

# **CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE**

## **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF BRACKNELL FOREST: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Boundary Commission is carrying out an electoral review of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

The aim of the electoral review is for the Commission to recommend ward boundaries that mean each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters.

The Commission also aims to ensure that the ward boundaries reflect the **interests and identities of local communities, as well as promoting effective local government.**

To achieve these aims, the Commission needs to re-draw ward boundaries across Bracknell Forest.

From **7 January 2020** to **16 March 2020**, the Boundary Commission is accepting opinions and comments (submissions) from the public on where it believes ward boundaries should be in Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

The Commission has stated that it is minded to recommend that Bracknell Forest Borough Council should have **40 councillors** in the future. This is 2 fewer than the current number of councillors.

The Commission needs information from people and groups across Bracknell Forest to help it to produce new ward boundaries to accommodate 40 councillors.

In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, the Boundary Commission must balance its three statutory criteria, namely:

- To deliver electoral equality where each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the borough.
- That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities.
- That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

The Commission will test proposals against the criteria before drawing up draft recommendations. Accordingly, all proposals should demonstrate how they meet the three requirements. The Commission will take decisions based on the strength of the evidence presented to it and not merely on assertion. For example, details of community interests such as the location and use made of local facilities, services and local organisations demonstrating how a community manifests itself, will carry greater weight than submissions that simply assert that an area has a community identity.

The Commission will consider all submissions on their merit. A well-evidenced submission from an individual which addresses the three statutory criteria will be more persuasive than one which does not, even if the latter is from an elected individual or body.

This report strives to emphasise these criteria as the basis for our recommendations:

- Taking into account the current voting population of the community of Crowthorne (5,244) and the growth through planned housebuilding through 2025 of 1487 new homes (estimated new voters of 2974), the total voter count of 8,091 will support 3 borough councillors, with 2,697 voters per councillor against an estimated borough average of 2.529 in 2025.

This proposal is stated in the body of the report and covered in detail in **Appendix 1**.

Further to this, a paper submitted by the Borough Council proposes that to balance the number of voters, to keep Crowthorne to 2 councillors, and sustain the number of councillors in Sandhurst, a section at the South East of Crowthorne be cut out and added to the Owlsmoor Ward, re-named Wildmoor and Owlsmoor, disregarding that this severs all community ties that this section of Crowthorne has with the rest of Crowthorne and to suggest that there will be community links with Owlsmoor, 3 miles away by car.

This proposal is examined in **Appendix 2**, and an alternative proposal made that Crowthorne remain as a single community where the Ward and Parish Boundaries are co-terminus, and is the exact same area covered by the Crowthorne Neighbourhood Plan, which will go to referendum in May 2020.

- We believe that the interests and identities of a local community are best supported if the community is sustainable, where a Sustainable Community is such that enables the wellbeing and quality of life of ALL the residents, through providing access to a rich and diverse set of resources and services that meet their equally diverse set of needs. We have listed in **Appendix 3** many of the Services and Resources that exist in Crowthorne, emphasising the sustainability of Crowthorne as a community. We have also added in **Appendix 4** a non-exhaustive list of actions that the Parish Council is taking to maintain and develop the local community, bearing in mind the growth that it is currently going through.
- Crowthorne is a discrete and separate community that sits between the towns of Bracknell and Sandhurst, and does not seek to be a part of either. While often described as a village, it has all the hallmarks of a town in its own right. If we are able to take this clear opportunity to ensure that the community of Crowthorne is clearly demarcated as a Borough Ward and as a Parish with co-terminus boundaries, covered by a single Neighbourhood Plan, this will provide for effective and convenient local government, in a clearly demarcated single community.

## 2. CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL PROPOSAL

The Boundary Commission requires BFC to submit a plan which reflects the following:

- The proposed number of electors in each ward does not exceed +/-10% from the ratio of 2,529\*\* electors per councillor.
- Communities are recognised and kept intact where possible.
- The total number of councillors does not exceed the proposed number of 40.
- Wards only cross the parliamentary boundary where there are robust reasons to do so such as to maintain community links.
- Identifiable boundaries such as railways, main roads, etc. have been used as ward boundaries where this is appropriate and does not interfere with community cohesion.

