

**APPENDIX 4**

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION  
PRIORS GREEN, LITTLE CANFIELD/TAKELEY**

**Your views are needed – please refer to the information in this leaflet before telling the Council your views. This will help the Council to decide what if any boundary or other changes are needed in the future.**

**Why is this review taking place?**

Planning permission was given a number of years ago to develop land at the old Takeley Nurseries site (now known as Priors Green) for residential use. The development crosses the historic boundary between the parishes of Takeley and Little Canfield so that part of the development falls into each parish.

The original intention was for some 387 residential units to be built on the Takeley side of the boundary, and 250 in Little Canfield. Unlike at the Rochford Nurseries site in Birchanger and Stansted (now known as Foresthall Park), the boundary does not divide individual properties or streets as the phases of the development are enclosed wholly in one parish or the other.

Both of the communities of Little Canfield and Takeley are parished areas and elect parish councils to govern their affairs at local level. Takeley is much the larger of the two communities and it seems therefore that Priors Green will have a greater relative impact on the parish of Little Canfield. Takeley presently has 2,345 electors and elects 11 parish councillors. On present boundaries, it is expected to grow to 3,028 electors in five years time. Little Canfield contains 636 electors and is expected to grow to 713 electors in five years. There are presently seven parish councillors. Before the occupation of the new development site there were fewer than 250 electors in the parish, and this illustrates the scale of the change that has taken place.

The Council decided that a review of the boundaries and the parish arrangements at Priors Green is necessary to try to establish the community interests and identities of the residents of the new site, and to reflect that in the boundaries to be agreed. It is not automatic that the boundary will change as this will depend on the views expressed by local residents at this stage of the review. However, the District Council has the necessary legal powers to change boundaries, and to create, abolish, group or merge parishes following a suitable period of consultation.

In conducting this review, Uttlesford must have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and provides for the effective and convenient delivery of local services.

The consultation now being undertaken is intended to establish how those objectives can best be met.

In deciding its preferred option of no change to the existing boundaries, the Council considered a range of different options suggested during the initial stage of the review. Some of these options were suggested by local residents at that time.

The Council will consider unifying the whole of the Priors Green site within a single parish, provided that option can be demonstrated to have strong or majority support within the community. It is not presently clear that this is the case and so local

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residents are being invited to express their preference for a range of options, as listed on the voting form enclosed with this leaflet.

The Council will use this information to decide on the option to be agreed.

Whatever is decided, the scheduled parish elections in May 2011 will be postponed until May 2012 to allow for the new arrangements to settle in before the new parish councils are elected. If this had not been decided, the parish councils in Little Canfield and Takeley would have been elected for a four year term of office before any agreed changes could be implemented.

### **The Community of Priors Green**

The responses to the first stage of the review highlighted that many new residents already feel they have integrated successfully into the surrounding communities, especially so in the case of Little Canfield. It appears that many new residents have adapted to the mainly rural nature of their surroundings and have joined local village groups and with other activities taking place in the community.

A community hall already exists at Bennett Canfield off the central roundabout just within Takeley parish. It is proposed that a new school will be built, also within Takeley, adjoining the community hall site.

It is now being proposed that the Council transfers the community hall to Takeley Parish Council along with associated Section 106 monies earmarked as funding for maintaining community facilities at Priors Green. It is understood that the hall will be run as a Charitable Trust managed by local volunteers acting as trustees. After the transfer of the building takes place it will continue to be owned by Takeley Parish Council.

These facilities will act as a strong focal point for the surrounding community on both sides of the boundary, and beyond that within the nearby villages, and there is some logic to the suggestion that the whole of the Priors Green site should be unified within a single parish area. For example, the community hall would make an ideal polling station for the entire Priors Green development area but this will not be possible if existing boundaries remain in place.

However, the Council has stepped back from proposing the option of changing boundaries, or merging or grouping the parishes together, because it cannot be demonstrated that any of these options would have majority support. These options remain on the table for consideration and the voting paper enclosed with this leaflet allows you to express your preference for a range of possible solutions. This leaflet explains in more detail what the various options for change are and how each one would affect the local community.

### **Your postal address**

The question of the postal addresses allocated to properties at Priors Green has been a cause of potential confusion throughout this review. Many of the people who responded to the first stage of the review said that they identified with Little Canfield more than with Takeley and would oppose any change from the present postal address. In fact, any change of parish boundary at this location will have no impact on the allocation of postal address.

