



**BURSTON AND SHIMPLING PARISH COUNCIL**



26 April 2017

Electoral Services,  
South Norfolk District Council  
Cygnet Court,  
Swan Lane,  
Long Stratton NR15 2XE

Dear Sirs,

**Review of Community Governance**

Please find enclosed our answers to the questions put in the on-line survey. It has been found easier for councillors to agree a response in a 'hardcopy' form. Please also find maps showing two parts of our Parish boundary, and also showing how these parts of the boundary might be changed.

We set out below our further comments.

These comments take, as a starting point the PowerPoint presentation given to Parish Council Chairs, and also the 'Terms of Reference' and are given from the perspective of Burston and Shimpling.

It is appreciated that SNC are obliged to conduct a review of governance, but it is submitted conducting a review does not necessarily imply that changes must be made.

It is noted that the key words of the objective are: to ensure that governance is 'effective and convenient'....and reflects 'the identities and interests of the community'.

The government guidance that boundaries should be 'tied to firm ground features' seems most strange. We are not sure where this 'guidance' has come from. Many

communities are actually centred on such features, rather than being divided by them. Most towns and villages are located on both sides of features such as roads, rivers and railways. Surely, the boundaries between many adjacent communities are really the open fields between the communities.

Reviewing redundant and moribund parishes does seem appropriate, but many parishes seem to be functioning well without a permanent full complement of councillors.

The PowerPoint does clearly show that there are a falling number of candidates for election year-on-year, with only 14 parishes being contested in 2015. However, the choice of a map showing councils who did not have a full complement of councillors immediately following the election is possibly misleading. Burston and Shimpling is shown on this map, but immediately following the election the council managed to co-opt, and so the council has effectively been 'at full strength'.

Other councils may have less than the specified number of councillors, but still provide an effective service, and good local democracy. If, for the sake of explanation., Burston and Shimpling had only five councillors instead of seven, there would be one councillor for each 60 electors, whereas, by following the government guidance, if there are 9 councillors for 2,000 electors, that is one councillor for more than 200 electors, and if there are 16 councillors for 9,000 electors that is one councillor for over 500 electors.

Taking the 'considerations' in order:

This Parish consists of the small village of Burston, and the small hamlet of Shimpling, and the smaller hamlet of Audley End. There is some social life in Burston, with community events organised in the nave of the church (which acts as the 'village hall') and sometimes in The Strike School. Burston also has a pub, a school, a church, a chapel and a playing field with swings, slide, zip-wire etc. The village and hamlets are surrounded by fields that form the effective boundary with Diss, Heywood, Gissing and Dickleburgh. The A140 does extend between Shimpling and Dickleburgh, and the boundary does quite closely follow the road, although it does move to the West side of the road to bring a few homes (White Farm and Black Cottage, and a few more) into Dickleburgh, and that is appropriate as these homes are much closer to Dickleburgh than they are to Burston.

The interests of the community are hard to ascertain. Most people here seem to value the quiet way of life.

Our arrangements do seem to be effective and convenient. The council has operated with a full complement of councillors for the great proportion of the time. The only 'firm ground features' that are on our a boundary are part of the A140 and a length of a stream ....but the real 'boundary' between communities is the open

fields, and there are no real 'ground features' of any note in the this part of South Norfolk.

SNC may well be considering combining parishes on the theory ( and this would be just a theory) that if there are, say, four parishes each with, say, five councillors at the moment, and these parishes were combined, then there would be a pool of 20 councillors to hold an election for, say, nine seats on the 'new' council.

This theory looks very tempting on paper – but would it really work in practice? Looking at the map one might contemplate combining Burston and Shimpling with Heywood, Gissing, and the Tivetshalls – if all the current councillors stood for election, then there would be a good 'pool' for an election.

BUT, and it is a big but...

Heywood is at present a Parish Meeting. They pay no precept. Would they be better served by paying a precept for no more services than they get at the moment?

The three remaining parishes have very different precepts ranging from £20 in Gissing to £53 in Burston and Shimpling. In a 'combined' parish there would be one precept, with the amount payable in Gissing going up, and in Burston going down. Gissing would effectively be 'subsidising' the Burston Playing Field.

Tivetshall owns a village hall, and would be liable for repairs etc. in the event that rental income did not cover such costs. Should the residents of Burston, Shimpling, Gissing and Heywood be put 'on the hook' for this potential liability?