\*\* BFC Electorate: 101, 156      40 Cllrs: 2,529 Electors per Councillor

The emphasis being applied by the Boundary Commission is that the communities created by the BFC Ward Boundary changes should be sustainable and demonstrate future proofing and good governance.

A Sustainable Community enables the wellbeing and quality of life of ALL the residents, through providing access to a rich and diverse set of resources and services that meet their equally diverse set of needs.

Crowthorne Parish is a Sustainable Community which has many diverse and disparate resources and services available to all its residents, the most significant of which are listed in Appendix 3. You will see very clearly from the list provided, that, although not an exhaustive list, Crowthorne is not only a sustainable community, but is thriving and is a great place for families to bring up their children as well as being an ideal community for the care for the elderly and frail.

It is also worth noting that Crowthorne was first established in the 1850's & 1860's as a community to support and service those two great Victorian institutions, Wellington College (1859) and Broadmoor Hospital (1863). The TRL (formerly TRRL) moved to Crowthorne in the 1950's, and was for many years, the third main employers in Crowthorne, until technology removed the need for a track and skidpan etc. for road transport research. These three great British Institutions are synonymous with the community of Crowthorne.

Thus Crowthorne has always been a strong sustainable community, built on the need to provide resources and services for Wellington College and Broadmoor, and both those institutions are still active and contributing members of the Crowthorne Community.

This paper is intended to ensure that after 160 years as a Community, Crowthorne remains as a discrete, sustainable community, serving the disparate needs of all the Stakeholders, and not dominated by the two towns of Bracknell and Sandhurst that it sits between.

And it is important that the impact of the Crowthorne 1,487 build programme (~2018 – 2030) should be reflected in the analysis.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION:**

**Crowthorne Parish Council resolves that from the 2023 elections, Crowthorne should be a "single ward" community served by 3 Bracknell Forest Councillors.**

**This will ensure that all the proposed building programmes (1,487 dwellings) will be adequately supported by the 3 Cllrs over the period 2023 – 2036 and beyond; and thereby the Crowthorne Community will strengthen its sustainability credentials.**

### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The draft submission has been prepared in line with advice from the Local Government Boundary Commission on the type of input which is relevant in such a review; namely the sustainability of Crowthorne as a community and the strategies and work undertaken to incorporate Buckler's Park residents, formerly the TRL site, and anticipated community facilities/infrastructure into the community of Crowthorne. Derby Field and Wellington College have also been included in recommendations as they do or will form part of 'Crowthorne' as a community rather than 'Little Sandhurst and Wellington' where the current ward boundaries sit.

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

CPC could opt not to submit a response in this consultation but would risk a decision being made to re-ward the BFC 'Crowthorne' boundaries in a way that may not be in the best interests of Crowthorne as a sustainable and cohesive community.

## **6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

All supporting information relating to the consultation can be found on the Local Government Boundary Commission website:

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/berkshire/bracknell-forest>

## **7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

None – all information considered is set out on the Local Government Boundary Review website and draft submission attached.

## **8 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The impact of the CPC recommendations, if accepted by the Boundary Review Commission, would not only ensure that Buckler's Park remains as part of Crowthorne Ward but would also extend the ward to incorporate the Wellington College and Derby Field part of the current Wellington and Little Sandhurst Ward. The boundary changes would be for borough wards only and not to 'the Parish' as the current boundary review focuses solely on BFC borough ward and not parishes.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

A small working party comprising Cllrs Wade, McKenzie-Boyle and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle has reviewed all the documentation pertaining to the Bracknell Forest Council ward review for 2020 and has drafted a proposed response for approval by CPC.

## **10 OVERVIEW FOR CROWTHORNE WARD**

- The community of Crowthorne has functioned for decades as a fully sustainable community; despite over 50% of the population residing in Wokingham Without Parish.

