ward of Finchampstead parish.

84 A resident called for the retention of the existing Finchampstead North and Finchampstead South wards, objecting to putting any part of Finchampstead in a ward with Barkham. Another resident suggested amending the boundary between these existing wards, while another suggested creating a smaller south ward focused on Finchampstead village.

85 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting the Council's proposals for a pattern of three-councillor wards across this area. As discussed in the Earley section (above), we propose transferring the small area of Ryhill Way out of the Shinfield ward, to West Earley ward, as this reflects its sole road access. We consider that the remainder of its Shinfield ward, focused around Shinfield itself, provides a good three-councillor solution. However, we also note the comments from a resident that the ward omits part of Ryeish Green. On balance, we are persuaded to move this small number of electors out of the Shinfield ward.

86 We note the concerns about the creation of a three-councillor Southern ward, particularly around the inclusion of a range of different rural communities. We have

examined the Council's minority proposal for a two-councillor and single-councillor ward. However, we do not consider that the suggested Grazeley & Swallowfield ward provides a coherent warding pattern as the two-councillor Three Mile Cross & Spencers Wood ward sits in the middle, effectively dividing it. When taken into consideration with the fact this moves away from the three-councillor pattern, we are not persuaded to adopt this proposal.

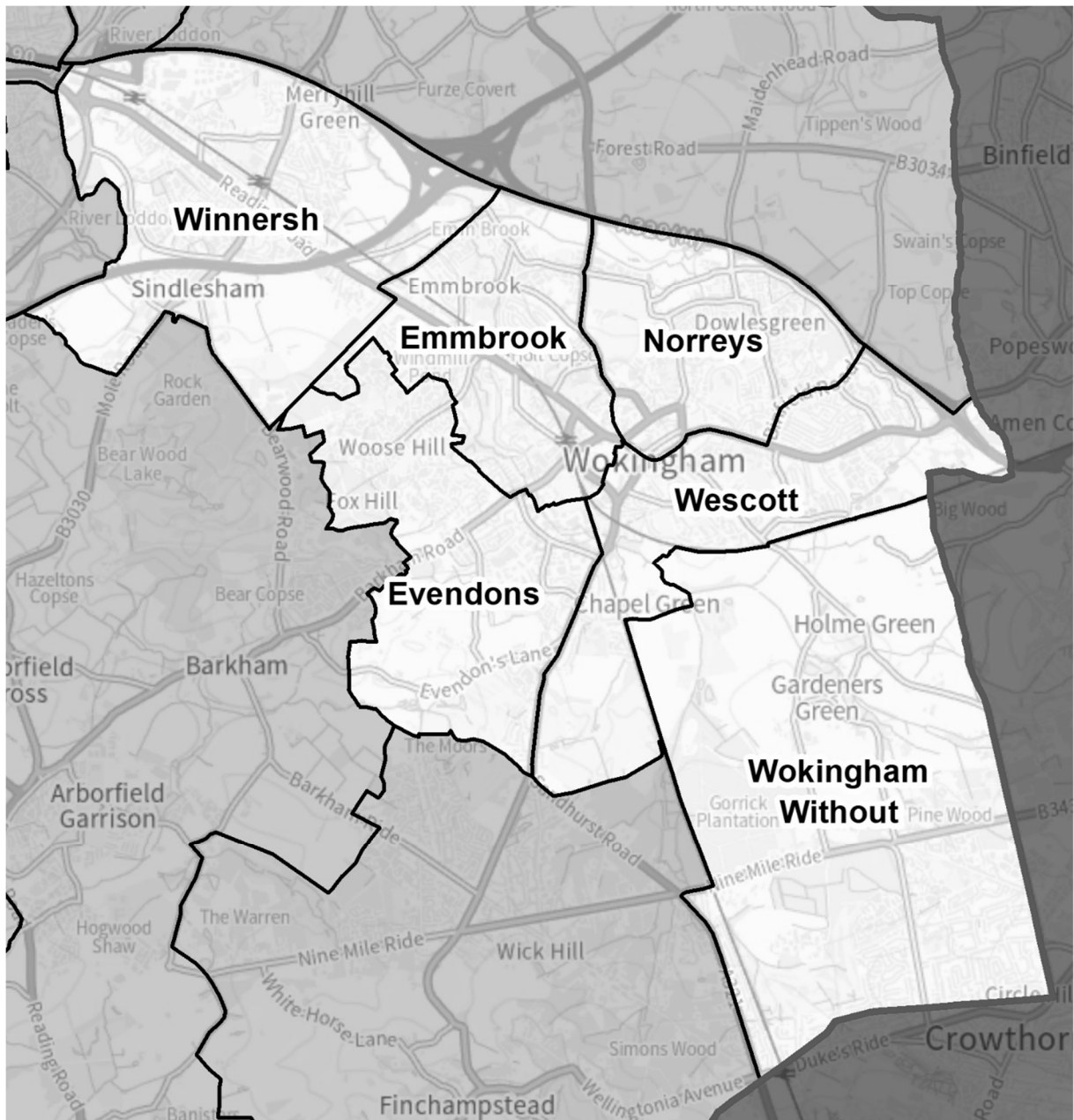
87 We note that the villages in the Council's Southern ward have good links between them, although we have concerns that the ward stretches too far east, taking in part of Finchampstead parish. We consider that the Eversley area has better links into the proposed Arborfield with Barkham ward. We are therefore adopting the Council's three-councillor Southern ward, subject to not including the Eversley area or the small area of Ryeish Green.

