

PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW OF GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

9 FEBRUARY 2022

THE ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP'S PROPOSED RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S (LGBCE) DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The LGBCE's Draft Recommendations in respect of the Periodic Electoral Review of Guildford Borough Council reflected the Council's own Warding Patterns Submission in respect of all the parished areas of the Borough.
- 1.2 The areas where the Draft Recommendations differed from the Council's submission, to varying degrees, were all located in the unparished town area as follows:
- Burpham ward
 - Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward
 - Friary ward
 - St Nicolas ward
 - Onslow ward
 - Westborough ward

2. Consideration of the differences between the Draft Recommendations and the Council's Submission

- 2.1 In considering each of the above areas where the Draft Recommendations differed from the Council's Submission, the Council is mindful that any further submission in response would still need to provide evidence in support and take into account the three statutory criteria, namely:
- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
 - Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
 - Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

Burpham Ward

- 2.2 The Council notes that the LGBCE has agreed with our proposed revised ward boundary for Burpham, with the only minor difference between their Draft Recommendation and our submission being in respect of the south-western boundary with their proposed Friary ward (adjacent to Abbotswood). We had proposed that it should extend slightly further south-west and use a footpath as the ward boundary, but the LGBCE has used a watercourse as the ward boundary (see plan).

- 2.3 As the difference is of such a minor nature, **the Council raises no objection to the Draft Recommendation in respect of Burpham ward.**

Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward

- 2.4 The Council notes that the LGBCE is proposing to adopt the Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward proposed by the Council as part of their Draft Recommendations, subject to boundary changes in the north of the ward, where they propose the boundary should follow London Road, rather than the edge of Stoke Park which they consider to be a clearer, more identifiable boundary (see plan).
- 2.5 The Council accepts that the LGBCE's proposal, the effect of which is to locate Spectrum and all of the green space of Stoke Park in the Friary ward rather than Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward, which already comprises a significant area of green space, had some merit.

2.6 Accordingly, **the Council raises no objection to the Draft Recommendation in respect of the proposed boundaries of the Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward.**

- 2.7 However, the Council, noting that the LGBCE has invited comments on their draft recommendations, not only in respect of the location of the ward boundaries, but also the names of their proposed wards, feels that "*Christchurch & Holy Trinity*" is a rather long name for the new ward.
- 2.8 The Council considered a suggestion for a new name for the ward, which was significantly shorter and referred specifically to a prominent and historic landmark located within the new ward, namely "Castle".
- 2.9 An alternative suggestion considered was "*Holy Trinity*" to reflect the fact that the existing Holy Trinity ward is substantially larger than the existing Christchurch ward, and the Holy Trinity name should prevail given that substantial areas of the existing Christchurch ward would be subsumed into neighbouring Merrow, Burpham and Friary wards.

2.10 Having considered the suggestions, **the Council would like the LGBCE to consider "Castle ward" as the name of the new Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward.**

Friary and St Nicolas wards

- 2.11 The Council notes that the Council's Submission had proposed a two-councillor Friary ward, bounded by the River Wey to the west, North Street and High Street to the south, the railway line and the edge of Stoke Park to the east, and following the A3 to the north. Our Submission had also proposed a two-councillor 'St Nicolas & Riverside' ward that would combine the St Nicolas area with the area along Walnut Tree Close, where considerable residential development in the town was taking place.
- 2.12 However, the LGBCE considers that the area along Walnut Tree Close (the 'Riverside' area of our proposal) would fit more appropriately within Friary ward, with the A31 and Bridge Street representing a strong and identifiable boundary. Consequently, they have recommended a three-councillor Friary ward and a single-councillor St Nicolas ward on the basis that this proposal best reflects the statutory criteria (see plan).

- 2.13 The Council notes that some councillors were opposed to the principle of single-member wards in the town area, and the Council's Submission had included a reference to single member town wards as being inappropriate. The LGBCE have referred to this comment in their report but noted that no further justification for this point of view had been provided. The LGBCE had stated that:

"...the allocation of councillors per ward is firmly based upon how it reflects our statutory criteria, and we would recommend a single-councillor ward within the town if we received evidence that it would provide for good electoral equality, reflect communities and aid effective and convenient local government. We therefore welcome comments regarding this decision during the current consultation".