The community has worked together over the past 40 years through the Crowthorne Carnival, and other community events such as the annual Crowthorne Late Night Shopping.

The production of the "Crowthorne Eye", a community magazine (published for 25 years) provides information on all community events, businesses, churches, schools and societies in both the Wokingham Without and Crowthorne Parishes; thereby improving community cohesion across the "wider" Crowthorne area.

There are several charities e.g. COATS (Crowthorne Old Age To Teens day centre and respite care), Crowthorne Minibus, Crowthorne Good Neighbour Scheme which operate for, and bring together, the community.

Crowthorne is renowned for its good schools - Edgharrow, Crowthorne C of E, Wildmoor Heath and of course Wellington College.

Crowthorne has 5 Churches – St John the Baptist C of E, Crowthorne Baptist Church, The Vineyard at Edgbarrow, Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church and Crowthorne Methodist Church who combine their resources as Crowthorne Churches Together.

- Before the last BFC Boundary Review in 2002, Crowthorne was represented by 10 Parish Councillors and 3 Borough Councillors in a single Crowthorne Ward.

After the 2002 BFC Ward Boundary review, two Crowthorne wards were created, i.e. Crowthorne (CN) and Crowthorne South (CS) / Wellington.

At the BFC level, CN was represented by 2 Borough Councillors with the CS/Wellington area represented by Councillors from the Little Sandhurst and Wellington (LS&W) BFC Ward.

The number of Crowthorne Parish Councillors remained at 10 (split 8 for CN and 2 for CS)

This Crowthorne South/Wellington arrangement has over the years has caused residents confusion, especially at elections. The residents of CS see themselves as part of Crowthorne rather than being annexed to LS&W.

It is proposed to remove the Wellington overlap with Crowthorne; and not to have any other area annexed to either the STC area (in the south) or, for that matter, to the BTC area in the north. Apart from anything else, it will be difficult for either STC or BTC to understand and service the Crowthorne needs, potentially leading to poor governance.

**Any other annexation simply moves the confusion of CS/Wellington ward into yet another part of Crowthorne.**

- The current Neighbourhood Plan (NP) boundary spans the current Crowthorne (CN) and Crowthorne South (CS) Wards, reflecting the extent of all dwellings in the Crowthorne area.

Ideally, any proposal should recognise the whole Crowthorne community estate – **Appendix 1**

This would lead to the Borough, Parish and Neighbourhood Plan areas being contiguous and, as such, a single ward, in this way, supporting a sustainable community with good governance at all levels and maintaining community cohesion

Crowthorne wishes to retain its contiguous boundary for the Borough Ward and Parish showing it is a fully sustainable community as delineated in the Crowthorne Neighbour Plan. This essentially precludes any further annexation.

Note, the **annexation of the Crowthorne Wildmoor area** to the **Sandhurst Town Council area of Owlsmoor** is not preferred and would not be good governance, since the two areas are **separated by a 3-mile drive - Appendix 1**

A recommendation for the Sandhurst Town Area wards, which does not require any annexation of the Crowthorne Community, is attached – see **Appendix 2**

The list of resources and services available in Crowthorne demonstrates conclusively that Crowthorne is a sustainable community, and should not in any way, or in any part, be subsumed into either of the Town of Sandhurst or of Bracknell - See **Appendix 3**

The list of actions being taken by Crowthorne Parish Council, in association with the community and stakeholders shows how we are to maintaining and developing a strongly sustainable community – see **Appendix 4.**

## CROWTHORNE WARD CONSIDERATIONS

The basic ground rules for the number of Electors/Councillor\*\* has been indicated by the Boundary Commission which for a total BFC Electorate of 101,156 with 40 Cllrs (reduce from 42 Cllrs) produces a Target of 2,529 Electors per Councillor. With a Target tolerance of +/- 10% this then produces the range of 2,276 – 2,782 Electors per Councillor.

Crowthorne has a **very significant build programme of 1,487 dwellings** from ~2018 to 2030.

Therefore, any solution proposed must reflect this, in order to provide a long-term solution.

