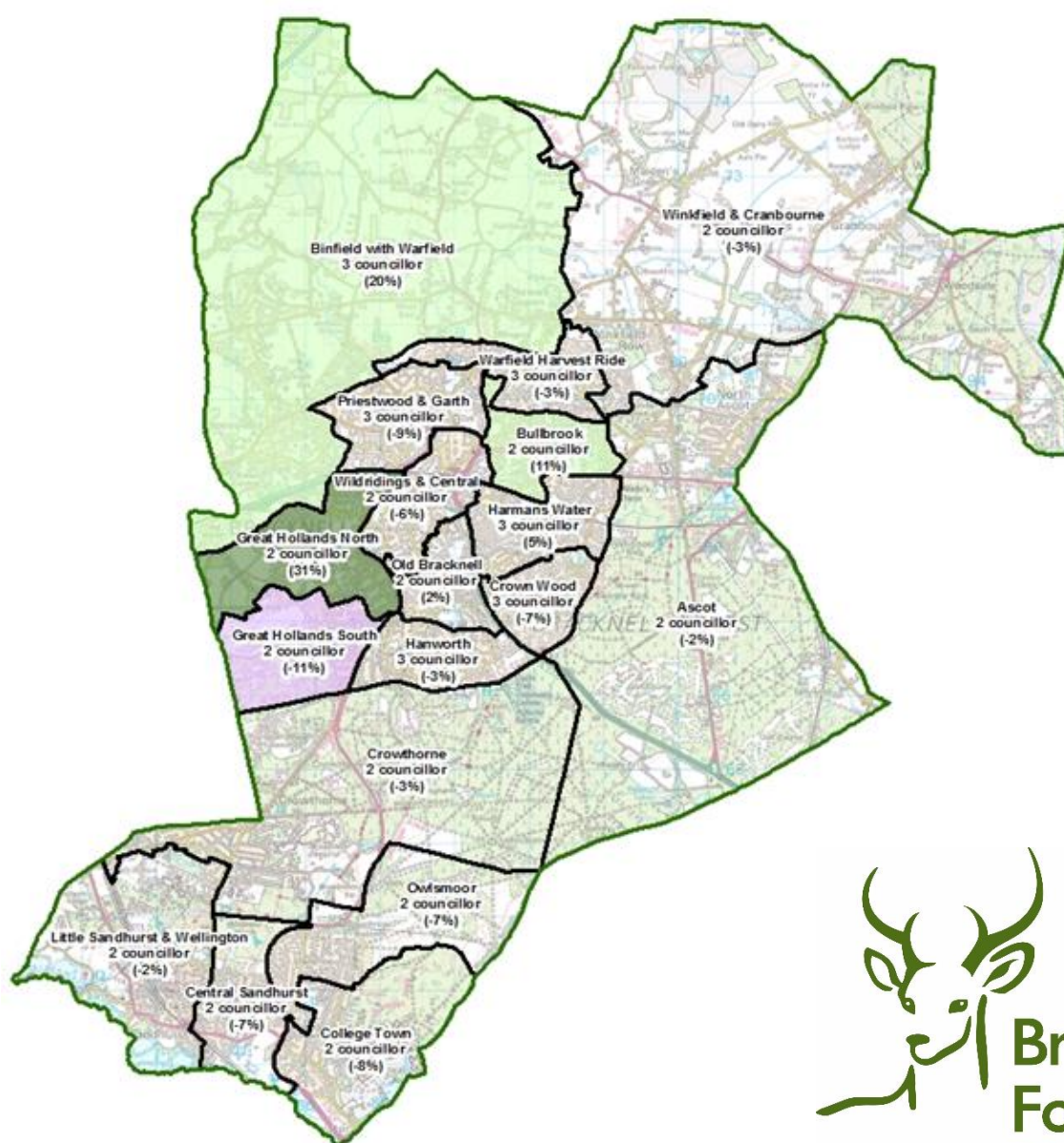


BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL ELECTORAL REVIEW

Stage Two Response – Ward Pattern Arrangements March 2020



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Introduction

This is Bracknell Forest Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Stage Two consultation on a warding pattern for the Borough. This phase of the consultation closes on 16 March 2020.

At a special meeting on 11 March 2020 the Council agreed unanimously to approve this proposal for submission to the Commission. It received full cross-party support at the meeting.

The Commission's review is undertaken in two stages. The first stage to determine the future Council size was completed on 7 January. The outcome was that the Commission is minded to recommend that 40 councillors should be elected to Bracknell Forest Council in future; two fewer than the current arrangements. This proposal is based on there being 40 councillors in 2023.

Developing a boundary proposal

The Council's Electoral Review Working Group was reconvened to develop a proposal for a Borough-wide ward pattern for Bracknell Forest and to recommend a pattern of wards to Council for submission to the Commission, that demonstrates how the statutory criteria set by the Commission have been met.

In developing its proposals on ward patterning the Working Group took account of the Commission's decision at Stage 1 on councillor numbers and of the statutory criteria on ward patterning which are:

To deliver electoral equality

To reflect community interests and local identities

To promote effective and convenient local government.

Throughout their deliberations the Working Group aimed to ensure that:

- No wards will exceed +/- 10% variance from the perfect electoral equality of 2500 electors per councillor
- Communities will be recognised and kept intact wherever possible
- The total number of councillors will not exceed the Commission's preferred number of 40
- Wards will only cross Parliamentary boundaries where there are robust reasons to do so, for example to improve community links
- Identifiable boundaries such as major roads, waterways and railway lines will be used as ward boundaries where this is appropriate and does not adversely affect community cohesion
- The warding pattern will comprise two and three-Member wards to promote effective local government which is likely to be compromised by the inclusion of single-Member wards

Context for Bracknell Forest

Bracknell Forest consists of a 1950's first generation New Town which has seen several phases of subsequent growth, along with a number of older villages across a varied geographic area. The principle residential conurbation is Bracknell itself with secondary population centres built up around the historic towns and villages of Sandhurst, Crowthorne, Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield.

Each area has its own distinct identity or sub-identity and each is covered by the respective parish/town council areas.

Bracknell Forest is forecast to have significant population growth over the coming six years and beyond. A total of 4,064 new dwellings have planning permission and are forecast for construction in the years leading up to 2025. This is not taking account of smaller planning changes that increase population density in existing developments and other population trends.

Taking account of these changes the upper end of Bracknell Forest's own electorate forecast takes the Borough's electorate number to 107,406. Recognising that build out rates can vary and the possibility that not all developments will be occupied by 2025 a mid-point figure of 101,484 between the Commission's forecast and the Borough's has been accepted for the purposes of this review. This affords the Council a degree of tolerance between electoral equality if developments do not proceed as planned and conversely allows the Council to absorb elector numbers at the upper end of the forecast if all developments are delivered by 2025.

Boundaries

There are no notable natural boundaries within the Borough so the main through-roads or green spaces often act as accepted limits to urban areas with communities contained within. Where neighbourhoods were originally developed and specific community hubs established, communities have largely retained intangible borders along the original lines. However, the A329(M)/A322 corridor does mark a distinct division running north west/south east through the Borough.

Bracknell Forest Borough is bordered by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in the north; Wokingham Borough to the South/West and Surrey Heath District to the east. Two parliamentary constituencies cover parts of the Borough. Bracknell Constituency encompasses most of the borough 'taking on' the additional areas of Wokingham Without and Finchampstead from Wokingham Borough Council. Windsor parliamentary constituency includes the three northern parishes with the exception of Martins Heron, The Warren and Forest Park which are in the Bracknell parliamentary constituency.

Binfield

The village of Binfield is in the north of the Borough within the Windsor Parliamentary Constituency and is a traditionally self-contained community. A number of new, large residential developments has resulted in significant population growth in recent years which will continue as more of these dwellings are constructed and occupied. There are community facilities, a library and shops situated towards the centre of the area which provide a focal point for the community.

Bracknell Town

Established in 1949 as part of the post-war New Town development to help cater for post-war reconstruction and London overspill, the vision for Bracknell New Town was the development of seven self-contained neighbourhoods with their own shops, schools, doctors and other public facilities with a town centre devoted primarily to commercial development and other industry segregated away from residential areas. As a result individual local identities are particularly strong in these areas.

These self-contained communities have maintained their distinct characteristics, and each has well-established community hubs to which the local population looks. The original 1950's neighbourhoods of Priestwood, Easthampstead and Bullbrook were joined by further expansions in

the decades following with Great Hollands, Harmans Water, Wildridings, Hanworth and Martins Heron developed at a later date.

Bracknell Town centre itself has undergone an extensive transformation and redevelopment in recent years which has brought about increased residential development in the area with a number of office conversions and new apartment buildings under construction. It is forecast that the town centre will have some of the most significant increases in residential growth over the coming years further changing the character and size of the area.

Crowthorne

Crowthorne is a village in the southern part of the Borough separated from Bracknell New Town by Swinley Forest (The Crown Estate). A portion of Crowthorne lies across the border and into Wokingham Borough.

The population of Crowthorne has been comparatively stable in recent decades but, future development (which is already well advanced as Buckler's Park) on the site of the old Transport Research Laboratory will result in a significant increase of residential properties in the area.

Sandhurst

Situated on the county border between Berkshire, Surrey and Hampshire, Sandhurst Town maintains the second largest population centre in the Borough. Sandhurst is geographically closer to Camberley (Surrey) than Bracknell Town itself.

Warfield

Warfield is a historic village in the north of the Borough within the Windsor Parliamentary Constituency. Unlike other parts of the Borough that were developed with specific community areas in mind, the expansion of the Whitegrove development in Warfield focussed community facilities around a large supermarket where the library, parish council offices and community centre are also situated.

