

Earley and Woodley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
East Woodley	3	-9%
North Earley	3	9%
North Woodley	3	-9%
South East Earley	3	5%
South West Earley	3	-1%
South Woodley	3	-2%

East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley

53 The Council put forward proposals for three three-councillor East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards for this area, entirely contained within Woodley parish. Under the revised electorate forecasts discussed in paragraph 24–27, its North Woodley ward would have 11% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, rather than 10% fewer as under the initial forecasts. The Council stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Whitegates area should remain in an Earley ward or be in a Woodley ward. However, the majority view was that it is part of Earley parish and should therefore be in an Earley ward, with the minority stating that the physical links to Earley are weak and that it looks to Woodley. The Council stated that these wards used major roads as boundaries and kept the airfield development in a single ward. It also put forward alternative proposals for three-councillor East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards, which were based on a ‘minority’ that sought to minimise change to the existing wards.

54 Councillor Baker supported the creation of three-councillor wards within Woodley parish. However, he expressed support for the Council’s minority view, along with different ward names, his Coronation ward mirroring the Council’s minority view North Woodley, Loddon mirroring East Woodley and South Lake identical to West Woodley. He stated that his Loddon ward matches the existing ward, except for a small area in the north-east, which is transferred to Coronation ward. He added that this means Loddon Bridge Road does not have a boundary running along it. The councillor’s South Lake ward comprises the existing ward with the addition of the west Bulmershe area and avoids the current boundary along Woodlands Road. Finally, his Coronation ward reflects elements of the existing Coronation ward, but with the addition of east Bulmershe area and part of Loddon, discussed above. A resident put forward similar proposals to the Council’s ‘minority’ pattern, but proposed calling the wards Woodley Loddon, Woodley North and Woodley South.

55 A resident objected to the current inclusion of the Whitegates area of Earley parish in a Woodley ward. Another resident accepted that Whitegates is in a different parish, but that given the ‘population, it is a good mix’ and they should be in a Woodley ward. They rejected putting Whitegates in a ward with Sonning or putting in the existing Maiden Erlegh ward as they are separated by the A3290.

56 A resident expressed concern about the inclusion of the Mannock Way area in the existing Coronation ward, arguing they would be better served in Loddon ward – or East Woodley under the Council’s proposals. Finally, a resident stated that School Drive should be in South Lake ward, not Loddon, reflecting its access.

57 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note the comments about the Whitegates area, but this area cannot be included in Woodley without moving away from the uniform pattern of three-member wards. In addition,

there are objections to including this area in a Woodley ward. Therefore, we are placing Whitegates in an Earley ward, as discussed below.

58 We note that the Council's proposals secure good electoral equality with the exception of the -11% for North Woodley. They also address issues of access around School Drive and Mannock Way under the existing wards that were raised by residents.

59 We have also considered 'minority view' proposals, as supported by Councillor Baker. However, we have a number of concerns, particularly the boundary between Coronation and Loddon wards, which as flagged by a resident results in the Mannock Way area having no direct access into its ward. Hurricane Way is divided under the proposal. We do not consider these suggestions provide for effective and convenient local government, and these concerns are not offset by avoiding ward boundaries along Loddon Bridge Road and Woodlands Avenue. Indeed, we believe these roads make clear boundaries. In addition, Councillor Baker stated that his proposal places the east and west areas of Bulmershe communities in separate wards, while the Council's proposal keeps these together with the town centre at the centre. We consider the Council's proposal to use the town centre as a focus provides a stronger warding pattern than proposals that divide it.

60 Therefore, we consider that the Council's proposals provide the best basis for the draft recommendations in this area. We do, however, propose a small amendment to secure better electoral equality in North Woodley ward by transferring Hartigan Place to North Woodley. This road has access directly into the ward and would improve electoral equality in North Woodley to 9% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028.

61 We note that there was not agreement on the names for these wards, with a resident putting 'Woodley' at the front, while the Council used it at the end. The resident also retained the Loddon name for the Council's Woodley East ward. We have no particular view on the use of Woodley as a name at the front or end, but note that with two of the wards using compass points in their name, it would be unusual to have one with a geographical name, i.e. Loddon. We are therefore using the Council's names as part of our draft recommendations, but would welcome local views on the most appropriate names for these wards.

62 Our East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley wards would have 9% fewer, 9% fewer and 2% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively.

North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley

63 The Council proposed three-councillor North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley wards for this area. As discussed above in the East Woodley, North Woodley and South Woodley section, the Council stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Whitegates area should remain in an Earley ward or be in a Woodley ward. However, the majority view was that it is part of Earley parish and should therefore be in an Earley ward, with the minority stating that the physical links to Earley are weak and that it looks to Woodley. The Council also noted that by respecting the Earley parish boundary it was possible to secure a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards.