### Crowthorne Developments (to year 2036)

- **Bucklers' Park:** 1,000 dwellings plus school, community centre, shops and leisure facilities. Planning permission has been granted and development has commenced.  
Current occupation is circa 50 homes
- **Broadmoor:** 210 dwellings plus 60 retirement places  
Awaiting Broadmoor hospital planning application and Natural England
- **Derby Field:** 217 dwellings  
Included in the latest Site Allocation Plan to 2036  
Not yet confirmed

Total: 1,487 dwellings

**Beyond 2036 there are no significant development sites**

### Crowthorne Projected Build Forecast

Based on current build programmes and likely “delays” in achieving Planning permission etc...

Year Developments	2020	2025	2030	2036	Grand Totals
Bucklers' Park	~50	~450	~500	0	<b>1,000</b>
Broadmoor	0	~50	~220	0	<b>270</b>
Derby Field	0	0	~217	0	<b>217</b>
Year Totals	~50	~500	~937	0	<b>1,487 Homes</b>

Electorate @ 2.0 voters/home	100	1,000	1,874	0	<b>2,974 Voters</b>
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There are no other significant Site Allocations available beyond 2036

**Crowthorne – TOTAL AREA****PREFERRED**

Year	2025	2030	2036 Current Site Allocation Date	2045
<b>Electorate</b>				
Crowthorne “TOTAL AREA” (CN +CS) proposed single ward Electorate	5,244	6,244	8,091	8,091
New Build Electorate	1,000	1,847	0	0
<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>6,244</b>	<b>8,091</b>	<b>8,091</b>	<b>8,091</b>

**Crowthorne – Less Wildmoor Area****NON PREFERRED**

Crowthorne “less Wildmoor”	4,501	5,501	7,348	7,348
New Build Electorate	1,000	1,847	0	0
<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>5,501</b>	<b>7,348</b>	<b>7,348</b>	<b>7,348</b>

**Two Councillor Model – TOTAL AREA**

Electorate / Cllr for 2 Cllrs	3,122	4,046	4,046	4,046
<b>Target Variance</b>	<b>+ 23.4 %</b>	<b>+ 60 %</b>	<b>+ 60 %</b>	<b>+ 60 %</b>

**UNSUSTAINABLE****Two Councillor Model – Less Wildmoor****NON PREFERRED OPTION**

Electorate / Cllr for 2 Cllrs	2,750	3,674	3,674	3,674
<b>Target Variance</b>	<b>+ 7.8%</b>	<b>+ 45 %</b>	<b>+ 45 %</b>	<b>+ 45 %</b>