- 2.14 In seeking to address the concern over the principle of single-member wards in the town, the Council acknowledges that issues affecting town wards differed from those affecting rural wards, for example in relation to planning, housing, highways and parking matters. It is felt that such a varied workload was more appropriately dealt with by councillors in a multi-member ward, rather than by one councillor in a single-member ward.
- 2.15 The Council has looked at possible alternative boundary proposals for the Friary and St Nicolas areas that would result in avoiding a single-member ward in the town. It is recognised that the area of the St. Nicolas ward proposed by the LGBCE is constrained by its boundary with the parish of Shalford to the south and south-west, by the river to the east which forms the boundary with the new Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward, and by the A31 to the north which forms the boundary with the proposed Onslow ward.
- 2.16 This means that it would not be practicable to extend St. Nicolas into the existing parished area to the south, neither would it be practicable to extend into Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward because the river is demonstrably a far clearer and more identifiable boundary than a residential road that would inevitably have to form a new ward boundary, and there would be little or no community identity. The Council also acknowledges that extending St Nicolas into the new Onslow ward area north of the A31 would again fail on the community identity criterion and would adversely affect the electoral equality of the new Onslow ward.
- 2.17 The Council's Electoral Review Working Group considered whether the Council should try to make a better case for the 'St. Nicolas & Riverside' ward proposal within its Warding Patterns Submission. It was noted that vehicular travel from the new Friary ward into the 'Riverside' area around Walnut Tree Close was only accessible via roads outside of the ward – i.e., via the gyratory system necessitating travel into the Christchurch & Holy Trinity ward and the St. Nicolas ward. The only pedestrian/cycle access across the river between the two areas was via the new Walnut Bridge.

- 2.18 However, on balance, the Council feels that the LGBCE's Draft Recommendations in respect of the Friary and St Nicolas wards better reflects the statutory criteria than the Council's proposals in its Warding Patterns Submission. Accordingly, the Council **raises no objection to the Draft Recommendations in respect of the proposed Friary and St Nicolas wards.**

