COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2025

Finchampstead Parish Council Revision Paper

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Introduction and Summary

This revision paper has been produced following the FPCs initial response in April 2025 to WBCs consultation and to our rejection of its proposals in October 2025. (Appendix 1)

Subsequent discussions with residents, representatives of Barkham Parish Council and WBC have necessitated clarification on the final position of the FPC on the consultation on the draft proposals which completes its public phase in November 2025.

In summary and for the avoidance of doubt the Council resolved at its meeting on 6/11/25 to advise the WBC CGR working group that;

1) With regard to the Arborfield SDL, we withdraw the recommendation in our April 2025 response, confirmed by our response in October. We oppose the current consultation draft proposals for boundary change and recommend the retention of the existing Parish boundary between Finchampstead Parish and Barkham Parish in its entirety, which reflects the working Parties criteria and our own for consensus.
2) We agree to the recommendations for boundary Change between Finchampstead and Swallowfield as proposed in the current consultation draft and our original submission in April 2025
3) We agree to the recommendation for boundary change between Finchampstead and Wokingham Town Council as in ours and Wokingham Town Councils April 2025 submission
4) We agree to the recommendation for boundary change between Finchampstead and Wokingham Without Parish as detailed in our Initial response in April 2025 and the working parties current recommendation.

Fig 1: Map of Current Finchampstead Parish Boundary

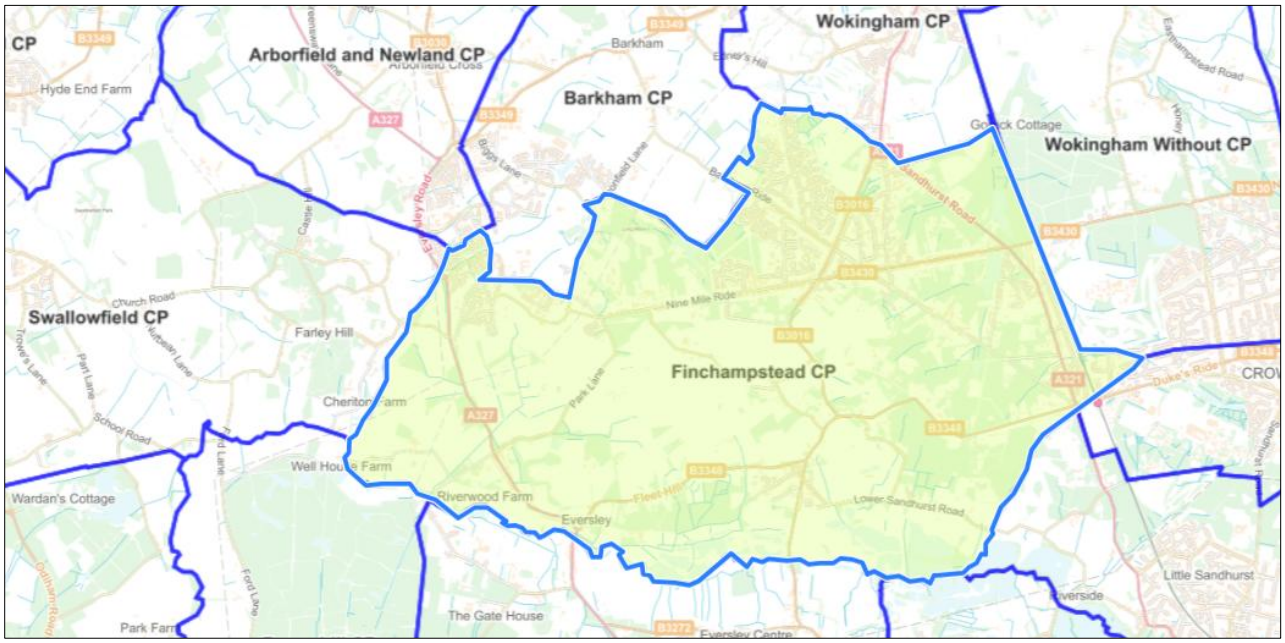
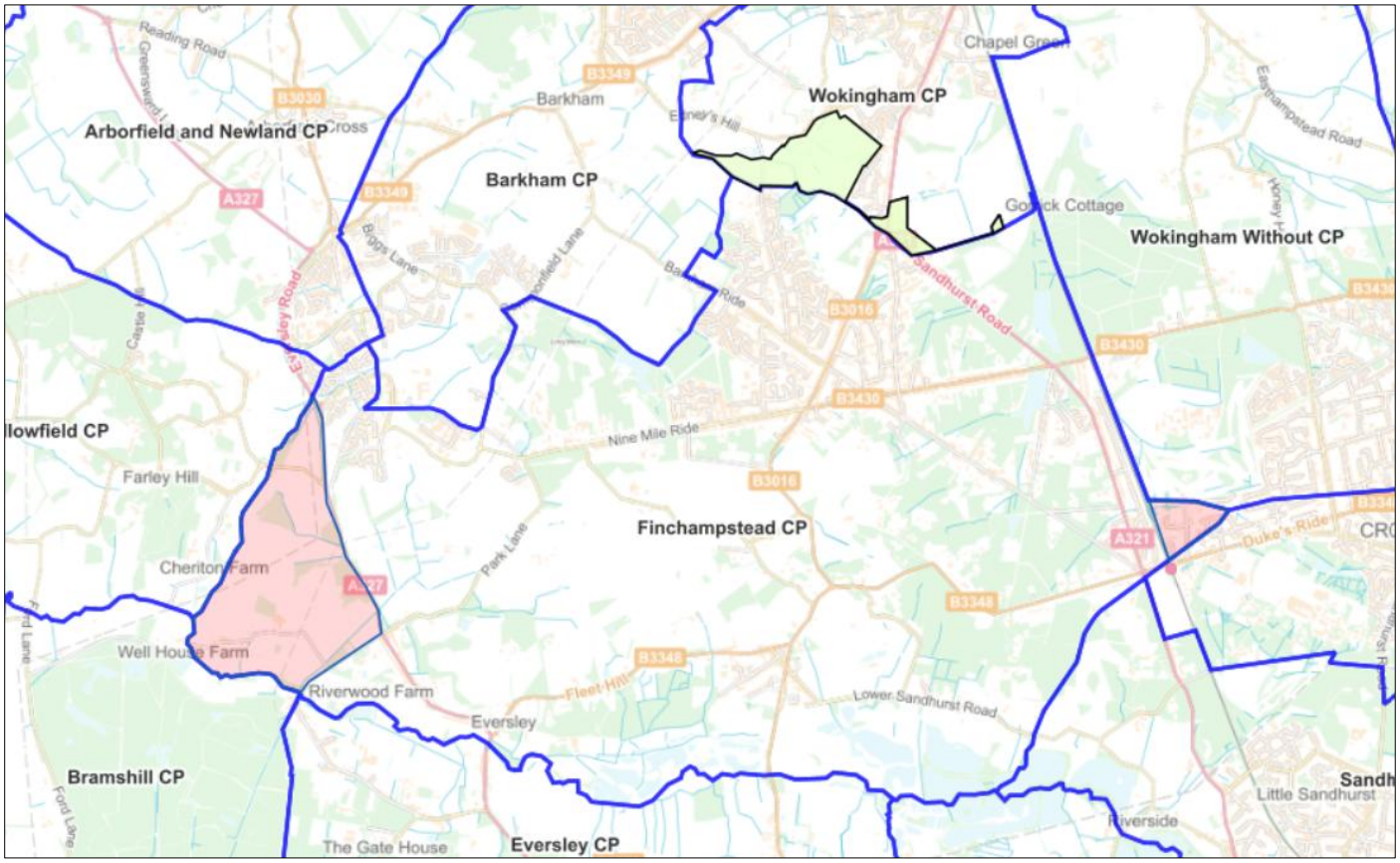


Fig 2: Map of Proposed Boundary Changes



Key:

Red shaded areas illustrate areas that FPC recommend relinquishing to neighbouring Parish Councils
Green shaded areas illustrate areas that FPC recommend acquiring from adjacent Parish Councils.

Arborfield Strategic Development Location (SDL)

The FPC submission (April 2025) has been superseded by our communication to the WBC CGR working group (October 2025) which opposes the proposal to alter the Finchampstead Parish Boundary with Barkham in this area.

Our original submission which recommended a boundary change was dependent on the creation of an individual Parish taking responsible for the whole SDL area. That has not transpired in the current CGR draft and we are opposed to the suggested boundary change in this area.