88 We note that there was support for including the whole of the Arborfield Garrison development in a single ward, which the Council achieves with its Arborfield with Barkham ward. We do not consider that any other respondents put forward a stronger warding pattern. As discussed in the paragraph above, we consider that the Eversley area of Finchampstead parish has better links into Arborfield with Barkham and we are therefore reflecting that in our proposals, noting that if we were to retain the area in the Finchampstead ward it would create a ward with 13% more electors than the borough average in 2028. This is a level of electoral inequality we are not persuaded to adopt.

89 Finally, we have considered the comments around Finchampstead, noting that there is not consensus on how the area should be divided, but note that the Council has provided a good three-councillor proposal. As discussed above, we support the inclusion of the Arborfield Garrison development area of Finchampstead parish in the Arborfield with Barkham ward and propose going further to also include the Eversley area. We note the Parish Council's concern that part of the parish is included in Wokingham Without ward. However, if this area is retained in the Council's three-councillor Finchampstead ward it would have 19% more electors than the borough average by 2028, while Wokingham Without would have 19% fewer. This is a level of electoral inequality we are not persuaded to adopt. We are therefore incorporating the Council's proposed ward without amendment.

90 Our draft recommendations are for three-councillor Arborfield with Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Southern wards with 8% more, 8% more, 9% fewer and 3% more electors than the borough average by 2028.

Wokingham, Wokingham Without and Winnersh



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Emmbrook	3	1%
Evendons	3	-1%
Norreys	3	-8%
Wescott	3	3%
Winnersh	3	5%
Wokingham Without	3	-9%

Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott

91 The Council proposed four three-councillor wards for the Wokingham parish area. It stated that there was agreement that the existing Emmbrook and Evendons wards remain an accurate reflection of their communities and should be unchanged. The Council proposed changes between Norreys and Westcott wards to secure electoral equality and reflect communities. A resident supported the inclusion of the area to the east of Binfield Road in Wescott ward. Another supported no change to Emmbrook ward. A resident put forward broadly similar proposals to the Council.

92 A resident proposed renaming Norreys as Cantley, but did not offer any supporting evidence as to why. Another resident stated that the area around Glebelands Road is cut off from the rest of Norreys ward by Wiltshire Road, and suggested that the area is a different ward. Another resident suggested dividing the existing Norreys ward along Binfield Road. However, they did not provide compelling supporting evidence. In addition, as with the proposal above, it would not fit with a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards.

93 A resident suggested that Keep Hatch should be in its own ward. However, this area does not contain sufficient electors for a single-councillor ward, nor does it fit in with a three-councillor pattern. Therefore, we have not considered it further. Another resident put forward general comments about the boundaries needing changing, as well as changing ward names, but did not provide any specific evidence. We received a suggestion of a ward covering the town centre, taking in the edges of the areas around it. However, there was no specific evidence, and this would make it difficult to secure three-councillor wards.

