

<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>21. RAF Honington</b>
<b>Area or Properties Under Review</b>	The review will look at the parish boundaries and ward arrangements in respect of RAF Honington (and their consequential impact upon Borough, County and Parliamentary representation).
<b>Parishes</b>	Honington cum Sapiston Troston
<b>Borough Ward</b>	Bardwell Pakenham
<b>County Divisions</b>	Blackbourn Thingoe North
<b>Method of Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter to Parish Councils</li> <li>• Letter to RAF</li> <li>• Emails to elected representatives (Borough, County and MP)</li> <li>• Letters to the small number of civilian electors adjacent to the Station in Troston who were potentially affected any change of parish boundary</li> <li>• Letters/emails to other stakeholders (see Appendix C)</li> <li>• Online questionnaire available for respondents to use</li> </ul>
<b>Projected electorate, warding arrangements and consequential impacts</b>	<p>The Autumn 2015 electorate of Honington Parish was 687; split 247 in the Village Parish Ward and 440 in the (RAF) Station Ward. The electorate of Troston was 602. If this issue is progressed, a more detailed five year electorate forecast will be prepared during phase 2 of the review relating to any recommendation made.</p> <p>There are two things to observe in relation to the current electoral arrangements and consequential impacts:</p> <p>(a) Firstly, it would be possible to maintain separate polling stations for the station and village even if the parish wards were removed (by way of two polling <i>districts</i>, just as in urban wards e.g. Honington 1 and 2 Registers). The RAF were made aware of this fact in their consultation letter.</p> <p>(b) Secondly, for the reasons explained in Issue 26, it is still possible that, to achieve electoral equality in borough wards or county divisions, the LGBCE might require the two parish wards to stay in place. Therefore, since we do not yet know what the new size of a borough ward will have to be at the next electoral review, it is theoretically possible that, even were the Borough Council to remove the parish wards through this CGR, they could be later reinstated by the LGBCE. This is not a reason not to make the change in this CGR, but a risk of which to be aware. Equally, it also follows that the wards could later be removed by the LGBCE even if the Borough Council left them in place.</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>The RAF Commander carried out consultation with families at the Station and, as a result, he supports Honington cum Sapiston Parish Council's proposal to remove of the Village and Station parish wards at the next scheduled elections.</p> <p>There has, however, only been a small amount of support expressed in relation to moving the Honington/Troston boundary in order for all of the housing associated with the Station to be in one parish. This has not been requested by either Parish Council or the RAF, although it was an option in the review.</p>

Respondents have, however, talked about the synergy between the Station and surrounding villages which suggests it would be ideal, if possible, for them to be contained in the same borough ward and county division. The Borough Council may, therefore, wish to seek this outcome in any consequential reviews of borough wards or county divisions.

In relation to the parish wards of Honington, if there is agreement that they should be removed through this CGR, the Council could recommend this option for consultation in early 2016 and then, as part of a final decision in summer 2016, be in a position to decide whether or not the best means of implementation is through the CGR or a subsequent electoral review of the Borough.

## **Summary of comments received during Phase 1**

### **A. Response of Honington cum Sapiston Parish Council**

"This matter has been raised previously by Councillors over the past few years and we have contacted the Borough Council with our concerns. Whilst Councillors appreciate the long standing ties that we share with RAF Honington and are delighted that so many use the facilities of the Village Hall and our local School, we feel that the Parish should no longer be "warded", as most parishes of our size are not. It is felt that we should be one parish for electoral purposes to encourage a sense of cohesiveness and integration. The three individual wards do not feel appropriate given our number of residents."

*(N.B. Clarification is being sought from the Parish Council whether the last sentence of its submission also means it wishes to merge the historical parishes of Honington and Sapiston to form one parish, electing one set of councillors. At present the parishes are grouped and elect their own councillors.)*

### **B. Summary of Response of Troston Parish Council**

Troston Parish Council believes there should be no change to the current parish boundaries, on the basis that this would:

- Preserve the capacity of the parish council to deliver better services and to represent the community's interests effectively.
- Reflect patterns of everyday life for those living and working in the area, building upon what new and existing communities have in common.
- Reflect a strong sense of community identity.

From discussions with senior base personnel, people on the RAF base do not feel that they are a part of any particular parish. The base is very much a self-contained, self-financing, unit. Its existence does, however, have a considerable financial and environmental impact on ALL the neighbouring parishes. In Troston, RAF personnel often train through the village and it has to cope with associated vehicle movements.

The relationship with the base is nevertheless very good and the Parish Council is working with the camp to develop recreational facilities in its nearby local community woodland and a circular running path through the Parish, as well as a new bigger children's playground which is seen to be of value to families who live on the Base. In addition, there are plans to develop a football pitch in Troston, alongside a re-opened village pub (reflecting the patronage it received in the past from the Base). In turn, the Post Office, Shop and Take-away at the end of Heath Road is seen to be one of the few services available to the people in the village of Troston. Where children from a parish go

to school is irrelevant to the CGR.

About 50 per cent of Troston precept income is generated from the houses on the base that fall within our parish boundary and the viability of the parish would be seriously undermined if these houses were to be moved into Honington parish.

Precept income is an effective way of neighbouring parishes being compensated for the impact of the base, as well as creating local facilities for base personnel, and there might be an argument for dividing the base between all the neighbouring parishes, not just Honington and Troston.

### **C. Response of RAF Station Commander**

"My staffs have consulted widely on the proposal to amalgamate the RAF Honington ward within the nearby Honington cum Sapiston Parish. We feel that this change would not have any significant negative effects and would bring the Station in to the Parish that provides schooling for the majority of our young people. We already have close linkages with Honington cum Sapiston Parish Council and would see this change as a strengthening of relations in our local community."

### **D. Local electors**

Two electors living in one of the small number of 'civilian' properties adjacent to the RAF Station in Troston have written to express a wish to be in the same parish/parish ward as the RAF Station (as part of a move of the military housing from Troston to Honington). Both said this would reflect patterns of everyday life for those living and working in the area, building upon what new and existing communities have in common, and improve the capacity of a parish council to deliver better services and to represent the community's interests effectively. One of the electors also felt it would give easy access to good quality local services (see specific comment below) whereas the other elector felt it would generate interest in parish affairs and improve participation in elections and community activities (this elector observed that, in terms of access to services, all they got were their bins emptied). The elector who felt that services would be improved specifically commented:

*"We have always felt more associated with RAF Honington than Troston due to our location. If we were officially linked we may be allowed access to some of RAF Honington's facilities - we currently only have negative implications e.g. our car insurance is much higher."*

A parish councillor from Bardwell has responded in an individual capacity to suggest that all 'RAF' electors should remain in their own parish ward and that, to reflect a more natural community link, the military housing currently in Troston should also be in that same parish ward (i.e. moved to Honington Parish). This would be in order to create a strong community identity and reflect patterns of everyday life for those living and working in the area, building upon what new and existing communities have in common.

**Map (see overleaf)**