Having considered the original Barkham submission it is clear that we are in agreement as the following extract from their submission reveals

“the Finchwood Park development lies entirely within the Parish of Finchampstead. Residents are clear that they fall within the jurisdiction of Finchampstead Parish Council, contributing to more coherent governance and community identity in that area” (extract from Barkham Parish Council submission to the CGR review April 2025)

This statement chimes with the FPC submission and our experience of the residents and community in this area as Finchwood Park is closely associated with Finchampstead, located less than a mile from California Country Park and its amenities, Nine Mile Ride, and key local amenities such as the GP surgery, dental practices, garage, shops, and restaurants at California Crossroads.

Further; in the Barkham submission in relation to this area they state “the preferred option is to incorporate all the Arborfield Green development fully into Barkham Parish, while Finchwood Park remains in Finchampstead. This results in a split of the development area between two Parishes but preserves existing community identities and reflects logical geographical divisions” “As an alternative option Finchwood Park could be incorporated into Barkham, creating a single unified Parish encompassing the entire development area. However, this would represent a more significant change, potentially affecting established community ties and increasing administrative complexity”

It is these quotes and our original caveat which has seemingly been overlooked by the CGR review team when considering the reality of the community in this area and their subsequent recommendations.

In an attempt to assuage the proposals by the CGR review panel the Chairs of both Barkham and Finchampstead posited a compromise around the line of the boundary recommended in Finchwood Park. This could not be agreed and the current boundary between Finchampstead and Barkham should remain. This will also mean that the proposals for the memorial Woods and Rooks nest will also revert to the original boundaries.

There are clear advantages in retaining the current boundary status quo not least that Finchampstead, Barkham and Arborfield can work collectively as a tri partite Parish group to utilise resources to the benefit of the whole community as Barkham’s original submission illustrates “it has been suggested that the development (SDL) must fall within a single parish to foster a sense of community. However this is not necessarily the case. Crowthorne serves as an example of a thriving community that spans three parish councils and two borough councils while maintaining a strong communal identity. Despite this administrative division. Crowthorne has a vibrant community life supported by a high street and local amenities”

While Finchampstead cannot speak for Barkham given their previous comments to the review team we believe the retention of the current boundary between the Parishes is the best solution for the community for the immediate future and allows a solid platform for continued cooperation on cross Parish boundary issues affecting the wider community.

Swallowfield

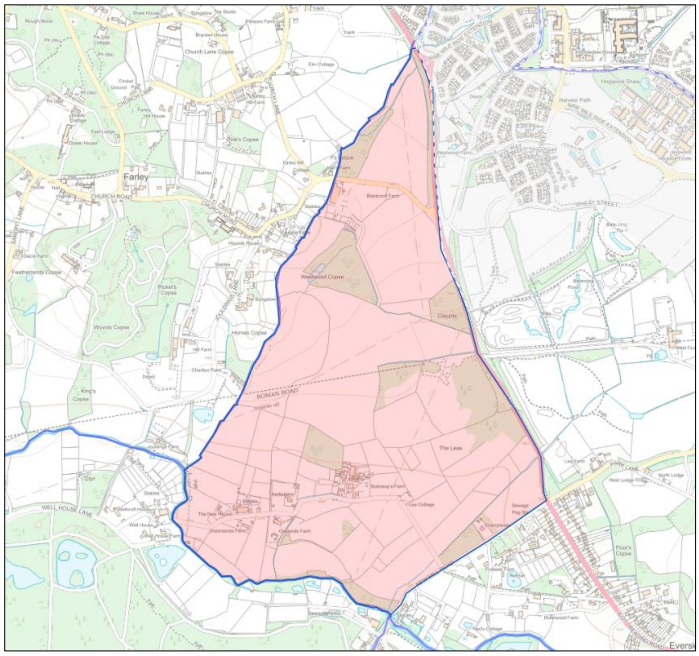
There is no change to our original recommendation to change the Parish Boundary with Swallowfield.

That is to adjust the boundary as indicated at Fig 3 below (in shaded pink) from the northern point of the FPC boundary along Reading Road until Park Lane and then continue west along New Mill Lane to the borough and county boundary.

The proposed changes have joint support from both parishes and are expected to bring the following advantages:

1. Communities will be better aligned with the parish they feel most connected to and represented by.
2. The redefined parish boundaries will reflect geographical logic and community patterns more accurately.

Fig 3: Map of Swallowfield - Recommended Boundary Changes with Finchampstead



Barkham

We refer to our original response to the consultation in April 2025.

