



10 September 2020

BY EMAIL

Jolyon Jackson CBE
Chief Executive
Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Dear Mr Jackson

Electoral Review of Bracknell Forest: response to LGBCE draft recommendations

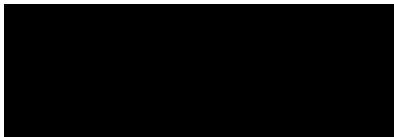
Please find attached Bracknell Forest Council's response to the Commission's draft recommendations for a new warding pattern for Bracknell Forest. The document sets out a response to each of the Commission's proposed wards.

The Council agreed the proposal at the Full Council meeting yesterday evening (9 September 2020). I will share the formal minutes of the meeting with you when they are available. Please accept our thanks for agreeing to accept our submission after the close of consultation which allowed us to agree the Council's response at a scheduled Council meeting. I can confirm that there were no changes made to the draft document shared with you last week.

The Council hopes that the Commission recognises the value in the changes proposed which ensure electoral equality has been delivered whilst balancing this with the requirement to keep existing community identities intact and deliver effective and convenient local government.

The Council commends its response to you.

Yours sincerely



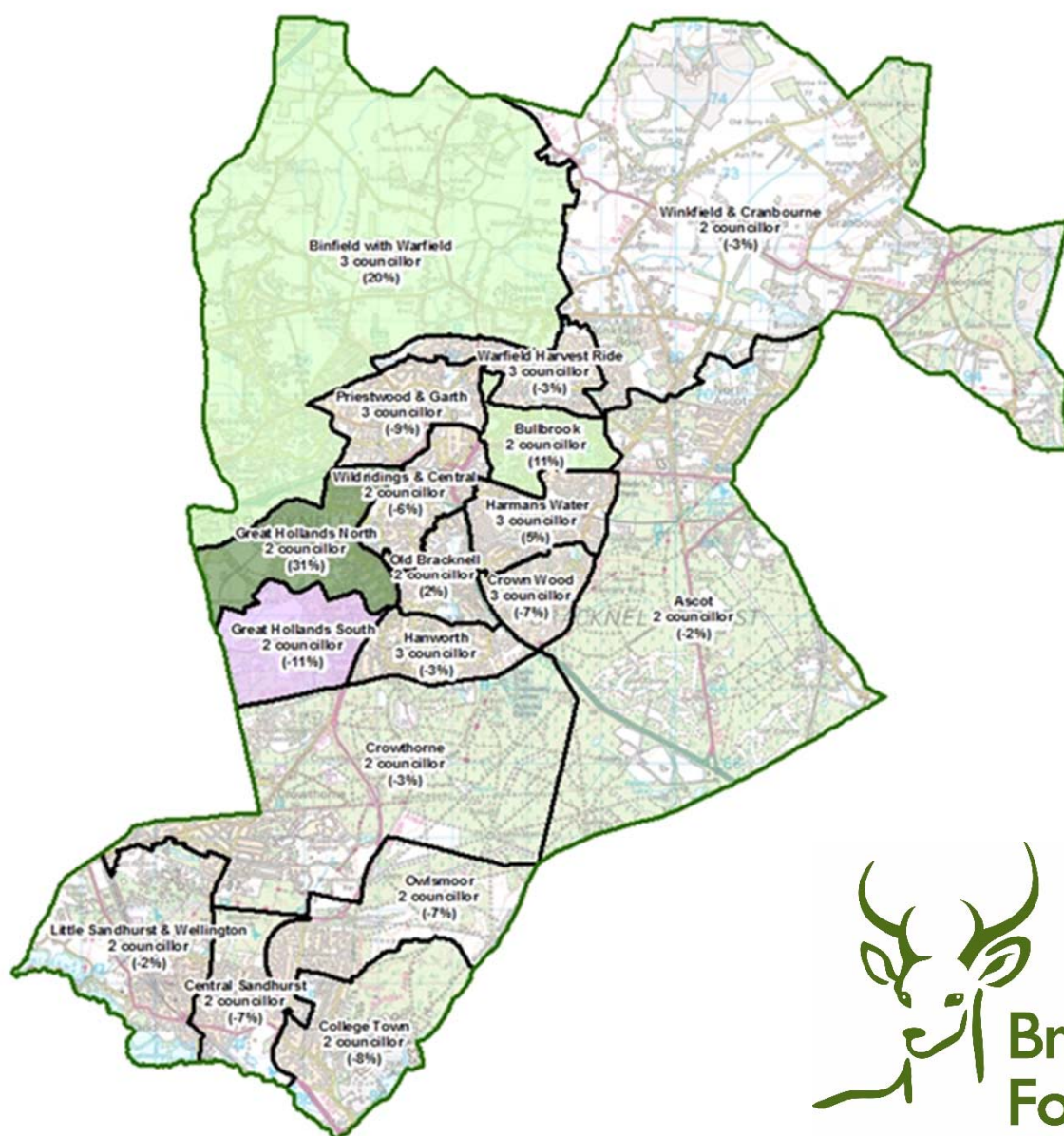
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BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL ELECTORAL REVIEW

Response to the Local Government Boundary
Commission's Draft Recommendations – September
2020



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Summary

Introduction

This is Bracknell Forest Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) draft warding recommendations published on 30 June 2020.