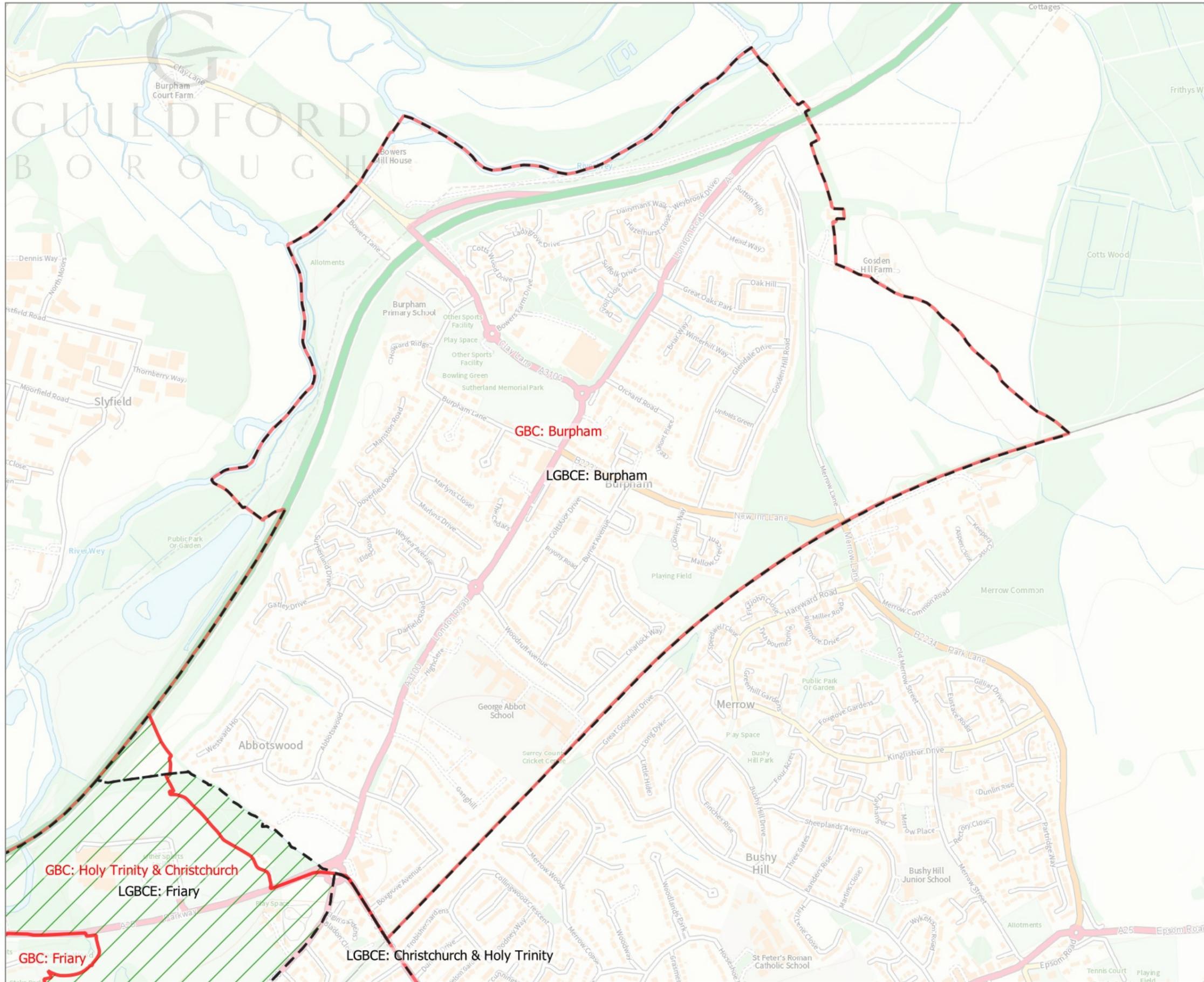
Onslow and Westborough wards

- 2.19 The Council notes that the LGBCE have based their draft recommendations for Onslow and Westborough wards on the Council's proposals in our Submission, subject to two modifications:
- (a) Whereas our proposed boundary between Onslow and Westborough comprised the A3, the LGBCE propose to use the A3 up to the railway line and then to follow the railway line. The rationale behind this is, according to the LGBCE, that it reflects road access routes from the A3 into Ash Grove, resulting in Ash Grove, the industrial estate, and the business park being incorporated into their proposed Westborough ward.
 - (b) The LGBCE have also included Beechcroft Drive within Onslow ward to again reflect road access routes from the A3
- 2.20 These modifications can be seen on the plan.
- 2.21 In relation to modification (a) above, the Council does not agree with the LGBCE as there is, in fact, no direct road access route from the A3 into Ash Grove (vehicular access to Ash Grove is via Cathedral Hill). The Council feels that the A3, which cuts diagonally through Guildford and forms a significant and identifiable boundary between a number of proposed town wards, should continue to form the boundary between the new Onslow and Westborough wards to the north. The effect of this would mean that Ash Grove, the industrial estate, and the business park would remain in Onslow ward.
- 2.22 The Council considers that modification (b) has some merit and would keep Beechcroft Drive in the Onslow ward.

