

**PARISH REVIEW WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 5 JUNE 2002**

Present:- Councillor A J Ketteridge – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs C A Bayley, Mrs S Flack and G Sell.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham.

Officer in attendance:- P J Snow.

PRWG5 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs M A Caton.

PRWG6 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 13 March 2002 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PRWG7 PARISH REVIEW

The Electoral Services Officer presented a comprehensive report with maps and background information and including detailed analysis of the various responses received following the publication on 25 March of a number of draft proposals for changes to parish boundaries and to parish electoral arrangements.

The formal consultation period following publication of the draft proposals had ended on 24 May, but this period had been extended until 31 May because of the disappointing lack of response from a number of parish councils directly affected by suggested changes. Even now, some parish councils had still not responded to the formal consultation. The report contained details of all representations received during the consultation period. Any comments that had been received since the preparation of the report were reported orally.

The next step was for this working group to recommend final proposals to the Resources Committee on 20 June for adoption. The final proposals for changes to parish boundaries would then be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. It was unclear, at this stage, whether the necessary order could be made in time for the changes to take effect at the local elections due in May 2003. Any agreed changes to parish electoral arrangements which did not involve adjustments to parish boundaries could be implemented by order of this council and would take effect in time for the 2003 elections.

The Working Group considered each of the draft proposals for change in turn.

(i) Proposal DR9 – Readjustment of boundaries along the A120 (west)

“That the Council supports a realignment of boundaries in the vicinity of the existing A120 road between the M11 and the western edge of Takeley parish, affecting the parishes of Birchanger, Great Hallingbury, Hatfield Broad Oak, Stansted and Takeley, based on option 1 in the report (to the meeting on 13 March), to include the property known as Highfields Lodge, Burton End, Stansted and that, in principle, the option of suggesting a realignment of boundaries so as to include the whole of Stansted Airport in the parish of Stansted be supported for consultation purposes.”

The Chairman agreed that this item should be considered first for the benefit of Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham, who was in attendance to speak concerning this draft proposal.

The Electoral Services Officer explained that this proposal really consisted of two distinct parts. The first part consisted of a proposal to realign boundaries along the line of the existing A120 between the M11 and Takeley village to recognise existing community links and identities. As a result, it was proposed to transfer to Great Hallingbury, 13 properties from Birchanger, four properties from Hatfield Broad Oak and two properties from Stansted Mountfitchet. Eight properties would also be transferred from Hatfield Broad Oak to Takeley. All of these properties had become increasingly isolated from their parent parish as a result of the location of the M11 motorway, Stansted Airport and the proposed construction of the new A120.

The occupiers of all of these properties had been consulted directly regarding this proposal and 17 responses had been received. The outcome of this consultation exercise was somewhat inconclusive. This seemed to bear out the suspicion that there was no well defined sense of community identity in this locality. However, a small majority of residents responding to the consultation agreed with the proposed changes.

The second part concerned the opportunity to tidy up parish boundaries in the vicinity of the M11 and Stansted Airport. This seemed to officers the most logical course to pursue as it was necessary to redefine a section of boundary north of the properties to be transferred at Start Hill, as a defined section of boundary would otherwise join on to a long section of undefined boundary crossing the airport site in haphazard fashion. Some Members, as well as Elsenham and Takeley Parish Councils, had expressed concerns that a redefinition of the boundary to include all, or most, of Stansted Airport in Stansted Mountfitchet parish would weaken those parishes' capacity to be consulted, and influence decisions on, matters relating to development at Stansted Airport. Assurances had been received from planning officers that consultation arrangements affecting airport matters would not be affected by the question whether a particular parish, or parishes, were included, or excluded, from the site of a particular application.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham attended the meeting to expand upon the representations she had already submitted opposing any change of parish boundaries so far as they affected the airport site. She did not accept the

assurances of the officers that opportunities for parishes to be consulted on airport matters would be affected by this proposal.