Winkfield

Winkfield completes the triple set of historic villages in the north of the Borough within the Windsor Parliamentary Constituency. Demographically similar to both Binfield and Warfield it is a geographically large area with large rural spaces in between the population centres. The majority of residential properties are located in the North Ascot area of the parish with other residential properties along and off Chavey Down Road.

Seeking electoral equality

The Commission is minded to recommend a Council size of 40 councillors which means that electoral equality will be achieved if each councillor represents 2,537 electors. Electoral equality is the only criterion which can be measured with precision.

The information in the tables below demonstrates how the Council's proposal achieves good electoral equality.

Table A shows the current position and the forecast for 2025 if no changes to the number of councillors and wards are made.

The forecast electorate for 2023 is 101,484. Combined with a reduction of two councillors this increases the average elector/councillor ratio to 2537.

The Council is proposing 40 councillors for 16 wards; eight two-Member wards and eight three-Member wards. Currently there are 42 councillors for 18 wards; 12 two-Member wards and six three-member wards.

Table A – current position

Ward name	No of cllrs	Electorate 2019	Variance 2019	Forecast electorate 2025	Variance 2025
Ascot	2	4,183	-2%	4,646	-4%
Binfield with Warfield	3	7,897	23%	9,574	32%
Bullbrook	2	4,739	11%	5,867	21%
Central Sandhurst	2	3,965	-7%	4,238	-12%
College Town	2	3,909	-9%	4,195	-13%
Crown Wood	3	5,991	-7%	6,414	-12%
Crowthorne	2	4,160	-3%	5,771	19%
Great Hollands North	2	5,568	30%	5,969	24%
Great Hollands South	2	3,820	-11%	4,105	-15%
Hanworth	3	6,193	-4%	6,662	-8%
Harmans Water	3	6,736	5%	7,705	6%
Little Sandhurst & Wellington	2	4,231	-1%	4,737	-2%
Old Bracknell	2	4,377	2%	4,661	-4%
Owlsmoor	2	3,955	-8%	4,229	-12%
Priestwood & Garth	3	5,847	-9%	6,420	-11%
Warfield Harvest Ride	3	6,163	-4%	6,559	-10%
Wildridings & Central	2	4,025	-6%	5,304	10%
Winkfield and Cranbourne	2	4,132	-3%	4,428	-8%

Table B below shows that the Council's proposal meets the Commission's ambition to deliver electoral fairness.

Table B – proposed position

Proposed ward name	No of cllrs	Forecast electorate 2025	Variance
Binfield	3	7358	-3.3%
Bullbrook	3	7509	-1.3%
College Town	2	4989	-1.7%
Crowthorne	2	5501	+8.4%
Easthampstead & Wildridings	3	7370	-3.2%
Great Hollands North	2	5275	+4%
Great Hollands South	2	5345	+5.3%
Hanworth	3	7901	+3.8%
Harmans Water	2	4908	-3.3%
Priestwood & Garth	3	7786	+2.3%
Sandhurst	3	6997	-8.1%
Savernake	3	7305	-4%
Warfield	2	5068	-0.1%
Whitegrove	2	5403	+6.5%
Wildmoor & Owlsmoor	2	5035	-0.8%
Winkfield with Ascot	3	7733	+1.6%

Perfect electoral equality has not been achieved across all wards, however:

- None exceed +/- 10%
- 12 of the 16 wards have a variance of 5% or less
- Only three wards have a variance of greater than 6%
- The greatest variances occur in Crowthorne and Sandhurst wards which both have distinct communities. The electoral equality problem cannot be solved by moving the suggested ward boundaries if coherent communities are to be retained
- The arrangements broadly provide for effective and convenient local government

Creating a pattern of wards

Unlike electoral equality it is not possible to measure levels of community identity. Evidence is set out below for each proposed ward which provides a range of information regarding communities and local links, such as how local people use local facilities, where boundaries such as roads or railway lines divide or unite communities, whether there are community groups representing a particular area, whether there are good transport links.

The following section provides a commentary on a ward by ward basis which explains the rationale used to formulate the proposal. The information is split into two areas: wards within the Windsor Parliamentary Constituency and those within the Bracknell Constituency.

Ward boundary proposals: Windsor Constituency

Binfield

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,358 (-3.3%)

The proposed ward follows the Parish boundary excluding Wykery Copse. Although Wykery Copse currently sits within the Binfield with Warfield Ward in the Windsor Parliamentary constituency it has strong community ties to Jennett's Park which lies in the Great Hollands North Ward within the Bracknell constituency. The inclusion of Wykery Copse in Great Hollands resolves a long-standing anomaly.

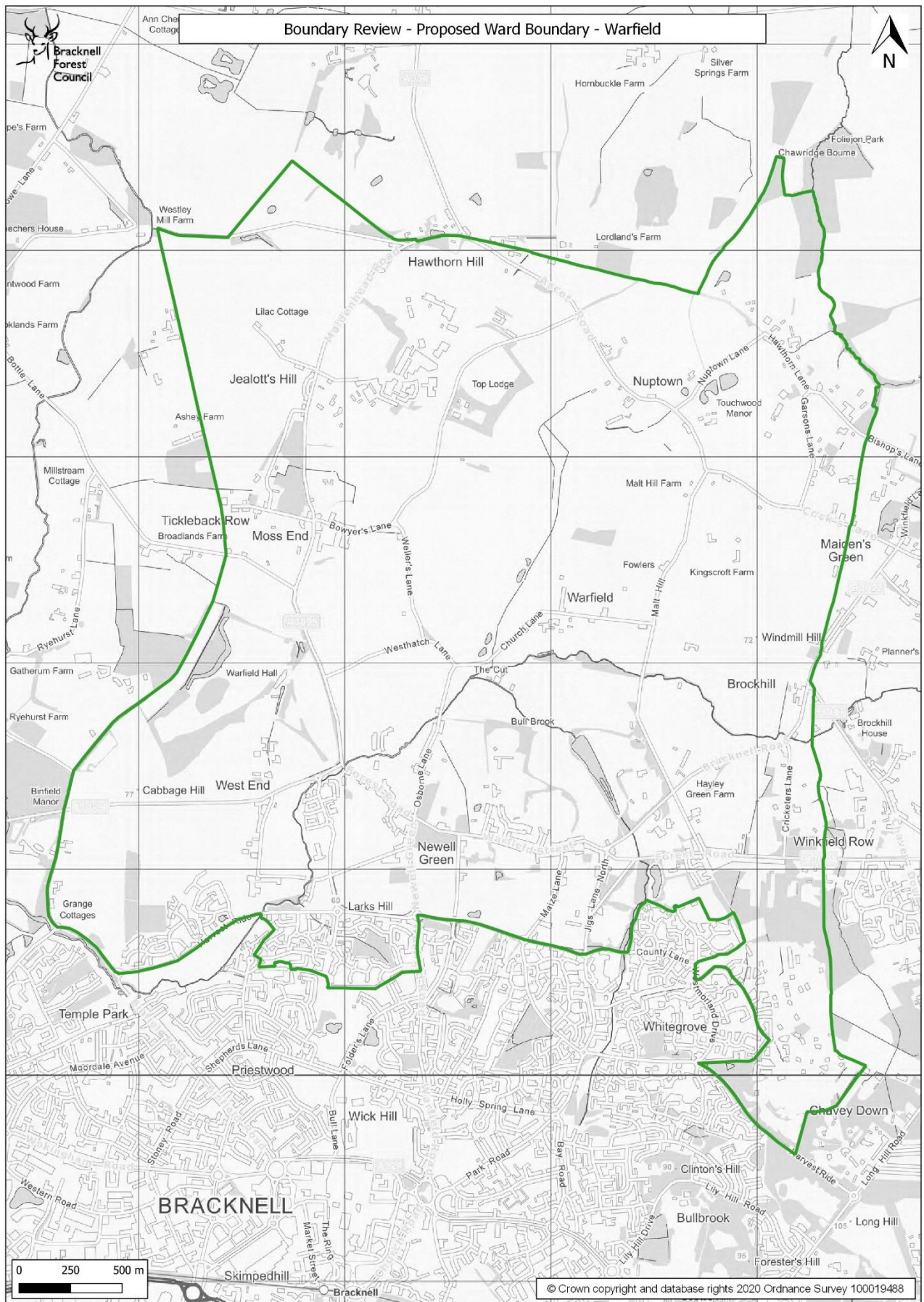
There is strong community interest and commitment to the parish identity, with a high regard for, and involvement in local schools. The Binfield Learning Village was built to cater for local need and to provide local school places. Local community facilities are well used and a community and health space facility is currently proposed for Blue Mountain.

Forest Road provides a corridor that effectively links all areas of the proposed ward and provides a common transportation route. Local footpaths and byways provide pedestrian links throughout the ward and connections are also provided by a range of cycle ways.