2.23 In response to the Draft Recommendations in respect of the proposed Onslow and Westborough wards, the Council:

- (1) objects to modification (a) above, for the reasons stated, and recommends that the LGBCE adopts the proposed ward boundary set out in the Council's Warding Patterns Submission; and**
- (2) raises no objection to modification (b) above.**

Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of Burpham Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

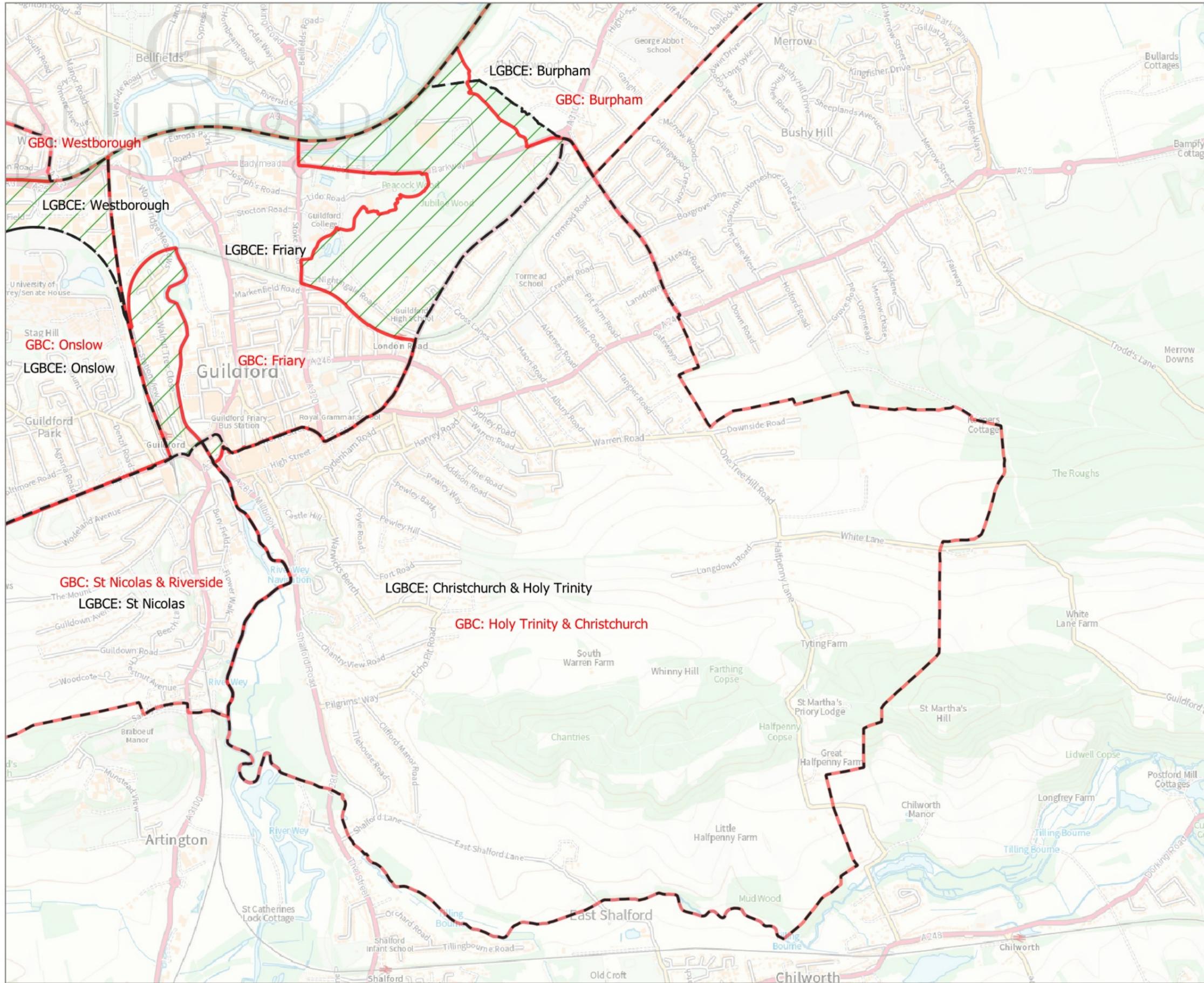
Publication Date: 2021-12-06

Scale at A3:
Diagrammatic

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Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of Holy Trinity & Christchurch Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