This phase of the consultation ends on 7 September however, to accommodate the timing of Bracknell Forest Council's next full council meeting the LGBCE has kindly agreed to accept the authority's submission after this meeting should it be agreed by Council on 9 September 2020.

Following the close of this consultation the LGBCE can decide to extend or open a further round of consultation should they feel it is necessary. Pending no further stages of consultation, the LGBCE's current timetable states that the final recommendations for Bracknell Forest will be published on 1 December 2020.

The Council is grateful for the meeting held on the 31 July between the LGBCE lead Commissioner and review manager and the Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader (also Chair of the Boundary Working Group) which has helped inform this response.

Developing a response to the draft recommendations

The Council's Boundary Review Working Group was reconvened to develop a response to the LGBCE's draft recommendations. The process undertaken was to examine each area and ward proposed by the LGBCE to understand how the commission had reached their proposals with the intention of recommending changes where it was felt appropriate.

At all stages of this process the Working Group was mindful of the advice given at the meeting of the 31 July that any suggestion contrary to the proposed warding pattern had to take account of the three guiding principles used by the commission when forming their draft recommendations. These were:

- To reflect community interests and local identities
- To promote effective and convenient local government
- To deliver equality of representation

Following the formation of the Working Group's initial response, two cross-party, all member workshops were held inviting all Bracknell Forest Borough councillors to comment on both the LGBCE's draft recommendations and the Working Group's proposed response.

Responses from these workshops and subsequent emailed suggestions were considered at the final Working Group meeting held on 19 August 2020 and the final draft response agreed.

Initial response to the draft recommendations

While the draft recommendations differ significantly to the warding pattern submitted by The Council at the Stage 2 consultation, the Working Group and members recognise the strengths of the LGBCE proposals and understand the rationale taken by the LGBCE's review officers in drafting their proposals.

The Council is proposing minimal changes to the vast majority of the wards detailed in the draft recommendations and asks that only some minor amendments are made to better reflect community identity and interests in some areas.

Additionally, a consensus view amongst the constituent elected members and political parties within Bracknell Forest is that single-member wards invite the possibility of poor electoral representation and or governance in these areas increasing the risk that residents are not properly or fairly represented. For example, should the elected councillor in that ward become unwell, etc.

and need to step back from their duties on a temporary basis, there is little inherent resilience to provide cover for casework or other ward-based queries.

Considering this point the Council proposes that the 'Central Bracknell' ward in the draft recommendations is reconfigured as a two-member ward. A proposal is included in this submission that has been evaluated against and meets the three criteria ensuring that individual community identities are retained while achieving good electoral equality and convenient and effective local government.

Ward based response and change requests

The below sets out, area by area, a response to each of the LGBCE's proposed wards.

Crowthorne and Sandhurst: Crowthorne, Sandhurst, Owlsmoor & College Town

Ward	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Crowthorne	3	-10%	3*	-10%*
Sandhurst	3	9%	3*	9%*
Owlsmoor & College Town	3	9%	3*	9%*

*No Change

No changes are proposed to the commission's draft recommendations and the Council welcomes the addition of another councillor to Crowthorne to ensure better community representation in that area.

The expansion of the 'Sandhurst' ward into 'Owlsmoor & College Town' (around Avocet Crescent) is not considered as an ideal solution by the Council as the communities held within this area very much look towards Owlsmoor and College Town for their amenities and local identity. Bracknell Forest would welcome a further examination of that area to see if it would be possible to reincorporate these residents into 'Owlsmoor & College Town' but, recognise the difficulties around meeting electoral equality.

The area of Derby Field in the north west of the 'Sandhurst' ward has been included in the local plan so it will receive future planning permission for properties that will look towards Crowthorne Parish for their amenities and community identity. Because there is no clear indication as to when an application will be submitted or building commence it is intended that Bracknell Forest will undertake a Community Governance Review of this area to incorporate these residents in Crowthorne Parish and would request the LGBCE amends the borough boundary to match these changes once they have been implemented. It is appreciated that this will be outside of this review process, so no changes are proposed to the commission's recommendations for Crowthorne

Central Bracknell: Hanworth, Easthampstead & Wildridings and Central Bracknell

Ward	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Hanworth	3	-5%	3*	-5%*
Easthampstead & Wildridings	3	-6%	3*	-6%*
Central Bracknell/ Town Centre & The Parks	1	-3%	2	8%