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The allocation of CM6 post codes (Dunmow), rather than CM22 (Bishop's Stortford) was a practical decision related to the capacity of the respective sorting offices. It could easily have been determined the other way round as the boundary between the two areas lies at roughly the line of the existing parish boundary. Indeed, that was the original intention.

Therefore, in considering your response to this review and your degree of preference for the various options under consideration, you should disregard the question of postal address.

### **Parish Councils – what are they for?**

Parish councils are the lowest tier of local government and provide the most local level of services. These services can cover functions such as providing allotments, community halls, recreation grounds and play areas, litter bins and street lighting.

All parish councils are elected every four years and the bulk of parishes, especially in the rural areas, are run on a non party political basis. The council is made up of local councillors from within the local community. Anybody who is on the electoral register, who works within the parish or lives either in the parish or within three miles of the boundary, and is at least 18 years of age, qualifies to be a parish councillor.

Parish councils raise money by means of a parish precept which is collected as part of your council tax. The parish element of the council tax you pay is shown on your bill and is usually a very small proportion of the total amount, but goes to pay for the local services provided.

In Uttlesford, the whole of the district is divided into parishes and there are 53 elected town and parish councils. These range from very rural parishes with fewer than 200 electors to the town of Saffron Walden with some 12,000 electors. Parishes are reviewed on a regular basis and two new parish councils (at Flich Green and Swards End) have been created in recent years.

### **The Options under consideration**

The following paragraphs set out the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options for boundary change for your consideration in deciding on your response to the consultation.

#### **Option 1: No change to the existing boundary**

This is the Council's preferred option and the voting form asks you to confirm whether you agree or disagree that there should be no change to the present boundary.

Suggested advantages are that the present boundary is fairly clear on the ground, does not pass through any streets or individual houses, and will not cause any disturbance to existing links that may already have been developed between individual residents and the respective parish councils. The proposed arrangements for the management of the community hall will remain in place.

Possible disadvantages are that the boundary line will arguably maintain an arbitrary distinction between different parts of a single residential community, and will miss the opportunity to unify the estate within a single parish area. It will not be possible to

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use the community hall as a polling station serving the whole estate; residents on the Little Canfield side of the boundary will continue to have to travel to the established village hall at Stortford Road to cast their vote. Community facilities at Priors Green will be maintained within different parishes.

A series of alternative options for the realignment of the boundary are set out below, with the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each one listed. You are asked to indicate on your voting form your order of preference for each of these options, together with any comments you wish to make.

### **Option 2: Transfer the entire site to Little Canfield**

**Advantages:** At the first stage of the review, this option was supported by a number of residents who gave their opinion. Some of these representations comment favourably on the degree of integration already achieved between the new residents and the existing community in Little Canfield. The option has the merit of uniting the entire Priors Green site in one parish. It would also bring all of the community facilities on the site, including the school, into one parish and possibly simplify the management of those facilities. The community hall would be able to accommodate a polling station serving the whole of Priors Green and surrounding area.

**Disadvantages:** The transfer of at least 387 dwellings to Little Canfield would place a considerable administrative burden on a small parish with limited infrastructure and might be seen to unbalance the community between the new and old elements. This would probably be the case even if the communities achieve a successful integration because of the numbers involved: there will be an estimated 1169 electors at Priors Green (including properties at Dunmow Road) by 2015 as compared with 191 in the remainder of the parish. The community hall will still be owned by Takeley Parish Council and thought may have to be given to the future ownership of the building.

### **Option 3: Create a new, separate parish of Priors Green (or other agreed name)**

**Advantages:** A proposal to create a new parish was submitted by a local resident at the initial consultation stage. This may be seen as the most effective way to unify the two parts of the new development. It will have the merit of helping to create a cohesive community and to build community values. All of the community facilities would be contained within the same parish and management arrangements can then be reviewed if desired. In considering required boundary changes, this option would avoid the need to choose between placing all Priors Green properties in either one or other of the existing neighbouring parishes. A new parish council would have the opportunity to create a new and separate identity for the area of Priors Green and to forge a co-operative relationship with both Little Canfield and Takeley so that they would still be able to work in partnership where needed.