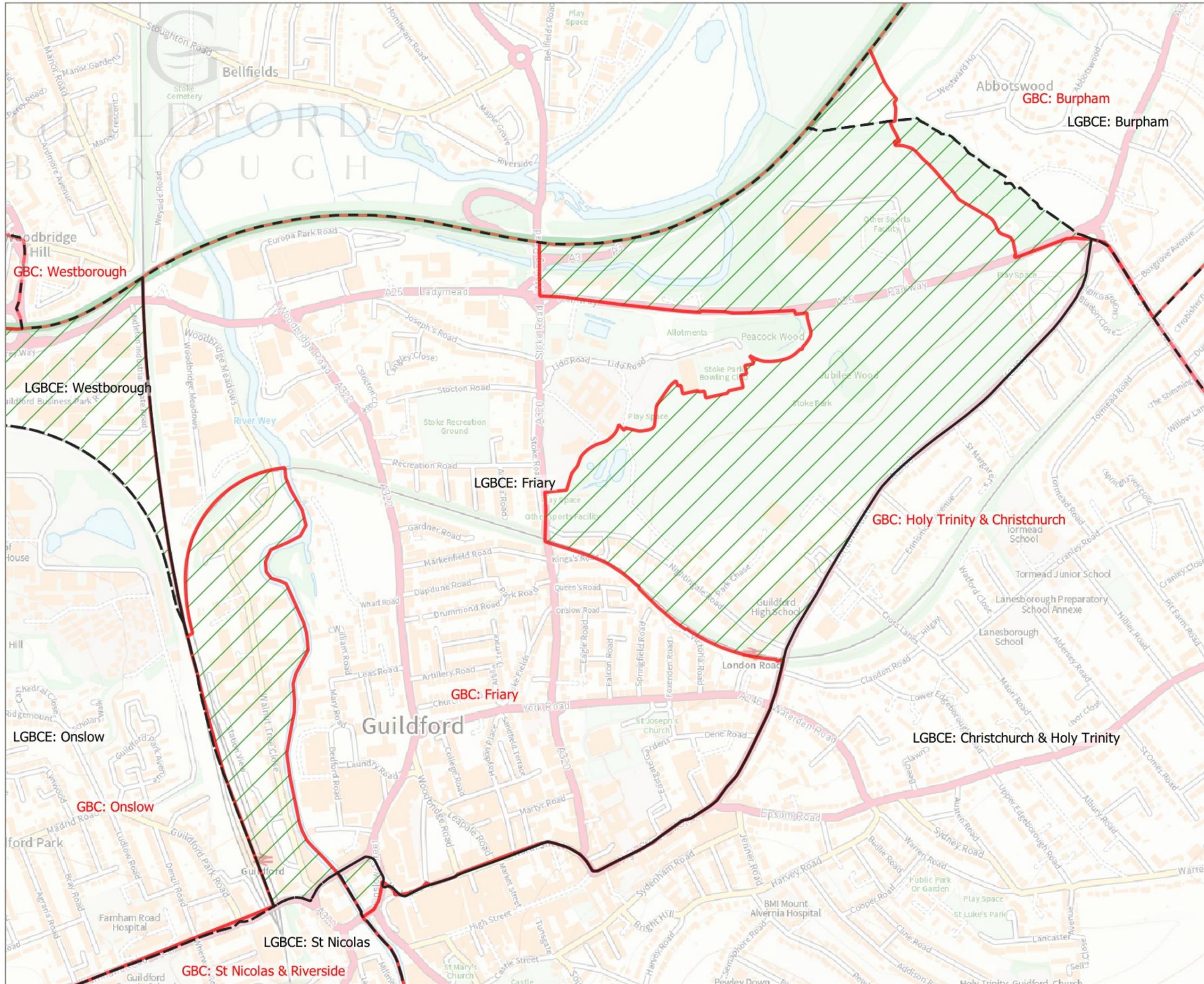
Publication Date: 2021-12-06

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Diagrammatic

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Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of Friary Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

