



# Great Coates Village Nursery School

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01/11/2024

To the Boundaries Commission England,

## CONTEXT

I am the head teacher of Great Coates Nursery School and Scartho Nursery in North East Lincolnshire. Great Coates Nursery has for many years been part of the local community and I am proud to be its Head Teacher, it is a honour. The village is a focal point of the Freshney Ward, it now houses the War Memorial which was once placed on the Reading Rooms before they were developed into a home. I have been proud to cement the schools place in the centre of the community; we run family events for all areas to attend, open our doors, and we are welcomed by all areas of the Freshney Ward- Wybers Wood, Aylesby Park, The Willows and indeed Great Coates. The ward is the air we breathe, it keeps us in business! I have, in my time at the school, seen children of the ward leave and go on to be successful and we see time and time again, generations of children attend the school as their families never leave the ward and are drawn by its strong community links.

On a personal note, I have lived in North East Lincolnshire most of my life (apart from my university days) and I have felt proud to do so.

However, the past couple of years have really opened my eyes to the political dishonesty within North East Lincolnshire and frankly, it has been destructive to our borough.

In the Summer of 2022, the two Maintained Nursery School's (of which I am the Head Teacher of both), were placed under threat of closure by North East Lincolnshire Council. I must highlight to yourselves that the two nursery schools sit within two different 'Wards' within North East Lincolnshire. I immediately reached out to the local councillors of both Wards for their support, help and guidance to oppose such a devastating proposal to close these two very well loved and respected Nursery Schools.

The response I received could not have been more different.

The 'Scartho Ward' councillors (all 3 Conservative) failed to respond to any calls for support; no help was forth coming in any way.

However, 2 of the 'Freshney Ward' Independent Councillors responded immediately with offers of help and support inclusive of arranging and attending a community meeting (the other Councillor, a Conservative member, failed to respond to calls for support). The ward has since elected its third Independent, with this a key matter. The Nursery was saved and the council was forced to make an apology for trying to close us based us mis truths- the response from our community blew us away. A public meeting on a Sunday evening at the local Village Hall was attended by over 200 people, including our MP at that time, who came out to show the strength of feeling for our ward. You can not create this type of community overnight, it has taken years and we wish for it to stay that way.

<https://www.grimsbytelegraph.co.uk/news/grimsby-news/parents-staff-councillors-grimsby-mp-8586963>

Basically, the proposal would essentially tear well established and supported communities apart.

### **STRENGTH OF THE FRESHNEY WARD**

It was the strength of the 2 Freshney Ward Independent Councillors and the community of Great Coates Nursery School which resulted in the 2 nursery schools remaining open after a very fierce battle with the local authority. Later found to have not followed statutory processes for consultation.

It is the strength of this community and the Independent Councillors that continue to prevent the proposal the building of unwanted local housing on a floodplain which would damage the chalk stream and the habitat of wildlife; areas which support the educational development of our children.

It is the strength of this community through Great Coates Village Council who have recently been awarded a national Gold Award from Villages in Bloom- their criteria is far more than flowers! 30% of the score looks for evidence of their community work- proving how well they have maintained their engagement with the nearby primary and secondary schools on the Willows- we are a ward who thrive on working together. Why would anyone want to change that?

There are many different community groups with the Freshney Ward that are suitable for a wide age range of residents, here are just a few example's, within the Freshney Ward; Women's Institute (107 years old one of the oldest in the country), Grumpy Old Men's club, Rainbows, Brownies, Walk Well Group, Older Peoples Collaborative, Freshney Comrades who regularly clear the river Freshney of debris and arrange regular litter picks within the Freshney Ward. These groups provide many benefits, for example, companionship, social interaction, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose to name but a few.

As a nursery school we have very strong links within the Freshney Ward and the community. For example, we have our regular Summer and Christmas Fairs which the community attend. We participate in the Scarecrow Festival and the Great Coates in Bloom event. We visit St Nicholas Church and St Nicholas church comes in to talk to the children. All provide essential learning experiences for our children. The community groups across the ward support our event and vice versa. We offer a vital parent and toddler group that's attended by parents across the ward

Historically, the majority of our children come from Wybers Wood Estate and they then join Wybers Wood Primary School. Currently, we have 55 children on roll, 10 of those from Great Coates and the other 45 from the rest of the Ward, including all other areas. The children at our school then go on to usually, Great Coates Primary or Wybers Wood Primary School- I work closely with these 2 heads and the schools have strong ties. It is unusual for our children to move on to schools outside of the ward, and happens only by exception. The ward is so well connected they have no reason to go elsewhere. Children who attend our nursey usually walk to and from school from across the ward and we don't even have a car park as the local feel of the school is so strong.

Some of our staff live in the ward as well as work in it and they too are proud of its status as an anchor of the Freshney ward Community. I talk on behalf of all staff at the school when I say that we urge the Boundary Commission to listen to us discount the plans to break up our home ward.

I feel the proposals made by the Council disregard our school, its staff and its pupils, yet again. The only people who have approached us for feedback are our local Independent Councillors who are

again battling the Council who are not listening to us. We hope that you will listen to us and other members of our community who feel strongly that on every count, the proposal by NELC makes no sense to those who live and work in the ward. I understand that anyone who faced their ward being “dismantled” (Philip Jackson, Council Leader) would be able to put forwards a strong view, but so as you can experience what I am saying, I would like to invite you to Great Coates Village Nursery School to meet with Councillors, residents, parents, children, Great Coates Village Council, Freshney in Bloom so that you can see for yourselves the strength of this community. You will also see for yourselves that Willows is ‘not a long way from Wybers Wood’ as presented to you by North East Lincolnshire Council or that ‘Great Coates is also a distance away from Wybers Wood and Aylesby Park’, therefore illustrating that it is not a credible option to dismantle the Freshney Ward, as promoted by our current minority council administration.

Kindest Regards

Sarah Bate

Head Teacher at Great Coates Village Nursery School and Scartho Nursery School

# North East Lincolnshire

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**Organisation Name:** Great Coates Village Nursery School (Representative of a local organisation)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** Freshney Ward

Please see attached letter

## Attached Documents:

- sarah-bate,-gcvn-head-waerd-boundary-letter.docx