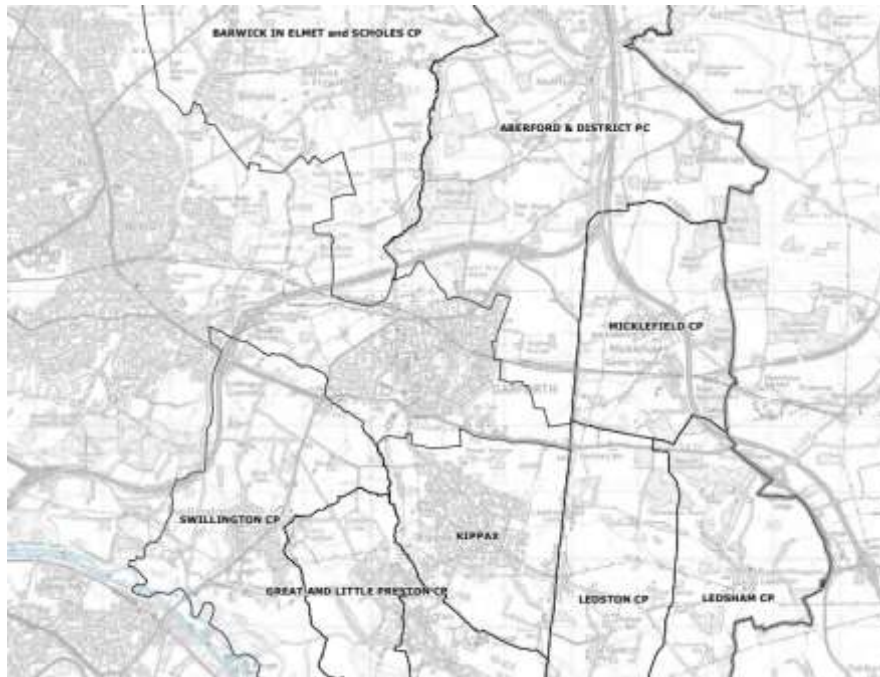


## Why did GNPf try to Create a Parish Council?



The map above shows the boundaries of the parishes surrounding Garforth. The boundaries of Garforth are largely defined by the edges of the surrounding parishes. The land immediately to the east belongs to Aberford Parish. A small area to the north west, by Barwick Road belongs to Barwick and Scholes Parish.

When GNPf was created we quickly discovered the following:

- The 300 residents of Brierlands and Cedar Ridge estates were not in the Garforth Plan area because they were in Aberford Parish
- Most of Garforth's surrounding fields to the north and east belonged to Aberford and Barwick Parishes
- And most concerning, the neighbourhood plans being prepared by Aberford and Barwick stopped at the M1 and did not include their lands on our side of the motorway. See map below.



We contacted these parish councils to be told by both that LCC would not approve their neighbourhood plans if they crossed the motorway. This meant that Garforth would be surrounded by green fields not covered by anybody's plan.

## **Seeking a Solution**

We immediately contacted our councillor and the planning department for an explanation and a solution to this situation. Neither were prepared to tell us why this decision had been taken. And they would not reconsider this position (we assume there were confidentiality issues here). They did suggest that we write two plans.

Sensing not everybody was on our side here, we took independent advice and discovered that:

- a forum can only produce one plan
- You cannot produce a plan for lands belonging to a neighbouring parish

We could have spent an additional 7 years writing a second plan only to be told by the examiner that it was invalid.

## **The Parish Council Solution**

We could see that Garforth would be very vulnerable to new development in these 'unplanned' fields. So we needed a solution that also produced a neighbourhood plan for these 'alien' fields around Garforth:

- Our neighbours were unlikely to jeopardise their own plans because of a few fields on the far edges of their parishes
- LCC we're not going to have a change of heart or even tell us what was going on

We needed to find a way to pull these fields inside our plan. We explored creating a parish council.

We had no experience of setting up a parish council, so we asked LCC Electoral Services and Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA) for advice and they were both very helpful. The guidelines we followed said boundaries of a new parish must be meaningful i.e. follow roads or streams so we decided the M1, A63 and the Ridge Road were obvious choices for our boundary as they incorporated the homes and the fields that we were concerned about.

Out of courtesy we informed Aberford, Barwick and Swillington PCs of our intentions. We started collecting petition signatures in the polling district that includes Brierlands and Cedar Ridge to determine if there was any interest in a Garforth Parish. If they had indicated they wanted to remain in Aberford Parish we would have abandoned the idea immediately. But in a single pass on a midweek early evening when some were not yet home from work, we obtained the signatures of 130 of the 300 residents. Only one resident declined to sign the petition.

We also spoke with Mr Makin, the owner of Makins Farm. He was quite happy with his land being in Garforth instead of Aberford parish and even offered to help if required. Satisfied we weren't imposing this solution on a reluctant Aberford community we pressed ahead with our petition.

## **The Outcome**

Although we achieved many more than the required minimum number of signatures for the petition for a parish council and when LCC invited residents to support or oppose the application we received 95 percent support from the residents who responded, the Council still found a way of throwing our application out.

Regretfully we had upset our neighbouring parishes. They all objected about the lands we tried to include but most understood why we did it and most also supported our PC application.

Fortunately for Garforth, the Government Inspectors of LCCs Site Allocation Plan decided the use of green belt land for housing was inappropriate and threw those sites out of the LCC plan, including the proposed Garforth housing site, saving us from 2,400 unwanted new homes. GNPF noted this significant development and also picked up on Government policies to protect high quality agricultural land. Garforth is surrounded by top quality agricultural land, far too useful to waste on housing development. The Garforth Plan if adopted will bring this to the planning officers' attention.