

Neatishead Irstead and Barton Turf Community Heritage Group



29th January 2017

Review Officer (North Norfolk)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP

Dear Sirs

Electoral Review of North Norfolk – villages of Neatishead, Irstead & Barton Turf

I write on behalf of Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf Community Heritage Group (NIBCHG) to register our opposition to the commission's proposal to separate the administration of the neighbouring parishes of Neatishead and Barton Turf & Irstead in terms of North Norfolk District Council ward changes. We recognise the broad need to review electoral arrangements from time to time and have no issues in principle with the generic aims you apply to the pattern of wards, but at local level in the case of our three villages of Neatishead, Barton Turf and Irstead, the conclusions you have reached which have led to this proposal we feel are wholly inappropriate.

Our heritage group, formed in 2013, undertook a significant two year project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to research the life and times of the three villages through the difficult years of WW1 and to commemorate those 134 men who served their country at that time. A plaque in their memory is now displayed in our three villages' New Victory Hall which stands adjacent to the former Victory Hall (now a residence). www.greatwar.nibchg.org.uk

Originally a reading and club room where members would meet to chat and read a selection of daily newspapers, the Victory Hall was built in 1887 by the Preston family. In 1919 the hall was purchased from Sir Edward Preston by residents of the three villages as a memorial to those who gave their lives in the Great War. The Victory Hall became a popular venue for very many community events but the upkeep of the hall became increasingly expensive and in early 1970 an appeal was launched to raise money for alterations to the building. One outcome of this appeal was the formation of NABS (Neatishead and Barton Society) the local drama group who have now performed over 100 productions.

Having outgrown the Victory Hall, in 2009 the New Victory Hall opened as a result of the collaboration of a massive voluntary effort by the community of the three villages - fundraising, design and building.

Following our successful WW1 project, NIBCHG has now become a local interest group in the community, meeting regularly for talks, research and to undertake further projects in order to the preserve the heritage of Neatishead, Irstead and Barton Turf.

These are some of the many 'interests that bind our community together' and surely displays the strong level of 'community identity' (aims of the Boundary Commission) across the three villages, which have been fostered over the past 100 years.

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The proposed boundary change would not only separate Neatishead parish from that of Barton Turf and Irstead at district level, thereby splitting up what is currently a tight-knit cohesive community, but would also isolate Irstead from Barton Turf.

The proposed boundary change would result in people in Neatishead, Barton Turf and Irstead being represented by two different District Councillors.

Having one District Councillor with a real understanding of the needs of our tight knit rural community and the opportunities that are available to its residents has proved successful in supporting the community in all that it has achieved to date. In contrast two representatives for the three villages would make working with external agencies much more complicated. The councillors would struggle in trying to merge the interests of our divided rural community with the differing issues of the neighbouring parishes and this would only serve to threaten the ongoing success of the three villages in combating social isolation and providing local support.

The three villages – and the two parishes of Neatishead and Barton Turf & Irstead - have worked together over many years as a well represented, cohesive, supportive community. We feel most strongly that the Commission's proposal threatens all that has been achieved to date and could make the delivery of future local community projects and activities much harder.

In reporting on your consultation exercise I would be grateful if you would include this response with those you may have received from other groups and residents in the area.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Claire Penstone-Smith, Chair

on behalf of
Neatishead, Irstead & Barton Turf Community Heritage Group