

(C Sec)

1. In 1974 North Berkshire was transferred to Oxfordshire and a new County boundary was formed between Berkshire and Oxfordshire across the Berkshire Downs following the local parish boundaries.
2. As a result of the transfer the White Horse of Uffington, a 2,000 year old hill figure and ancient monument of historic and national importance, which had always been used as the County emblem of Berkshire and formed part of the County Coat of Arms and used as an emblem for many County organisations, eg Berkshire Yeomanry, was transferred into the administrative County of Oxfordshire. Many Berkshire people were angered at the loss of the County symbol and a petition was received from 7,000 signatories requesting the new Berkshire County Council to take action to restore the White Horse to Berkshire. The County Council came to the view, however, that no action could usefully be taken at that time and a new Coat of Arms was designed, incorporating a Black Horse.
3. In adhering to Parish boundaries, the Boundaries Commission used lines on a map which are not readily discernible on the ground. The Ridgeway, the Ancient Green Road, which pre-dates even the White Horse and runs the entire length of the Berkshire Downs, is generally thought to be the County boundary but is not. Instead the County boundary zig zags north and south of the Ridgeway so that parts of Berkshire lie north of and parts of Oxfordshire lie south of this line.
4. It would be logical, therefore, to seek to constitute the Ridgeway as the County boundary between Oxfordshire and Berkshire with a slight deviation northwards at Uffington Castle to ensure that the White Horse returns to Berkshire. One mile west of Uffington Castle lies another famous ancient monument, the long barrow known as 'Waylands Smithy' which is immediately north of the Ridgeway. A further slight deviation of the boundary from the Ridgeway at this point would ensure that this historic land mark returns to Berkshire as well.
5. If the Ridgeway became the County boundary, one farm in Berkshire would transfer to Oxfordshire and some 30 farms and cottages including one National Trust property would revert to Berkshire.
6. In D of E Circular 33/78 the Boundary Commission stated that they would be seeking to commence Reviews of County Boundaries during 1984-89 and have indicated that only uncontroversial reviews affecting the County boundary will be considered in the intervening period. Consultations will need to be carried out, therefore, with local authorities and members of the public who would be affected by the proposal to establish the degree of support or opposition that exists.

The Committee is advised to RECOMMEND:

That Oxfordshire and Berkshire local authorities and members of the public be consulted on the proposal to constitute the line of The Ridgeway as varied to include the White Horse and Waylands Smithy on the Berkshire side, as the County Boundary between Oxfordshire and Berkshire.