94 A resident stated that Jasmine Close should be in Evendons ward, rather than Emmbrook, citing the use of facilities there. However, we note that the road's only access to Evendons is via Emmbrook ward, and ensuring internal access for the ward would require transferring a large area to the west of Reading Road. Another resident suggested that the area to the west of Reading Road should be in Evendons. However, moving this area would worsen electoral equality in Emmbrook and Evendons to 15% fewer and 16% more electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively. We do not propose adopting wards with this poor level of electoral equality.

95 A resident proposed moving a small area of Evendons ward to Finchampstead. However, there was not sufficient evidence for this change and would require the creation of an unviable parish ward.

96 We received a number of general comments about the need for changes to the existing boundaries or proposing small changes, as well as a range of comments proposing specific changes. However, none of these provided strong evidence to support the changes.

97 We are therefore basing the draft recommendations on the Council's proposals, subject to a small amendment to the boundary between Emmbrook and Wescott wards. We are tying the boundary to Earle Crescent to ensure that the Elms Road area has road access into Wescott ward. This does not affect any electors.

98 Our three-councillor Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott wards would have 1% more, 1% fewer, 8% fewer and 3% more electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively.

Winnersh

99 The Council proposed the retention of the existing Winnersh ward noting that there was support for this. A resident stated that Old Forest Road should be in Emmbrook ward, not Winnersh ward. We received no other significant comments on this area.

100 We note that the Council's proposals secure good electoral equality, while comprising the whole parish. The resident's suggestion would require the creation of an unviable parish ward and would be better addressed as part of a Community Governance Review, which is a separate process run by the Council. We are therefore retaining the three-councillor Winnersh ward without amendment. This would have 5% more electors than the borough average by 2028.

Wokingham Without

101 The Council proposed the retention of the existing Wokingham Without ward. As discussed in the Arborfield with Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Southern section (above), Finchampstead Parish Council and a number of residents objected to the inclusion of part of Finchampstead in Wokingham Without ward. A resident put forward broadly similar proposals to the Council.

102 A resident put forward good evidence for retaining the existing Wokingham Without ward, including the inclusion of part of Finchampstead parish. A number of other residents also supported the retention of the existing ward. Another resident suggested that the western boundary should follow the railway line, while addressing the loss of electors by amending the northern boundary. A resident proposed moving the boundary between Wokingham Without and the existing Wescott ward. Finally, a resident suggested that Wokingham Without could be renamed Pinewood.

103 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received, noting some support for the retention of the existing ward. As discussed in the Arborfield with Barkham, Finchampstead, Shinfield and Southern section, we note the concern of Finchampstead Parish Council about the inclusion of part of the parish in Wokingham Without. However, if this area is retained in the Council's three-councillor Finchampstead ward it would have 19% more electors than the borough

average by 2028, while Wokingham Without would have 19% fewer. This is a level of electoral inequality we are not persuaded to adopt. This proposal also precludes the suggestion of tying the boundary to the railway line as this effectively reflects the removal of the parish ward.

104 We note the suggestion from a resident for amending the boundary between Wokingham Without and the existing Wescott wards, but this would require the creation of a parish ward, as well as worsen electoral equality. In light of this and no other support, we are not adopting this amendment. Finally, we note the suggestion to rename the ward as Pinewood. However, there was no other evidence to support this and the ward name reflects the name of the parish.

105 We are therefore retaining the existing Wokingham Without ward without change. This would have 9% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028.

Conclusions

106 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Wokingham, referencing the 2021 and 2028 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2021	2028
Number of councillors	54	54
Number of electoral wards	18	18
Average number of electors per councillor	2,420	2,455
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations

Wokingham Borough Council should be made up of 54 councillors serving 18 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Wokingham Borough Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Wokingham Borough Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

107 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

108 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Wokingham Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

109 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Earley, Finchampstead, Shinfield, Swallowfield, Wokingham and Woodley parishes.

110 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Earley parish.