Burston and Shimpling own a playing field, but this was sold to the Council at a very low price by a generous landowner, but comes with restrictions. It can only belong to Burston and Shimpling Parish Council. Who would pay for sorting out the legal nightmare that would ensue if Burston and Shimpling Parish Council was simply swept away?

A combined council would be able, maybe, to have a full time caretaker, but would there be work for such a caretaker at all times of the year? Our present arrangement is that we have a part-time caretaker who works in the evenings and at weekends in summer, when his services are required. The employment of a full-time caretaker would also possibly involve the payment of NI contributions and payments into a pension fund, thus increasing costs. The combined council would not be large enough to have a full time mowing team, and so would still have to use contractors for mowing and hedging.

At the moment a lot of tasks are carried out by volunteers at no cost. So far this year in Burston and Shimpling all of the village benches have been restored and repainted for only the cost of raw materials. Many other jobs have also been done by volunteers

at no cost to the Council. It is to be doubted if such jobs would be done for a combined council.

The truth of the matter is that there is virtually no social intermingling between the four parishes. Maybe some go to visit the pubs in the adjoining parishes, and the school in Burston does share a head-teacher with the school in Tivetshall, but there does not seem to be any social interaction. A social event in Burston is attended primarily by residents of Burston and Shimpling.

There might be a cost saving in having only one clerk, and only one set of meetings each year, but the clerk would have a much bigger job, making it more of a challenge to find a person willing to be the clerk. While clerks are paid, many do far more hours than they charge for, and see this as 'doing their bit' to help the community. Being a clerk of a small parish takes a few hours each week, but being a clerk of a larger community would take many more hours. If there was a full time clerk NI payments and pension payments would become an issue.

Many matters considered by the Parish Council rely on local knowledge. The general consensus is that there would be very few people with local knowledge spanning a number of parishes.

A combined parish might be 'warded' to help insure that there are councillors with knowledge of the whole territory on the council. However, in some councils that are presently warded if there are no councillors standing from one ward, after the election period councillors from the other ward can be co-opted. There does not seem to be any way of 'forcing' the warding the work, unless there are enough candidates for an election to cover all wards.

More importantly, there must be great doubt that potential councillors would actually stand for election to a combined council, which would inevitably seem remote from the actual community. At an informal meeting of the councillors of Burston and Shimpling, held to discuss this review and to settle the contents of this letter, all councillors said that they would not stand for election in a combination of parishes – they were only willing to be councillors in their own community.

Our councillors had a full discussion of this aspect of the review, and the general feeling was that any sort of amalgamation would not be appropriate, but it must be said that one councillor was of the view that an amalgamation with Gissing might work.

In summary, there would be resentment from some residents who would have to pay more, for no additional 'services', there would be 'unfairness' as funds would be spent on facilities only used by one village rather than the whole area, there would only be minimal cost saving, and it would be harder to find a clerk, councillors would

not have local knowledge of the whole area, and it may well be far more difficult to find people willing to act as councillors.

We have considered our boundaries in the light of the terms of reference, and we wish to propose changes to our Eastern boundary and our South Western boundary.

Maps are enclosed which show the present position and our proposed changes.

In the Eastern side of the Parish the boundary follows (presumably) old field boundaries that have been intersected by the A140, and the boundary moves quite close to the centre of Dickleburgh. Already there are developments in Dickleburgh that are beginning to 'infill' the space between the centre of the village and the A140, and no doubt such developments will continue over the coming years. Residents in such developments will, we are sure, consider themselves to 'belong' to Dickleburgh rather than Burston and Shimpling. Consequently it does seem very reasonable that all of the land between the centre of Dickleburgh and the A140 should 'belong' to Dickleburgh.

Our proposal involves the boundary following part of the A140, and Moor Road rather than a field boundary a few yards South of Moor Road. The proposal does not involve the re-alignment of the boundary with the A140 to the South end of the area of interest, as the houses on the West side of the A140 are very close to Dickleburgh, and we feel that these home identify more with Dickleburgh than with Burston and Shimpling.

On the South Western side of the parish we are suggesting that the boundary should follow the track at Paradise farm, and then follow a valley to Wolsey Bridge, and then follow the stream to reconnect with the existing boundary South of the lower end of Durbidge's Hill. This has the effect of bringing into Burston and Shimpling some homes presently in The Heywood. These homes are so far from the rest of The Heywood that to get there one would have to go into Diss and out again. Our proposed changes also bring two homes presently in Diss, but much closer to Burston than to Diss, into our Parish.

Yours faithfully,



Nigel Frankland  
Chairman.

