I am one of the West Berkshire Councillors representing the Falkland Ward of Newbury. 
I attach my submission for your attention.

Best wishes

Adrian Edwards
PROPOSAL FOR ELECTORAL REVIEW FOR FALKLAND WARD

An electoral review will be commencing soon for West Berkshire Council and the following are proposals for the review team to consider.

Ward Councillors    Howard Bairstow (HB)  Adrian Edwards (AE)

Geography

The Falkland Ward is the most southerly of the Newbury Town Wards and its southern border is adjacent to the Hampshire County boundary and runs along Wash Water past the Woodpecker public house for several hundred yards, but does not go on to Spring Gardens, which is in the Kintbury Ward. The Falkland Ward boundary follows the Andover Road (A343) north and includes all the roads and houses on both sides of the road until it reaches the Gun public house. Although the boundary continues north along Andover Road, only the houses on the west side of the road are in the Ward. At Buckingham Road, where the St Bartholomew’s school is located, the boundary follows Buckingham Road on the west side until it reaches Fifth Road. It follows Fifth Road on the south side until it reaches Salcombe Road. There the boundary crosses the road and only includes the houses on the western side until it reaches the Enborne Road where it turns left and includes all the houses and roads on its southern side. The boundary finishes at Enborne Gate Farm. However, the Ward also encompasses a small development on the northern side of the Enborne Road, Sunderland Gardens and Astley Close and two houses adjacent to this development, numbers 117 and 119 Enborne Road. The Ward boundary goes south, including Enborne Gate Farm, passing John Rankin Schools and follows the eastern boundary of the Civil War battle ground until it meets Essex Street and moves south along Enborne Street until it reaches Conifer.
Crest. The boundary continues along Conifer Crest until it joins the Andover Road, just north of Sandpit Hill. (See Newbury Town Council Map)

Infrastructure

There are 2 principal roads which access the Ward. These are the A343, the Andover Road, which accesses the eastern boundary while the Enborne Road passes along the northern side. Buckingham Road which links the A343 with the Enborne Road, passes along the northern border of the Ward. At the mini-roundabout at the Gun public house, Essex Street effectively bisects the north and south aspects of the Ward.

There is a small parade of shops at Essex Street with a Sainsburys’ petrol filling station which includes a provisions shop some 200 yards further away along the A343.

Within the Ward are 4 schools; St Bartholomews comprehensive secondary and John Rankin Infants and Junior schools in the north, with Park House comprehensive school and Falkland primary school in the south, the latter off the A343, the Andover Road. Two churches, with attached community halls, are located off the A343; one Anglian St Georges and a Roman Catholic, St Francis de Sales. There is the Wash Common Library within the Wash Common estate and a nearby Community Association Hall. There are 2 public houses in the Ward, the Woodpecker at Wash Water on the furthest southern part of the Ward while the Gun is midway at the Essex Street junction, adjacent to the Falkland Memorial.

There are bus routes through the Ward linking from the southern part down to the town, although these tend to be curtailed after working hours and on Sundays.
Apart from a small number of retail outlets, there are no commercial or business premises in the Ward.

Population and Councillor Numbers

The electorate of the Ward at the time of this report was 4880. This Ward is supported by 2 District and 4 Town Councillors. The 2 District Councillors are also Town Councillors.

The population is well integrated as many of the residents from the south send their children to schools outside their residential areas of south or north to the secondary schools although with the primary schools most of the children go to the schools nearest to their homes. Some of the southern village residents outside the Ward send their children to the Falkland Ward schools as do some from over the border in Hampshire.

There will be a significant increase in the population of the Ward in the next 4 years with the development of Sandleford Park to the east of Warren and Kendrick Roads which are within the boundaries of the Ward. Over 400 houses are proposed on the south-west Part of this development. This will have an effect on the political management of the Ward and the number of Councillors. However with a logical re-alignment of the current Ward (see below), it is believed that an enlarged Ward in this residential area can be properly managed in the initial stages of the development by the existing number of Councillors. As the houses will be built in stages of around 100 per annum, consideration will need to be given on the formation of a new Ward to include the north-eastern part of this Sandleford Park development.