"*One of the guiding principles in our consideration of the Community Governance Review is that Parish boundaries should be meaningful and appropriate to residents, particularly those who consider Finchampstead as their Parish home. This view is strongly supported by guidance from the Boundary Commission.*

Access to and from properties, particularly those that enter or exit primarily via roads within the existing Parish, are a key indicator of community alignment and identity.

The use of local facilities such as GP and dental services, convenience shops, garages, and restaurants are also an important measure of community identity. In addition, California Country Park and the Finchampstead Baptist Centre, which provides a range of recreational facilities, play a significant role in defining the local community. Properties along Barkham Ride are notably closer to these central Finchampstead facilities.

The new Covid Remembrance Wood, managed by WBC currently within Barkham Parish is directly adjacent to California Country Park. Existing footpaths and bridleways on the current parish boundary, would, we believe, be better served in terms of future stewardship and investment if included within the Finchampstead Parish boundary. Similarly, properties along Barkham Ride that are more closely associated with Finchampstead should also be included in the boundary revision

Rooks Nest Wood although to be part of the wider solar development project is almost entirely used by Finchampstead residents and entered via the extensive community of the California Crossroads conurbation. Finchampstead has an active investment programme in respect of repair and maintenance of footpaths and bridleways which would help to maintain this valuable community facility well into the future."

Finchampstead Parish Council is clear that the residents of the properties along Barkham Ride have more community identity with Finchampstead than with Barkham, being closer to the centre of Finchampstead, its shops restaurants and facilities. The proximity of California Country Park and the recreational facilities available at the FBC Centre provide strong signals for community identity in the area."

Our Councils view in relation to the above areas currently in Barkham remain, however we understand that Barkham Parish in their response to the working party caveated their position, to the effect that should the change in Parish boundary to include the Finchwood Park into Barkham not be achieved they would not support the changes as considered above. A position confirmed by a recent meeting between representatives of the two Councils.

Given the position Finchampstead has adopted with regard to Finchwood Park and the recommended retention of the boundary between our two Parishes, in the interests of consensus, the changes we have recommended above and in the consultation draft should not be pursued. If the current status quo is achieved, we will work closely with Barkham Parish to consider how appropriate support to facilities in their area used by Finchampstead residents can be achieved.

Wokingham Town

There is no change from our original submissions in the agreement between Wokingham Town Council and Finchampstead Parish Council to alter the Parish and Town Council boundaries as accepted in the current draft of the CGR as detailed below and in Fig 4.

The recommended boundary changes would incorporate the following areas into Finchampstead Parish:

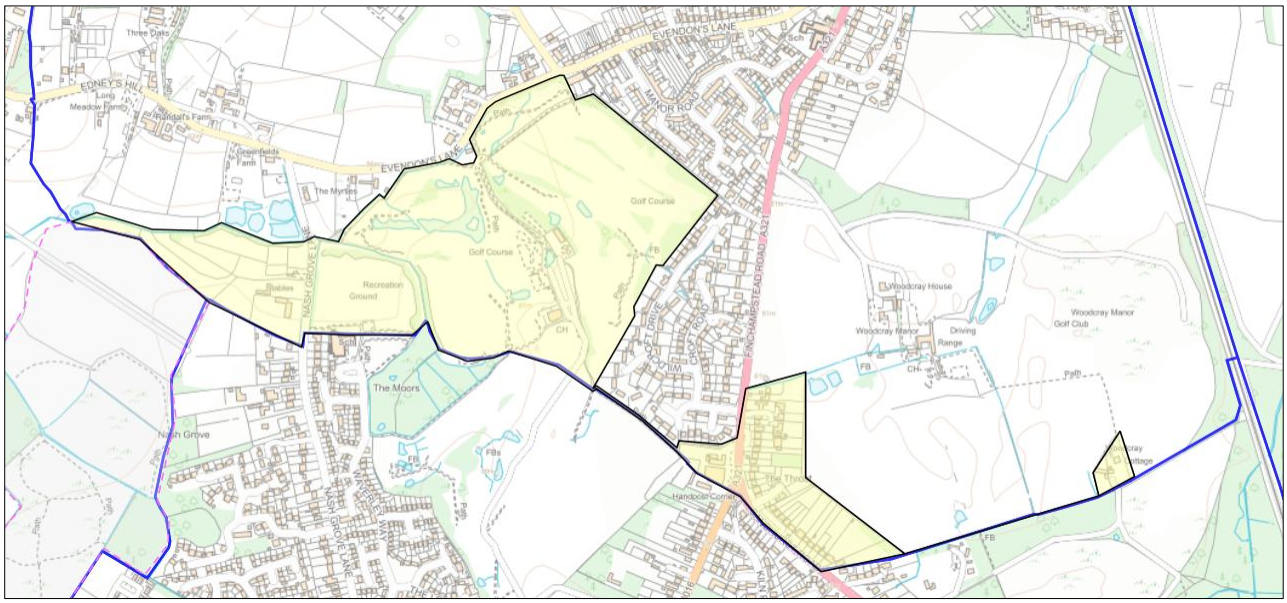
1. Eastern Finchampstead Road – Dwellings on the lower eastern side of Finchampstead Road through to Sandhurst Road (highlighted in the yellow-lined area), as well as Woodcray Cottage and The Barn, both accessible only via a private road within the current Finchampstead boundary.