*No Change

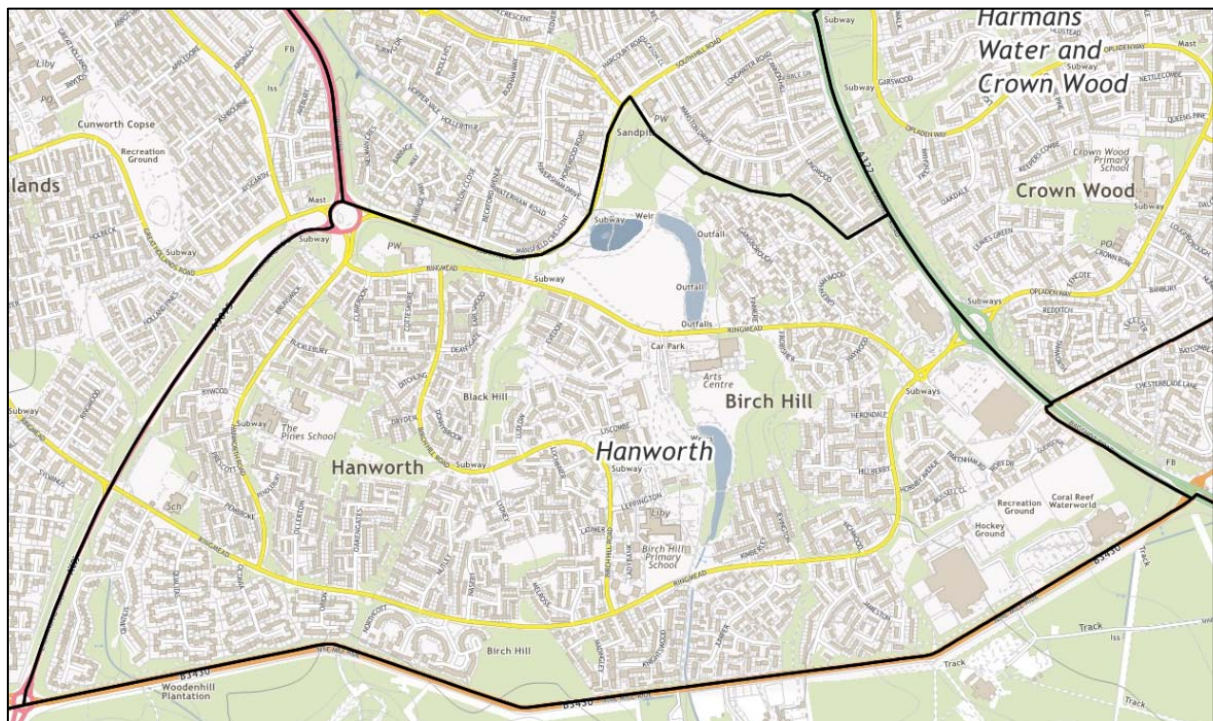
A change is proposed to the 'Hanworth' and 'Easthampstead & Wildridings' wards moving the boundary between 'Hanworth' ward and 'Easthampstead & Wildridings' along South Hill Road to incorporate the area of North Lake and the park into the 'Hanworth' ward.

Evidence submitted from borough and town councillors representing the Hanworth and Birch Hill areas demonstrate that there is a strong view amongst residents that this area along with The South Hill Park Arts Centre are a single combined entity referred to locally as South Hill Park with issues around anti-social behaviour, annual community events etc. often directed to the Hanworth councillors. Therefore, to better meet the criteria for effective and efficient local governance it would be beneficial to incorporate the North Lake itself and the park area (North Field) within the same ward. The evidence presented recognises the commission's comments in paragraph 67 of the draft response that retains the communities of Manston Drive, Longwater Road, Canon Hill and Lingwood in the 'Easthampstead & Wildridings' ward and seeks only to include the North Lake and park area within Hanworth.

Community interest and local identity is not affected as the area of North Lake and the park is already identified as South Hill Park.

No electors currently reside in the area in question and there will be no changes to the elector totals in either ward as a result of this amendment.

