

## **The Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

### **Wokingham**

#### **John Halsall – Member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe**

1. I am the member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe which is currently a two-councillor ward. I have served in this capacity since 2011.
2. The northern parishes were not represented in the Council's working group's discussion on warding arrangements.
3. Wokingham Borough consists of some villages and a few towns. LGBC in my view was correct to recognise these smaller communities in the last review twenty years ago. It was explained that this was no longer an option in principle though LGBC has some discretion and that the alternatives available were either four-year elections with discretion on communities or annual elections consisting of three councillor wards. This is regretted for two reasons:
  - a. The larger three councillor wards will tend towards being the domain of political parties rather than residents
  - b. The rural communities will be lost amongst the towns and the needs of those communities will be subservient to the towns
4. The towns are Wokingham, Woodley, Earley and Twyford, but the latter calls itself a village for reasons not really understood.
5. My understanding is that LGBC is likely to recommend two wards in the North of the Borough consisting of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning and another for Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst. For this to work, the parish boundaries should be respected when warding.
6. Commenting on the latter first, it is regrettable that the communities of Hurst and Ruscombe will be subsumed into what is a sizeable town erroneously called a village – Twyford. Hurst in particular has a thriving community which is very particular and not necessarily orientated towards Twyford but between Twyford and Wokingham. Ruscombe is more orientated towards Twyford but again has its own parish council and community. Were it possible to have an exception to the three Councillor warding mandate, it would be to retain Twyford as a two-councillor ward and Hurst and Ruscombe as a one Councillor ward – this would go a long way in protecting the unique nature of the two communities.
7. Sonning currently consists of two communities – Sonning and the Warrens. The Warrens is really Woodley and Sonning has some traits in common with the other Riverside parishes.
8. To be helpful, there has I believe been some discussion on the name of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning – why not just call it Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and

Sonning. If that is too much of a mouthful, the parishes are currently called “the Northern Parishes” when referred to within the Parliamentary Associations so why not “the Northern Parishes” if Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning is unacceptable. My recommendation is Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning which will inevitably be shortened to RWCS but is clear what it represents and underwrites that there are four distinct communities.

9. Again, with RWCS my preference would be to have individual seats representing the individual communities but if the warding structure respects parish boundaries it can be made to work. Because there are four unique communities the domination of one and subservience of the others is less likely to occur.

John Halsall

5<sup>th</sup> November 2022

# Wokingham Borough Council

## Personal Details:

**Name:** John Halsall  
**E-mail:** [REDACTED]  
**Postcode:** [REDACTED]  
**Organisation Name:** Wokingham Borough Council/Remenham Parish Council/Wargarve Parish Council

## Comment text:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England Wokingham John Halsall – Member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe 1. I am the member for Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe which is currently a two-councillor ward. I have served in this capacity since 2011. 2. The northern parishes were not represented in the Council's working group's discussion on warding arrangements. 3. Wokingham Borough consists of some villages and a few towns. LGBC in my view was correct to recognise these smaller communities in the last review twenty years ago. It was explained that this was no longer an option in principle though LGBC has some discretion and that the alternatives available were either four-year elections with discretion on communities or annual elections consisting of three councillor wards. This is regretted for two reasons: a. The larger three councillor wards will tend towards being the domain of political parties rather than residents b. The rural communities will be lost amongst the towns and the needs of those communities will be subservient to the towns 4. The towns are Wokingham, Woodley, Earley and Twyford, but the latter calls itself a village for reasons not really understood. 5. My understanding is that LGBC is likely to recommend two wards in the North of the Borough consisting of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning and another for Twyford, Ruscombe and Hurst. For this to work, the parish boundaries should be respected when warding. 6. Commenting on the latter first, it is regrettable that the communities of Hurst and Ruscombe will be subsumed into what is a sizeable town erroneously called a village – Twyford. Hurst in particular has a thriving community which is very particular and not necessarily orientated towards Twyford but between Twyford and Wokingham. Ruscombe is more orientated towards Twyford but again has its own parish council and community. Were it possible to have an exception to the three Councillor warding mandate, it would be to retain Twyford as a two-councillor ward and Hurst and Ruscombe as a one Councillor ward – this would go a long way in protecting the unique nature of the two communities. 7. Sonning currently consists of two communities – Sonning and the Warrens. The Warrens is really Woodley and Sonning has some traits in common with the other Riverside parishes. 8. To be helpful, there has I believe been some discussion on the name of Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning – why not just call it Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning. If that is too much of a mouthful, the parishes are currently called “the Northern Parishes” when referred to within the Parliamentary Associations so why not “the Northern Parishes” if Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning is unacceptable. My recommendation is Remenham, Wargrave, Charvil and Sonning which will inevitably be shortened to RWCS but is clear what it represents and underwrites that there are four distinct communities. 9. Again, with RWCS my preference would be to have individual seats representing the individual communities but if the warding structure respects parish boundaries it can be made to work. Because there are four unique communities the domination of one and subservience of the others is less likely to occur. John Halsall 5th November 2022

## Uploaded Documents:

**[https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1667804553\\_2022+11+05+Representation+to+LGBC.docx](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1667804553_2022+11+05+Representation+to+LGBC.docx)**