

North Norfolk Liberal Democrats
Ward Boundary Proposal Comments

30 January 2017

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Covering Comments

North Norfolk Liberal Democrats wish to reiterate the points already made in their original submission, however our key comments are:-

We remain concerned that the challenges of ensuring councillors are able to represent wards effectively, are in some cases being much underestimated. Under the new proposals some councillors will have extremely large geographical areas to cover; councillors with working or caring commitments will find this especially difficult. This is particularly relevant in the proposed – Coastal, Gresham and Priory wards, in these areas it can take at least 30 minutes to drive from one side of the ward to the other. The practical consequence of the expansion in rural ward sizes necessitated by a decrease in council size is to increase (sometimes significantly) the travel time necessary for councillors to visit different parishes within their wards to look at sites of planning applications, and meet with local residents. Transport links can be very poor in places, and there is therefore an obvious benefit in grouping together parishes that follow natural routes of travel.

Not all of the proposed new wards have taken full account of the local alliances and natural cohesion of certain communities and we are concerned that these should be fully addressed wherever possible. Details of areas where this is of concern have been noted in the appropriate areas of this document.

Whilst we appreciate that a line must be drawn when considering future expansion of towns; where there is considerable evidence to suggest that principal market towns will absorb the bulk of planned development surely this should be given further weight and consideration. As I am sure you are aware both North Walsham and Fakenham are North Norfolk's growth towns. Under these proposals the voices of both Lancaster North and North Walsham would be weakened and this is surely not in the best interests of local residents. We would request that the proposals for both these towns be reviewed.

We would suggest on greater reflection that perhaps all areas of North Norfolk would have been better served with a reduction from 48 to 42 members, allowing better representation for all areas.

Leaving that aside our comments on each proposed ward are to be found below.

Proposed wards

Central North Norfolk

1. Erpingham

As proposed

2. Mundesley

As proposed

3. Poppyland

As proposed

4. Roughton

As proposed

Cromer and Sheringham

5. Beeston Regis & The Runtons

As proposed

6. Cromer Town

As proposed

7. Gresham

As proposed

8. Sheringham North

As proposed

9. Sheringham South

As proposed

10. Suffield Park

As proposed

Fakenham, Holt and the west

11. Briston

As proposed

12. Costal

Blakeney and Wiveton consider they have nothing in common with Upper Sheringham and believe themselves far more aligned to Stiffkey. Due to their proximity and the businesses that operate in these locations, and their joint access to the sea this does make sense from a geographical and community view.

13. Holt

Glandford and Letheringsett are separate rural communities that are deeply concerned that their needs and issues will not be well understood or met by a member also representing a neighbouring town.

14. Lancaster North

As proposed but taking into consideration the points raised about growth towns.

15. Lancaster South

As proposed but taking into consideration the points raised about growth towns.

16. Priory

This ward covers an extremely large area which could impact upon its member's ability to represent all areas equitably.

17. Stibbard

As proposed, However much concern has been raised that the historic name of Astley is being lost. The Astley family name has strong historical links with politics, and the family were benefactors of the area for many generations. Many would like to see the Stibbard ward named New Astley instead.

18. Stody

Thornage, Hunworth and Stody do not consider there to be a good geographic reach for the ward, and are concerned by the scale and mix of the parishes proposed.

19. The Raynhams

As proposed

20. Walsingham

As proposed

21. Wells with Holkham

As proposed

North Walsham

22. Bacton

As proposed

23. North Walsham East

As proposed but taking into consideration the points raised about growth towns.

24. North Walsham Market Cross

As proposed

25. North Walsham West

As proposed but taking into consideration the points raised about growth towns.

26. Trunch

As proposed

The South East

27. Happisburgh

As proposed

28. Hickling

As proposed

29. Horning

The Boundary Commission's brief to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities is not a straight forward task and there will inevitably be areas where there is local discontent with decisions made from afar that alter the make up of an historically happy and contented group of villages. This appears to be the case in my present ward of Barton Turf, Irstead, Horning and Neatishead for which it is proposed to group Barton Turf and Horning with Ludham, and Neatishead with Hoveton.

Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf, known locally as the NIB villages, have a strong connection, not only historically, but more recently by coming together as a robust community force, raising funds for and completing three important 'three village' projects. The astonishing result of their commitment to their local area not only resulted in the replacement and building of a prize winning eco-friendly village hall, but also a flourishing village shop, owned and run by the community, and the restoration of the last pub in that area which is owned locally and has become the focus of a thriving and happy community.

It should also be mentioned that the ward villages coincide with the church benefice that encompasses the churches of Barton Turf, Irstead, Neatishead and Horning, and that their connection is consolidated by the sharing of their two parish magazines, the NIB and the Horning Reach..

For the sake of a few hundred people short in an endeavour to make up numbers, I would be unhappy to see a wedge being driven through the present make up of a ward that is a good, safe and settled community with a clear and strong rural identity.

30. Hoveton

As proposed

31. Stalham

As proposed

32. Tunstead

As proposed

33. Worstead

As proposed