

North East Lincolnshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: North East Lincolnshire: 1) Scartho and 2) generally

INTRODUCTION:

In May 2024, I became a Ward Councillor for the Scartho ward, in this unitary authority of North East Lincs. It was the first time I've stood. Soon after election, I was made aware of a Ward Boundary working group consisting of 3 Conservatives, 2 Labour, 1 independent and 1 Liberal Democrat members. This is relevant as 2 of the Conservatives represent my ward, Scartho, and have done for a number of years, and yet they did not discuss this with me (in person nor email). They didn't seek my views as the new Councillor with over 1100 votes, but also as a long-term Scartho resident.

I understand the NELincs Working Group suggested one minor change to Scartho at Permain Close to rectify one cul de sac which currently is split between 2 different wards. Otherwise, I am aware of zero changes; no wider community meetings, no public consultation beyond the Boundary Commission's efforts. I am very concerned about the lack of reference to Scartho in the Council's proposals via the working group.

COUNCIL PROPOSAL:

When I attended the special Full Council called to discuss this matter, I was very disappointed with both the lack of detail in the officer report, which lacked evidence, statistics, rationale, and explanation. Also at the meeting, the votes clearly went on party lines, as the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats voted together for this botched, ill-prepared submission to go forward on behalf of the Council. Many Conservatives had nothing to say, and those that did speak were self-congratulatory on their supposedly amazing hard work, which seems to have failed to review ward boundaries. One of my colleagues, Councillor Augusta, remarked this is the first ward boundary review of his lifetime and its important to get

it right. I agree. Councillor Kaczmarek of Sidney Sussex ward rightly pointed out that the word 'community' appears only once in the report!

In 2001, of the then 14 wards, only 2 were recommended to stay the same; it was a thorough wide-ranging review. The 2001 Report stated that in 2000 Scartho had an electorate of 7356, and it was projected to be 9028 by 2005. In 2024, the NELC report says projected figures are currently 9449. By comparison the Conservative;Liberal proposal at full council deletes 1 ward, amends 9 wards, but keeps 5 the same. It mentions numbers, without any explanation nor detailed discussion. Those amendments were done on the basis of accommodating the deleted wards or managing the numbers in each ward.

The 2001 report stated; the Council 'expected most of the growth to be in Scartho ward' (para 37). Yet the Scartho ward boundaries remain untouched in the current proposal; that doesn't reflect this growth. If most of the growth is in Scartho, why have 2 of the Scartho councillors not mentioned or considered this? Indeed in 2001 the Conservatives preferred a FOUR member Scartho ward, but this idea has perhaps been forgotten. Also in 2001 the Scartho Preservation Society sought that Edge Avenue area stayed in Scartho (para 76) 'for reasons of community identity' yet that idea appears to have been entirely dismissed or forgotten about.

SCARTH0 WARD:

The Scartho ward is a distinct area of Grimsby but now sits in parliamentary terms in the new Brigg and Immingham constituency. Scartho has grown over time from a small village to a much larger community, arguably a main Scartho Village community, and new sub-communities such as Scartho Top, a new housing estate, and the areas around the 2 public houses or the 2 primary schools.

Again the NELC official submission neglects to reflect any recent or forthcoming growth. I have at least 5 key examples which I think merit serious consideration to be brought INTO Scartho ward:

(Please imagine Scartho ward as either a compass/clock face for ease of reference):

1. At 12noon/North there is an issue with the new estate built (Kings Park etc) on the old hospital land. This surely must be in Scartho Ward, but it currently sits in Park Ward, because where it came from, hospital land. Its sole access is via Scartho. It has no link to anywhere else. At the recent elections, its residents had to literally pass a Scartho Polling Station to go to vote in the Park ward. Its residents likely use Scartho shops, medical facilities, parks etc.

2. At the opposite end of the ward, 6pm/South is a small new-ish cul-de-sac Boundary Farm Court, which I understand from maps and from the 2 elections earlier this year sits in Waltham. Again, completely irrationally/historically. People in Boundary Farm Court are in Scartho as soon as they turn right out of the cul de sac, or if they cross the road! Again, an accident of history which should be rectified now.

3. The third example is where I live, closer to 3pm on the clockface, as the new Cyden Homes estate, Kensington Green, is growing outwards at Glebe Road/Shaw Drive/Westkirke Avenue. The adjacent land is Waltham ward or New Waltham ward. As new houses are built, people might not realise their council ward immediately, but might be baffled when they find out; it might deter them from voting. In recent elections I've had people tell me that they thought the polling card was wrong when they see the ward they are in or polling station location. A hidden effect of illogical ward choices is that it causes a deterrent or inconvenience to voting. It detaches people from their communities potentially.

4. Similarly to both above examples, there is an imminent development of land at rear of Torbay Drive and Emfield Road, (7pm) which AGAIN is in Waltham for historical reasons, but it makes no sense for a new estate solely connected by road to Scartho to NOT be designated as Scartho, and to be aligned with Waltham. Again, please look at the map, it looks naturally Scartho.

5. My fifth and final example is around 9pm-10pm on clock face of my map, roughly; the west side of the Scartho Top estate. I'm uncertain how many houses are still to be built on this estate, as that depends on how much of the remaining estate is built on with commercial units, and how much is residential. The boundary here is currently next to land at the Wolds Ward, so a similar situation could reoccur as above. There are multiple housebuilders active on Scartho Top currently and for an estate with a 30 year history of stop-start building, it seems to be going quite fast at the moment.

I raised these five points with Council officers who told me that Scartho is already above the desired Ward number target of around 8000 per ward, and indeed is approaching the maximum number of 9.5k or similar, allowing for a % uplift so there is no room for manoeuvre. I appreciate numbers are important, but there are other important considerations here.