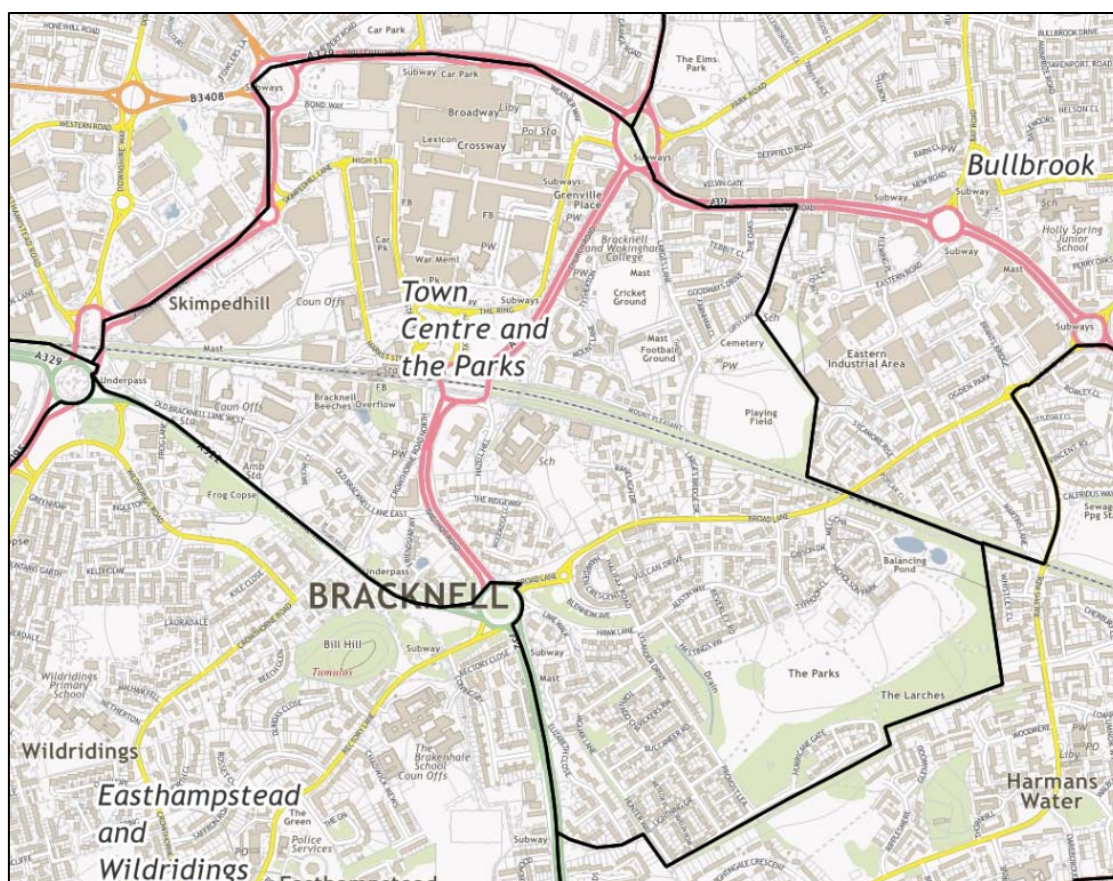
Map of proposed Hanworth ward:



As referenced earlier in this submission there is a strong preference for multi-member wards and no single-member wards. The Council recognises the commission's approach to creating the single-member 'Central Bracknell' ward and respects the community-based argument for its creation.

Taking account of both of these interests the Council proposes an adjustment to the 'Central Bracknell' ward and 'Bullbrook & The Parks' ward to create two, two-member wards in place of the one single-member ward and one three-member ward as currently proposed in the draft recommendations.

These are proposed to be named 'Bullbrook' and 'Town Centre & The Parks'



In terms of maintaining community links and identities, currently there is no shared identity between The Parks and Bullbrook other than those shared universally with other wards. i.e. residents in both areas look towards the Town Centre for amenities, etc. Amending the pattern of wards in this way retains each distinct community in its entirety. Pairing the Parks with the Town Centre, i.e. another distinct community, follows the same methodology adopted by the commission in the draft recommendations when creating 'Bullbrook & The Parks'. The Council's proposed solution has the added benefit of addressing our concerns around effective and convenient local government for the residents in the 'Central Bracknell' ward.

Of all areas considered by the Council when crafting the response to the LGBCE's draft recommendations it is felt most strongly that changes need to be made here above anywhere else in the proposed scheme.

West Bracknell: Great Hollands, Binfield South & Jennett's Hill

Ward	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Great Hollands	3	0%	3*	0%*
Binfield South & Jennett's Hill	3	-3%	3*	1%

*No Change

No changes are proposed in this area other than a small amendment to move The Roebuck estate and some surrounding houses into 'Binfield North & Warfield East' as these residents most identify with Binfield Village itself, accessing the shops, library and other amenities on Terrace Road South.

