

## Submission to Boundary Commission:

- Part A: General comments on BFC's proposals
- Part B: Arguments for keeping Winkfield and Cranbourne area of Warfield parish in a Winkfield ward

### Part A: General comments on BFC's proposal

*(Passed by meeting of the Council, 11 March 2020; quotes in green)*

**Page 3:** Description of Warfield and Winkfield as 'historic villages' seems inaccurate: they are parishes once containing only scattered settlements. Unlike Binfield, there is no 'core village'. This has implications for some cross-boundary community identities and interests.

Unlike for Binfield, the description of Warfield omits in the text mention of ongoing development, and the map is out of date: 2200 homes (Woodhurst) are being built out in a swathe west-east between developments of Whitegrove/etc. and the small settlements on Forest Road; this will dominate the new Warfield ward.

**Page 5:** *"Unlike electoral equality it is not possible to measure levels of community identity."* But both elements are indicated as material in the legal factors listed by LGBCE.

Noting: *"Evidence is set out below for each proposed ward which provides a range of information regarding communities and local links, such as how local people use local facilities, where boundaries such as roads or railway lines divide or unite communities, whether there are community groups representing a particular area, whether there are good transport links."* BFC makes a good case for some proposed wards (e.g. Binfield), but under-values important considerations for some affected communities elsewhere. There is sometimes a sense that ward boundaries have primarily been drawn to give the 'right' numbers and in places no other defensible argument is made.

#### **Page 7 – Warfield ward.**

*"This proposed ward follows the Warfield Parish boundary to the west and east and encompasses part of the existing Binfield with Warfield and Winkfield and Cranbourne Wards."*

**See Part B of this submission for arguments, following LGBCE guidance, for retaining the current eastern ward boundary, and thus this area of the parish in a Winkfield ward.**

*"Warfield Park, a large self-contained "Park Home" community to the south-east of Warfield Parish, is geographically closer to the proposed Whitegrove Ward but there is no intrinsic community links to Whitegrove and has therefore been included in Warfield to ensure better electoral equality. Two areas of Warfield Park are currently in the existing Winkfield and Cranbourne Ward. These have been brought together with the rest of Warfield Park in Warfield Ward which provides better representation for electors and brings the community together, which is currently artificially split."*

**Warfield Park:** it seems sensible to put in one ward, but arguments for Warfield ward are weak. On the map it is a southern protrusion into Winkfield and Ascot. One of its access roads is from Winkfield Row/Chavey Down (Winkfield & Cranbourne) and at a recent appeal for more park homes, the Inspector referred to acceptable pedestrian access to bus stops on Chavey Down Road.

## Page 9 Winkfield with Ascot.

*“The proposed Winkfield with Ascot Ward is geographically significant and encompasses the conurbations of North Ascot, Winkfield Row and Chavey Down and respects the Winkfield parish boundary. It is a largely rural ward with the population centres close to one another therefore effective local government is not compromised.”*

This is an enormous area cf. all other wards (hence the map is illegible, which is unhelpful). It also covers a very diverse area, far more than current Winkfield & Cranbourne or Ascot, which have internal commonalities.

No argument supports the statement that it is *“geographically significant”*. How? Why?

North Ascot, Winkfield Row and Chavey Down are not conurbations and do not form a conurbation; the latter two are small settlements in BFC policy terms.

*“It is a largely rural ward with the population centres close to one another”* The three settlements are reasonably close in relation to the size of the ward, but they aren’t walkable. However, their proximity means the electorate is disproportionately concentrated in a relatively small part of this huge ward, which (i) does not make for equal representation for more scattered residents with different concerns, and/or (ii) suggests an assumption that North Ascot, Winkfield Row and Chavey Down share interests; I believe the North Ascot’s are more transboundary and shared with Ascot (RBWM), which raises a query about *“therefore effective local government is not compromised”*.