It was noted that no observations had been received from Birchanger Parish Council, although oral comments had been made by Councillor Mrs E J Godwin. Nevertheless, Members took the view that the boundary already agreed by the Council as a draft proposal should be adjusted so as to enable part of Birchanger parish to remain within the airport site. The Working Group could not identify a suggested boundary line to meet this purpose and requested the Electoral Services Officer to resolve this issue by selecting a suitable physical feature in the landscape along which a revised boundary could be drawn.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 the Council agree a realignment of boundaries in the vicinity of the existing A120 road between the M11 and the western edge of Takeley parish, affecting the parishes of Birchanger, Great Hallingbury, Hatfield Broad Oak, Stansted and Takeley (as shown on Map A attached) resulting in the following transfers of property:

Transfer from Birchanger to Great Hallingbury the following properties:

Greencroft, Barnmead, Marstons, Uplands, Henbury, Melbourne, Karmel, Hillcrest, Allandale, Hillside, South View, Ariston and Thatched Cottage;

Transfer from Hatfield Broad Oak to Great Hallingbury, the following properties:

1-4 Thremhall Priory Cottages;

and from Hatfield Broad Oak to Takeley the following properties:

Grasmere, Latymer, Silverdale, Lolands, 2 and 3 Stanes Cottages, Hawthorns and Cranwellian;

Transfer from Stansted Mountfitchet to Great Hallingbury the following properties:

Thremhall Priory Farm and Thremhall Priory Lodge;

- 2 that existing parish boundaries crossing the site of Stansted Airport remain undefined; and
- 3 that officers examine the question of resolving the possible disenfranchisement of Birchanger Parish from matters relating to the Airport if the boundary were to be adjusted to follow the eastern edge of the M11 motorway.

At this point Councillor Mrs J F Cheetham left the meeting.

(ii) Proposal DL3 – Ringers Farm House, Newport

“That the Council supports a change of boundary to transfer Ringers Farm House and Ringers, Debden Road, Newport from Newport to the parish of Widdington, and that the occupiers of the nearby property known as ‘Greenfield’ also be consulted on a possible change of boundaries.”

Members were reminded that this proposal had arisen from the desire of the occupier of Ringers Farm House for the property to transfer to the parish of Widdington where there were said to be historic connections. This proposal had been opposed by Newport Parish Council on the grounds that the properties concerned were more closely associated with Newport.

Councillor G Sell said that he understood that Ringers Farm House had not formed part of the parish of Widdington within living memory.

It was noted that the occupier of Greenfield had not responded to the letter of consultation.

RECOMMENDED that proposal DR3 be endorsed (excluding Greenfield) and that the boundary line between Newport and Widdington be adjusted to follow the centre of Debden Road at that point (see map B attached) thus transferring Ringers and Ringers Farm House to the parish of Widdington.

(iii) Proposal DR4 – Formation of a new parish at Swards End

“That the Council supports the constitution of a new parish, and parish council, of Swards End, in principle, as a draft proposal for further consultation.”

Councillors Mrs C A Bayley and A J Ketteridge declared their interest in this item as members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

The Electoral Services Officer reminded Members that five key tests had been suggested in the report to the previous meeting to justify proceeding with the proposed establishment of a new parish. Of these, four had been satisfied already. The fifth, and crucial test, concerned whether there was sufficient evidence of public support.

Following the adoption of the draft proposal, a letter, together with further information and a questionnaire form, had been sent to every elector in the proposed new parish area of Swards End and the following responses had been received:

Questionnaires issued: 364 (100%)	In favour of the proposal: 145 (39.8%)	Against the proposal: 50 (13.7%)	Undecided 15 (4.1%)	Unmarked 2 (0.5%)	Not yet returned 152 (41.8%)
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As can be seen from the above figures, some 70% of all those residents of Swards End returning completed questionnaires were in favour of the formation of a separate parish and parish council. Members were advised that all of the key tests devised by officers to determine the viability of this proposal had now been met and no obstacle remained to the formation of a new parish area, subject to the endorsement of the Secretary of State. Members agreed with this analysis.

RECOMMENDED that proposal DR4 be endorsed and that the area of the new parish should be identical to the parish ward of Swards End, as described in the District of Uttlesford (Electoral Changes) Order 2001, due to come into effect on 1 May 2003, and as shown on Map C.

(iv) Proposal DR5 – North Park Cottage, Little Chesterford

“That the Council supports a change of boundary to transfer North Park Cottage, Little Walden from the parish of Little Chesterford to the parish of Saffron Walden.”

This proposal, designed to address the lack of any direct access from North Park Cottage to the parent parish of Little Chesterford, had been generally welcomed.

RECOMMENDED that proposal DR5 be endorsed and that the adjusted boundary line should broadly follow the line indicated on Map D attached.

(v) Proposal DR6 – Stoney Common Road, Stansted

“That the Council supports a change of boundary south of Stoney Common Road, Stansted so as to place all of the residential properties at Brook View, Rochford Close and Stoney Place wholly within the parish of Stansted (the new boundary to run along the line of the northern development limit of the Rochford Nurseries site - as shown on Map E attached), but that any further action to adjust the boundary between Birchanger and Stansted to take account of the Rochford Nurseries site be deferred, pending the occupation of a significant proportion of the new development site, and at that stage the review be reactivated and a process of full consultation carried out.”