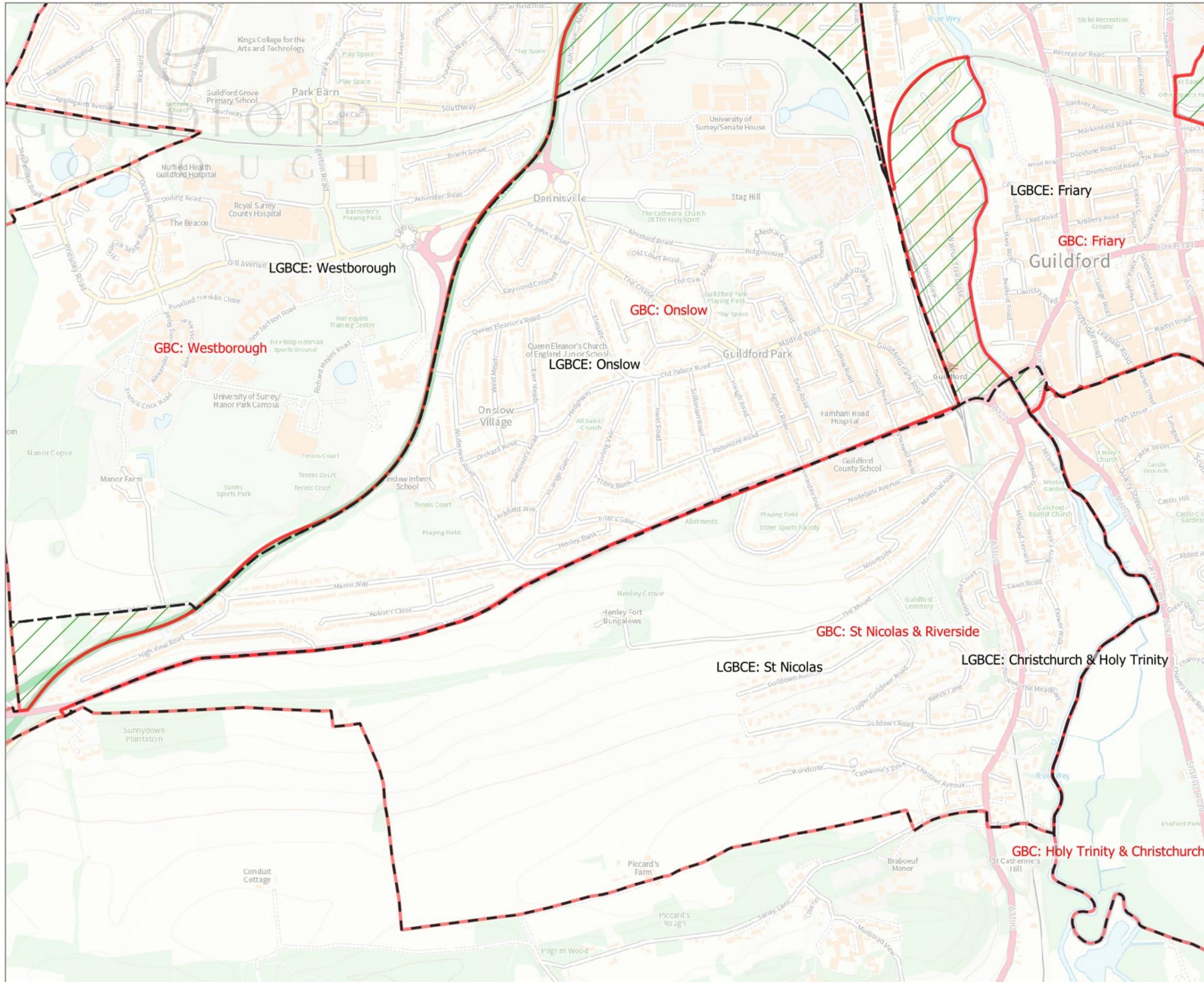
Publication Date: 2021-12-06

Scale at A3:
Diagrammatic

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Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of St Nicolas & Riverside Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