64 The Council also stated that it could not reach a consensus on whether the Shinfield North area should be in an Earley ward, with a minority considering the M4 a barrier to the rest of Shinfield. A resident put forward similar proposals to the Council, but proposed calling the wards Earley North, Earley South East and Earley South West.

65 Earley & Shinfield Liberal Democrats expressed broad support for the Council's proposals for this area, but proposed a number of small amendments between North Earley ward and South East Earley and West Earley wards to provide a stronger boundary along Gipsy Lane, Mill Lane and Wokingham Road.

66 Parish Councillor Chopping expressed support for the existing wards. A resident proposed transferring an area to the south of Lower Earley Way to Winnersh. However, this area only contains a few electors and would not make a viable parish ward within Earley parish. In addition, there is no other evidence of support for such a change. Therefore, we are not adopting this proposal.

67 One resident provided good evidence for including part of Shinfield North in an Earley ward. He argued that Shinfield North is separated from the rest of Shinfield by the M4 and that the Shinfield Rise estate has footpath links into the Whitegates area of Earley. He also pointed out that Ryhill Way has no direct access into Shinfield North ward or indeed Shinfield parish and only access into Earley. As a result, the resident argued that the area to the east of Shinfield Road should be included in Earley. A number of respondents proposed transferring the Ryhill Way area to Earley, citing a lack of direct access to Shinfield and use of services in Earley.

68 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As discussed in the Woodley section (above), we note that there is not total agreement on where the Whitegates area sits best, but putting it in a Woodley ward means moving away from the three-member pattern of wards. Therefore, we are placing Whitegates in an Earley ward, as suggested by the Council. Doing this means moving away from the existing Earley wards, as they need to be adjusted to accommodate the Whitegates area, as well as improve electoral equality of the existing wards.

69 We consider that the Council's proposals provide a good basis for the draft recommendations. We note the concerns about the Shinfield North area. Given the number of electors, moving this area would mean departing from the three-member ward pattern. Even just including the area to the east of Shinfield Road in an Earley ward, as suggested by a resident, would worsen electoral equality in Shinfield ward to over -10%, which we do not consider acceptable. In addition, we note that the Shinfield Rise area does have direct access into Shinfield, via Shinfield Road, even if it is closer in proximity to parts of Earley. However, we note that the Ryhill Way has no direct access into Shinfield (except for a single footpath) and that its links are directly into Earley. Transferring this area would require the creation of a parish ward of Earley parish and worsen electoral equality in Shinfield ward (discussed below) to 8% fewer electors than the district average by 2023. It would, however, improve in the Council's West Earley ward to 1% fewer, rather than 3% fewer. We consider that this amendment should be adopted because of the improved reflection of community identity.

70 We have considered the proposal from the Earley & Shinfield Liberal Democrats for an amendment to North Earley ward. This provides a good boundary, reflecting the access of the electors on these roads, albeit while moving away from the centre of road boundaries. However, we consider this a good boundary. While this arrangement worsens electoral equality in North Earley ward from 7% to 9% more electors than the borough average by 2028, it improves it in South East Earley ward from 8% more to 5% more. Therefore, on balance, we are persuaded to adopt these amendments.

71 We note that there was not agreement on the names for these wards, with a resident putting 'Earley' as a prefix, while the Council used it as suffix. The resident proposed a 'South West' ward, rather than 'South'. We have no particular view on the use of Earley as a suffix or prefix, but consider the use of South West sensible given that the two wards south of the A3290 contain south areas of Earley parish. We are therefore adopting the 'South West' element of the resident's ward name, but would welcome local views.

72 Our draft recommendations are for three-councillor North Earley, South East Earley and South West Earley wards which would have 9% more, 5% more and 1% fewer electors than the borough average by 2028, respectively.

Conclusions

106 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Wokingham, referencing the 2021 and 2028 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2021	2028
Number of councillors	54	54
Number of electoral wards	18	18
Average number of electors per councillor	2,420	2,455
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations

Wokingham Borough Council should be made up of 54 councillors serving 18 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Wokingham Borough Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Wokingham Borough Council on our interactive maps at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Parish electoral arrangements

107 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

108 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Wokingham Borough Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

109 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Earley, Finchampstead, Shinfield, Swallowfield, Wokingham and Woodley parishes.

110 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Earley parish.

Draft recommendations

Earley Town Council should comprise 25 councillors, as at present, representing nine wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Cutbush	4
Egremont	1
Hawkedon	4
Hillside	4
Maiden Erlegh	2
Radstock	4
Redhatch	1
St Nicolas	2
Whitegates	3

111 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Finchampstead parish.

Draft recommendations

Finchampstead Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Finchampstead North	7
Finchampstead South	6
Finchampstead West	3
Lower Wokingham	1

Have your say

116 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole borough or just a part of it.

117 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for area, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

118 Our website has a special consultation area where you can explore the maps. You can find it at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk

119 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by writing to:

Review Officer (Wokingham)
LGBCE
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

120 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Wokingham Borough Council which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

121 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