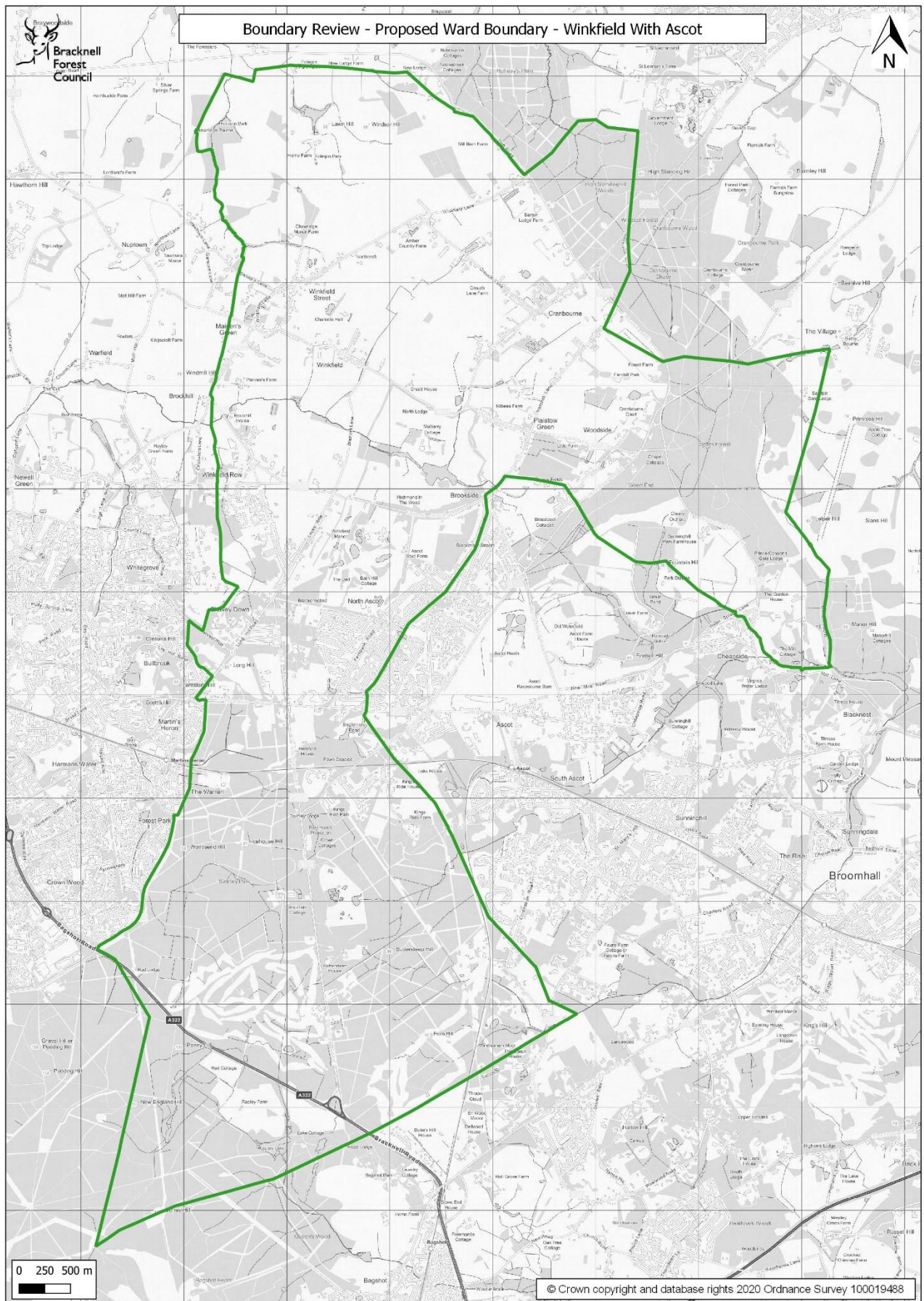
Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	5,068 (-0.1%)

This proposed ward follows the Warfield Parish boundary to the west and east and encompasses part of the existing Binfield with Warfield and Winkfield and Cranbourne Wards.

Warfield Park, a large self-contained “Park Home” community to the south-east of Warfield Parish, is geographically closer to the proposed Whitegrove Ward but there is no intrinsic community links to Whitegrove and has therefore been included in Warfield to ensure better electoral equality. Two areas of Warfield Park are currently in the existing Winkfield and Cranbourne Ward. These have been brought together with the rest of Warfield Park in Warfield Ward which provides better representation for electors and brings the community together, which is currently artificially split.



Two areas of Whitegrove around Goughs Lane and Priory Lane are currently split between the existing Warfield Harvest Ride and Bullbrook Wards. Geographically access to these areas is via Whitegrove or Warfield. The residents of these communities look to Whitegrove for their amenities and community links, therefore these areas have been incorporated into the proposed Whitegrove Ward. As a result, the ward crosses the parliamentary boundary but the improvement to community links provides a robust reason to do so.

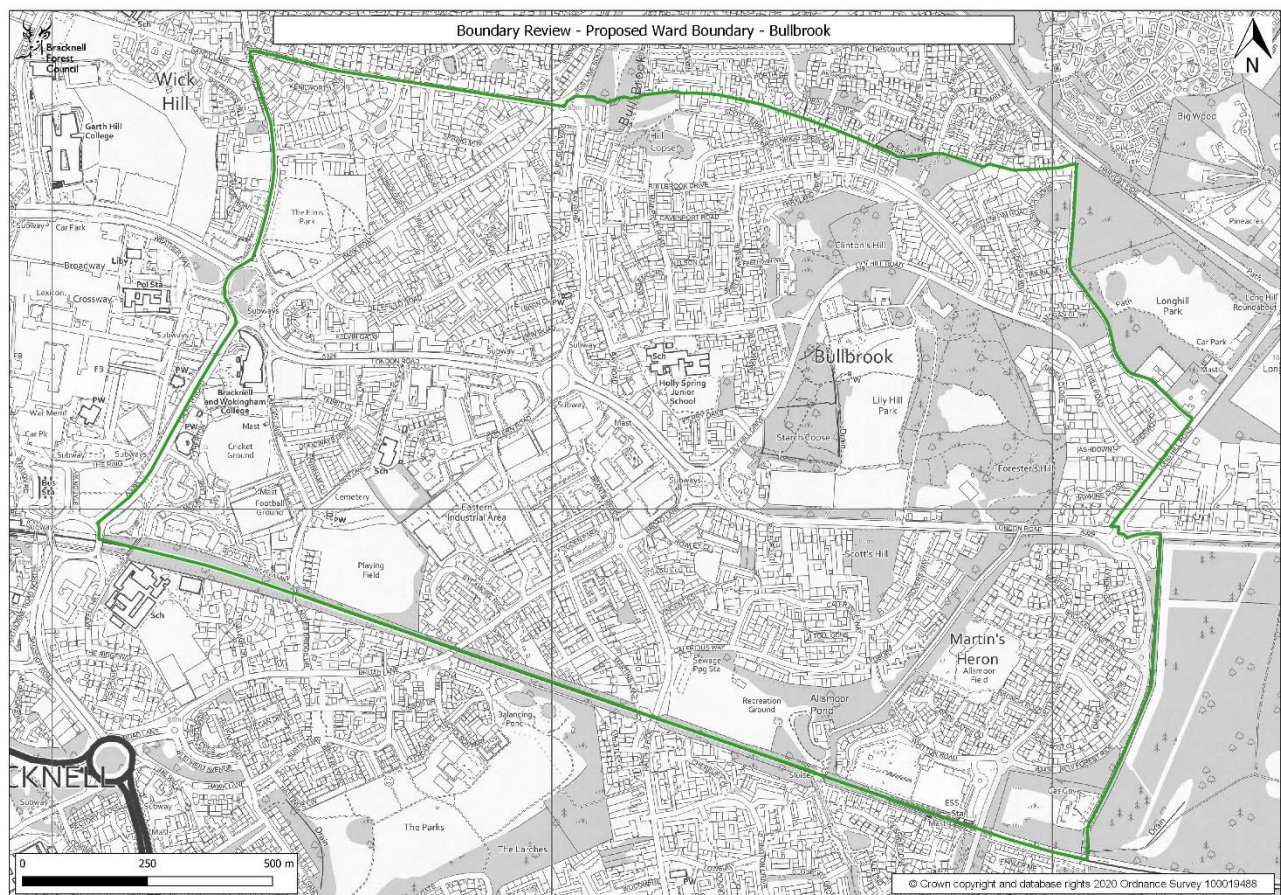


Bullbrook

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,509 (-1.3%)

The current Bullbrook ward has been significantly redrawn to include a large proportion of the Town Centre in the west and the Martins Heron development in east. The proposal ensures that communities remain intact and delivers reasonable electoral equality.