**Disadvantages:** Strong evidence of support from local residents will be needed before the option of a new parish can be considered. The proposal for a new parish is only likely to prove viable if it can be demonstrated that this would be a better option than pursuing full integration with one or both of the neighbouring parishes, or leaving things as they are. It would tend to separate Priors Green from the surrounding village communities rather than to bind them together. Before any such proposal can be considered seriously, it will have to be shown that Priors Green is a separate and distinct community. The definition of the boundaries of a new parish would be difficult to determine as there is the possibility of further development in the future, both to the east of the existing site, as far as the Lion and Lamb Public

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House, and to the north of the approved development north of Jacks Lane. There would be little point in defining a new parish with boundaries that subsequently became redundant. There is also the potential difficulty of including long established residents on the island sites and along Dunmow Road within the new parish. A new parish council would have to create its own infrastructure and administrative support, and there will be a cost to this work.

### **Option 4: Merge the two parishes of Takeley and Little Canfield into a single parish**

**Advantages:** This may be the most effective way of integrating all of the communities in and around Priors Green without the difficult problem of defining a suitable boundary line. The two parishes would simply be merged together into a new single parish and the electoral arrangements could then reflect the separate communities within the parish. For example, the Priors Green area could become a separate ward of the parish to ensure separate representation for that area; the boundary defining the ward would be easier to settle than trying to define a suitable parish boundary as it could encompass the whole of the residential area. It would enable all of the community facilities to be managed within the same parish council. Any future arguments about boundary lines caused by further development adjoining Priors Green would be easy to resolve by adjusting ward boundaries, so that no further review of parish boundaries would be needed.

**Disadvantages:** The parishes of Little Canfield and Takeley will lose their independence. The ability of the two parish councils to work together in co-operation or partnership, while still maintaining their separate power of action, will be lost. A loss of identity could result, although the title of the new parish could incorporate both of the existing parish names.

### **Option 5: Group together the two parishes into a single parish council**

**Advantages:** This is a similar solution to option 4 above but is less flexible as the two parishes would simply be grouped together rather than merged. Parish council affairs would come under a common council and there would be a requirement to ensure separate representation for both parishes. As the two parishes would be fully integrated, it would enable the community facilities to be owned and managed under a single parish council. The grouping could be dissolved at some future point by agreement (although it is hoped this would not be necessary).

**Disadvantages:** There will be some loss of independence and possibly of local identity too, although the two parishes will continue to exist as separate civil parishes, and could divorce at some future point if the relationship does not work. It would still be necessary to define the boundaries of the constituent parishes so the flexibility allowed by a full merger would not exist.

### **Option 6: An alternative agreed boundary change**

**Advantages:** If it proves possible to agree a boundary change that unifies most of the Priors Green site within one parish, without a full transfer to one parish or the other, this might provide a solution to the difficulty of defining community identity. At the first stage of the review two possible alternative boundaries were suggested. The first of these would incorporate into Little Canfield the Countryside development land north of Jacks Lane. Alternatively, it was suggested that the boundary could be drawn along or at Broadfield Road.

Disadvantages: There is no evidence that either or both of these alternative boundary lines would reflect community identities. There would be some disruption to existing arrangements without achieving the benefit of unifying the whole of the Priors Green development into one parish. A substantial number of dwellings would be transferred from Takeley to Little Canfield. As in option 2 above, this might place an administrative strain on the small parish of Little Canfield and lead to an imbalance between the 'old' and 'new' populations. A new boundary that did not bring about the unification of the whole site could prove even more divisive than other options, as well as causing further confusion.

### **Option 7: Transfer the entire Priors Green site to Takeley**

Advantages: This solution would unify the whole site under a single administrative body. Takeley might be able to adapt more easily than Little Canfield to a large influx of population and the extra revenue this would entail although that is entirely speculative. As with option 2, it would enable all of the community facilities to be brought together into a single parish and might therefore simplify the management arrangements.

Disadvantages: The responses received at the first stage of the review indicated some resistance to any transfer to Takeley taking place. There might be some loss of the community links already established between new residents on the Little Canfield side of the boundary and the established community bodies operating in Little Canfield.

### **Your views are requested**

This leaflet contains some of the information you will need in deciding your view about the future shape and direction of your community. Please consider carefully all of the options listed and the possible advantages and disadvantages of each before sending the Council your views.

It is unlikely the Council will proceed with any change to the existing boundary without a strong demonstration of public support for at least one of the options listed in this leaflet and on the voting form. It is therefore important that you respond to this consultation with your views. That will help the Council to decide whether there is enough support for any change to take place or whether matters should be left as they are now. In deciding what its final recommendation should be, the Council will evaluate carefully the views expressed by all local residents.

Please help this process by expressing and submitting your views. They can be sent by completing the enclosed voting form and sending it to The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Saffron Walden CB11 4ER, together with any additional comments. Alternatively, your views may be sent to [elections@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:elections@uttlesford.gov.uk).