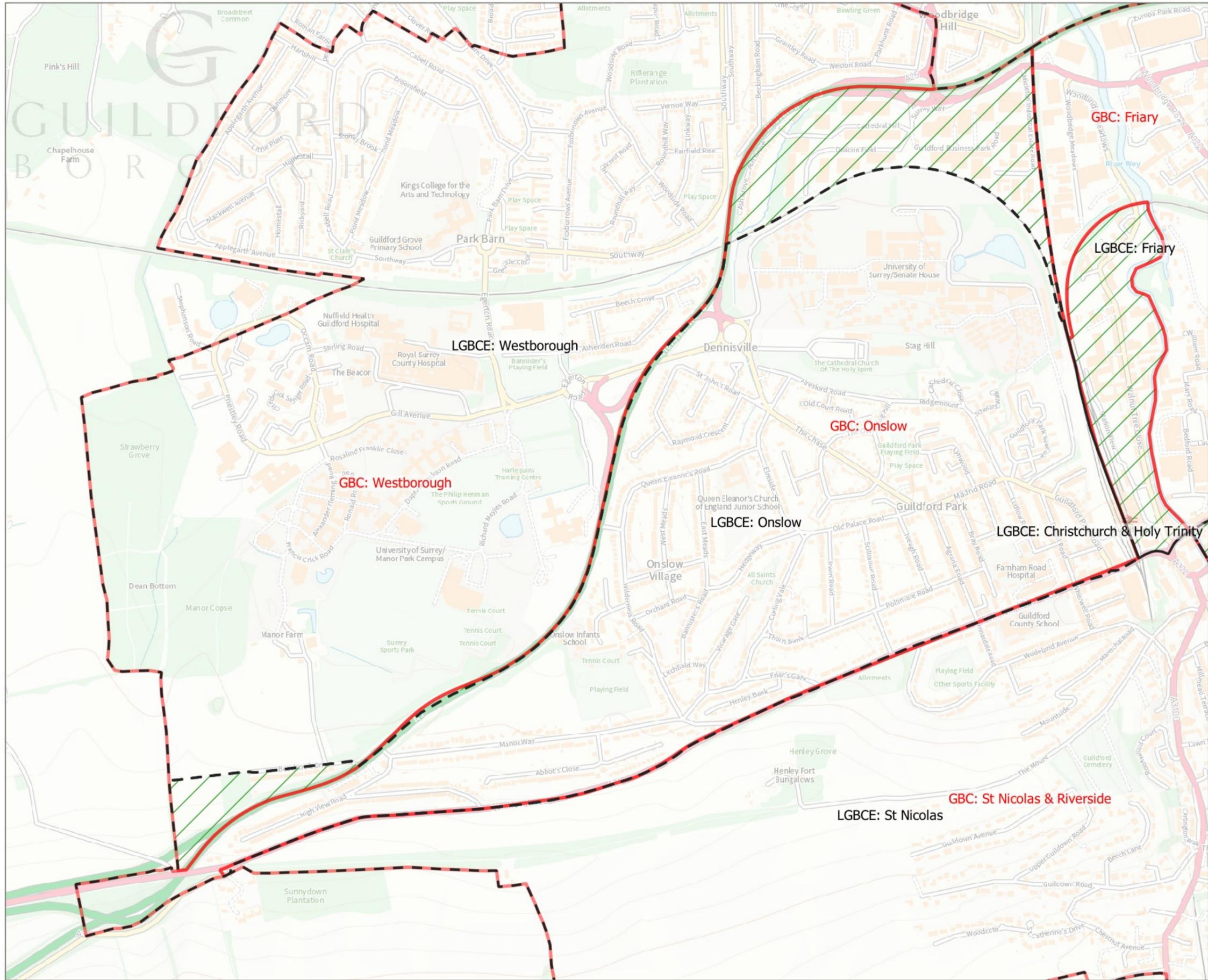
Publication Date: 2021-12-06

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Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of Onslow Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