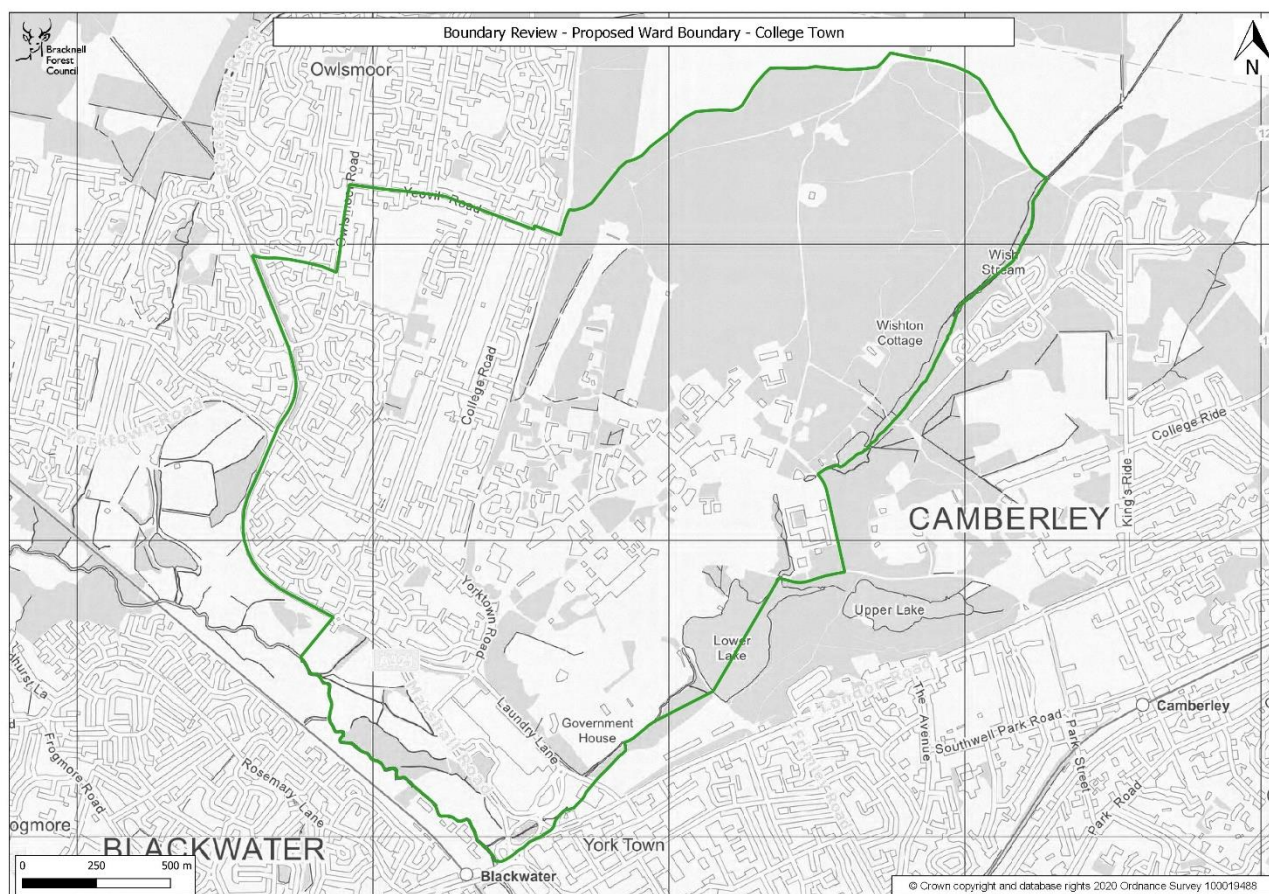
Changes made to the northern boundary have been undertaken to take account of the fact that the parliamentary boundary line is no longer the identifiable natural boundary it was previously.



College Town

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	4,989 (-1.7%)

The proposed College Town ward is largely unchanged from the current ward but, addresses a longstanding anomaly that saw Avocett Crescent and surrounding areas that were included in Central Sandhurst ward. These residents maintain strong community ties to College Town.



Crowthorne

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	5,501 (+8.4%)

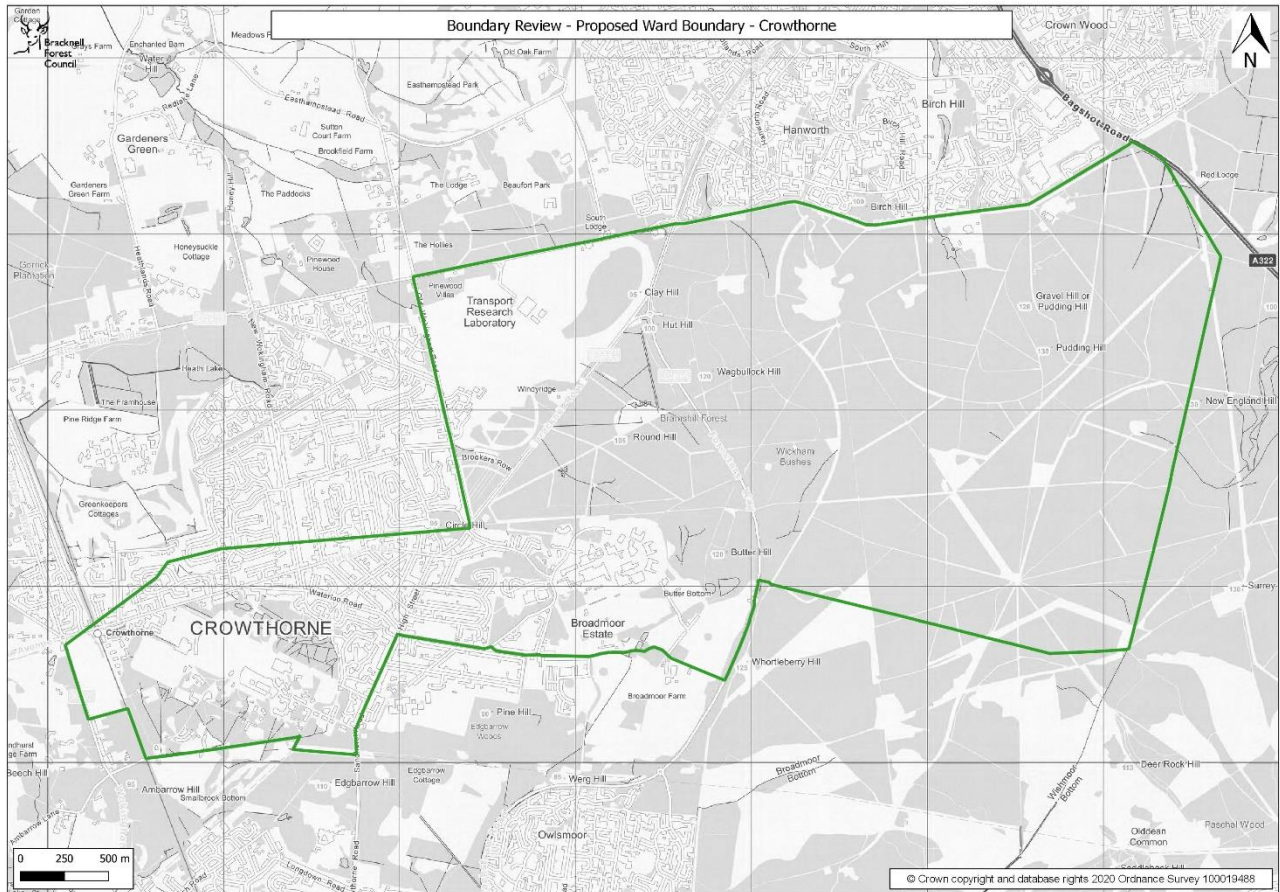
As outlined above Crowthorne is a geographically large area with the established population centred towards the western principal area boundary between Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough. Crowthorne is already split between the two boroughs.

It has been challenging to meet all the Commission's criteria when devising the proposed Crowthorne ward. The proposal has sought to maintain community identity where possible in Crowthorne Village itself whilst recognising that residents in the large residential

development at the Transport Research Laboratory (Bucklers Park) site also identify themselves with Crowthorne and use their facilities.

While the TRL site is geographically closer to the Great Hollands South ward, there are no direct public transport links or easy access to facilities within that ward.

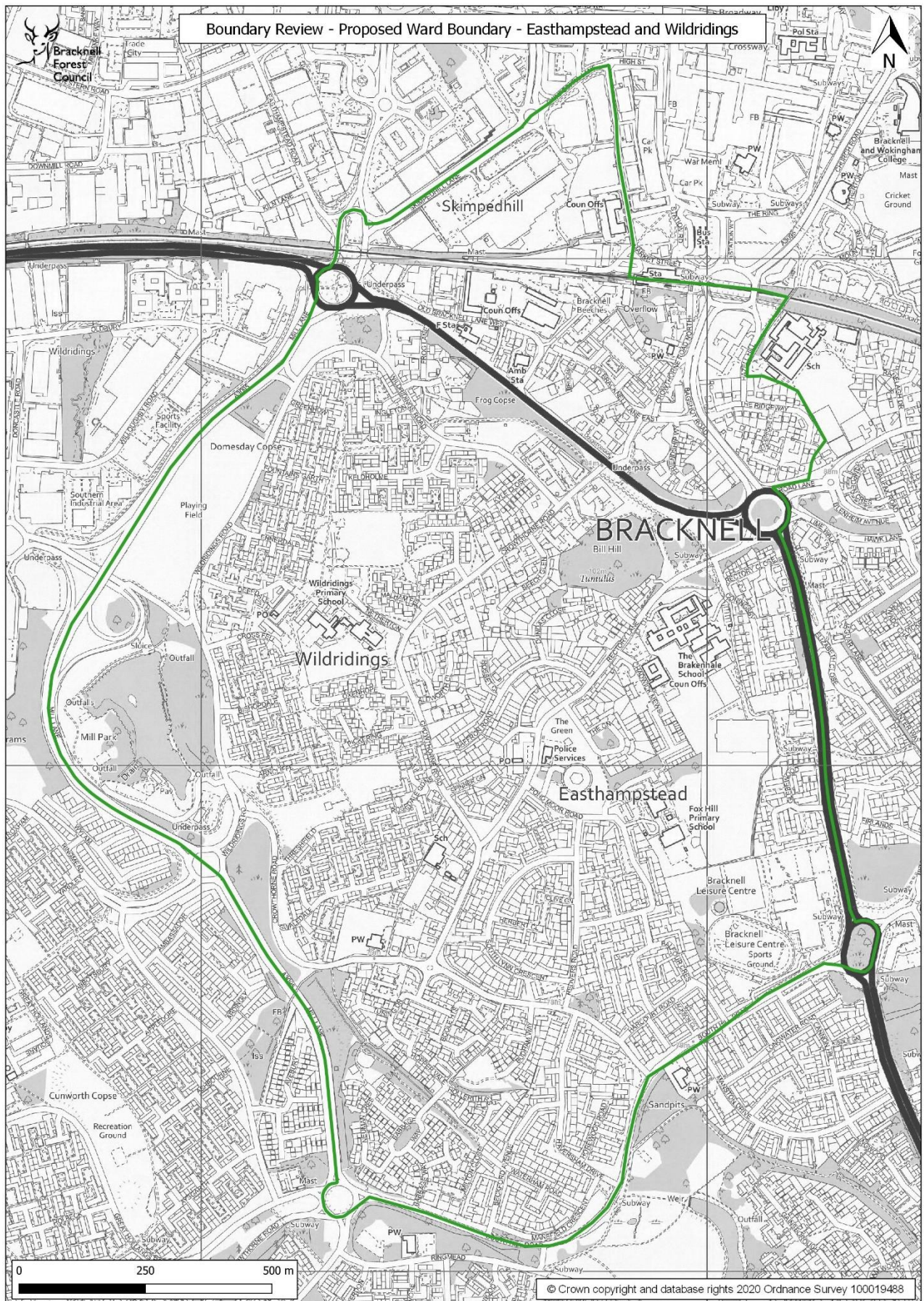
In order to achieve reasonable electoral equality across the southern wards The Wildmoor area south of Lower Broadmoor Road has been included in the proposed Wildmoor and Owlsmoor ward.