2. Western Finchampstead Road and Sand Martins Golf Course – On the western side of Finchampstead Road, the revised boundary would follow the rear of properties in Russley Green and Wildcroft Drive, extending along the boundary of Sand Martins Golf Course. This would bring the entire golf course and the Ford garage into Finchampstead Parish. The proposed boundary would follow the natural line of the drainage ditch and terminate at Evendons Lane.

3. Waverley Recreation Ground and the Stables – Following the boundary shift to the edge of the golf course, the proposal includes extending the boundary to incorporate Waverley Recreation Ground, to the east of Nash Grove Lane, and the Stables to the west (currently in Wokingham Town Council and Evendons Ward). The playing fields and children's play area at the end of Waverley Way, adjacent to Waverley School, are used almost exclusively by Finchampstead residents. Many residents assume this land is managed by Finchampstead Parish Council, which has in fact funded its recent refurbishment, despite it falling outside the current boundary. The proposed new boundary would follow the drainage ditch, a natural landscape feature separating the two parishes.

The rationale for boundary change agreed by both councils was based on the access point to a property, particularly where it leads towards the centre of the local community. The properties included in the proposed adjustment are functionally and geographically closer to the Finchampstead community. They make regular use of amenities at California Crossroads and have already benefited from parish investment, with further projects planned, including improvements to connecting footpaths, bridleways, and cycle routes into Wokingham.

Fig 4: Map of Wokingham Town/Finchampstead - Agreed Boundary Changes



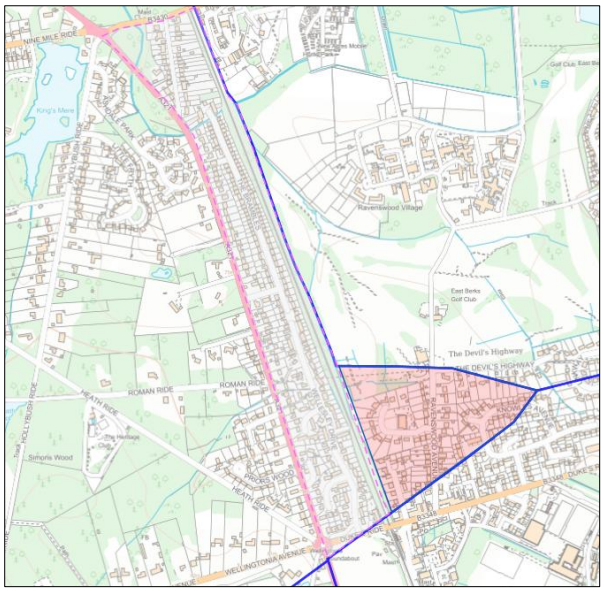
Eastern Parish Boundary

(bordering Wokingham Without / Crowthorne)

There is no change to the original recommendations on the boundary with Wokingham Without. The Parish boundary should be amended to the railway line Fig 5 with the area in pink (the Crowthorne triangle) transferring.

This change is agreed by both Parish Councils

Fig 5: Map of Eastern Parish Boundary (bordering Wokingham Without and Crowthorne



Key - the “triangle” area shaded pink is recommended to be transferred to Wokingham Without.