**Points raided at APM**

**Hedge on footpath near the beck**

**Smell from beck**

**Tree at end of Audley Close**

**Speeding...Market Lane junction**

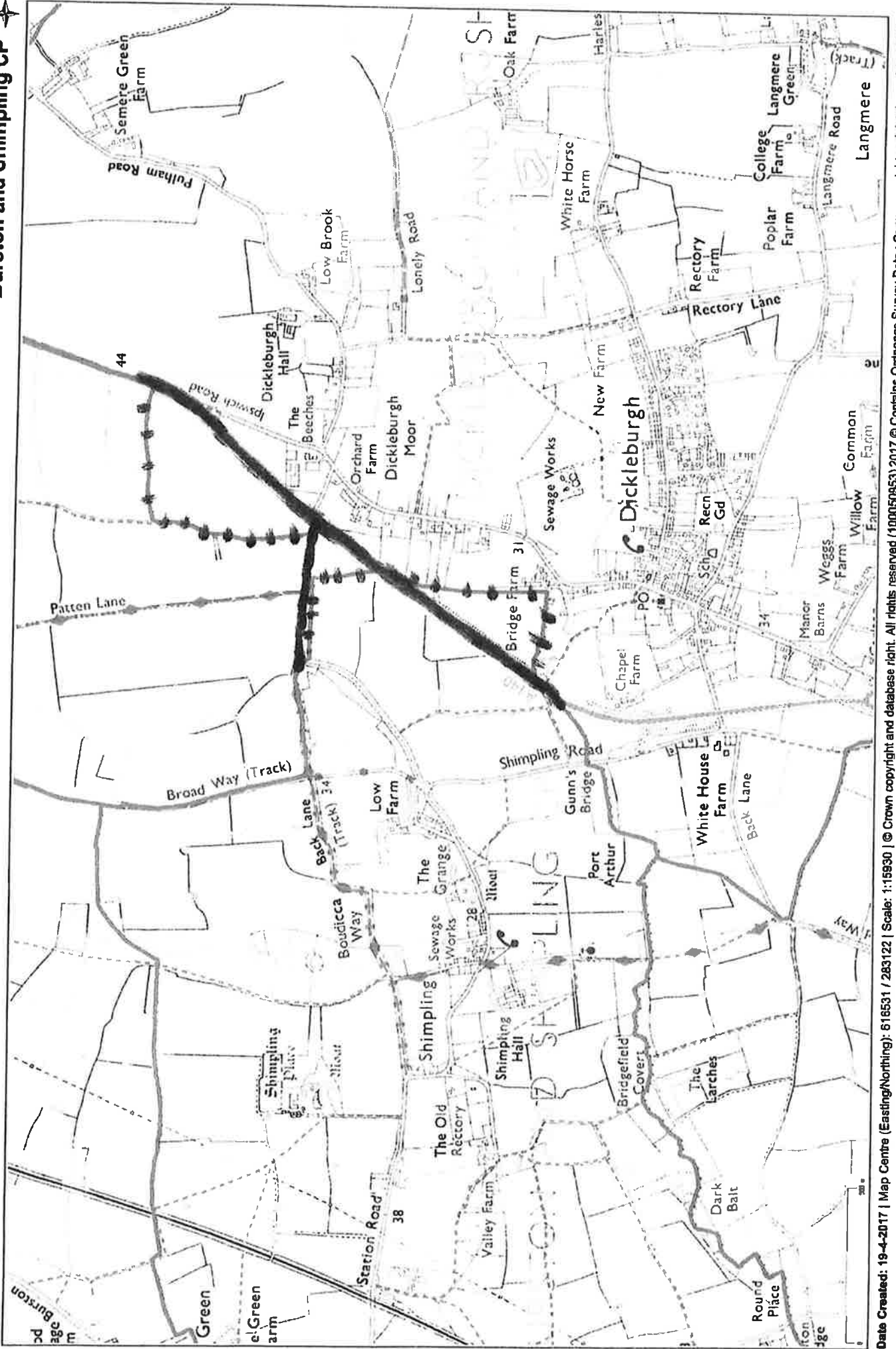
**Mill Green**

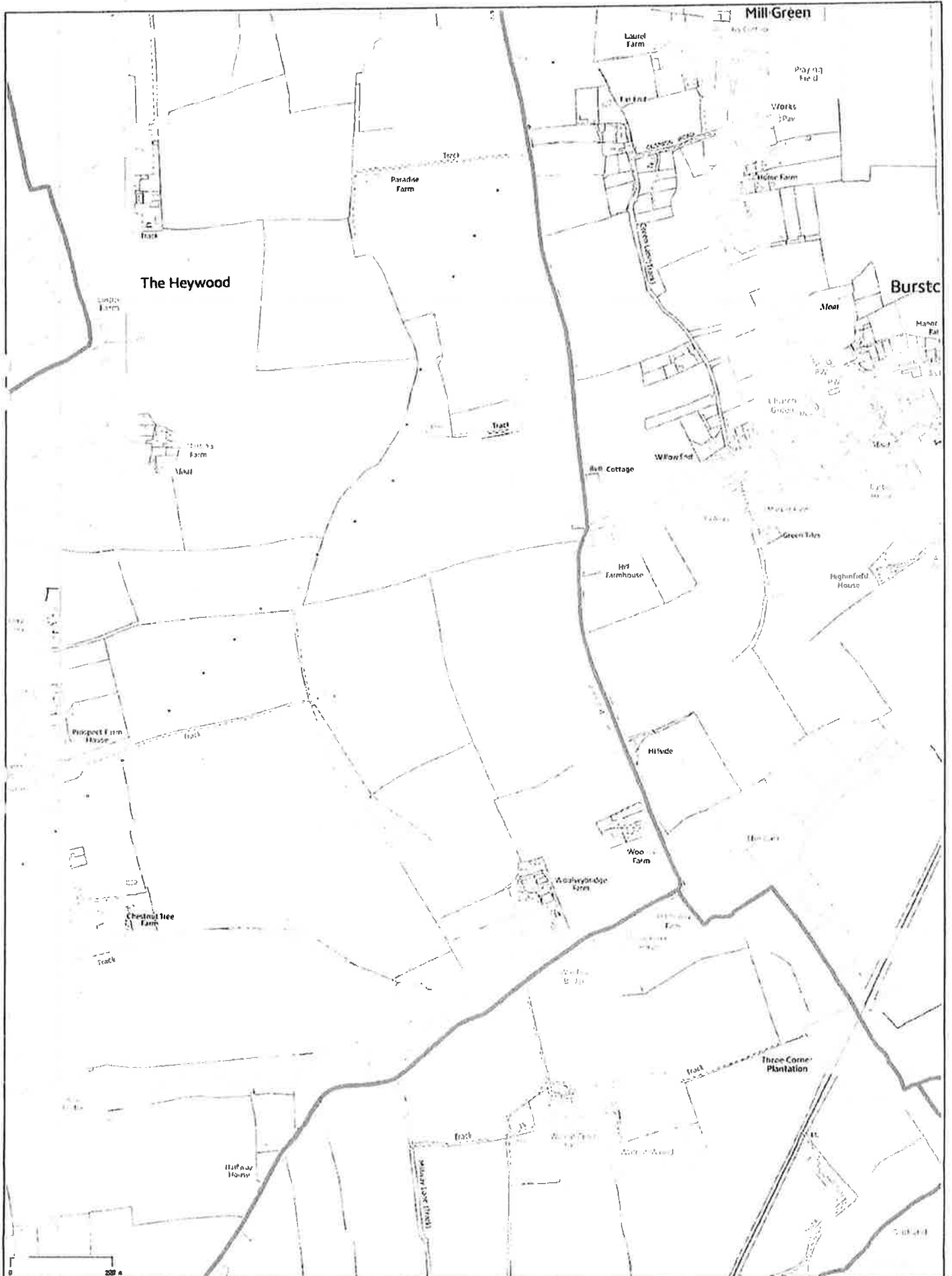
**Gissing Road.**

**Water/ice on Gissing Road**

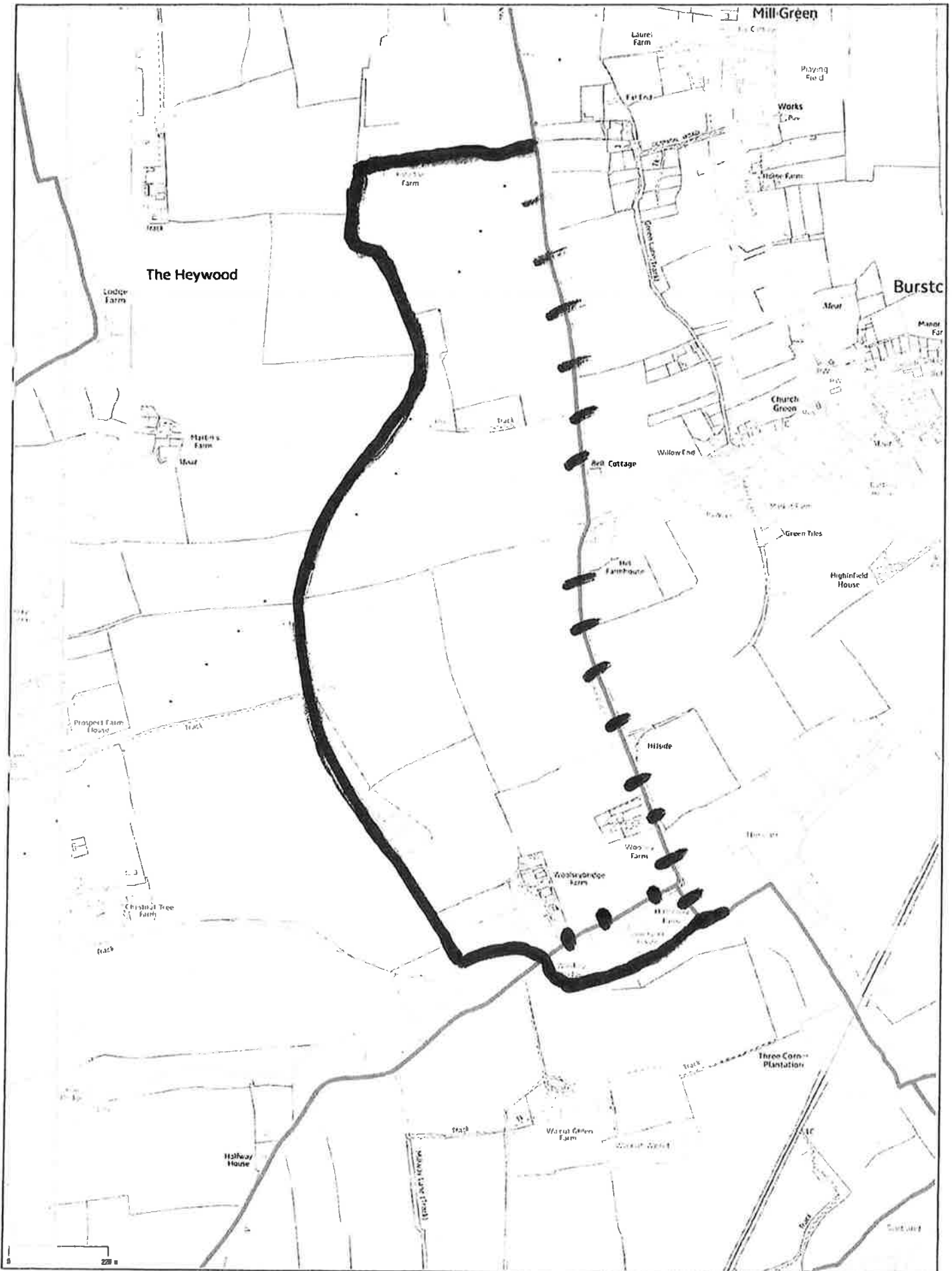
**Lack of school sign?**

**Open gates to school carpark.**











# 1. Review of Community Governance Arrangements for Parishes in South Norfolk

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## 1. Name

Nigel Frankland

## 2. Job title or position

Chairman

## 3. Parish

Burston and Shimpling

## 4. Email address

nigelfrankland@btinternet.com

Please reply to the following questions, and give reasons or examples where possible. Where your answers would affect another parish (for instance, a suggestion of merging parishes, a joint parish arrangement or changing a parish boundary) you are encouraged to take this up with the other parish(es) concerned at the earliest opportunity.

## 5. Does the parish council (or parish meeting) have the capacity to deliver its statutory functions and other services that residents require?

- Yes
- No

### Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:

We have consistently maintained a full number of councillors for our parish needs. Councillors have specific roles and responsibilities. We hold regular meetings which are well documented by our clerk. We have always pursued requests from residents, and given assistance to resolve any issues that arise. However it must be admitted that it is difficult to assess exactly what 'residents require' as only a few residents attend Parish Council meetings, unless there is a particular issue that is of great importance.

## 6. Can you solve the problems that your residents bring to you? Does the Parish Council (or parish meeting) discuss important issues that affect the parish and try to take action, or to seek action, to deal with those issues?