## Part B: Keep Winkfield and Cranbourne area of Warfield parish in a Winkfield ward

(Advice quoted from: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/berkshire/bracknell-forest>)

**“Explain your opinion using evidence and examples.**

■ **“Think about the three legal factors the Commission uses to draw new boundaries:**

**“1 New wards should leave each councillor representing roughly the same number of voters as other councillors elsewhere in the authority.”**

**Not assessed. Residents have little capacity to assess how ideas impact voter numbers.**

**“2 New wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities, and boundaries should be identifiable. Consider transport links, community groups and facilities, natural or physical boundaries, parishes and shared interests.”**

### **COMMUNITY INTERESTS/IDENTITIES**

#### **(a) Transport links**

BFC’s proposal says of new Binfield ward (page 5): *“Forest Road provides a corridor that effectively links all areas of the proposed ward and provides a common transportation route.”* This **also** applies to villages in Warfield parish on Forest Road. Most significantly for this review, **Hayley Green and Winkfield Row are either side of the ward boundary, but linked by Forest Road and only a few hundred metres apart.** In a similar fashion, Bracknell Road (which crosses Forest Road at Fiveways junction) links Hayley Green and Brockhill.

My comments focus on these three settlements and why they should remain in a single (Winkfield) ward. I moved here in 1990. These are my views. Others may or may not feel

affiliated to Warfield parish; e.g. residents who grew up here and went to former Warfield CE Primary School in Hayley Green. But that closed and moved to Whitegrove in the 1990s, and I see no remaining tangible parish links.

The current Winkfield and Cranbourne part of Warfield parish is effectively severed from the rest of the parish where Forest Road is crossed by Bracknell Road at Fiveways junction: There is **no evidence** in the emerging Warfield Neighbourhood Plan or emerging Local Plan of proposals to improve pedestrian/cycle east–west crossing. It is currently awkward/potentially hazardous (on a sharp bend) particularly at busy times of day. (A proposed cycle path from Hayley Green will link with St Edmund Lane and Whitegrove, but not to Warfield Street and the rest of the proposed new ward [no material weight but indicative of BFC planning thinking].)

**Bus services serve either Newell Green/Warfield Street or Winkfield/Hayley Green; no bus runs between them (nos 53, 153, 162, 162a).**

### **(b) Community groups and facilities**

Background: Warfield has no ‘centre’: The parish church is in a **small isolated settlement** in the north of the parish; there is no village shopping street or even shop (daily needs are met at e.g. Whitegrove, North Ascot, Binfield).

We have few facilities in any of the three settlements, but socially, **I feel many Hayley Green residents have stronger links with Winkfield Row, in particular, than settlements to the west in the proposed new ward:**

- Many in Hayley Green gravitate east for facilities/services not available here, for example indoor and outdoor leisure facilities and events, and some for churches, schools (I was a parent-governor at Winkfield St Mary’s CE School). Equally, our pub is a popular short walk for Winkfield Row residents.
- Hayley Green Woods are popular with dog-walkers and others from Winkfield Row and Hayley Green, as well as Warfield Park and Whitegrove. They are relatively distant and inaccessible for settlements to the west in the new ward.
- Hayley Green, Winkfield Row and Brockhill are joined by a rural Public Rights of Way network (e.g. along The Cut; and between Brockhill and Malt Hill). Rural Public Rights of Way to westward settlements are far more circuitous, via the church.
- Hayley Green residents have been invited to Winkfield Row meetings when common issues arise, and included on their community social media site (Hayley Green information posted, e.g. roadworks).

### **(c) Shared interests**

Unlike for Binfield, there is no explanation of how the new ward boundary relates to the communities within it, or to existing links between communities. It seems based on numbers only.

There is no formal link between Hayley Green, Winkfield Row and Brockhill, but we have good informal links reflecting shared interests and values, helpfully fostered by excellent ward councillor engagement, which we collectively value.

**Traffic.** To the west, Newell Green and Warfield Street are rightly recognised in the Warfield Neighbourhood Plan to share concerns about traffic on Forest Road through these

settlements. A supposed alternative route (Sopwith Road, Harvest Ride, Jigs Lane North) may ease that traffic: encouraging traffic away from Forest Road is a focus for them.