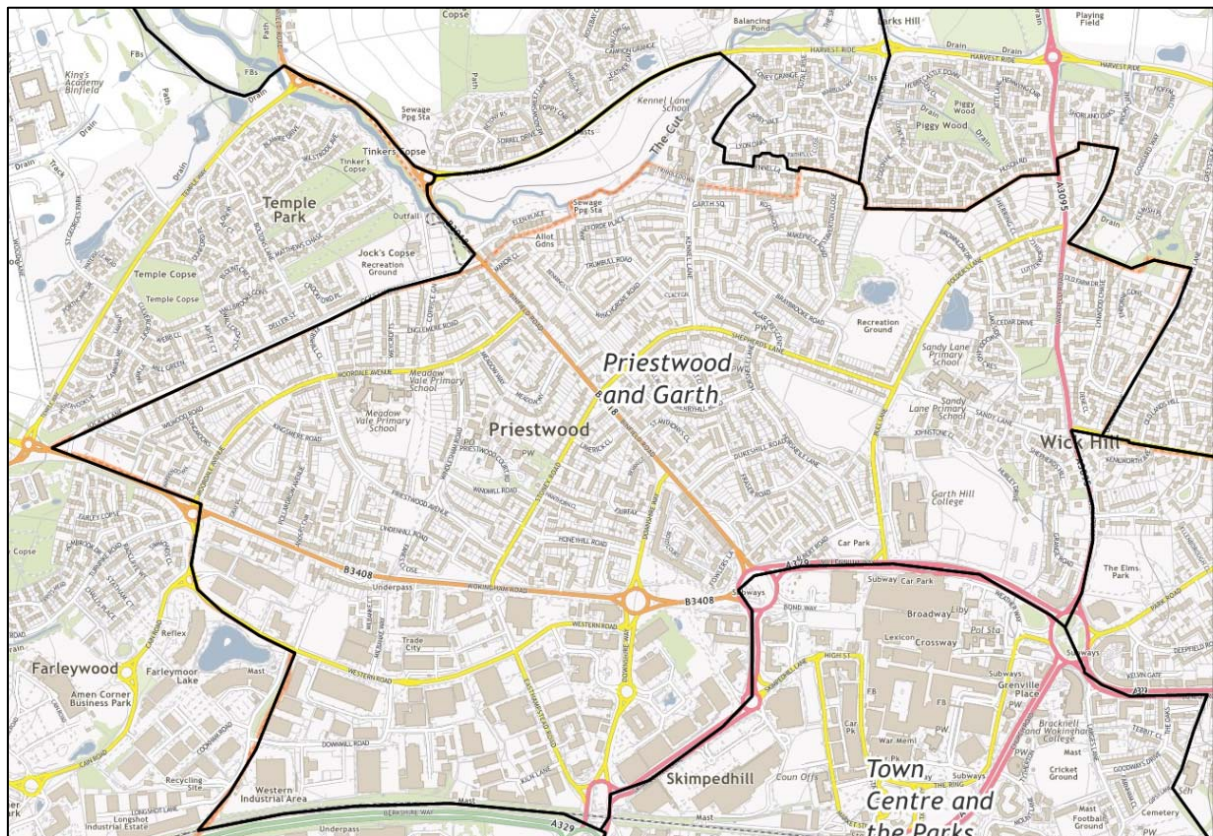
proposed ward. There is no road within the boundaries of the proposed ward that link the two areas.

In looking to address this the Council recognises that, for the purposes of electoral equality, it is not possible to wholly remove Quelm Park from 'Priestwood & Garth' and place it into either 'Binfield North & Warfield West' or 'Warfield East'. However, by splitting the area into two the west part of Quelm Park can be added to 'Binfield North & Warfield West' with the eastern part of the estate added to 'Warfield East.'

To ensure electoral equality some additional amendments would need to be affected in 'Warfield East' and 'Binfield North & Warfield West.'

- 1) A slight adjustment of the boundary between the 'Binfield North & Warfield West' and 'Warfield East'. The community identity is retained.
- 2) The area around Lynwood Chase, currently in the proposed 'Warfield East' ward should be added to the 'Priestwood & Garth' Community with identity largely retained as there is no existing relationship with Warfield Parish that would be detrimentally affected by the proposed change. A small area north should also be included in this area to take account of the current parliamentary boundary however, it would be preferred if these electors could be incorporated into Warfield at a later date through the proper processes.
- 3) A small area in the north east of the 'Priestwood & Garth' ward around Priory Lane should be included in this ward to take account of the existing town council and parliamentary boundaries. In a future Community Governance Review this area could either be retained in 'Priestwood & Garth' or moved into Warfield Parish and Warfield East without detrimentally impacting electoral equality in either area.
- 4) The area around Wick Hill and Elm Park are moved into Bullbrook. These residents already strongly identify with the Town Centre and Bullbrook area as this is their current borough and town council ward.

Map of proposed Priestwood & Garth ward:



East Bracknell: Winkfield North and Winkfield South

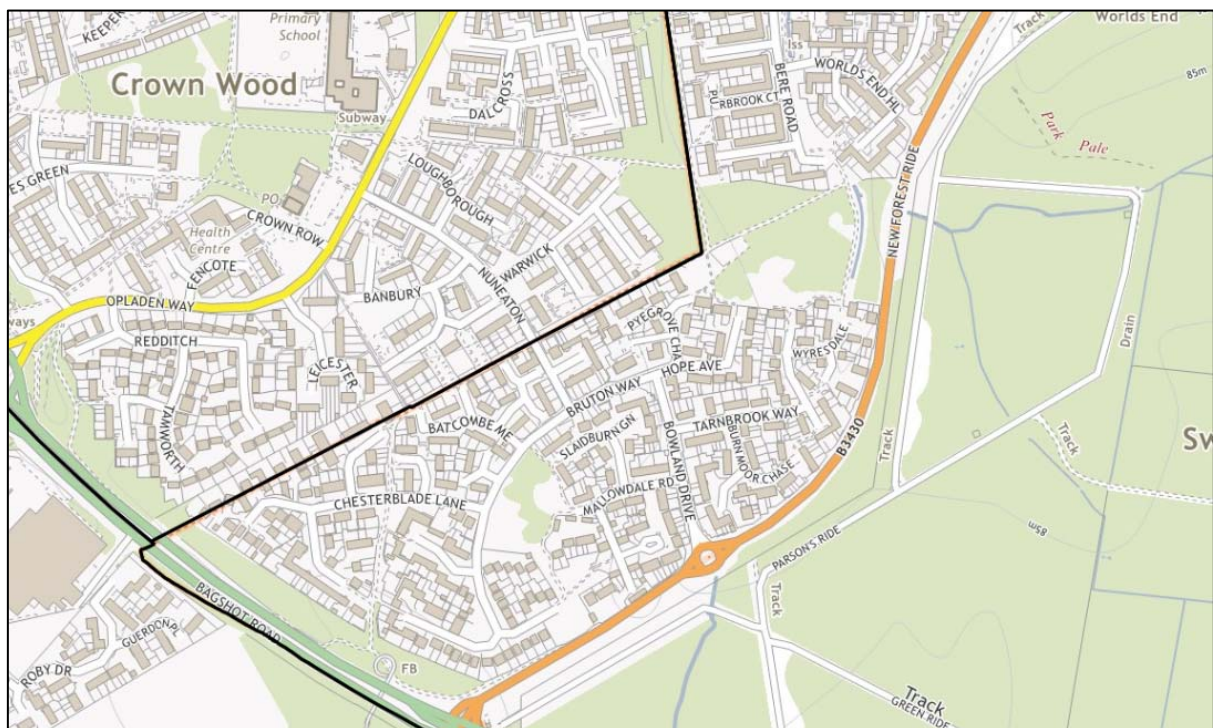
Ward	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Winkfield North	3	-2%	3*	-2%*
Winkfield South	2	6%	2*	6%*

*No Change

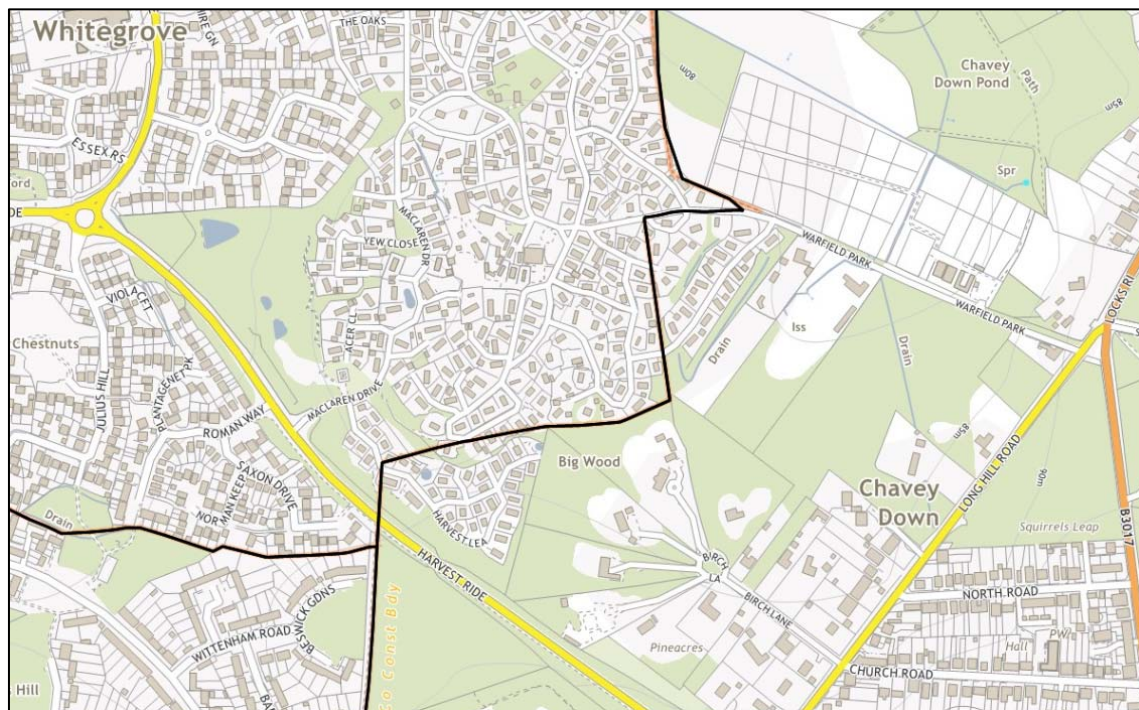
The Council proposes no changes to the boundaries in this area and accepts the draft recommendations as proposed.