This proposal had resulted from the discovery during the Periodic Electoral Review of district wards that a number of properties south of Stoney Common Road were located beyond the line of the Stansted Parish boundary. Electors registered in all of the properties concerned had consequently had to be transferred to the parish of Birchanger. A simple boundary readjustment could resolve this anomaly, but the position was complicated by the fact that the Birchanger/Stansted boundary ran through the Rochford Nurseries development site just to the south.

Planning consent had now been granted to two private developers for the development of a total of 600 houses at Rochford Nurseries, some two thirds of which would fall within the existing parish of Birchanger. Pressure had been exerted by Stansted Parish Council for the Rochford Nurseries site

(which appeared to form a natural extension of the southern urban area of Stansted) to be moved wholly into Stansted Parish. Birchanger Parish Council had resisted this suggestion on the grounds that the occupiers of the new site should be given the opportunity to comment upon their perception of community identity.

The Electoral Services Officer endorsed this view and advised Members that they should be cautious in promoting a short term change of boundary to resolve the obvious anomaly south of Stoney Common Road, if there was a long term intention to review the boundary following the development of the Rochford Nurseries site.

The Working Group did not accept officers' advice in this matter and took the view that the anomaly caused by the over spilling of development across the existing parish boundary should be resolved as quickly as possible. However, Members agreed that a review of the boundary so far as it affects the Rochford Nurseries site should be carried out as soon as at least 200 properties on the site became occupied.

In response to a question, the Electoral Services Officer said that properties constructed at Rochford Nurseries would be allocated to the appropriate parish depending on their site location in relation to the boundary. In theory the development could result in a number of properties being divided by the existing boundary line. A judgement would then have to be made about the most appropriate parish in which those properties would be placed.

Councillor G Sell declared his interest in this item as a Member of Stansted Parish Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 Proposal DR6 be endorsed and that the Council supports a change of boundaries south of Stoney Common Road, Stansted so as to place all of the residential properties at Brook View, Rochford Close and Stoney Place wholly within the parish of Stansted (the new boundary to run along the line of the northern development limit of the Rochford Nurseries site, as shown on Map E attached); and
- 2 the intention to conduct a further Parish Review to determine the position of the parish boundary between Birchanger and Stansted in relation to the Rochford Nurseries site be confirmed once 200 residential properties on the site were occupied.

(vi) Proposal DR10 – Latchmore Cottage, Little Hallingbury

“That the Council supports a change of boundary to transfer Latchmore Cottage from Little Hallingbury to the parish of Great Hallingbury.”

The Working Group was reminded that this proposal had arisen entirely from the desire of the occupiers of Latchmore Cottage to vote and participate in

parish affairs in Great Hallingbury where they had always considered their community interests to lie. No objections to this proposal had been received.

RECOMMENDED that the Council endorse proposal DR10, the adjusted boundary to follow the eastern edge of the road leading from the A1060 road to the road leading to Great Hallingbury village as shown on Map F attached.

(vii) Proposal DR11 – Readjustment of boundaries adjoining the A120 (east)

“That the Council consults upon a possible realignment of boundaries between the parishes of Great Dunmow, Little Dunmow and Stebbing in the vicinity of the existing A120.”

This proposal had arisen from a number of suggestions made by Stebbing Parish Council for a possible change of boundaries north of the existing A120. This was based on a perception that the heavily trafficked A120 road was acting as a virtual barrier for community representation purposes, in respect of the parent parish of Little Dunmow. It appeared likely that this situation would be exacerbated following the construction of the new A120.

Following the adoption of the draft recommendation as shown above, a letter of representation together with a reply questionnaire was sent to the occupiers of each of the properties concerned. There were 20 residential properties in Little Dunmow potentially affected by this proposal (including Bridge Farm lying to the south of the existing A120, but north of the line of the new road) together with three residential properties in Great Dunmow at Tooleys Farm that were cut off from Great Dunmow parish and had expressed a wish to move to Stebbing.

The Electoral Services Officer reported that the outcome to this process of consultation had proved disappointing and was somewhat inconclusive. It had been difficult to identify any feeling of community identity in the various groups of properties adjoining the A120 and on the road leading northwards to Stebbing Village. However, only three occupiers had opted to remain in Little Dunmow in the responses received.