Easthampstead & Wildridings

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,370 (-3.2%)

This proposed ward encompasses two distinct communities of Easthampstead and Wildridings which are currently part of Old Bracknell and Wildridings & Central Wards. The two communities have similar demographics and community links. Easthampstead Community Centre and shops act as a larger local hub for both communities alongside the amenities in Wildridings Square. Mill Pond and Wildridings School are community resources used by both communities.

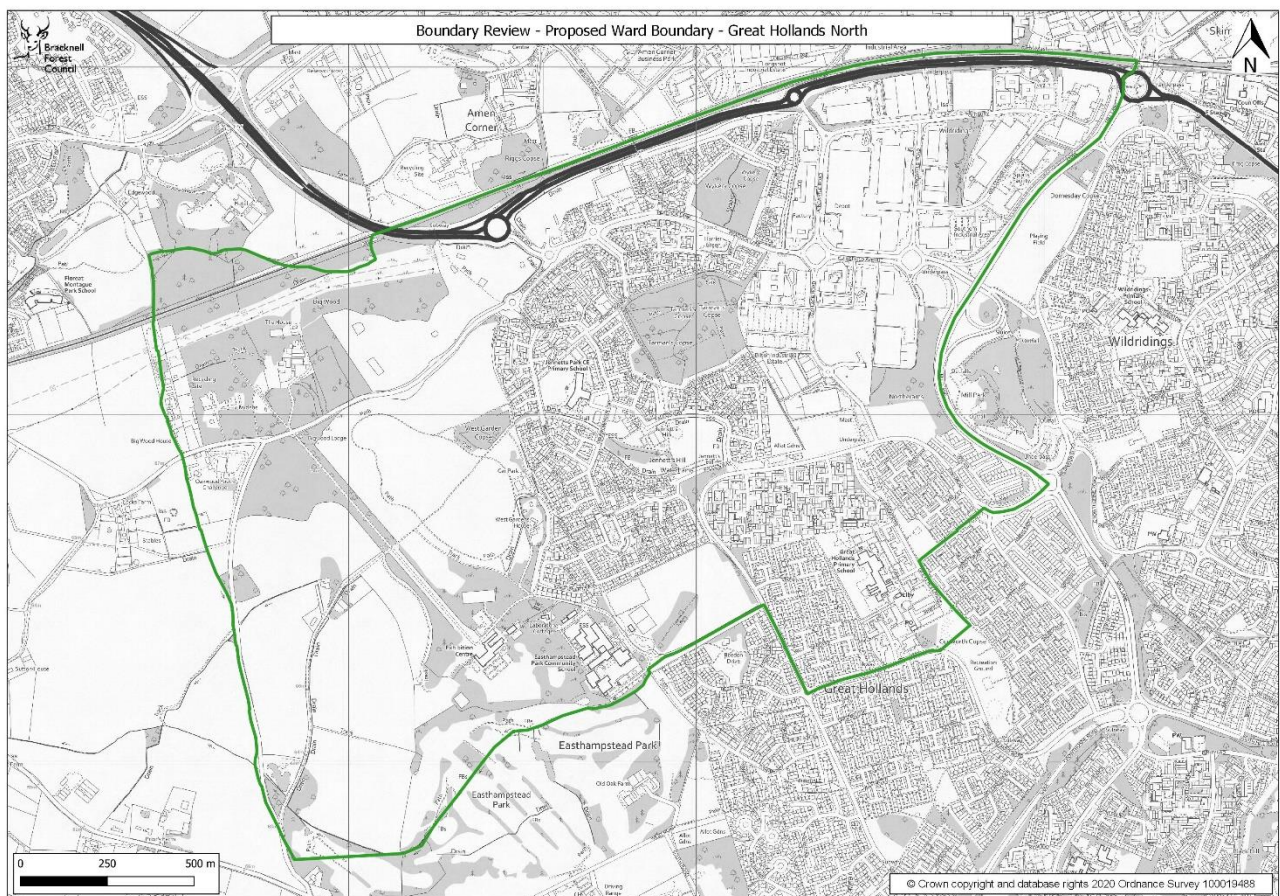


Great Hollands North

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	5,275 (+4%)

Great Hollands North remains largely intact except for the inclusion of the Wykery Copse part of Jennetts Park which is currently included within the existing Binfield with Warfield ward.

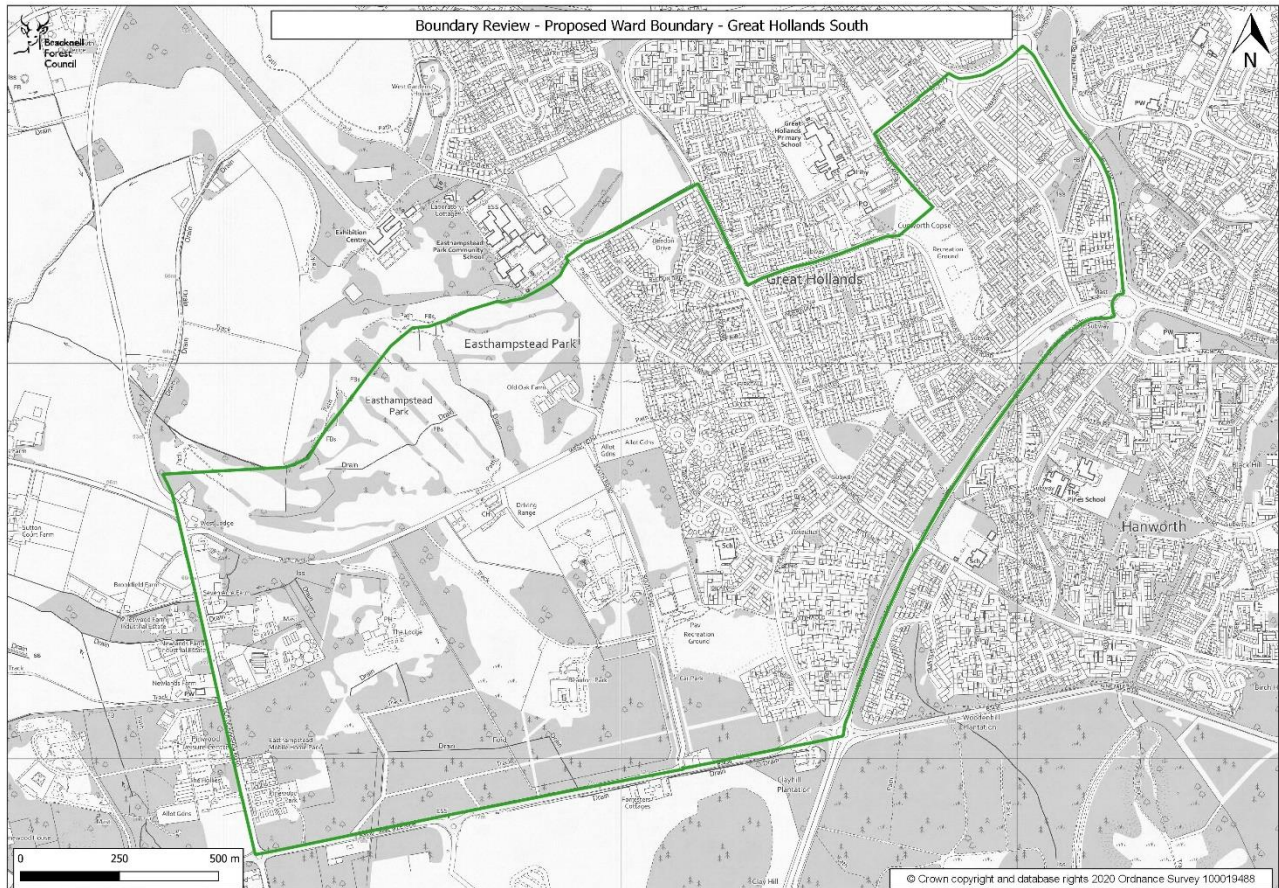
While this crosses the parliamentary constituency boundary the area is separated from Binfield by the A329 dual carriageway and the residents have a strong community ties with the Jennetts Park more widely giving robust justification to make this change. Jennetts Park looks to the community facilities at the centre of the development, including a school, community centre and a local supermarket.



