

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Further comments on the 2023 boundary review

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the representations from the previous stages of the consultation. We hope that these comments, which are made on the basis of our detailed local knowledge arising from our eighty-year history, will help you to make more appropriate choices as the process moves forward.
2. We have reviewed all of the comments relevant to the City of Durham, and also our own representation in the light of developments.
3. Our representation, reference BCE-73166, made three main points:
 - Villages close to the City and with firm links to it should not be moved into other constituencies whose centres of gravity are a lot further away.
 - Adding three wards from the City of Sunderland with weak links to Durham but strong links to Sunderland did not make sense.
 - A new housing development to the north-west of Durham would be split in two by these proposals.

Villages close to the City

3. There are 29 existing constituencies in the North East Region and 1,433 comments were received from members of the public, an average of 49 per constituency. 101 comments were received from members of the public in the City of Durham constituency, more than twice the average. 80 of these comments objected to the removal of a village or group of villages from the City of Durham constituency. We consider this to be a ringing endorsement of our first point. Most of these comments are backed up with passionate, intimate, local knowledge of the type we would expect the Commission to be looking for.
4. In addition, two local councillors and three parish councils from the existing City of Durham constituency made representations. All of them felt that their village should remain part of the Durham constituency.
5. Only two individual comments (BCE-85251 and BCE-83505) supported removing neighbouring villages from the City of Durham Parish and both were associated with (different) political parties.
6. None of the official representations from the political parties, with the possible exception of the Greens (BCE-75305), displayed any local knowledge.
7. Representation BCE-79502 proposes that the Durham South ward should be removed from the City of Durham Constituency. This would mean that the City of Durham Parish would be split between two different constituencies. Durham University's administrative headquarters are in Durham South, along with a major part of the University campus and four of its colleges. If this proposal were implemented it would mean that two MPs would be dealing with University matters and the University would need to build relationships with both of them.

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We support the more detailed comments made by our Trustee Roger Cornwell which have been given the reference BCE-91656.

8. Of the representations making a counter-proposal, aside from those from political parties dealt with above, BCE-82304 and BCE-68871 agree with our proposals. BCE-80474, so far as it affects the City of Durham, differs from our proposals only in that it would include Lanchester but exclude Coxhoe. We do not regard this as a major difference.
9. Other counter-proposals have come largely from those outside the region and display a lack of local knowledge. BCE-81039 would separate Framwellgate and Newton Hall from the rest of the built-up area of Durham City, as well as removing Coxhoe and Sherburn while adding five areas further west that have less connection with the City. BCE-77985 would lose Deerness, and Esh and Witton Gilbert, while adding an area that belongs with Chester-le-Street. BCE-58022, with no justification at all, seems happy with the proposals and proposes a name change.

Adding wards in the City of Sunderland

10. There were 38 individual representations that opposed this idea, making similar arguments to those advanced by the Trust in our representation. There was only one (BCE-61337) that welcomed the opportunity for Houghton to return to Durham.
11. The City of Sunderland (BCE-82112) considers that constituency boundaries should not cross the City boundary.

Housing development split in two

12. Only two other respondents aside from ourselves commented on the fact that the proposed boundary between North West Durham and the City of Durham cuts right through an area proposed for new housing in the County Durham Plan. Both felt this issue needs to be addressed.
13. Since we wrote our original representation planning applications have been submitted and are awaiting determination. These now provide for up to 1,920 houses to be built on this site. As we pointed out, the consequence of this is that this new community will be split between two constituencies, and there could very well be some houses where the boundary runs through the middle of the house. Including Witton Gilbert in the City of Durham Constituency would resolve this.

Conclusion

14. Having considered the representations on the BCE website, we have found overwhelming support from local people, with reasoned arguments, for the arguments we have advanced. This has strengthened the case we made in representation reference BCE-73166, which stands without any further amendment and supported by the arguments in this document.