Draft recommendations

Earley Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Cutbush	4
Egremont	1
Hawkedon	4
Hillside	4
Maiden Erlegh	2
Radstock	4
Redhatch	1
St Nicolas	2
Whitegates	3

111 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Finchampstead parish.

Draft recommendations

Finchampstead Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Finchampstead North	7
Finchampstead South	6
Finchampstead West	3
Lower Wokingham	1

112 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Shinfield parish.

Draft recommendations

Shinfield Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Grazeley	2
Shinfield North	2
Shinfield North East	1
Shinfield Village	5
Spencers Wood & Three Mile Cross	4
Spencers Wood South	1

113 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Swallowfield parish.

Draft recommendations

Swallowfield Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
East	1
West	8

114 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Wokingham parish.

Draft recommendations

Wokingham Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Emmbrook North	3
Emmbrook South	3
Evendons East	3
Evendons West	4
Norreys Central	2
Norreys East	2
Norreys West	4
Wescott East	2
Wescott West	2

115 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Woodley parish.

Draft recommendations

Woodley Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing 10 wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bulmershe East	2
Bulmershe West	2
Coronation Central	1
Coronation East	3
Loddon Airfield	5
Loddon South	3
Loddon West	2
South Lake North	2
South Lake South	3
Warren	2

Have your say

116 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole borough or just a part of it.

117 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for area, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

118 Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps. You can find it at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

119 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by writing to:

Review Officer (Wokingham)
LGBCE
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

120 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Wokingham Borough Council which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

121 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

122 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in Wokingham?

123 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents the area?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

124 Effective local government:

- Are any of the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?
- Are there good links across your proposed wards? Is there any form of public transport?

125 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lqbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

126 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

127 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

128 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for Wokingham Borough Council in 2024.

Equalities

129 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Wokingham Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Arborfield with Barkham	3	6,384	2,128	-12%	7,935	2,645	8%
2	East Woodley	3	6,729	2,243	-7%	6,717	2,239	-9%
3	Emmbrook	3	7,388	2,463	2%	7,455	2,485	1%
4	Evendons	3	7,162	2,387	-1%	7,315	2,438	-1%
5	Finchampstead	3	8,152	2,717	12%	7,971	2,657	8%
6	Norreys	3	6,543	2,181	-10%	6,747	2,249	-8%
7	North Earley	3	8,256	2,752	14%	8,063	2,688	9%
8	North Woodley	3	7,199	2,400	-1%	6,711	2,237	-9%
9	Northern	3	7,170	2,390	-1%	7,122	2,374	-3%
10	Shinfield	3	6,049	2,016	-17%	6,731	2,244	-9%
11	Southern	3	7,381	2,460	2%	7,550	2,517	3%