Great Hollands South

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	5,345 (+5.3%)

Great Hollands South remains largely intact. Any changes proposed do not impact community identity and ensure electoral equality between the wider Great Hollands area.

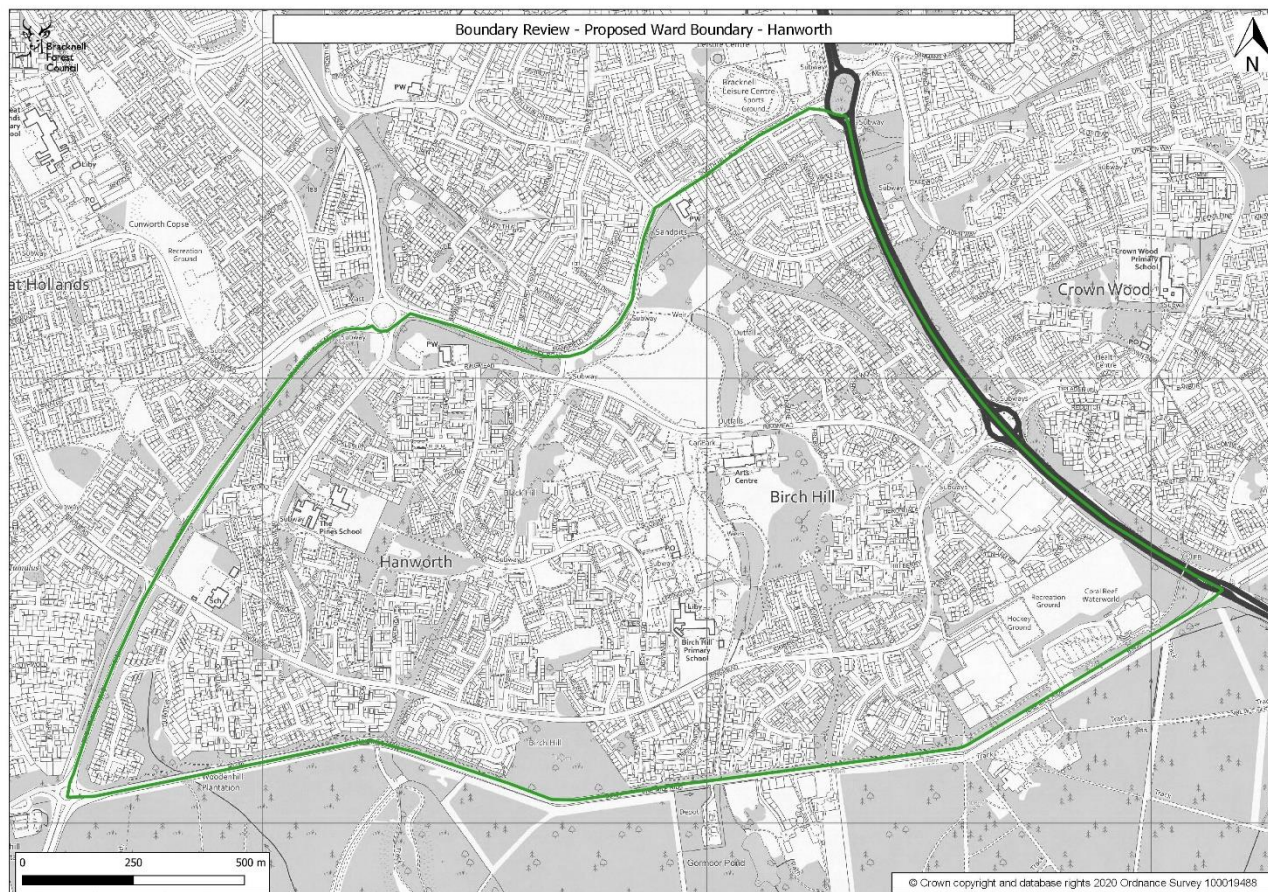


Hanworth

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,901 (+3.8%)

The established new town neighbourhood of Hanworth is retained in the submission. Existing boundaries in the west, south and east are maintained with the A3095, B3430 and A322 acting as hard boundaries respectively.

The ward has been extended to the north and now encompasses the southern area of the current Old Bracknell ward. This does not impact community relations and achieves better electoral equality.

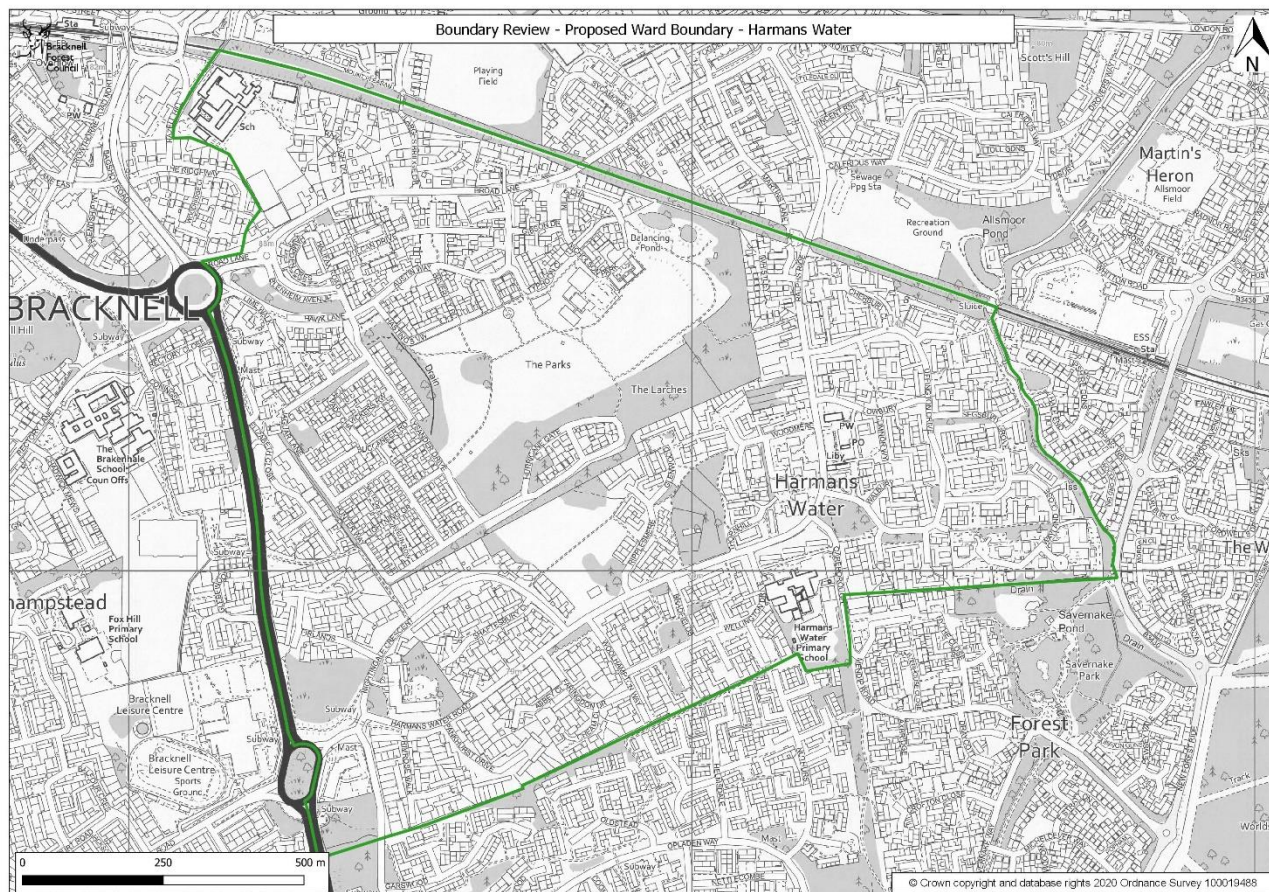


Harmans Water

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	4,908 (-3.3%)

The current ward/ neighbourhood of Harmans Water has been largely retained but, revised to provide better electoral equality. The boundary to the south has been widely retained but, amended to exclude 'The Warren' which has no direct transport links or community connection to the rest of the proposed ward.

