



Submission by Bramley Parish Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of Waverley

Bramley Parish Council (BPC) thanks the Boundary Commission for their request for input to their review of the ward boundaries for Waverley. This is BPC's submission to that consultation.

Comment on Current State

BPC understands why Bramley, Busbridge and Hascombe (BBH) were assembled into a single ward: the parishes have common boundaries, and the combined electorate size, which is currently in excess of that expected for a two-member ward, would nearly exactly meet the required level of electorate consistency after the reduction number of seats in 2023.

However, BPC suggests there are several reasons why BBH is an artificial construct that only makes sense within that single constraint of electorate consistency:

- **Transport.** There are no public transport links between Bramley and the other two parishes. The direct road between Bramley and Hascombe is a narrow single-track road, with more comfortable driving conditions requiring a longer, circuitous route.
- **Distance.** While the parishes are adjacent, the centre of Hascombe is some miles from Bramley and the rural Busbridge parish, which lacks a defined centre, is spread over a large area and is closer to the centres of Godalming and Milford than to Bramley. Over 95% of Bramley's residents are in the east of the parish away from Busbridge and Hascombe while both those parishes have populations set back from their eastern boundaries which abut Bramley's.
- **Affinity.** Hascombe is roughly equidistant from the centres at Godalming, Milford and Cranleigh and has closest affinity with Dunsfold, while Busbridge connects north to Godalming and west to Milford and is probably most closely linked to the parish of Hambledon, which shares a common border. Bramley connects north into Guildford and east towards Cranleigh.
- **Commercial, Cultural or Medical.** Because of the above factors there are few regular commercial or cultural links between Bramley and Busbridge and Hascombe, and the latter two parishes look to Godalming, Milford and Cranleigh for commercial, cultural and medical facilities.
- **Education.** Bramley parish contains St Catherine's Junior and Senior schools, which are both private girls-only schools, together with Bramley Infant and Nursery School. The parish also contains several special schools typically serving special needs pupils from further afield. State junior education for Bramley residents is predominantly provided at Tillingbourne school in Chilworth and Shamley Green Primary School. Neither Busbridge, nor Hascombe offers educational facilities of any description though Busbridge Infant and Busbridge Junior schools, located in the Godalming suburb of the same name are only just to the north of the rural parish. Primary age children in Busbridge and Hascombe, for the most part, will use schools in Milford, Godalming and Cranleigh with few using the Bramley schools.

- **Commonality.** The high ground to the west of the A281 in Bramley and to the east of Hascombe Road in Busbridge and down to Hascombe contains the large Wintershall Estate and the National Trust's popular Winkworth Arboretum. Wintershall puts on religious dramas (The Life of Christ and the Nativity) which attract large audiences and include participants from all three parishes. Winkworth Arboretum is a prime visitor attraction used by residents of all three parishes.

Most Bramley residents would perceive Hascombe as a relatively distant and hard to reach village with a lovely pub, and confuse the rural Busbridge parish with the suburb of Godalming of the same name.

Comment on Bramley as a standalone ward

BPC believes that disregarding any population/electorate size factors (which it understands the Electoral Commission cannot do) then Bramley could present as a standalone ward. It has the largest shopping centre of any village in Waverley, a substantial number (over 100) businesses, its own library and thriving community. It is therefore as self-contained and supporting, other than for medical services, as any village in Waverley.

That said, BPC assumes that the Electoral Commission may deem Bramley unsatisfactory as a standalone ward from a population/electorate size perspective.

Comment on Bramley's connection to Wonersh, Blackheath and Shamley Green

If Bramley does not have strong links to Hascombe or Busbridge, it does across many dimensions to Wonersh, Blackheath and Shamley Green (WBS):

- **Transport.** Bramley and WBS are connected by three roads including the busy Station Road. They are on the same bus routes between Guildford and Cranleigh. When the railway which used to run on the boundary between them existed, they shared a station, Bramley & Wonersh, which has been renovated and still exists as a Bramley & Wonersh heritage site.
- **Education.** Bramley's schools extensively serve Wonersh residents at all age groups and many of Bramley's junior school age children attend Shamley Green Primary School and Longacre Preparatory School in Shamley Green.
- **Distance.** Wonersh village is on its western parish boundary with Bramley village on its eastern parish boundary. The villages are very close physically and within easy walking distance of each other.
- **Commercial.** Wonersh has few shops and Wonersh residents make extensive use of Bramley's convenience stores, butcher, greengrocer, and takeaways, while Bramley residents make use of Wonersh's village store and newsagent.
- **Services.** Bramley residents use Wonersh's (large) GP practice and pharmacy which is closer to much of Bramley village than it is to Blackheath or Shamley Green. Bramley itself has no public medical facilities. Meanwhile, the Waverley Blunden Court sheltered accommodation serves both Bramley and Wonersh. Wonersh residents use Bramley's Community Partnered Library.
- **Religious.** Wonersh Catholics use Bramley Catholic Church. Some Church of England worshippers use Bramley's Church of England Church, while some Bramley residents use Wonersh's Church of England Church and other Wonersh Churches.

- **Historic.** Bramley and WBS have always been closely connected historically even as far back as Domesday Book. Indeed, the Saxon name Wonersh (east ploughed field) mirrors the Linersh (west ploughed field) area of Bramley: the two areas separated just by the Cranleigh Waters river.
- **Activities.** While each community has their own societies and clubs there is extensive interchange between these with Bramley residents being members of many Wonersh societies and vice versa. Cubs, Scouts, Guides and Brownies all draw on both communities with no duplication of groups. Bramley residents join Wonersh's U3A, Women's Institute and Gardening Club. Wonersh residents are active within Bramley Golf Club. The main footpath widely used in the area, the Downs Link, sits sometimes as the boundary between Bramley and Wonersh, and residents typically walk interchangeably between the two parishes. Wonersh landmarks such as Chinthurst Hill are extensively used by Bramley residents.

Many Bramley residents would consider WBS as a closely linked and related community with which they have significant exchange.

Other National and Local Government Constituencies

We recognise that WBS is in the Guildford Parliamentary Constituency and that following a boundary change implemented for the 2010 General Election, Bramley moved to South West Surrey from Guildford. However, BPC does not believe this is an issue and having two MPs engaged with the ward could be attractive in attracting additional parliamentary muscle on strategic issues. Both Bramley and WBS are in the single Surrey constituency of Waverley Eastern Villages.

Conclusion

BPC understands the difficult job the Boundary Commission has in connecting parishes to create wards that enable councillors to serve similar number of electors. However, BPC would like the Boundary Commission to consider that the only justification for the current ward construct is that single criterium. All other factors would suggest that, if possible, a Bramley connection to WBS would reflect the extensive and long-standing community ties and identities that historically and currently exist.