



Barkham Parish Council

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Local Government Boundary Commission for England
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To whom it may concern,

RE: Consultation on Wokingham Borough Ward Boundaries

Barkham Parish was recognised in the Domesday Book completed in 1086 by order of King William I. The Manors of Barkham and Arborfield were united by marriage during the 1330s and the relationship endures to the present day. The Churches of St. James, Barkham and St. Bartholomew's, Arborfield are part of a group of churches within the Benefice of Arborfield and Barkham, under a single rector. The parishes share a common War Memorial and conduct joint Remembrance Sunday services each year.

Barkham Parish has been a very stable parish for many years, built along either side of Barkham Road, from the Railway Station to the entrance of Arborfield Garrison at Biggs Lane. This was the route taken on a regular basis by the military horses which were manually driven along the road at night to replenish the supply of horses needed for the troop during the 1914-1918 War. Residents and volunteers manned the side roads and entrances along the route to keep them under control. The Garrison was effectively "behind the wire" at this time, with Military Housing and working structures only, including the stables and Horse Infirmary.

When the R.E.M.E College was established, the housing levels increased and the population was randomly split between Barkham and Arborfield. Post 1945 housing grew very steadily and by the 2011 Census the Barkham figure was absolutely within the limits to justify one Ward Councillors, although the occupation levels in the Garrison housing varied according to the ongoing deployment of the Troops.

By this time, the Military had been speculating for some time that they would be pulling out of Arborfield Garrison and releasing the land to Developers for private housing. The Arborfield Garrison, whilst mainly in Barkham, was so called, due to the entrance to the site being located in Arborfield. The first projected figures were for some 2000 houses to be built on Garrison land, almost all of which were in the Barkham Parish, 12 houses were located in the Arborfield Parish. This new Strategic Development was to include all infrastructure necessary for the new residents and also for the existing population in Barkham Parish.

Also included in this joint new Strategic Development was a second site towards the South, bounded by the A327 with a separate negotiated contract.

At this time Barkham and Arborfield Parish Councils took the decision to work together to produce a joint Neighbourhood Plan, believing it would give both parishes some influence in their future development, although it was accepted that Neighbourhood Plans could not be used against the Policies in place in

Wokingham Borough. They gave residents the opportunity to express their views and wishes about their future. After many months of hard work, the referendum was eventually held in February 2020 and was overwhelmingly approved.

Barkham Parish Councillors worked alongside the developers and took the view that with 2000 houses to be built in Barkham Parish, then almost all of the Parish could be enhanced in some way. The improvements were to have been funded by S106 agreements, which would provide mitigation for the disruption of the ongoing development, traffic improvements needed for the dramatic increase in vehicle use in and around the site and new facilities being provided. These included a primary and secondary school, a District Centre with a supermarket and other shops, a community centre with library, a parish council office and other meeting rooms and a Nursery. Our existing residents were promised a health centre and a swimming pool. With the exception of the two schools, none of these have yet materialised.

We are blessed with a local area of ancient woodland which is found between Bearwood Road in Barkham and Sindlesham Road in Arborfield. The Coombes is a much-valued area of woodland with many footpaths and Bridleways for both dog walkers and riders. In addition, there are areas within the new SDLs which allow for walking in the countryside.

However, a major intervention to provide mitigation for both areas of the SDL towards the A327 was the provision of a bypass running from the Eversley Road around the outskirts of Arborfield Village and connecting again on the A327 North of the village, closer to Shinfield. This has come with much more important consequences for Barkham.

The Bypass comes with a package of Village Improvements for Arborfield. It appears that the consultation for these was held in September 2020 and was restricted to Arborfield residents only. Barkham Parish found out purely by chance that one of the improvements is designed to restrict traffic through the village by closing the only road directly accessing the school attended by many Barkham children. The Closure sadly means that parents taking their children to the school of their choice now have to make four trips a day through the village on the Eversley Road.

We consider it quite appropriate that Barkham and Arborfield should be part of a larger ward with three members, but would like to make the point that Barkham Parish has accepted almost double the housing numbers during the last two terms of voting, whilst Arborfield have accepted minimal development. Despite this, there are many residents who feel that Wokingham Borough Council are almost actively trying to erase Barkham and would welcome the opportunity to see Barkham on the local signposts from Shute End and the level crossing, following the Military Horse Trail along Barkham Road.

We also welcome keeping Arborfield Green in the same ward, as the new District Centre and Community Centre will become the new focal point of Barkham.

This road no longer leads to Arborfield but to the Ward of Barkham with Arborfield.

Yours sincerely,



Ellen Tims
Clerk to Barkham Parish Council

Wokingham Borough Council

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Comment text:

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