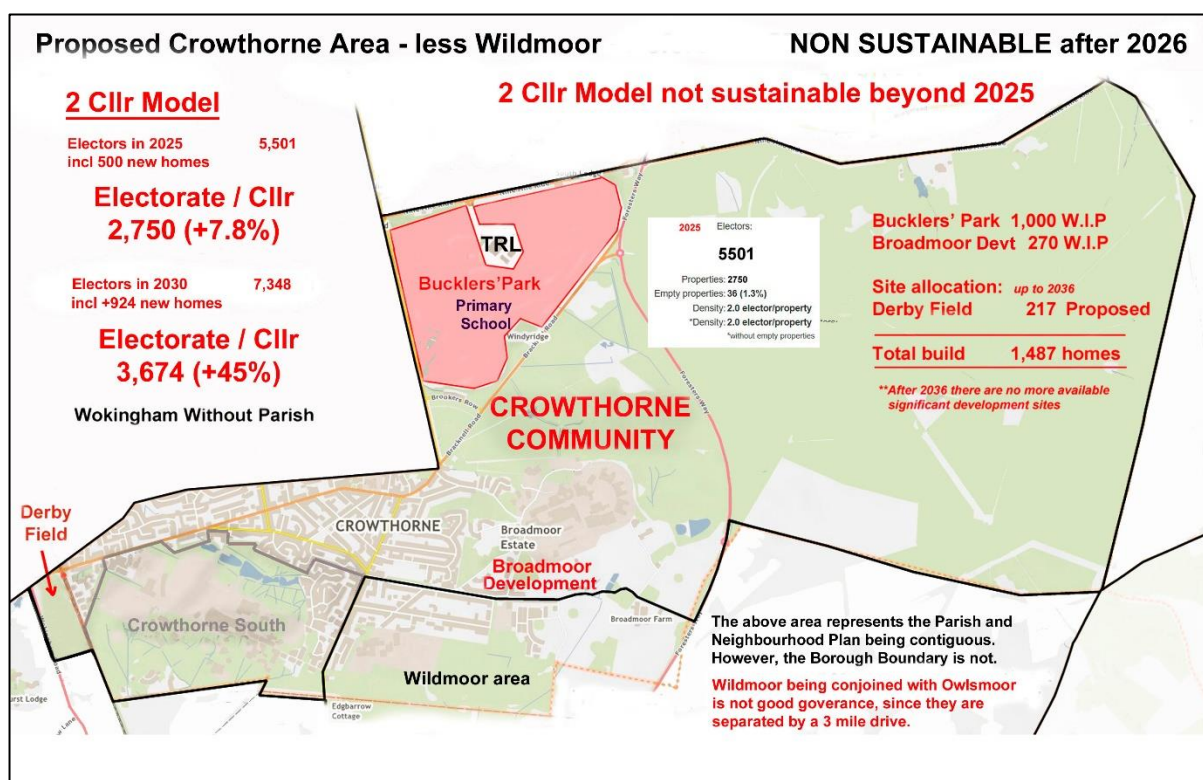
**UNSUSTAINABLE from 2026****Three Councillor Model – TOTAL AREA****PREFERRED OPTION**

Electorate / Cllr for 3 Cllrs	2,079	2,697	2,697	2,697
<b>Target Variance</b>	<b>- 17.8 %</b>	<b>+ 6.6 %</b>	<b>+ 6.6 %</b>	<b>+ 6.6 %</b>