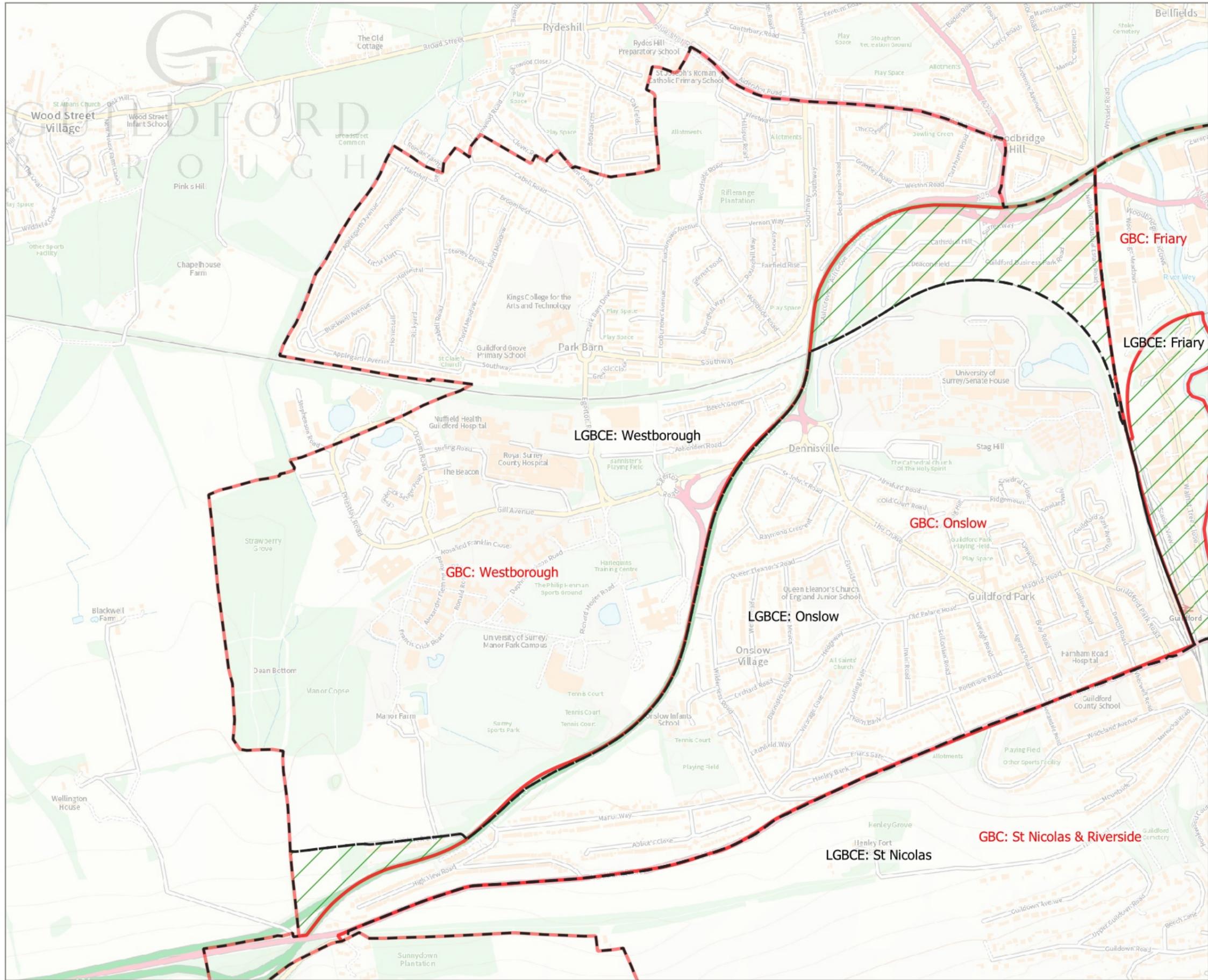
Publication Date: 2021-12-06

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Boundary Review 2021: Comparison of Proposed Warding Pattern of Westborough Ward



Legend

- GBC Proposed Ward
- LGBCE Proposed Ward
- Area of difference between proposals

Publication Date: 2021-12-06



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