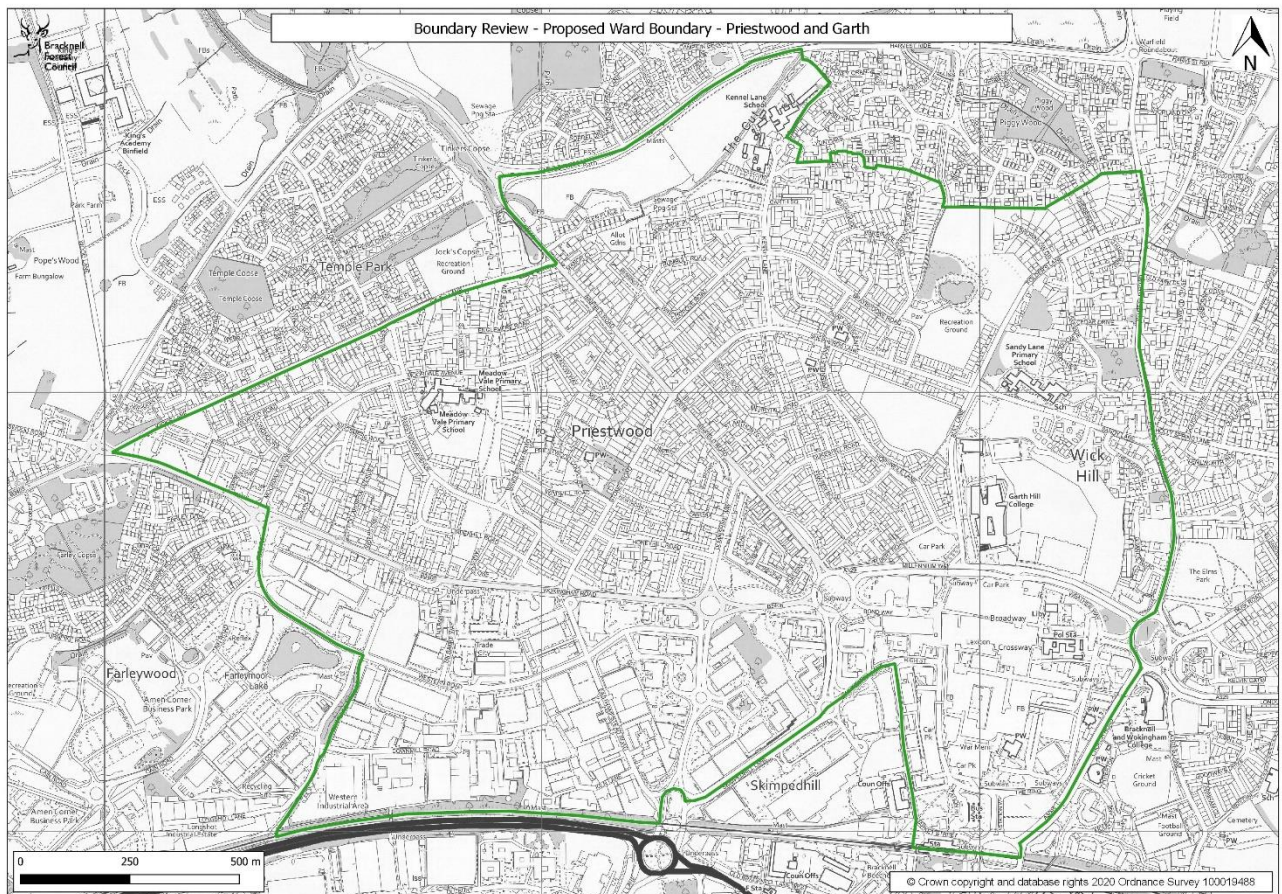
The boundary to the north has been redrawn with the railway line used as the ward limit and the western boundary is broadly unchanged. The boundary has not been extended to the Bagshot Road as the residents in Hazel Hill, The Ridgeway and Woodridge Close maintain strong links with amenities in the proposed Easthampstead and Wildridings.



Priestwood & Garth

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,786 (+2.3%)

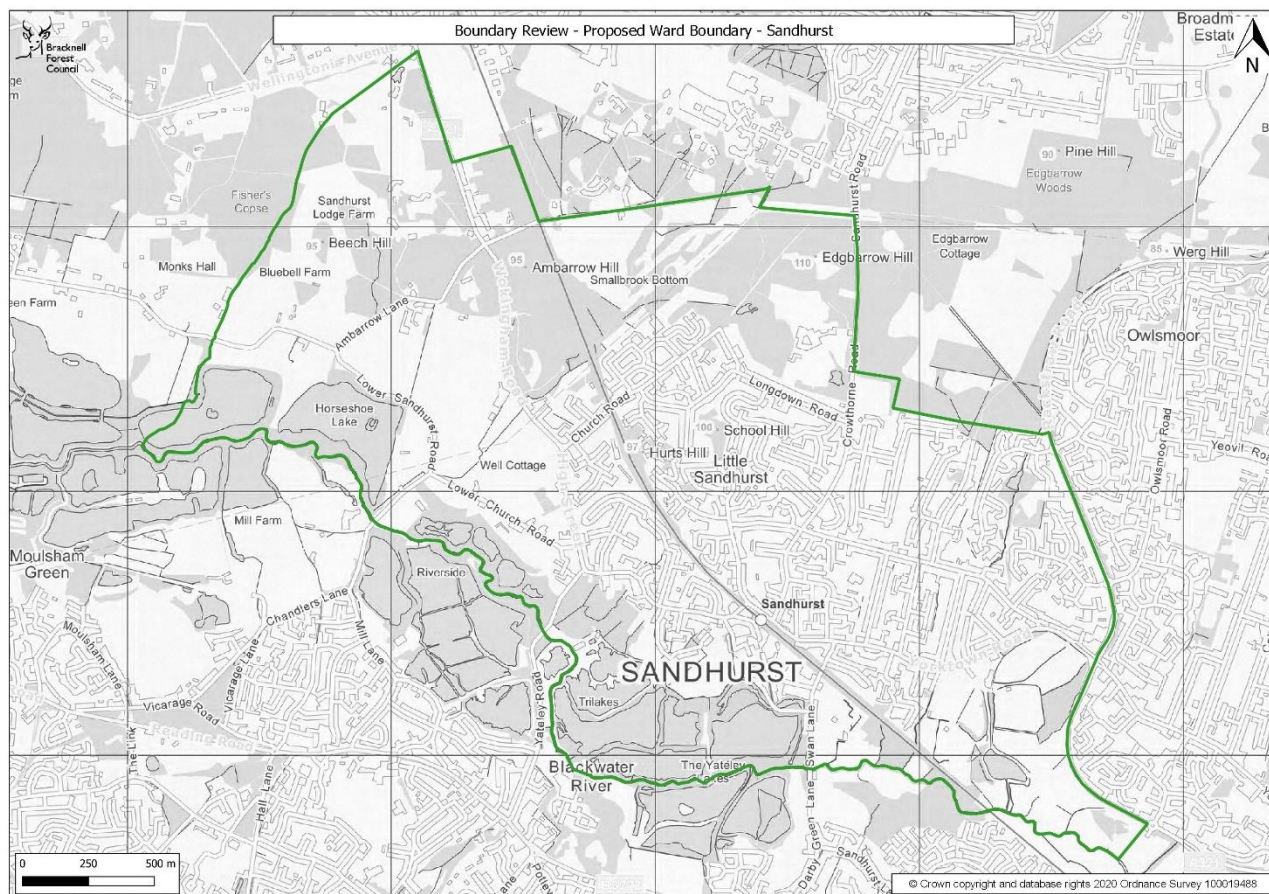
Priestwood and Garth ward has been largely maintained but with some expansion in the north and east to include residents residing within the Windsor parliamentary constituency boundary, however this approach helps maintain stronger community links, transport connections and access to amenities.



Sandhurst

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	6,997 (-8.1%)

The proposed Sandhurst ward encompasses the current wards of Little Sandhurst and Wellington and a large proportion of Central Sandhurst. Wellington College and its surrounding areas are currently included within the existing Little Sandhurst and Wellington ward, however it maintains better community links with Crowthorne rather than Sandhurst and therefore are included in the proposed Crowthorne ward.

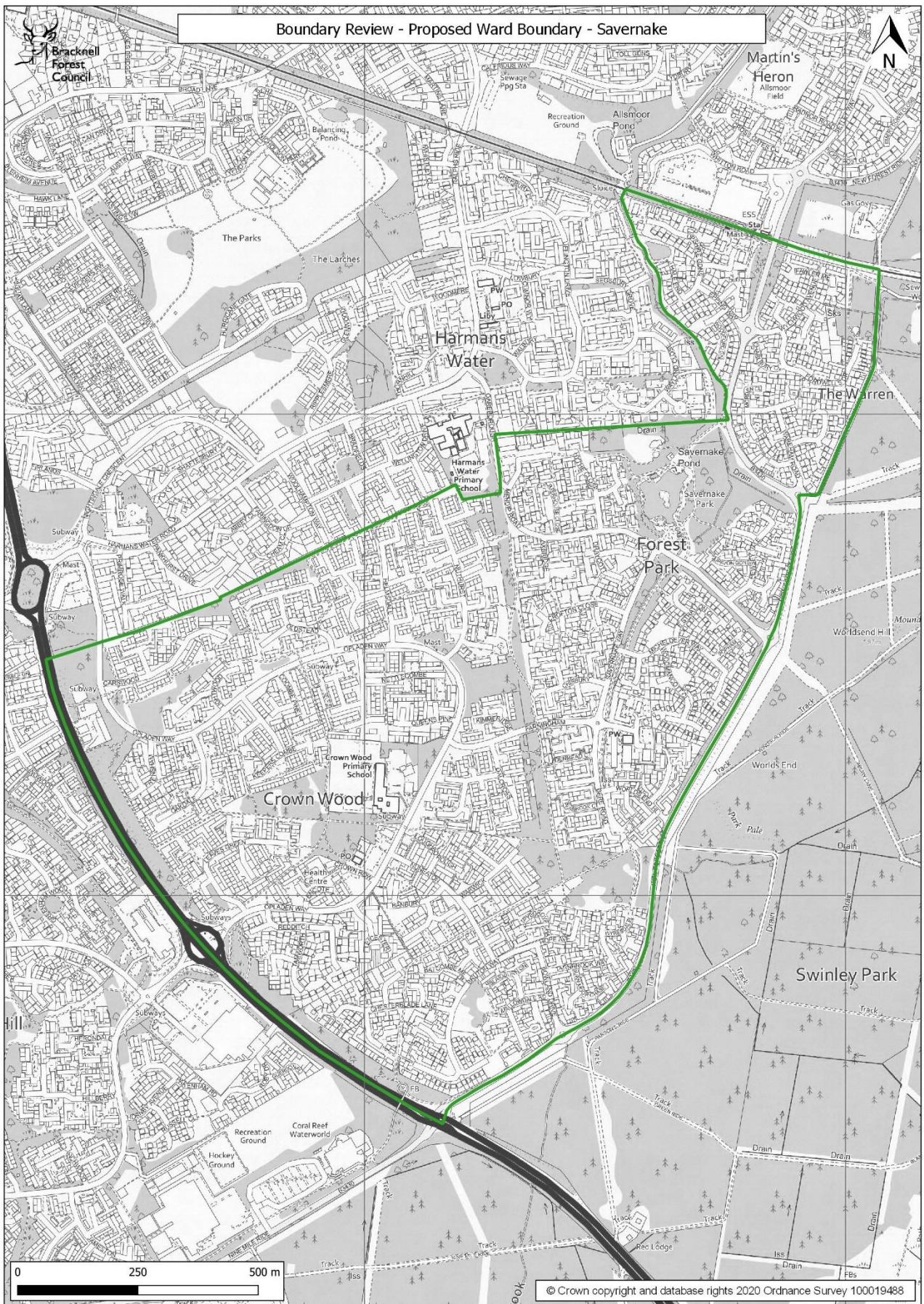


Savernake

Proposed number of councillors	3
Electorate and variance:	7,305 (-4%)

Savernake primarily encompasses all areas of the current Crown Wood ward but, has been slightly extended to the north to include The Warren. The community as whole includes three distinct areas: Crown Wood, Forest Park and The Warren.