Appendix A

Finchampstead Parish Council Response to WBC CGR Consultation

(submitted 23rd October 2025)

Initial Statement and Position of Finchampstead Parish Council

Finchampstead Parish Council has considered in detail the draft proposals published by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) for boundary changes as part of the current Community Governance Review (CGR).

The Council resolves to reject and oppose the proposal to alter the parish boundary so that the area of Finchwood Park (Area E in WBC Consultation paper) is transferred from Finchampstead Parish to Barkham Parish.

We therefore recommend that the current boundary (ie; the boundary as it existed prior to this CGR) be retained in this area.

Reference to Finchampstead Parish Council's Original Submission

We remind the CGR Working Group of Finchampstead Parish Council's formal submission (full text in Appendix 1), which stated:

> *"The question of future Parish Council support to this new community has been posed by the CGR and whether Parish boundaries should be redrawn to assist clear community cohesion in this new area.*
>
> *There may be benefits in the creation of a new Parish for the area, or alternatively to widen the remit of one or more existing Parish Councils to cover the whole area.*
>
> *Finchampstead Parish Council considered this question and confirmed its willingness either to assume responsibility for the whole SDL or to work jointly with neighbouring parishes to develop the new community, including redrawing our boundary to the southern edge of the SDL.*
>
> *In discussions with Barkham Parish as part of the preparation of this response, it was clear that redrawing our northern boundary along Park Lane (to the south of the SDL boundary) would enable a more focused discussion between Barkham and Arborfield & Newland Parishes on the broader governance question.*

Discussions with representatives from Arborfield & Newland Parish Council also indicated that they believe such a change in the Finchampstead boundary would be helpful in reaching conclusions about future parish representation for the new community.

Whether that requires a boundary change for Barkham, Arborfield, or both, is a matter for those parishes and WBC as part of this review. What is clear is that there is a golden opportunity for enhanced community cohesion and support through appropriate parish boundary changes in this area.

"If the responsibility for the Arborfield SDL area cannot be settled in this CGR, then the Council considers that the status quo should remain until the community matures and its needs become clearer."

As is evident from the extract above, our proposal was conditioned on a comprehensive, single-parish solution for the whole of the Arborfield SDL.

Regrettably, and despite constructive initial discussions and indications of support from Arborfield & Newland PC, this solution has not been included in the current CGR proposal.

Grounds for Objection

Under the current draft proposals, the CGR would transfer approximately 947 properties from Finchampstead to Barkham, without any comprehensive solution to the wider question of coherent community governance for the whole area around the Arborfield SDL.

This provides no tangible benefit to residents, either existing or new.

Many residents of Finchwood Park have expressed concern at the proposed changes and the lack of clear governance identity that would result.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that this is not a semantic exercise about boundaries. The proposed change is not simply a line on a map but one that carries real implications for the community, governance, and the financial sustainability of Finchampstead Parish Council.

The proposed alteration to the parish boundaries and the resulting loss of such a significant number of properties from the parish tax base would have a serious and lasting impact on the residents of Finchampstead who would remain within the parish.

Finchampstead Parish Council has been recognised by residents and by WBC as a go ahead and proactive council with a proven record of delivering infrastructure improvements and extensive community investment. The reduction of nearly 1,000 properties from our tax base would restrict our ability to continue serving our community at current levels without a substantial rise in the annual precept. Even with an increase in precept of c20%, we would still face cutting our already very meagre staff numbers. To set a budget for the next financial year is proving beyond challenging, especially with the outcome of the CGR unknown.

The financial impact would not only severely impede our ability to offer grant support to local community groups, (which currently come from our precept receipts) but would also necessitate a very significant reappraisal of how we use CIL receipts, which would have to be re-focused on revenue generation.

We currently seek to support the delivery of major infrastructure both in Finchampstead and in neighbouring parishes, for example, the Arborfield Community Centre. We do not wish this to be compromised.

In our original submission, these potential consequences were fully recognised by FPC, but they were accepted as part of our proposals in the interests of achieving a cohesive and united community in Arborfield and delivering clear governance benefits to the wider area. The proposed CGR does not deliver this.

It is our understanding that we were the only parish to come forward to the review with such a significant offer and it is unfortunate that our sense of altruism has not been matched by others.
As that wider benefit has not been realised, Finchampstead Parish Council now faces the prospect of a very severe financial loss to no corresponding advantage elsewhere.

This outcome is unacceptable to both the Parish Council and the residents of Finchampstead.