The parish/ ward boundary line is noticeably 'defaced' i.e. no longer representative of contemporary property developments in the south of the area along the boundary between the 'Winkfield South' and 'Harmans Water & Crown Wood' wards where it can be seen to cross through the middle of several residential properties. Following the conclusion of this review the Council will seek to undertake a Community Governance Review in this area to rectify the issue and will ask the commission to adjust the ward boundary as appropriate. The same process will also be undertaken around the Warfield Park area to bring the entirety of that development into the 'Warfield East' borough ward.

Southern boundary between Crown Wood and Forest Park:



Boundary between Winkfield North and Warfield East encompassing Warfield Park:



The Council proposes that the 'Winkfield South' ward be renamed 'Swinley Forest.' This name has greater local meaning to the communities in this area as there is little local connection to the locality of Winkfield itself. Therefore, it is also suggested that 'Winkfield North' be renamed as 'Winkfield.'

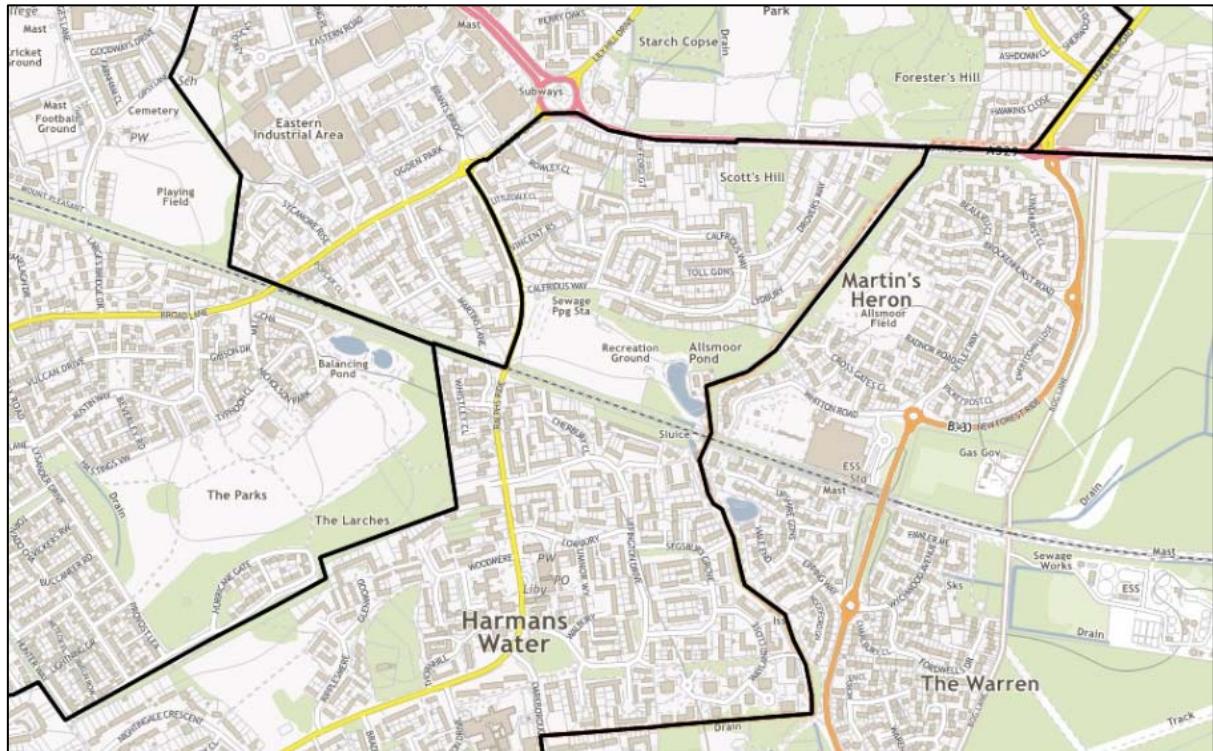
Central East Bracknell: Bullbrook & The Parks, Harmans Water & Crown Wood

Ward	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Bullbrook & The Parks/ Bullbrook	3	2%	2	1%
Harmans Water & Crown Wood	3	-9%	3*	-9%*