- Yes
- No

**Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:**

While answering 'yes' to this question, what we really mean is that that we try to solve the problems – some simply cannot be solved. The Parish Council is not shy about discussing important and often controversial issues, such as, for example, a proposed enlargement of Burston House Hospital (where the patients have all been 'sectioned', and some have criminal histories), problems with some residents in Audley Close, a development of 'social' housing, and issues with regard to heavy traffic passing through the village. We always try to take action, but sometimes the only action that can be taken is the application of pressure, which is not always successful

**7. Is the Parish Council (or parish meeting) seen by residents to be offering active community leadership?**

- Yes
- No

**Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:**

We have answered with a slightly hesitant yes, as it is difficult to assess what the parishioners actually 'see'. We try to communicate with residents in different ways. We maintain a website and a facebook page, and publish a quarterly full colour newsletter. Regular emails are sent to over a hundred residents – a high proportion as we have about 280 addresses in the parish. The Chairman of the Council is often seen out and about in the village, and is known to a high proportion of residents. The Parish Council have organised 'free' events for parishioners, for example when a World War 1 memorial garden was opened, when a new set of play equipment was opened on the playing field, and for the Queen's Birthday. However, it is not clear if all of this is 'community leadership'.

**8. Does the Parish Council find it difficult to get and retain sufficient Parish Councillors?**

- Yes
- No

**Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:**

While we have not had a contested election for a long time, we have always been able to fill any vacancies by co-optation within a few weeks of the vacancy arising.

**9. Based on the Terms of Reference or other local considerations, is there a case for either increasing or reducing the number of parish councillors?**

- Yes
- No

**Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:**

The Parish Council has worked well with the current number up to now, and there does not seem to be any logical reason to make a change

**10. Based on the Terms of Reference or other local considerations, is there a case for dividing the parish into two or more wards, each with its own allocation of parish councillors?**

- Yes
- No

While it might be suggested that there is an argument for making Shimpling a separate ward, the present councillors do not think that this suggestion has any real merit. Shimpling would be a ward with a single councillor, based on the relative number of residents, and at the moment provides two of the seven councillors. In any event, Shimpling issues are always dealt with fairly by the council, and there is a general feeling that Burston and Shimpling is a single community.

If yes, please let us know how you would change the boundary and the reasons for the change and email the map to [review@s-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:review@s-norfolk.gov.uk).

**11. Based on the Terms of Reference or other local considerations, if you already have wards, are they up-to-date in representing the parish communities.**

- Yes
- No

We are not presently warded.

**12. Is there a case for 'grouping' your parish with one or more neighbouring parishes, merging them to create a single new 'joint' parish and parish council?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, with which parish would you merge and are there any significant parish-owned assets or employment issues that might be affected by a merger?**

Burston and Shimpling seems, to councillors, to be a single integral 'community' with no great ties or links to adjacent communities. Of course, there is some movement of people between communities in that some from Burston use the Gissing Crown pub, and some children from Gissing come to play on the play equipment in the Burston playing field, but mainly villagers keep themselves to themselves. The Playing field was transferred to Burston and Shimpling Parish Council at a very low price by the local landowner, but is to remain in the ownership of that council. A merger would mean that a clerk would have to be 'let go'. Possibly a new clerk would have to be found as the job would be much bigger. Maybe the pay of the clerk would rise to a level where NI payments and pension payments would have to be made, making any potential cost saving ineffective.

**13. If you are already a 'grouped' joint parish as a result of a previous merger of parishes, does the current arrangement work satisfactorily?**

- Yes
- No

**Please explain why you have indicated yes or no:**

We have been the parish of Burston and Shimpling for a very long time and no problems have arisen.

**14. Do your parish boundaries need amending to fit with your community or communities?**

- Yes
- No

**If no, are there features such as rivers, railways or less-populated rural roads that might replace some of your current boundaries?**

There are some properties towards the bottom of Durbidge's Hill which presently 'belong' to Diss and The Heywood, but these properties are really located much closer to Burston. The boundary at the Eastern side can be partially aligned with the A140. This will remove the anomaly that Burston and Shimpling 'own' land hard up against Dickleburgh, and between the centre of Dickleburgh and the A140. There is already development of Dickleburgh which is getting very close to this land, and if this area is developed the residents will surely consider themselves to be 'Dickleburgh' rather than 'Shimpling'.

Maps showing our suggestions are attached.

**15. Would you like to change the 'style' of your parish council – in other words, its name. If you wanted to merge, what would you like to call the new 'grouped' council?**

No, we are happy with the name.

**16. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?**

No but we are filing a letter with more comments.