Unfortunately no such solution is available east of 'Fiveways' for Hayley Green, Winkfield Row and Brockhill, where increasing commuter and other traffic has no option but Forest Road or Bracknell Road through our settlements.

With no 'bypass' routes, these roads will inevitably carry more and more traffic through these small settlements as 'Woodhurst' and other sites are built out.

This cross-boundary concern is, reasonably, not of interest to settlements west of us on Forest Road in Warfield, but is common to settlements in Winkfield and on other rural commuter roads (Maidens Green, Winkfield, Cranbourne) – also Nuptown in the Winkfield and Cranbourne part of Warfield.

**Development.** The three small settlements act together to influence development, e.g.

- Support to Hayley Green from Winkfield Row especially during Warfield Neighbourhood Plan development (petition signatures & Regulation 14 objections)

- Mutual support and activities in Winkfield Row and Hayley Green on draft Local Plan proposals for the two settlements (information pooling, advice sharing, consultation attendance, Regulation 18 objections)

- Support to Brockhill from Winkfield Row and Hayley Green against Planners Farm proposal in draft Central & Eastern Berkshire Authorities Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (information dissemination, consultation attendance, objections)

- On a positive note: although BFC policy maintains a 'gap' between Hayley Green and Winkfield Row, there is little/no local opposition to development proposals between the two settlements, and some support. This reflects that Hayley Green feels closer to Winkfield Row than settlements to the west (where, in contrast, coalescence is strongly resisted).

**Sewage.** This longstanding problem in Hayley Green does not affect nearby Warfield parish settlements and urban areas, but is shared by Winkfield, including Winkfield Row and Brockhill.

Winkfield Parish Council included Hayley Green in its negotiations for area wide improved sewerage from Thames Water. Although this was at the parish level, it demonstrates the close links of Hayley Green and Winkfield as a whole.

## **BOUNDARIES**

### **(a) Natural or physical boundaries**

BFC proposal: *"There are no notable natural boundaries within the Borough so the main through-roads or green spaces often act as accepted limits to urban areas with communities contained within."*

- Hayley Green Woods & Westmorland Park separate Hayley Green from Whitegrove to the south, and the Bull Brook river corridor separates it from Warfield Street to the west. No such geographical features separate Hayley Green from Winkfield Row and Brockhill.

- On Forest Road, Fiveways junction (see above) separates Hayley Green from Warfield. In contrast, Forest Road directly connects Hayley Green and Winkfield Row, with no junction between them. Similarly, Bracknell Road links Hayley Green and Brockhill with only a (Cricketers') Lane to cross.

– Hayley Green is closer to Winkfield Row than to Warfield Street.

These and social factors are reflected in greater numbers seen walking between Winkfield Row and Hayley Green than west towards Warfield Street.

**(b) Parishes and wards**

BFC proposal: *“This proposed ward follows the Warfield Parish boundary to the west and east and encompasses part of the existing Binfield with Warfield and Winkfield and Cranbourne Wards.”*

**No convincing argument is given for removing an area from Winkfield & Cranbourne.**

**Merging the ward to Warfield parish boundary does not meet the Commission’s requirement for boundaries to be visible on the ground: the parish boundary is not, while the ward boundary is.**

In the Hayley Green and Brockhill area, the current ward boundary follows the Bull Brook (a ‘main river’ for BFC planning purposes) west of Hayley Green, then Bracknell Road and north up Malt Hill: it’s easy to discern ‘on the ground’.

Most significantly and inconsistently, the BFC proposal splits Brockhill (while elsewhere BFC argues the importance of putting all of Warfield Park in one ward).

Having coincident parish and ward boundaries might seem helpful to good governance, but in this case it is more logical to move the parish boundary so the Winkfield and Cranbourne area becomes part of Winkfield parish.

**“3 New wards should promote effective and convenient local government. Consider the number of councillors for, the geographic size of, and the links between parts of the ward.”**

**Because of the location of Hayley Green, the area is isolated from the rest of the Parish and including it in Warfield Ward will be to the detriment of residents who have little interaction on any salient matters.**

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