# Swanton Morley and Hoe and Worthing clash over parish control of former Robertson Barracks site



In the heart of Norfolk, a conflict is brewing between two neighbouring villages over the future of a significant military site. Robertson Barracks, formerly known as RAF Swanton Morley, is scheduled to close by 2031, prompting plans for a substantial development of 2,000 homes across the 400-acre estate. This ambitious proposal has ignited tensions, as the development area falls within the boundaries of both Swanton Morley and the combined parish of Hoe and Worthing. The location's historical significance, dating back to World War II, intertwines with the current dispute, as local councils navigate the complexities of parish boundaries and future community planning.

The Swanton Morley Parish Council is advocating for the entire site to fall under its jurisdiction, arguing that it makes logistical sense to consolidate planning oversight as the area gears up for significant growth. Their pitch was put forward during a recent meeting with Breckland Council, citing the need for cohesive management as new homes are built. Supporters of the proposal, including Roger Atterwill, the chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council, argue that such a move would not only give the parish greater control but also facilitate "strong and stable leadership" in the face of forthcoming changes.

However, voices from Hoe and Worthing strongly oppose this motion. Celia Daniel, chairman of Hoe and Worthing Parish Council, described the move as a "land grab," asserting that the proposal would diminish their parish to an irrelevant fragment of land. Alongside concerns about the economic implications of losing parish territory, local farmer Michael Goff expressed his dismay, indicating that the change would effectively render Hoe and Worthing obsolete. The contrast between the two parishes is stark: Swanton Morley, with a population of 2,300 and various amenities, stands in direct juxtaposition to Hoe and Worthing, home to fewer than 300 residents and limited facilities.

The potential for significant council tax revenue from the new housing is a compelling motivator for Swanton Morley. Each new household represents not just an increase in population but also financial growth for the parish, which has made its case for the future with assertions of economic and community development. The plans include using the Grade II-listed former control tower to create a museum, celebrating the airbase's historical significance, especially its role in the first combined bombing raid of World War II that took place on July 4, 1942. This marks an important legacy for the base, as both British and American forces launched their coordinated assault on German-held territories from this location.

Despite Swanton Morley's advocacy, Breckland Council has, for now, sided with Hoe and Worthing, deeming the proposal "premature.” Councillors argued that any realignment of parish boundaries should occur only in conjunction with concrete planning applications for the proposed development. This cautious approach reflects broader concerns about how planning changes may impact local governance structures.

As the community faces the prospect of transformation, the complex interplay of historical significance, local governance, and future development schemes will undoubtedly continue to fuel discussions. The evolution of these two parishes could set a precedent for how such disputes are handled in the future, and as Robertson Barracks prepares for its closure, residents on both sides will watch closely to see how their identities and communities are shaped in the wake of such significant change.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25169697.swanton-morley-worthing-parishes-fight-ww2-airfield/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robertson_Barracks,_Swanton_Morley)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25169697.swanton-morley-worthing-parishes-fight-ww2-airfield/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.swantonmorleypc.info/planning), [[3]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24451565.swanton-morley-council-backs-robertson-barracks-development/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24451565.swanton-morley-council-backs-robertson-barracks-development/), [[5]](https://wikimapia.org/2242554/Robertson-Barracks), [[6]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23649776.swanton-morley-base-hosts-celebration-transatlantic-air-alliance/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25169697.swanton-morley-worthing-parishes-fight-ww2-airfield/?ref=rss), [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robertson_Barracks,_Swanton_Morley), [[7]](https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/modest-start-for-the-mighty-eighth/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25169697.swanton-morley-worthing-parishes-fight-ww2-airfield/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.swantonmorleypc.info/planning)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25169697.swanton-morley-worthing-parishes-fight-ww2-airfield/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.swantonmorleypc.info/planning> - The Swanton Morley Parish Council's planning page discusses the future of Robertson Barracks, highlighting its expected closure in 2031 as part of a £5.1 billion investment program. The council envisions transforming the 400-acre site into a sustainable rural community, emphasizing housing and employment growth. They have engaged with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Breckland District Council to explore development options, expressing a preference for housing and business premises over alternative uses like prisons or immigration centers.
3. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24451565.swanton-morley-council-backs-robertson-barracks-development/> - This article reports on Swanton Morley Parish Council's support for a proposed 2,000-home development at Robertson Barracks, aiming to more than double the village's population. The council views this as a preferred option for the site's future, highlighting potential benefits such as local investment, employment opportunities, and improved services. They plan to collaborate with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Breckland Council in the coming years to realize this vision.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robertson_Barracks,_Swanton_Morley> - Robertson Barracks, formerly RAF Swanton Morley, is a military installation in Norfolk, England. It has been home to 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards since 2015 and is scheduled to close in 2029. The barracks have a rich history, including serving as a Bomber Command station during World War II and hosting the first combined bombing raid of the war on July 4, 1942. The site is now under consideration for redevelopment into a sustainable community.
5. <https://wikimapia.org/2242554/Robertson-Barracks> - This Wikimapia entry provides detailed information about Robertson Barracks, including its history and current status. It notes that the site was initially designed as a fighter station but was incomplete by the outbreak of World War II. The airfield opened in September 1940 and served various RAF squadrons during the war. After the war, it hosted different RAF units until its closure in 1995, after which it became Robertson Barracks under the British Army.
6. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/23649776.swanton-morley-base-hosts-celebration-transatlantic-air-alliance/> - This article celebrates the 81st anniversary of the first combined bombing raid of World War II, which took place on July 4, 1942, from RAF Swanton Morley. The raid involved American and British airmen attacking German airfields in the Netherlands. The event was commemorated at the same location, now Robertson Barracks, which has been home to the 1st The Queen’s Dragoon Guards since 2015.
7. <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/modest-start-for-the-mighty-eighth/> - This article details the first combined bombing raid of World War II, which took place on July 4, 1942, from RAF Swanton Morley. It describes the mission, the aircraft used, and the challenges faced by the crews. The raid targeted German airfields in the Netherlands and marked a significant moment in the transatlantic air alliance during the war.