Firstly Scartho is a community. It has different elements within it; the Scartho Top part of the ward is growing rapidly, and it has been mooted that one day it might be its own ward given it has a community feel. However, it also has increasingly road and footpath connectivity with the rest of Scartho, and when it next autumn has its own school, there will likely be stronger links between it and the rest of Scartho. People refer to areas that they live in within Scartho; maybe sub-communities; they live near Mendip, St Giles, Springfield or Southfield. Again, these haven't been discussed or considered to my knowledge.

Secondly, the map of Scartho shows a tight boundary. Scartho is not exactly an island but of those examples I gave above, most of them are not direct physical neighbours to Scartho residents. There is a Strategic Gap between Scartho and Waltham settlements, which is gradually being eroded by planning permission. This boundary review needs to review the boundaries of the ward of Scartho. The majority of current councillors are happy to vote for leaving it as it is. I think that is a mistake and that the review should look at recent planning permissions granted, and current building trends, and adjust the boundary accordingly. Scartho is growing, has grown over 20 years. It continues to grow. It is about to acquire more properties, and a new school, and has just acquired multiple new shops, a supermarket and a convenience store for example. The review should consider this. Otherwise it is not very thorough, and smacks of political convenience/short cuts.

I am conscious that another key point of a boundary review is to review future governance; and I believe that my suggestions show consideration regarding how Scartho ward should look, in terms of consistency, fairness, appropriate ward locations.

A good submission should be robust, persuasive, and contain evidence. I think my points above qualify, although admittedly the main evidence is the map itself. I simply do not understand why any review of Scartho as a ward would NOT extend the boundary outwards to incorporate the new build properties on the edge of Scartho. New properties put Scartho on their postal address, the residents consider themselves as Scartho residents, and are surprised to find otherwise for electoral purposes. I want to be an effective Councillor, working hard for local residents. For example my ward surgeries take place in multiple venues so I can be accessible to a range of constituents. I don't want to have to tell attendees from neighbouring properties that they are not in my ward so need to contact a different councillor.

In terms of Scartho being a community, as a Ward Councillor, I have been made aware of the great work happening at Scartho Community Garden, by Scartho In Bloom, the litter picking by Scartho Wombles, the groups at St Giles Church Hall, Scartho, and Scartho Methodist Church, and Scartho Community Centre. Almost everything Scartho-related in terms of community activity falls within the current Scartho boundary. There is a notable exception regarding education, as hinted above. There are currently 2 primary schools, Fairfield and Springfield, plus there will next year be a third a new primary school called Scartho Gateway Academy. There is also Scartho Nursery on Pinfold Lane, Scartho. There are local pubs and bars, shops in small groups, and a new convenience store.

The exception here is the estate close to the Scartho Infants and Junior schools consisting of a number of roads, with local shops, often called the Edge Avenue estate. It is in Park Ward, but when I, like many, parents walk through the rear school entrance to take my son to school I come from Scartho into Park Ward. This does not appear to have been considered. Perhaps because Scartho is already growing as above, but to not mention why Scartho Infants and Junior is not in Scartho seems a bit odd. I can understand why it may stay as is, but was surprised not to see mention of it. The report provided makes numerous omissions like this, which I feel compelled to point out.

If you tidy up the ward as per my examples above, this will be an inclusive move, but will push you very close to the total numbers stipulated. I want people living in Scartho to be represented by Scartho Ward Councillors because it is logical, inclusive, and hopefully increases a sense of community and belonging. Finally, I'd rather the numbers were slightly over and reflected the whole of Scartho as it is, rather than sections be left cut adrift to meet a target.

A FEW NON-SCARTH0 ISSUES:

1) Ward names

If the current Conservative/Liberal Democrat proposals were actioned we'd have 14 wards: Croft Baker; East Marsh; Haverstoe; Heneage; Humberston&New Waltham; Immingham; Park; Scartho; Sidney Sussex; South; Waltham; West Marsh; Wolds; Yarborough.

I'm not happy with a number of titles of the wards – Park is presumably named after Peoples Park, but that really doesn't label it properly. South is

worse, as it is mainly composed of Nunsthorpe, Grange and Bradley Park estates, but again, you wouldn't know from the name. I've never heard anyone say they are from the South of Grimsby, yet we have a South ward.

II) Ward deletion

If there is to be a ward deleted, I'm not convinced it should be Freshney. I would retain Freshney ward personally; I think it is a good sized ward of 3 linked areas.

I'm not certain that a ward should be deleted, and that was the focus of the Council report, which I thought was disappointing. I'd rather we reviewed the boundaries and their names, as opposed to just deleting one as the main priority.

III) Other general points

I think Stallingborough should be in the same ward as Healing, i.e. in the Wolds, as neighbouring villages. I'm confused as to how certain wards, particularly Yarborough are composed; I don't think people living on Laceby Acres see themselves as from the Yarborough.

On reflection I think it makes sense to look at the biggest areas of the authority, and work with a blank canvass from there; so clearly Grimsby and Cleethorpes are too big for one ward each. Immingham has a Town Council, but areas like Waltham and Scartho are growing to a similar size. I'm not sure whether Humberston and New Waltham fit together well, and hadn't realised until recently that some of what I consider to be Wolds villages are actually in the Waltham wards, and think that should change too.

I think there are many issues which have yet to be discussed at Council level, and I am interested in what levels of response the Commission receive and what ideas come forward.

Thanks for the opportunity to put forward my views.

I've asked Scartho residents and anyone who follows me on social media to submit their thoughts, but have no idea of the level of uptake you will get, though I'd be interested to be kept informed.

Attached Documents:

None attached