

Bracknell Forest Borough Council

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Comment text:

Please find attached file "200904_Final_LGBCE comment_Binfield Parish Council.pdf" comment from Binfield Parish Council. If there is anything further you need then please contact the Clerk, Ally Wickham, Binfield Parish Council on 01344 454 602 or office@binfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk. This submission has been made by Kirsty Sizeland, Admin Officer, at Binfield Parish Council.

Uploaded Documents:

https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1599505520_200904_Final+LGBCE+comment_Binfield+Parish+Council.pdf

Binfield Parish Council Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England Proposals for Bracknell Forest Borough Warding

Binfield Parish Council (the Parish) wishes to make the following comments on the proposed warding arrangements in Bracknell Forest Borough.

The Parish is strongly opposed to the proposal for splitting Binfield into two separate wards for the following reasons:

1. The Commission's second consideration that the recommendations reflect community identity appear to have been completely overlooked, or the current community identity misunderstood by the commission.
2. There are no strong clearly identified boundaries for either proposed ward.

The parish council would also like to ask why the representation from Binfield Parish Council submitted to reviews@lgbce.org.uk timed at Mon 16/03/2020 13:27 appears to have been entirely missed or ignored.

Community Identity

The Parish has produced a very brief description of Binfield at the end of this response document.

Paragraph 73 of your recommendations states:

"Our draft recommendations are based on a resident's submission for a three- councillor Great Hollands ward. We consider that this offers the best balance of our statutory criteria in both Binfield, Great Hollands, and Jennett's Hill – discussed further below. Our proposed Great Hollands ward keeps the entirety of the Great Hollands estate together, using Ringmead as a boundary between Great Hollands and Binfield South with Jennett's Hill."

Binfield has been a community for over 200 years and remains coherent despite recent developments. Most of the children from Farley Wood and Temple park have traditionally attended the Binfield School, joined the Binfield Scouts & Guides, and played football & cricket for the Binfield clubs. We have evidence from recent surveys that most residents, if asked, will say they live in Binfield, not Bracknell. The new Kings Academy School at Blue Mountain will only serve to strengthen that feeling of one community now that most of the Binfield Children will be attending the same secondary school.

While we can see that the aim to keep Great Hollands together has some merit, it seems illogical to break up one of the oldest communities in Bracknell Forest in favour of an estate that has existed only since 1967 and where many will feel a part of Bracknell rather than of Great Hollands.

The Wykery copse development is, clearly, less entrenched in the Binfield Parish, and the A329m does form a significant barrier between parts of the Binfield community. If there is to be a redrawing of the boundary then using the A329M certainly has some merit. However, the recent door to door survey, early in 2020, reinforced our belief in the desire of residents to be in Binfield, and for their children to attend the Kings Academy schools.

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The proposal document states a preference to avoid four-councillor wards, on the grounds of "potentially diluting the accountability of councillors to the electorate." This is only a potential dilution, and councillors work together to support their electorate. The Parish believes that the argument against four-councillor wards is spurious and can be overcome.

If there is a need to avoid 4-councillor wards then it would make more sense from a community identity viewpoint to combine the Warfield West portion of the proposed North Binfield & Warfield West with the Warfield East ward and split this into two two-councillor wards.

Alternatively, a single-councillor ward could be formed encompassing the area to the south of the A329 and North of the Great Hollands Estate.

Paragraph 78 of your recommendations states:

As part of our virtual tour of the area, we were able to confirm that Berkshire Way is a strong and identifiable boundary between Binfield and Jennett's Hill. However, as a result of our decision to avoid splitting the Great Hollands community (discussed above in paragraph 72), it is not possible to propose a warding arrangement in this area that utilises Berkshire Way as a boundary and still retains good electoral equality.

The Parish notes that you, yourselves, have observed the strong barrier that the A329 presents to community identity. The Parish Council finds it illogical to favour the cohesion of the Great Hollands estate over the long established community of Binfield.

Paragraph 79 of your recommendations state:

Our draft recommendations are therefore based on a resident's submission for a three-councillor 'Binfield South' ward. This arrangement includes the Amen Corner, Farley Wood, Park Farm, Popeswood, and Temple Park areas of Binfield parish with Jennett's Hill, using Ringmead as the southern boundary between this area and Great Hollands estate. While we are conscious that the two areas either side of Berkshire Way do not share a great deal of access routes, we are of the view that this arrangement ensures no communities are split across the west of the borough and provides for good levels of electoral equality in 2025.