The report offered five options for Members’ consideration and officers suggested that the best outcomes would be either Option B, to transfer to Stebbing only those properties at Tooleys Farm, Brookend and Haydens, or Option D, to realign the boundary along the line of the new A120 which would have the effect of transferring all of the properties identified in the report to Stebbing parish.

Members did not agree with this analysis and took the view that no change should take place on the basis that no firm of sense of community identity was apparent. Brief consideration was given to the possibility of moving to Stebbing only those properties at Tooleys Farm, but the Electoral Services Officer advised that this would be inappropriate as Tooleys Farm effectively formed part of the small community of Brookend and obtained access to the road at that point.

At a late stage of the consultation period a further letter had been received from Stebbing Parish Council asking for consideration to be given to the readjustment of the boundary so as to include in Stebbing Parish (from Great Dunmow) those properties at Homelye Farm and Homelye Chase. Two of the five occupiers had since responded to say that they did not favour this change whilst one occupier was in agreement. It was nevertheless not felt appropriate to include these properties in any boundary realignment.

RECOMMENDED that no change be made to the boundary between the parishes of Great Dunmow, Little Dunmow and Stebbing in this vicinity.

Consideration was also given to a number of proposals made as part of the initial consultation period that the Council decided not to adopt as draft proposals. Full consultation was, nevertheless, carried out regarding each of these proposals.

(viii) Proposal DR1 – Amalgamation of parishes of Elmdon and Wendens Lofts

“To amalgamate the separate civil parishes of Elmdon and Wendens Lofts, so as to mirror the area of the existing parish council, and to make adjustments to the existing warding scheme.”

The Council had decided not to pursue this proposal because it did not have the support of the parish council. However, it had been discovered that the parish council had not complied with the terms of the original 1976 grouping order which required separate parish meetings to be held for each of the separate parishes. In spite of further prompting, the parish council had failed to offer assurances that the terms of the 1976 order would be met. Officers considered this situation to be highly unsatisfactory.

The Electoral Services Officer had now spoken to David Hill, the parish Chairman, who had asked for the legal position to be checked as to whether the requirement to hold separate parish meetings could be removed by order. Advice on this matter was not available at the time of this meeting.

Again, the Working Group did not agree with the analysis of the officers that the parish council should be asked for assurances that it would comply with the terms of the 1976 grouping order.

RECOMMENDED that this matter be not pursued further.

(ix) Proposal DR2 – Exchanges of land between Newport, Wendens Ambo and Wicken Bonhunt

“A possible realignment of boundaries between Newport, Wendens Ambo and Wicken Bonhunt, involving exchanges of land in the vicinity of the M11.”

Newport Parish Council had requested a change of boundaries involving exchanges of land either side of the M11 but had never properly defined the

areas to be exchanged and had not offered any reasons for making this suggestion. It appeared that two residential properties had become unwittingly involved in this possible exchange of boundaries and one of the occupiers had now written to express her opposition to any change. Neither of the other parishes concerned had commented directly, but there did not seem any reason why the Council should proceed with this proposal.

RECOMMENDED that this proposal not be pursued further.

(x) Proposal DR7 – Possible changes to the Takeley/Little Canfield boundary at Priors Green

“That no change is proposed to the boundary between Takeley and Little Canfield in the vicinity of the Priors Green development site at the present time and that the matter is considered again at a suitable time when occupation of the site has taken place.”

This matter had been raised, tentatively, because (as at Rochford Nurseries) the boundary between Little Canfield and Takeley parishes crossed the development site. Officers considered it premature to consider any possible change to boundaries at this location in advance of actual development taking place.

However, Members considered that it would be appropriate for the Council to agree to review the parish boundary at this location in the future following the occupation of a similar proportion of the houses to be built as at Rochford Nurseries.

RECOMMENDED that the Council agree, in principle, to carry out a future Parish Review incorporating the position of the boundary between Little Canfield and Takeley at Priors Green.

(xi) Proposal DR8 – Bacon End, Great Canfield

“That the suggestion of Little Canfield Parish Council to transfer an area containing nine properties at Bacon End from Great Canfield to Little Canfield be not pursued.”

This proposal made by Little Canfield Parish Council had resulted in overwhelming opposition from the local occupiers concerned. It was still not entirely clear why Little Canfield had put this suggestion forward.

RECOMMENDED that proposal DR8 be not pursued.

(xii) Proposal DR12 – Oakwood Park, Little Dunmow

“That the Council takes no action to pursue any change of boundaries, or any action to create a new parish, at Oakwood Park, Little Dunmow.”

It had been considered premature at this stage to consider any change in relation to the development site at Oakwood Park, Little Dunmow. A small proportion of the new houses were now occupied.