Conclusion and Request

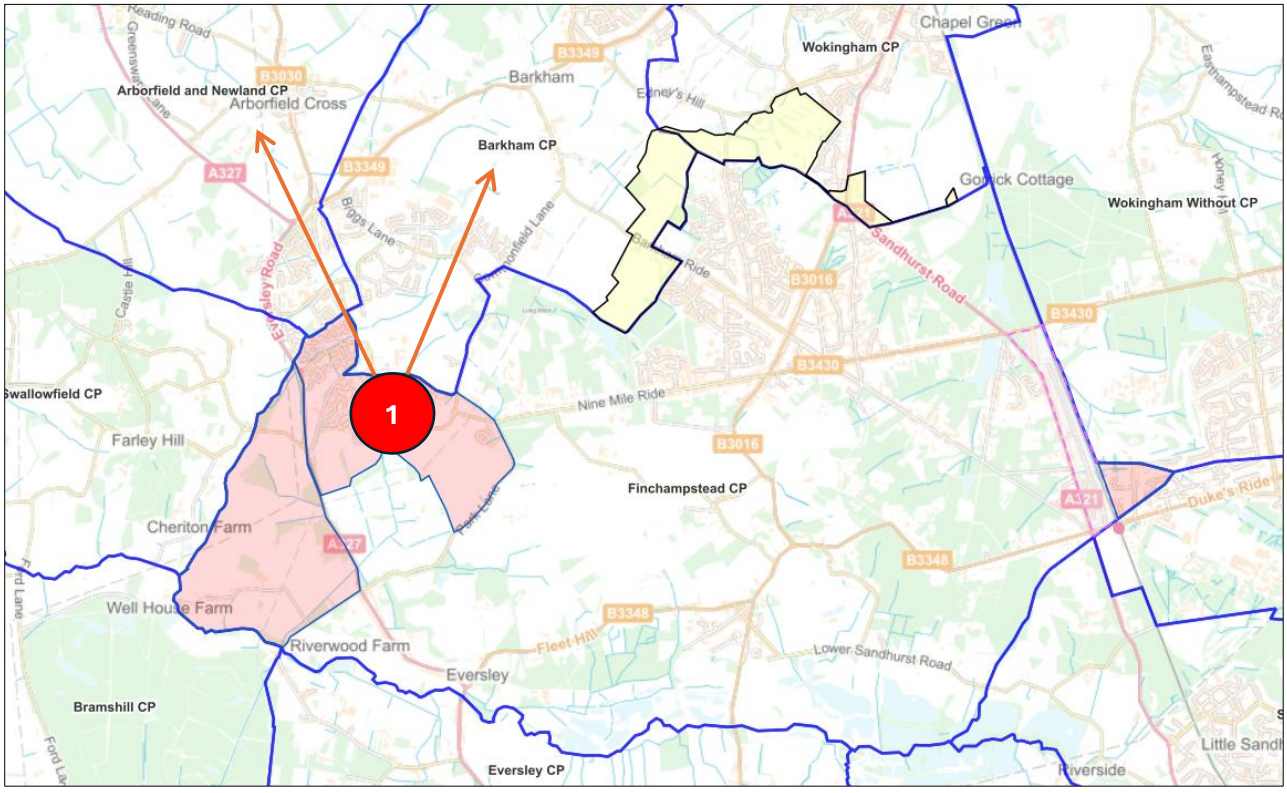
Finchampstead Parish Council strongly urges the CGR Panel to retain the existing parish boundary in the Finchwood Park area pending any future review that might deliver a unified governance solution for the entire Arborfield SDL.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the CGR panel to discuss these concerns before any final recommendations are made.

Our Ward Councillors have been copied into this correspondence, and we ask for their continued support in representing the Parish Council's position.

Appendix 1

The following extract is taken directly from Finchampstead Parish Council's formal submission to the Community Governance Review (submitted on 29th April 2025):



1 Arborfield Strategic Development Location (SDL)

Part of the Arborfield SDL, specifically Finchwood Park, currently lies within the Finchampstead Parish boundary.

The original strategic vision for the SDL was to create a high-quality new village and a sustainable community, including:

- Up to 3,500 new homes
- Schools and sports pitches
- A district centre with a food store, shops, community centre, and leisure centre
- Restaurants, cafés, and other typical district centre uses
- Children's play parks, including a skate park
- Community gardens and allotments
- Nature parks
- New roads, footpaths, and cycle and bridleways

Finchampstead Parish Council is one of the four Parish Councils that, for historical reasons, intersect in the SDL area, and we have all been fully engaged in discussions about the development since its inception.