The name 'Savernake' has been proposed to unite these communities taking account of 'Savernake Lake' which is a popular natural space at the centre of the proposed ward.

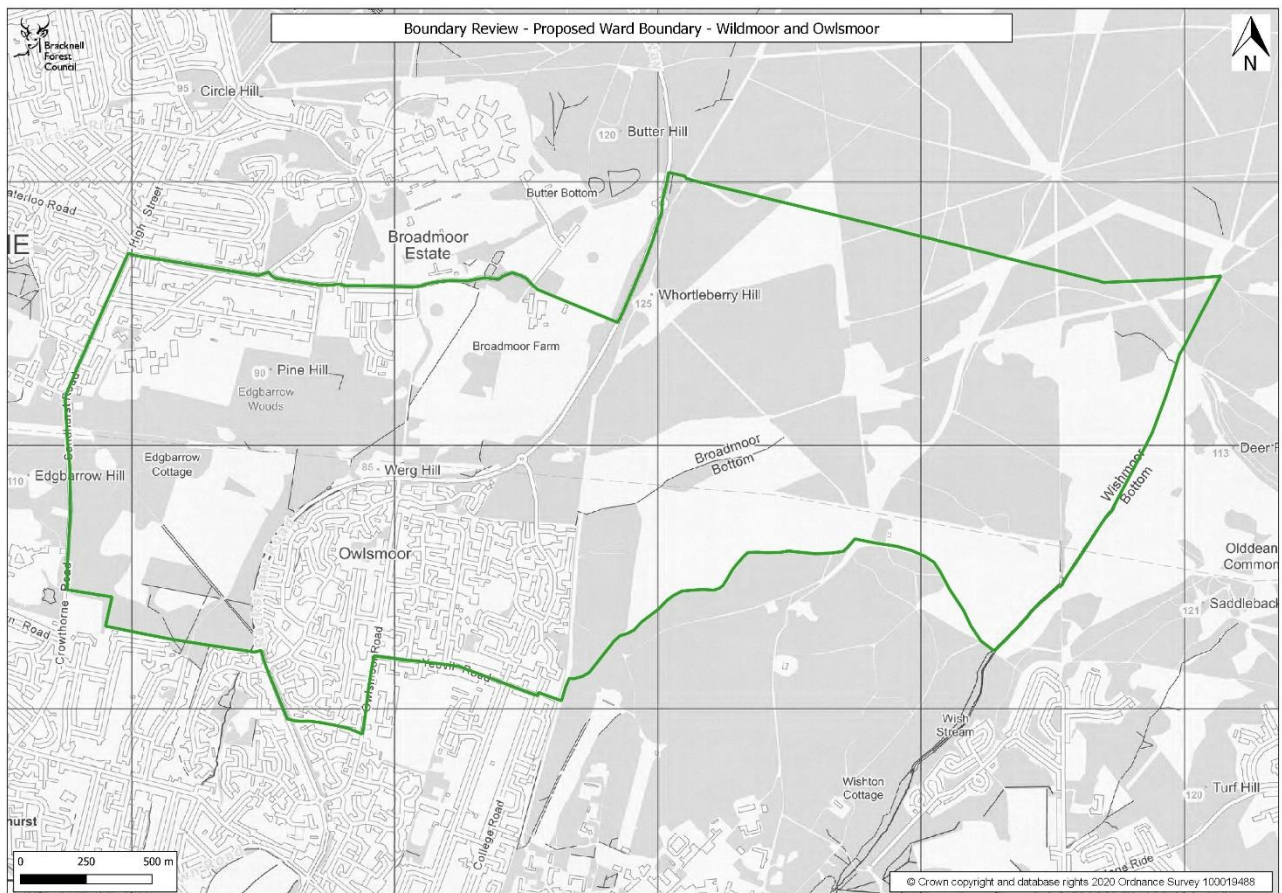


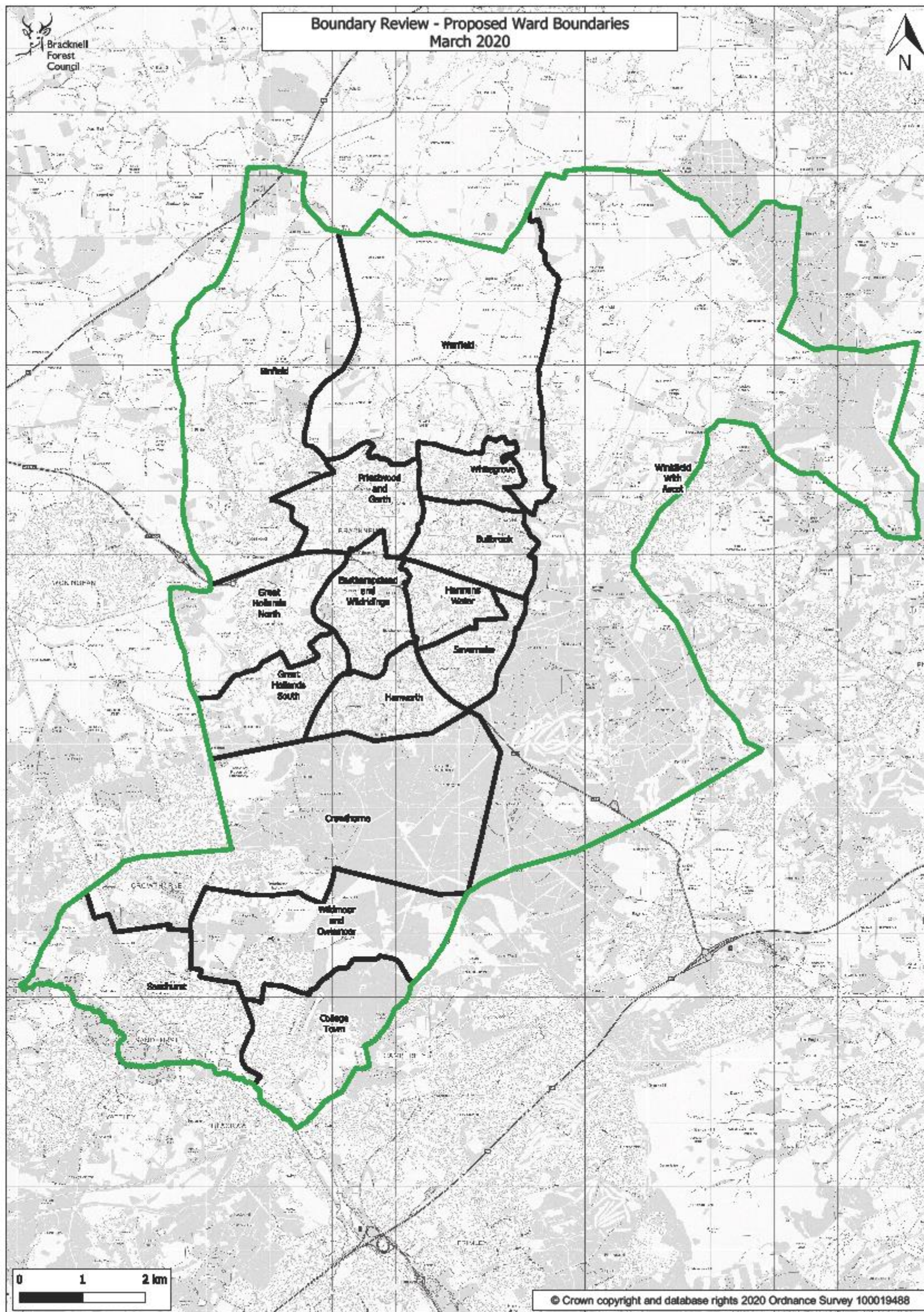
Wildmoor & Owlsmoor

Proposed number of councillors	2
Electorate and variance:	5,035 (-0.8%)

The ward is primarily rural with the population clustered to the west of the current Owlsmoor ward.

The existing boundaries of the current Owlsmoor ward have been largely maintained with an extension to the west to encompass the Wildmoor area of Crowthorne. This ensures better electoral equality.





The interactive map can be found [here](#).

Ward names

The names that have been proposed for each ward reflect the communities that are contained within them as far as possible and closely resemble existing ward names. This is considered to be the best approach in order to continue to foster established community identities and local ties. The name 'Savernake' has been proposed for the ward with a number of distinct communities reflecting a natural space important to all at the heart of the proposed ward.