As the Ward is mainly residential, the main concern of the residents are the roads, traffic, schools and planning applications or the large development at Sandleford. There are current issues over the potential closure of the Wash Common Library and the redundancy of a schools crossing patroller in Valley Road. Both councillors are
involved with the potential continuation of the library under volunteer management and the re-institution of the crossing patrol under a different management and funding.

Re-alignment of Ward Boundaries

There are a number of ward boundaries which are either illogical geographically or irrational. These are;

Sunderland Gardens, Astley Close and numbers 117 and 119 Enborne Road. These streets and houses are divorced from the other Ward houses along the southern part of Enborne Road. It is recommended that these are included in the neighbouring Ward of St. Johns. (approximately 86 electors)

Salcombe Road. The boundary bisects this road from east to west. It is recommended that the entire road is included in Falkland Ward. (approximately 76 electors)

Oaken Grove. There is one house furthest west in Oaken Grove which is in the neighbouring Ward of Kintbury. It is recommended that this house be included in the Falkland Ward. (2 electors).

Enborne Street. The Ward boundary proceeds along the eastern side and turns into Conifer Crest with The Grange located in the neighbouring Ward. Geographically it would be logical for the boundary to continue to Andover Drove, then south to include the eastern side of this road and link up with Wash Water. The boundary should then extend to the Woodpecker pub where it joins the southern Ward boundary. The increase in the Ward electors from The Grange and Spring Gardens would be in the region of 65.

Monks Lane. There are 9 houses in Monks Lane which are in the electoral register for Falkland Ward. The entire length of this road is in the St Johns Ward and it is illogical to have these 9 houses in Falkland Ward. It is therefore recommended that these are transferred to St Johns Ward (18 electors).
With the new proposed geographical boundary, there would be a net increase in the electorate by 39 which is considered manageable.

Work Load

Despite the fact there are 2 Councillors serving the Ward, any query or request from a resident is addressed to the Councillor whom the person knows but occasionally it goes to both and there has to be a decision on who deals with it. The number of letters or emails received averages around 30 – 35 each day although most are sent by email. This is common throughout the year with less around August and at Christmas. Some of these emails are Town Council and Outside Bodies related. The Councillors are allocated to the following West Berkshire Council committees;

Licencing. Normally quarterly but can be convened at other times whenever the need arises. HB.

Western Area Planning Committee. Every 3 weeks with a number of pre-meeting site visits which occupy a whole or part of a morning. HB and AE

Appeals Panel As and when required. HB and AE

Heritage Champion. Ad hoc occasions. Could be daily or weekly. AE

Asset Management Group. Monthly. AE


West Berkshire Heritage Group. Bi-monthly. AE

Outside Bodies and Organisations

Newbury Town Council Weekly. HB and AE

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Fortnightly AE

Berkshire NHS Health Trust Sometimes weekly, otherwise fortnightly AE
St Bartholomews School Foundation Trust HB and AE

Newbury Almshouse Trust. Quarterly AE

Patient Participation Group, Wash Common Surgery Bi-monthly AE

Hours of Work

An accurate figure of how many hours is spent by the 2 Councillors can only be made if a daily record is maintained by them, which is not done at present. However an estimate has been carried out which includes time spent on travelling as well as time to read reports and agendas, and reading emails, responding to them and attending meetings. As both are retired, it has resulted in both being full time Councillors. Based on diary engagements and meetings over the last 5 weeks, the estimated time is around 45 hours per week for AE and 25 hrs for HB.

However, unless there is a significant change in tasking, or one of the two Councillors becomes long term sick, the current representation for the Ward should continue. It is easier for the Ward to be represented if one of the two councillors is on holiday or is ill short time. In the event of an emergency situation or a planning issue, one would be normally be available to deal with it. Breaking up the Ward into several single Ward members would not be a credible alternative.

Conclusions

The Falkland Ward is the largest populated and has the largest area of land of all the Newbury Town Wards. With an electorate of around 4880, the current Councillors consider it can be managed effectively by the existing 2 Councillors, even though the electorate is relatively higher than other Wards in the District. A suggested re-alignment of the Ward boundaries will not make a significant difference to the management of the Ward. As and when the Sandleford Farm development is built, there will eventually need to be a re-appraisal
of the Ward boundaries. This will not be necessary until the second year after the development starts.

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