

Ref. Submission 37031 Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley, Hyde, Godshill, Woodgreen, Hale.

*Despite favourable comments on our submission the Boundary Commission's Draft Proposal for our area confirms the NFDC proposal (February 2020) without amendment and therefore agrees that expediency - getting the 'right' numbers of voters for each district councillor, should be the main aim of the consultation, regardless of whether residents will be in the right, most suitable ward.

* It is therefore convenient for the B.C. to totally ignore its own inconvenient aim that wards should 'reflect community interests and identities....' (a Legal Factor) the NFDC/BC proposal simply deletes the existing Forest North West ward and splits up the 5 parishes in our proposal to join 3 different existing wards, (the proposed warding actually severs North Gorley from South Gorley) none of which share the identity or interests of the 5 parishes and their 3,000+ residents, as described in our submission - and which the B.C. report refers to as 'strong supporting evidence'.

*This aim also states that boundaries should be identifiable and natural or physical boundaries should be considered - our proposal was for a ward of 5 geographically linked parishes all situated to the east of the A338 and the river Avon, but these features separate Woodgreen and Hale from the rest of Downland, and as NFDC points out (Warding Proposals Feb 2020 Apx 1) 'The parishes in the proposed (Downland) ward... share a common rurality that look towards Cranbourne and Salisbury' - which Wood green and Hale do not share - their 'rurality' being the same as the other parishes in our proposal; but these two parishes will have the advantage of a District Councillor for their ward and will not be made part of a shared Fordingbridge ward, which is urban and increasing in size and population due to obligatory house building in 3 areas of the town.

* We stated very clearly that none of the parishes wanted to be attached to urban wards in Ringwood or Fordingbridge because ours are rural parishes, they have large areas within the National Park and settlements all along its western edge and have a very different way of life and a separate planning authority.

*We object to the dismissive statement in the B.C. Report 'we note that Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley does have direct links into Ringwood. Moreover, although they may face different issues, Godshill and Hyde parishes have links into Fordingbridge' we assume these unspecified 'links' are meant to balance or cancel out our acknowledged 'strong evidence' !

*This 'numbers balancing' system - rather than more attention by councillors to local circumstances and how best people's interests can be served, may lead to more convenient government for the council, whether it proves to be more effective will depend on the calibre and capability of officers not on equality of voter numbers.

*We consider this consultation to be a democratic failure on the part of the Boundary Commission and we are disappointed that NFDC has shown a lack of concern or interest in the wishes of the parishes that make up its boundary with the western border of the National Park, but with the support of the B.C. the council has averted the formation of what would have been a strong electoral rural ward.

Letter sent to B. Commission and to the group of New Forest District Councillors responsible for NFDC's decision.

Decision - Hyde and Godshill to join Fordingbridge.

Ellingham Harbridge & Ibsley to join Ringwood North.

Woodgreen to remain with Downland