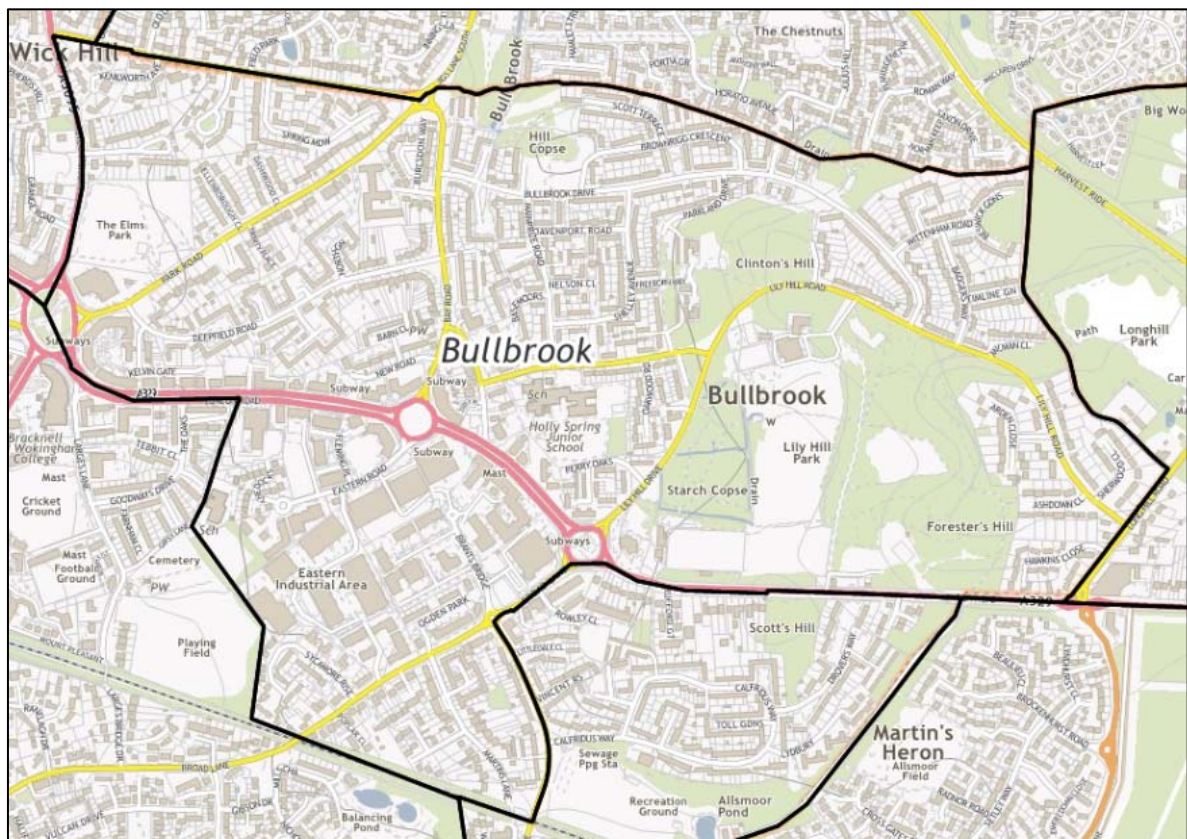
*No Change

The requested changes to 'Bullbrook & The Parks' have been set out elsewhere in this submission. One final requested adjustment is for the inclusion of 'Scott's Hill' into 'Harmans Water & Crown Wood' as this community has closer links with Harmans Water than Bullbrook ensuring accurate community representation

Area of proposed change 'Scott's Hill'



Map of proposed Bullbrook ward



The Council would have preferred a solution that had been able to keep Harmans Water, Crown Wood and Forest Park together as a ward or wards as it is felt that there is a shared community identity and interest between these distinct communities. However, it is recognised that there is significant difficulty in doing this based on the principle of electoral equality and accepts the commission's proposal within the context of the wider draft recommendations as they are proposed.

Summary

The Council has taken account of the response to the Council's first submission and hopes that the commission recognises the value in the changes proposed. These have been put forward as it is collectively felt by the Council that these changes meet the three criteria guiding this process.

Electoral integrity is retained in all of the proposed wards with no area exceeding the greatest level of imbalance in the commission's draft recommendations.

Community identity has been put at the forefront of the Council's considerations as much as has been possible within the wider implications of the draft recommendations and considered on balance within the wider process.

Effective and convenient local government has been considered carefully in all areas proposed and where the Council has concerns, these have been raised in the hope that they will be addressed where possible.

Ward summary

	LGBCE Draft Recommendations		BFC Proposals	
Ward	Cllrs	Variance	Cllrs	Variance
Binfield South & Jennett's Hill	3	-3%	3*	1%
Binfield North & Warfield West	2	-3%	2*	10%
Bullbrook	3	2%	2	1%
Crowthorne	3	-10%	3*	-10%*
Easthampstead & Wildridings	3	-6%	3*	-6%*
Great Hollands	3	0%	3*	0%*
Hanworth	3	-5%	3*	-5%*
Harmans Water & Crown Wood	3	-9%	3*	--9%*
Owlsmoor & College Town	3	9%	3*	9%*
Priestwood & Garth	3	-3%	3*	-10%
Sandhurst	3	9%	3*	9%*
Central Bracknell/ Town Centre & The Parks	1	-3%	2	8%
Warfield East	3	-0%	3*	5%
Winkfield North	3	-2%	3*	-2%*
Winkfield South	2	6%	2*	6%*

*No Change

A detailed and interactive version of the Council's proposals can be seen at:

https://rds.statmap.co.uk/map/map.html?login=bracknellforest_viewer&scenario=FINAL_SUBMISSION&sid=ecef70748c1b71c461eebbf040b2271b