A letter had now been received from Little Dunmow Parish Council (after the report was finalised) expressing the hope that in the foreseeable future Oakwood Park would form its own parish. It appeared that Little Dunmow Parish Council had taken no vote or decision on this matter but this was the informal view of parish councillors. The Electoral Services Officer suggested that proper consultation with the occupiers of the new site could be carried out in any future review incorporating Priors Green and Rochford Nurseries.

RECOMMENDED that no suggestions for any changes at Oakwood Park are pursued at the present time but that the Council endorse the intention to consult with occupiers of the site at some appropriate future time.

(xiii) Consequential Changes to Electoral Wards as a result of the proposed changes

It was noted that changes to district wards and county electoral divisions consequent upon parish boundary alterations would have to be clearly identified for implementation at the appropriate time.

RECOMMENDED that the electoral changes which would result from the adoption of proposals DR3, DR4, DR5, DR6, DR9 and DR10, as set out in the report, be adopted.

Proposals for Parish Electoral Arrangements

(xiv) Proposal PEP4 – Numbers of Parish Councillors

The previous report had identified a number of parishes which had been under subscribed at each of the two most recent ordinary elections in 1995 and 1999 and which may have experienced difficulties in recruiting parish councillors as a result.

Members noted the response received from each of the parishes concerned although, Clavering, Great Easton, Henham and Widdington Parish Councils had not responded at all to the letter of consultation sent to them.

The position appeared to have caused most concern in relation to Great Canfield Parish Council which had been under subscribed by four members at the most recent ordinary election and had been unable to recruit members to fill all of the places available for a lengthy period of time following that election.

The Working Group was aware of the concerns caused to parish councils in the district by the recent statutory provisions relating to the adoption of a Code of Conduct and the registration of Members' interests and felt that a settling down period was now required after which it would be possible to make a proper assessment of the appropriate number of parish councillors to be allocated in each case.

In this context, it was noted that Great Chesterford and Widdington Parish Councils had both requested the allocation of an extra member to assist with the additional workload in each of those parishes. However, in spite of reminders to those parishes, no proper case for the allocation of an additional councillor had ever been received in writing. It was agreed that it would be inappropriate to grant additional parish council places at the present time.

RECOMMENDED that no change be made in the number of parish councillors for any of the parishes identified in the report but that a further review of parish electoral arrangements be carried out in the period following the elections due to take place in May 2003.

(xv) PEP5 – Quendon and Rickling

“That the Council consults on the following two options for future electoral arrangements at Quendon and Rickling:

Option 1 (the first preference) - abolish the warding scheme altogether because the communities of Quendon and Rickling are considered to be merged and there is felt to be no justification for the two areas to be separately represented; the Parish would still be entitled to seven parish councillors and the cost of parish elections would be reduced;

Option 2 (the second preference) - realign the ward boundary to run southwards along Willis Lane from the parish boundary west of Quendon Park to join with Rickling Green Road and then follow the western boundary of Mistletoe Cottage and Quendon Garage to join Cambridge Road; it would then follow the centre of the road to the parish boundary with diversions to follow the boundaries of Ventnor Lodge and Broomwood. The effect of this would be:

Revised Quendon Ward: 171 electors – three councillors
Revised Rickling Ward: 262 electors – four councillors

If it is considered appropriate to retain parish wards at all, then this option provides a better balance between the wards and a more clearly defined boundary line.”

No formal letter of representation had been received from Quendon and Rickling Parish Council in response to the adoption of these two options. However, the Chairman of the Parish Council had, earlier today, telephoned the Electoral Services Officer to express the Parish Council’s wish to retain the existing parish ward boundary based on the line of the former parish boundary before the two parishes were unified in 1949.

Members could find no justification for agreeing to this request as it was considered that the communities of Quendon and Rickling were not, in any way, separate and did not require separate representation.

RECOMMENDED that Option 1, to abolish the warding scheme altogether, be adopted in respect of the Parish of Quendon and Rickling, that seven parish councillors be retained for the whole parish and that an order be made implementing this change prior to the ordinary election of parish councillors in May next year.

PRWG8 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted that the Resources Committee had now agreed to extend the Terms of Reference of the Working Group to enable a full review of polling districts and polling places to be carried out. Such a review was necessary as a result of the changes made to the Council's wards following the recent Periodic Electoral Review. It was anticipated that a report would be submitted to the Resources Committee in November this year and that a meeting of the Working Group would be arranged sometime in October to allow recommendations to be submitted to that meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.