

**From:** George Francis [mailto:s[REDACTED]]

**Sent:** 05 September 2016 14:17

**To:** reviews <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL; REALLOCATION OF WARDS

The Local Government Boundary Commission

Dear Sirs,

**PROPOSED REVISION OF WARDS IN SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL**

**PROPOSAL IN RELATION TO THE PARISH OF SWARDESTON**

I would be grateful if you would receive this representation of the urgent concerns felt by Swardeston Parish Council about the proposal just sent to you by South Norfolk Council to change the ward in which the parish of Swardeston should be included.

To put the matter briefly, our understanding is that the present situation in which we are included in a ward with the adjacent village of Mulbarton, which straddles the same road that we straddle at a distance of only 1 mile and with which we share most of our local facilities, is to be changed to put us and the adjacent parish of East Carleton in a ward with the village of Stoke Holy Cross with which neither of our parishes has anything in common.

We understand that of the three criteria governing the grouping of parishes in a ward, the criteria requiring an equality within a small tolerance of the number of constituents served by a councillor is to be given such prominence over the other two criteria as to make them insignificant. We know that in our case this process has produced a severely impractical result, and we understand that as is by no means the only such.

Unfortunately Swardeston Parish Council learned of the proposal too late for South Norfolk Council to consider our views. We understand that the Commission will be considering the proposal and consulting on it. Please might I ask you to confirm to me the precise terms and period of this consultation, so that we may make the most effective representations to you that we can.

In the meantime, I attach a copy of my letter to South Norfolk Council.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Francis

Chair, Swardeston Parish Council.

Dear Councillors,

## **PROPOSED WARD BOUNDARY CHANGES: SWARDESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

We have had the advantage of reading the papers for your meeting on Tuesday 5th September concerning Ward boundary changes at South Norfolk Council.

We are so concerned at the proposals for Ward 13 that we felt we should write to you individually.

We appreciate that you are practically and reasonably bound to take account of the Council as a whole as well as the interests of individual parishes. For this reason, electoral equality is important. However, we note that it is only one of the three considerations to be weighed, the other two being that the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of the local communities, and that the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

We have learned over the years how essential is the relationship between our council and South Norfolk. We strongly value the contact with South Norfolk which we have with our current ward councillor Nigel Legg. While no doubt that has a good deal to do with his personal qualities, we feel that his current responsibilities fit well with the second and third of the key statutory criteria in a way that they would not if he was also representing Stoke Holy Cross.

While Stoke Holy Cross is a fine village, we are quite clear that our only natural relationship with it is that it is not too far away as the crow flies. And the crow does not have to trouble himself with the A140.

We notice that Ward 27 is described as a group of villages lying on the B 1108 /A140 routes to Norwich. With respect, it in fact lies on the B 1113 to Norwich, as does Swardeston. In our firmly held view, Swardeston shares the interests and identities of those villages and is effectively and conveniently locally governed with them.

People from Swardeston use the doctor's surgery, the two schools, the farm shop, the pub, the toddler group, the church, the cafe, the dentist, the chemist, the fish and chip shop, the motor repair shop, the Post Office and stores and the supermarket in Mulbarton. Of all these facilities, the only ones which Swardeston have of its own are a church and a farm shop.

Ward 27 already bears a 4% variance from electoral equality, and in our view Swardeston could fit into that Ward without violating the first criteria too adversely, and would satisfy the second and third criteria realistically.

Even if this proved too difficult, we are confident that a fair examination would conclude that Swardeston's claim to be part of Ward 27 should justify a rearrangement of other parishes to include it.

Further we are concerned that in very neatly satisfying electoral equality without fulfilling the second and third criteria, the “community perspective” comments seem to group the villages together on the basis of their proximity to Norwich. It seems to us that their proximity to Norwich is only relevant in so far as it relates to their real proximity to each other, unless by implication you are saying that they are really to be seen as part of Norwich.

We do not suppose that anyone would seriously argue that Stoke Holy Cross and Swardeston actually have a community of interests between them, in the way that I have demonstrated in relation to Mulbarton. We cannot imagine any basis for such an argument.

Because of this we urge you to find that the present proposals for Ward 13 do not satisfy the criteria, and that satisfaction of the first criterion ought to be found in another way.

We have not been given time to consult our colleagues at East Carleton with Ketteringham, and have therefore not attempted to argue the case from their point of view, although I am copying the letter to them.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Francis

Chair, Swardeston Parish Council