**THREE COUNCILLOR MODEL IS SUSTAINABLE**  
notwithstanding the short-term variance in 2025



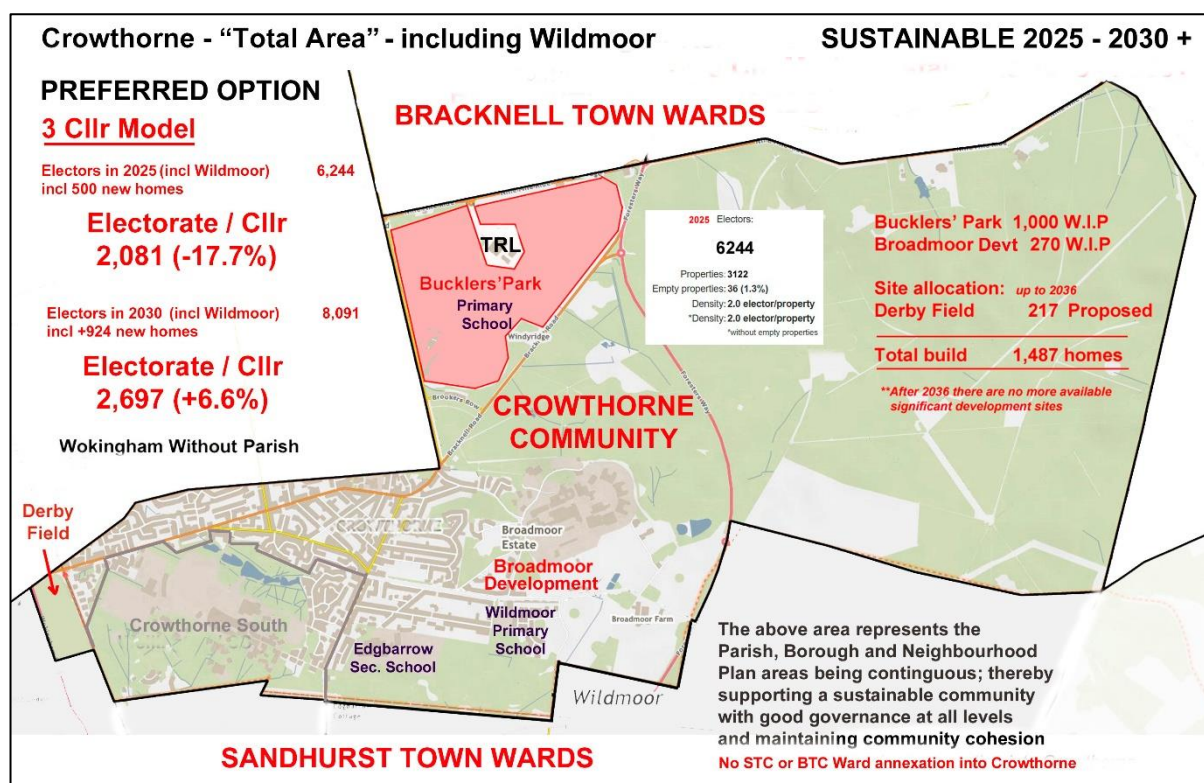
### NON PREFERRED OPTION





## Crowthorne – “TOTAL AREA”

## PREFERRED OPTION



The 3 Borough Council Councillor single ward, which is coterminous with the Parish ward, will provide the best governance and sustainability solution into the foreseeable future covering the total Crowthorne Community.

## SANDHURST TOWN WARDS CONSIDERATIONS

### Sandhurst Town Wards

*The Voter Target/Councillor is 2,529 +/- 10% (2,279 to 2782)*

The total for the Little Sandhurst, Central Sandhurst, Owlsmoor and College Town voters is **16,205** according to the map data.

**Based on 16,205 voters with 6 Cllrs covering the STC area:**

Voters per Cllr: **2,701** Target Variance/Cllr: **+ 6.8%**

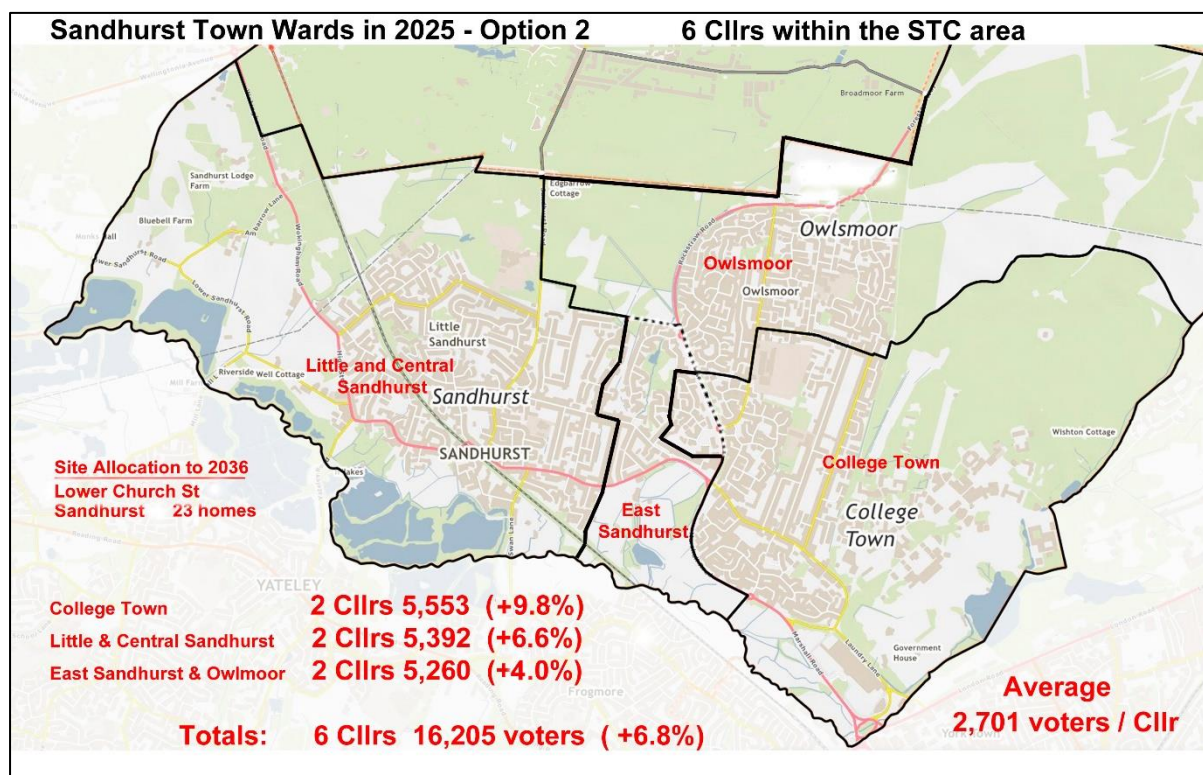
### Sandhurst Town Developments (to year 2036)