However, concerns have been raised that liaison meetings between the Parish Councils covering the area and the developers have diminished as construction progresses. There are also concerns that elements of the development may now differ from the original vision.

The wider Finchampstead Parish community has benefited significantly from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments as a result of the housing development in this area in recent years. This has enabled us to fund infrastructure improvements across established Finchampstead communities, which have been affected by increased traffic, pressure on local services, and general disruption resulting from the SDL. Our ongoing investment programme is designed to address these effects, with notable examples including:

- Contributions to the remodelling of California Crossroads
- Improvements to footpaths and bridleways
- Enhancements to California Country Park
- Grants to schools, voluntary organisations, and community groups
- Remodelling of the "war memorial" Junction on Jubilee Road
- Rooks nest woods access improvements (In Barkham but extensively used by Finchampstead residents)
- Provision of playground equipment at Waverly Way open space (In Wokingham Town but almost exclusively used by Finchampstead residents)

The Community Governance Review has posed the question of whether future parish council support for this new community would be best served by redrawing parish boundaries to promote clearer community cohesion in the SDL area. There may be merit in creating a new parish for the area to support this objective. Finchampstead Parish Council believes that the Arborfield SDL, including Finchwood Park, should form a cohesive community represented by a single parish, ensuring effective governance and encouraging a strong sense of community identity and enabling future investment in the maintenance of facilities and infrastructure.

Alternatively, expanding the remit of one or more existing Parish Councils to encompass the entire SDL could achieve the same result. This is ultimately a matter for Wokingham Borough Council to determine through the CGR process. Finchampstead Parish Council has considered this question and is open to either assuming responsibility for the entire SDL or working in partnership with neighbouring parishes to support the development of the new community. We are also open to redrawing our parish boundary to follow the southern edge of the housing development minus the SANG, along Park Lane. It should be noted that while the proposed allotment site off Park Lane currently lies within Finchampstead Parish, it may fall within the Arborfield SDL if the parish boundaries are altered. In the event of such a change, Finchampstead Parish Council may continue to manage the site, or may consider transferring responsibility to the parish in which the site will then be located. This is not a matter for the governance review or a specific recommendation on boundary changes, but it is important that the review team is aware and that arrangements with WBC regarding this allotment site are already well advanced.

In our discussions with Barkham Parish Council during the preparation of this response, it was clear that if Finchampstead were to recommend moving its northern boundary south to Park Lane, this would allow a more focused discussion to take place between Barkham and Arborfield Parish Councils on the broader governance arrangements for the SDL.

Our discussions with representatives from Arborfield and Newlands Parish also indicated that they believe such a change to the Finchampstead boundary would be helpful in reaching a resolution on future parish representation in the SDL. Whether that results in a boundary change for Barkham, Arborfield, or both is a matter for those parishes and Wokingham Borough Council to decide through this review. What is clear is that there is now a golden opportunity to strengthen community cohesion and support through parish boundary adjustments in this area.

An adjustment to the Finchampstead boundary would also allow for a revision to the Swallowfield boundary, which could then include some existing Finchampstead properties where residents (we believe), would more naturally identify with Swallowfield as their community. (See the Swallowfield section for more details.)

However, it is recognised that such changes may be unpopular with current residents in the affected areas, particularly due to differences in precept charges. It is worth noting that Finchampstead Parish currently has the second lowest precept in the borough.

Existing Parish Boundary

To support Parish Council discussions and promote community cohesion in relation to the Arborfield SDL, Finchampstead Parish Council would be willing to cede the area north of Park Lane (Finchwood Park), with the exception of the West Court SANG, which is extensively used by Finchampstead residents and which the Council wishes to retain and promote within its area. The proposed boundary would therefore be redrawn along Park Lane, extending westward to Reading Road.

If a decision on the future governance of the Arborfield SDL is not made during this CGR, then Finchampstead Parish Council recommends maintaining the current boundaries. This would allow time for the SDL community to mature and its needs to become clearer, particularly as other large-scale developments emerge in Wokingham and as the role, function, and resources of parish councils evolve in response to wider local government restructuring.