The Parish is surprised that you appear to have given so much weight to the submission of one person, especially as it would appear that the views of the Parish as originally submitted on March 16th have been overlooked entirely.

The only access route across the A329 between the two parts of the proposed Binfield South ward is a footbridge, and there is no public transport between these two areas. We find it incongruous that this appears to have less weight than the lack of a road between Great Hollands and Jennett's Hill.

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Lack of strong clear boundaries

Paragraph 19 of the recommendations states:

“We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.”

The boundary between the proposed Binfield North and Binfield South splits off the Roebuck Estate, parts of Terrace Road South, Murrell Hill Lane, St Marks Road and the Popeswood triangle. All these areas have a very strong historic identity as being part of ‘the village’ of Binfield. Similarly, Farley Wood is well established as a Binfield area. This north/south boundary in particular appears to be entirely arbitrary and completely at odds with the stated aim of NOT splitting established communities.

If there must be a split between Binfield North and South then it must be drawn further South, to keep this established community intact.

The A329 (a dual carriageway) cuts through the proposed Binfield South ward, dividing Jennets Park from the main community of Binfield Parish. The A329 has always crossed Binfield, since the parish boundary is Peacock Lane, but the A329 dualling created an effective barrier. Jennets Park is a recent development, most of which is inside the current Great Hollands North ward. The people who live there look towards Great Hollands for their shopping, but in our 2019 survey several residents expressed their wish to use The Kings Academy school and the Parish Council had started to consider options for using CIL funds to improve the footbridge access between Wykery Copse and the rest of the Parish.

Paragraph 72 of the recommendations states:

“We also noted the lack of access between Jennett’s Hill and the Great Hollands estate”

Having noted this fact, the Parish is surprised that the lack of any road link is of greater importance than the existence of the A329.

Conclusion

The Parish does not accept the proposals for dividing Binfield into two wards.

The proposed warding creates an artificial division in the middle of our community, and further confuses matters by ignoring the one true natural boundary that exists in the parish and ‘bolting on’ areas that do not identify as being parts of Binfield.

We are already a strong, viable, coherent community and wish to honour our historic boundaries and remain as a single ward.

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About Binfield

Binfield Parish, as it exists today, has been in existence since 1817. It is geographically a very large parish of 1,300 hectares, or 3,200 acres, in the middle of the historic ancient Windsor Great Forest, which gives it an established rural feel. It has grown significantly from a small village in the centre of the parish with a ring of country houses with parkland and estates employing most of the village, to a large thriving community with many commuters and good local facilities. The village followed the typical pattern of colonisation in the 19th and early 20th century with the construction of high-quality detached villas standing in private grounds, in some cases of high architectural interest, which make an important contribution to Binfield's character. (Binfield Neighbourhood Plan, Section 2.2)

Binfield has a Neighbourhood Plan (made in 2015), and, remains the only parish in Bracknell Forest Borough to have one.

The parish centre has good facilities comprising shops, cafes, restaurants, three pubs, a library, a primary school, a scout hut, the Memorial Hall (maintained in trust for the use of residents of the parish), a parish office with an associated cafe and a GP surgery. More recent development in the south of the parish mean that people generally use their cars to access these facilities. During the making of the Neighbourhood Plan, extensive sampling of the local population was carried out where it was determined that even in the new developments, people strongly identified with Binfield Parish rather than with Bracknell town. This was further reinforced by similar findings in a resident's survey carried out on behalf of the Parish Council in the second half of 2019.

One of the main Parish Council objectives is to promote a sense of community and to ensure that events and activities to support mental and physical wellbeing are supported and sponsored across the community. Binfield has an annual 10K run around the parish and the 'Party by the pitch' event run by the Cricket club & Scouts that brings together over 800 residents. We have an annual Scarecrow Trail, Easter Egg hunt and take part in Summer of Fun activities for local children as well as the Bracknell Northern Parishes Arts Week in October Half-Term.

Binfield has many clubs and societies for all ages promoting the community feel to the parish. There is a football club, a cricket club, two tennis clubs, an archery club, thriving brownies, guides, cubs and scouts. Binfield has a WI, Binfield Singers, Binfield Bards, Environmental Group, Garden Club and others. The café attached to the parish office is run as a community interest company with profits from the café ploughed back into community activities and events. All of these activities are used by residents from the whole Parish.

We refer you to the Parish Council website – www.binfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk – for more details of our facilities.