- **Sandhurst** Lower Church Street: 23 dwellings
- **Central Sandhurst** None
- **Owlsmoor** None
- **College Town** None

No significant impact on the Target variance of + 6.8% from 2023 - 2036

### Conclusion:

The Sandhurst Town wards can be covered by 6 Cllrs and be within the 10 % Maximum Target Variance and **does not need to annex any of the adjacent wards** (Crowthorne) - see below



## **CROWTHORNE RESOURCES & SERVICES**

As stated on page 1, Crowthorne grew up as a service community for Wellington College and for Broadmoor Hospital, and as a consequence developed a strong and sustainable ethos, which has remained and grown over the past 160 years. TRL noted this community feel and moved their operations to Crowthorne in the 1950's. Since then, many local businesses have appeared both throughout the community, and also on the Wellington Business Park, offering work and careers for the residents.

As will be seen from the list below, there are many resources and activities extant in Crowthorne that emphasise the strength of this Community.

1. There is a separate and distinct elected Parish Council (CPC) which has developed:
2. High St – the only true High St. in the Borough, where CPC have been working with the Trader's Association to maintain and revitalise it as a core element of the Crowthorne Community.
3. Traders Association – the Association of the High Street Traders, working to revitalise and develop the High St trading community.
4. 5 Churches – St. John the Baptist C of E, Crowthorne Baptist Church, The Vineyard at Edgbarrow, Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church and Crowthorne Methodist Church who combine their resources as Crowthorne Churches Together.
5. 1 Secondary School – Edgbarrow (highly regarded nationally)
6. 1 Public School – Wellington College, who work with Edgbarrow to the betterment of both establishments. In addition, they host termly meetings with Councillors from Crowthorne, Wokingham Without and Sandhurst, to discuss common ground and to share knowledge. They are very supportive of the Crowthorne Community, as shown by their hosting the Fire Service while the Fire Station is rebuilt, offering alternative accommodation to COATS Day Centre during their recent refurbishment project and hosting the Ark pre-school while the Baptist Church is undergoing a major rebuild. These points not only show the integration of all parties in Crowthorne in a single community, but these types of Projects also show that Crowthorne isn't standing still but continues to develop at pace.
7. 2 Primary Schools – Wildmoor Heath & Crowthorne C of E, with the new C of E Campus on Buckler's Park adding capacity in a growing community.
8. Tri Service Fire Station – Including Police and Ambulance presence, to be re-opened in early summer 2020. This re-development of the Fire Station as a completely new build indicates that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service sees Crowthorne as a viable and sustainable community. The fact that the Firefighters have been re-housed temporarily by Wellington College during the re-development of the Fire Station is living proof of the community in action, working in concert for the good of the residents.