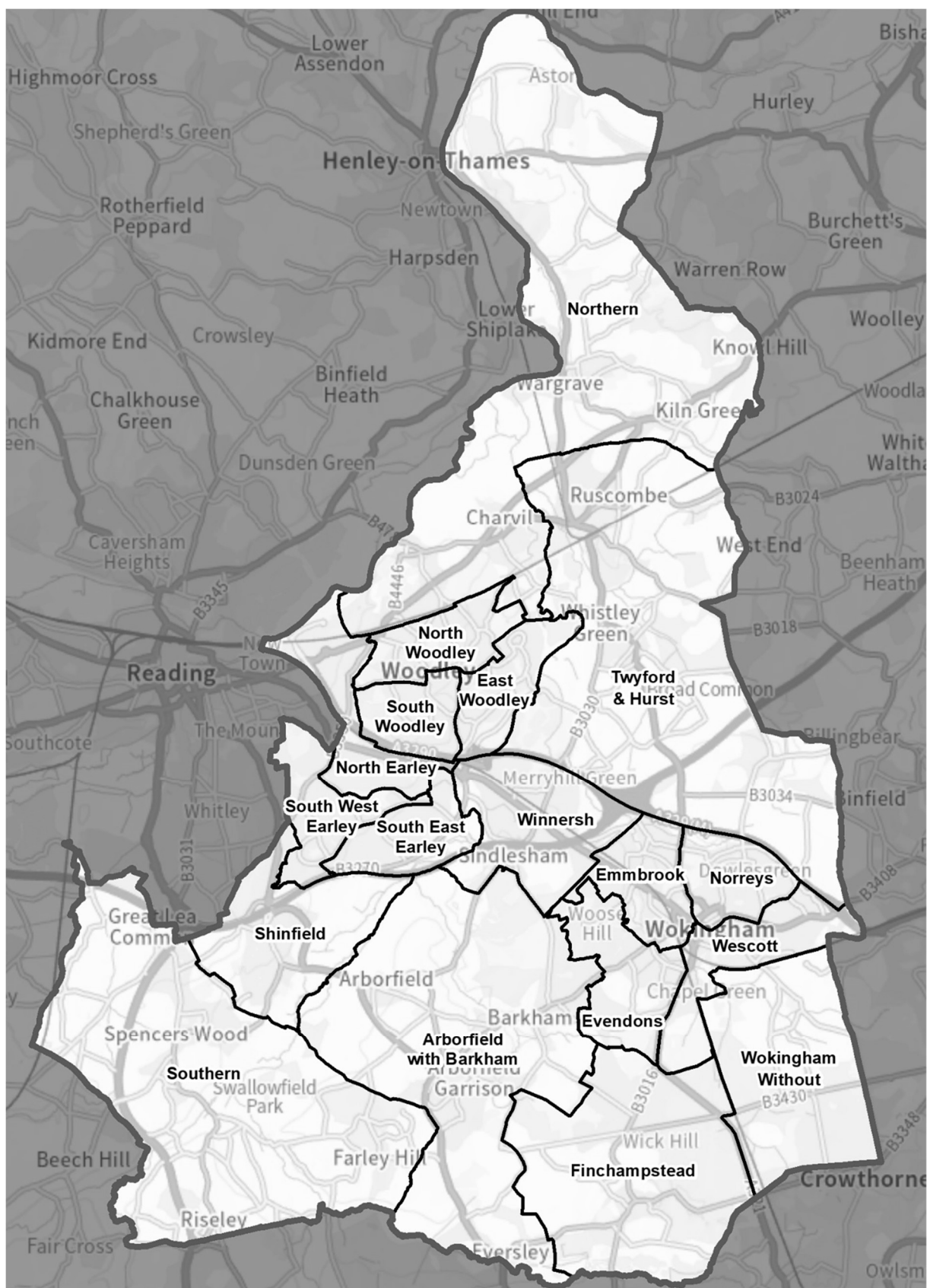
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2021)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12	South East Earley	3	7,865	2,622	8%	7,768	2,589	5%
13	South West Earley	3	7,481	2,494	3%	7,297	2,432	-1%
14	South Woodley	3	7,485	2,495	3%	7,182	2,394	-2%
15	Twyford & Hurst	3	7,794	2,598	7%	7,902	2,634	7%
16	Wescott	3	7,383	2,461	2%	7,619	2,540	3%
17	Winnersh	3	7,867	2,622	8%	7,756	2,585	5%
18	Wokingham Without	3	6,400	2,133	-12%	6,721	2,240	-9%
	Totals	54	130,690	-	-	132,562	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,420	-	-	2,455	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wokingham Borough Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/berkshire/wokingham

Appendix C

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/berkshire/wokingham

Local Authority

- Wokingham Borough Council

Political Groups

- Earley & Shinfield Liberal Democrats

Councillors

- Councillor V. Milam (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Councillor K. Baker (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Councillor M. Firmager (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Councillor J. Halsall (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Councillor G. Cowan (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Councillor W. Smith (Wokingham Borough Council)
- Parish Councillor D. Chopping (Earley Town Council)

Local Organisations

- Arborfield Garrison Residents' Action Group

Parish and Town Councils

- Barkham Parish Council
- Charvil Parish Council
- Finchampstead Parish Council
- Wokingham Without Parish Council
- St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council
- Swallowfield Parish Council

Local Residents

- 130 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

Local Government Boundary Commission for
England
1st Floor, Windsor House
50 Victoria Street, London
SW1H 0TL

Telephone: 0330 500 1525

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Online: www.lgbce.org.uk

www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Twitter: @LGBCE