

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Question 3

Do you agree that County Durham is a single Housing Market Area for developing housing needs?

No. The evidence offered does not prove this.

The justification offered is that

The council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) June 2016^{iv} has determined that County Durham can be described as a self-contained housing market area in that the majority of households seeking to move house, look for another house within the county.

In fact the SHMA offers no analysis of possible housing market areas smaller than the entire County. (While both Map 3.3 and paragraph 3.15 describe smaller areas there is no analysis.) Paragraph 11 of the Planning Practice Guidance offers a methodology for the identification of housing market areas, not a procedure for deciding whether a previously selected area meets the criteria.

Following the logic of the arguments in the SHMA one could also prove that the whole of the North East of England, or indeed the entire country, was a single housing market area.

In fact it is the contextual data – travel to work area boundaries, retail and school catchment areas – that prevents this kind of error. The analysis offered in the SHMA simply looks at the extent to which County Durham residents cross the County boundary on their way to work. It does not consider travel the other way, or at the extent that people keep themselves to an area within the County. No analysis is offered of school catchment areas or retail.

Technical Appendix C begins by saying

Views on the current housing market position were sought from estate agents operating across County Durham. Interviews were conducted with two to three estate agents in each of the survey areas and their views were sought on current trends and levels of activity within the open market, buy to let and rental market. The following narrative presents key findings for County Durham and localities across the County.

There are ten survey areas and these should have been the starting points for determining what the housing market areas are in County Durham. Within Appendix C we find several quotations that indicate the cross-border nature of the market in that area. For example:

“Barnard Castle due to its rural location, amenities, transportation links, schools and relative affordability compared to rural areas in North Yorkshire makes it an attractive place for buyers.”

Chester-le-Street’s “proximity to Newcastle and Durham, good transport links, amenities including schools, a retail centre and parks make it an attractive location for buyers.”

“Consett has also received a boost to the local housing market due to the increase in demand from non-locals. Many will now seek property from the areas of Newcastle, Gateshead and Northumberland due to value for money factors especially when compared with other areas within County Durham.”

“The significant regeneration of Seaham, alongside its coastal location and proximity to Sunderland continues to make the area popular particularly amongst non-locals who often move to the area and commute out for work.”

Consequently we conclude that County Durham is a number of housing market areas, some of which extend into neighbouring authorities.

^{iv} <http://durhamcc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/issuesandoptions> > <http://durhamcc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/file/4012198>