9. Railway Station, with trains running to Reading in the North and to Gatwick Airport to the South. The station has recently undergone a facelift, emphasising the connection of Crowthorne with Broadmoor Hospital, Wellington College and Edgbarrow School. In addition, the timetable has undergone a recent review, with increased and improved services in both directions. This line offers an important link between Reading, a key transport hub in the Thames Valley and Gatwick Airport.
10. Crowthorne Community minibus, which provides a service to elderly and disabled persons living in Crowthorne.
11. Crowthorne Eye, a community magazine “Connecting Crowthorne”, has been distributed free of charge to every household in the Community for the past 25 years. This covers all the activities taking place in Crowthorne, keeps the readers up to date with what is going on and provides a platform for local businesses and traders to inform and advertise their products and services.
12. Library
13. Doctors’ Surgery
14. Three Dental Surgeries
15. A significant number of care homes and warden-controlled communities for the frail and elderly as well as luxury homes designed for the retired.
16. COATS Day Centre for the elderly offers activities, lunch and regular outings, and operates a minibus to support those activities.
17. A wide range of interest groups including:
  - a. Rugby Club
  - b. Football Club – AFC Crowthorne, including Ladies FC
  - c. Cricket Club (in association with Crown Wood)
  - d. Crowthorne Choral Society
  - e. Crowthorne Musical Players
  - f. Crowthorne Amateur Theatrical Society
  - g. Many other hobby clubs from horticulture to philately, from genealogy to photography.
  - h. Gym, Swimming Pool, Exercise Classes, Yoga etc...
18. Biennial Carnival
19. Annual May Fair
20. Late Night Christmas Shopping always on the first Friday in December, a major social event plus the Christmas Lights Switch-on and Carols Evening.
21. Countless Charities covering a multitude of good causes.

This list is itself a clear statement that Crowthorne is more than a sustainable community, that caters for the very diverse needs of all its residents, but a rich and diverse community that embraces all the residents.

## CROWTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Crowthorne Parish Council operates as a community leader, working with many disparate groups within the community to improve and develop infrastructure, and the services and the resources available to meet the needs of the community and its residents.

1. It has developed a Neighbourhood Plan, covering the same area as the Parish, which has passed the inspection phase and goes to public referendum in May/June.
2. The Three Year Strategy Plan, which was developed to cover the years 2016-2019, is currently being reviewed and reshaped to incorporate the larger Community, and the changes that have happened in recent years. This is being driven by a residents' survey through which we will get a good idea of what the community thinks are the high priority issues. The Parish Council has run a number of surveys, on-line and paper based, as well as through social media, over the past 5 years which has informed our key activities.
3. The Parish is represented at the Broadmoor Hospital External Stakeholders Group on a regular basis allowing us to inform the community of what is happening at the hospital and to share knowledge and information.
4. We also have representation at a Joint College/Councillors Meeting termly at Wellington College, again to share information and knowledge and to maintain the relationship. This relationship is exemplified by the recent support given to the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service during the rebuild of the Fire Station, to the ARC pre-school kindergarten during the development of the Baptist Church and to COATS Day Centre, during their recent rebuilding programme.
5. We have been working pro-actively with the Traders' Association to support and invigorate the High St as not only a vibrant shopping centre but also as a social amenity.
6. We support the biennial Crowthorne Carnival with the free use of Council and Community facilities.
7. The Parish Council runs two halls, the Parish Hall and the Morgan Centre, as well as the Morgan Recreation Ground. These halls are used by many of the organisations identified in Appendix 3, the main activities falling into the following 4 categories:
  - a. Performances (drama and music)
  - b. Pre-school groups
  - c. Fitness and dance groups
  - d. Hobby groups

The Morgan Recreation Ground is used for sport, mainly football, although we are developing a MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) on the recreation ground.

8. We have been working with Legal & General Homes since 2013 at their current development of 1000 new homes at Buckler's Park (formerly the TRL site), ensuring that this new community will see itself as an integral part of Crowthorne, regularly attending the Stakeholders meetings, and chairing the design committee of the new Community Hub, being built as part of the S106 settlement.
9. We run a Summer of Fun event on the Morgan Recreation Ground during the school summer break.

These are just some but not all of the community leadership activities driven by the Parish Council through which we are determined to maintain the high degree of sustainability of the Crowthorne Community.