

## **Submission to the LGBCE's Initial Consultation on the Wokingham Borough Council Electoral Review 2023 specifically on the Wokingham Without Ward.**

**Introduction.** This submission deals specifically with the Wokingham Without ward of Wokingham Borough Council which is shaped like a rectangle on its narrow end, located at the south east corner of the Borough. The ward consists of all of Wokingham Without Parish forming Polling District XWB with a 2021 electorate of 5,594 and the part of Finchampstead Parish lying to the east of Lower Wokingham Road forming Polling District FCB with a 2021 electorate of 773. Polling District FCB was added to the Wokingham Without ward in the last Electoral Review in 2002. The ward currently is represented by 3 councillors.

**Boundaries.** The Wokingham Without ward has, as its southern and eastern boundaries, the Principal Boundary with Bracknell Forest Council with this principal boundary not under review. The northern boundary is very strong, being the Wokingham to Bracknell railway which forms a barrier to movement. The north east corner of the ward is just shy of the old concrete footbridge over the railway to Gypsy Lane. The boundary then runs down the edge of some trees to the Emm Brook, then follows that stream to the SE to the Ludgrove access road before running west to the Wokingham to Guildford railway, another very strong boundary. The western boundary runs down the railway from Luckley Road to Nine Mile Ride where it runs briefly along Nine Mile Ride to the A321 Lower Wokingham Road completing the western boundary. The only fairly weak boundary runs from the Wokingham to Bracknell railway to the Emm Brook but that is the boundary between Wokingham Town (the current Wescott ward) and Wokingham Without Parish.

**Housing in the ward.** The ward is divided by the road called Nine Mile Ride which runs from east to west across the ward. South of Nine Mile Ride, the ward is essentially urban containing over 95% of the ward electorate. To the north is, at the moment, semi-rural with a few small settlements. A large area immediately to the south of the Wokingham to Bracknell railway is designated as part of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location with some 1,800 homes planned with about 1,750 to be in the current Wokingham Without ward. All 1,800 have at least outline planning permission although construction is not expected to begin for at least a year.

**Electoral Numbers.** I note that the LGBCE 'is minded to recommend' a Council size of 54 and have accepted the estimate of electorate in 2028 as 132,156 giving a Councillor quota of 2,447.3. As Wokingham Borough Council is to continue electing in thirds, there are to be 3 member wards giving a target ward electorate of 7,342 with ward electorates to be within a bracket of +/- 10% giving a lower limit of 6,608 and an upper limit of 8,076.

The 2028 estimate for the Wokingham Without ward is 6,721 which is 113 above the minimum size of electorate. With the number of new homes with planning permissions to be constructed in the ward it is logical to leave the ward as it is currently so giving headroom for new residents to be added to the electorate. I therefore suggest that there should be no change to the ward boundaries of Wokingham Without.

**The Estimated 2028 Electorates.** I appreciate that forecasting is difficult, especially if it's about the future but the 2028 estimate for Wokingham Borough electorate appears to be

unrealistically low. The 2009 electorate was 120,911 and the 2021 electorate was 130,690 giving a gain of 9,779 electors over 12 years or an average of 815 per year. The forecast for 2028 is 132,156 which suggests an increase of electorate over the next 7 years of 1,466 or 209 per year. As new housing is proceeding apace across the borough and should start in Wokingham Without in earnest in the next few years, with an unchanged housing target of 781 new homes per year and the additional 'pull' factor of a general election in 2024, the estimated electorate for 2028 does appear to be low by about some 4,000. Were this to be correct, it would de-value this Electoral Review and could precipitate an a premature need for a further review..

On a micro matter, the electorate of Polling District FCB is forecast to drop from 806 to 773, a reduction of 33 or just over 4%. It does not appear to me that there is any basis for forecasting such a reduction.

**Conclusion.** Based on a Council size of 54, 3 councillor wards and a 2028 electorate of 132,156 coupled with the planning approvals for additional housing in the Wokingham Without ward, the forecast electorate of 6,721 allows for no change in the strong or very strong ward boundaries. I therefore commend no change to the ward boundaries. As far as the ward name is concerned, Wokingham Without has been the name of the ward prior to the inclusion of Polling District FCB and since. There has been no comment that I have been aware of over the last 20 years to suggest that the title, **Wokingham Without**, should not continue to be used.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Wokingham Borough Council

### Personal Details:

Name:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Organisation Name:** Retired

### Comment text:

Please see attached document.

### Uploaded Documents:

**Download ([https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1662645165\\_LGBCE+Sep22.docx](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1662645165_LGBCE+Sep22.docx))**