

County Durham

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

Good morning,

I am writing in response to the LGBCE's initial proposals for the Consett South and Lanchester electoral division to raise the deepest concerns about whether the proposed three-member division meets the statutory criteria or the needs of residents in the area.

I am the current councillor representing Consett South. I was elected in May 2021. I have been resident in Consett most of my life. I have strong links to the Consett South area having attended the former Moorside Comprehensive School.

The LGBCE report (paragraph 53) invites proposals for subdivisions within the proposed 3-member Consett South and Lanchester division. The report itself provides a clear case for the connections between the areas adjacent to Consett town (paragraph 52):

"We determined from our visit to the area that Healeyfield parish shares closer links with communities nearer to Consett, such as Moorside and The Grove, and these communities should thus be placed in the same division. This was supported by a local resident who stated that these areas have an affinity with Consett town. The Labour Group, and the Derwentside Independents, Liberal Democrats and Greens, all proposed linking Healeyfield, Moorside and The Grove communities in the same division."

The sub-division of a single member ward containing Healeyfield, Moorside and The Grove would better represent community interests and ties.

The area retains an extremely strong “three village” sense of community, with associational ties and close transport links. The current hub of community activities, St John’s Church Hall, illustrates this connection especially well: The Church Hall is in Moorside, the Church to which it belongs is in Castleside, and residents across Healeyfield, Moorside and The Grove make good use of it. This demonstrates the persistence of community links since the closure of Moorside Comprehensive School and the Phoenix Centre co-located at the school (similarly very well used by all three villages), which embedded a lasting link between the villages in the legacy of its catchment area for 400-500 secondary school children. Including Castleside in the same division as Moorside and the Grove would, therefore, preserve the distinct sense of community of these villages beyond the edges of Consett town.

A community worker part-funded by my councillor’s division budget currently focuses on serving and strengthening the community spirit and civic pride by running community events in Moorside and The Grove. The need and demand for local events reflects the close ties between these communities and the levels of deprivation in those areas compared with the new estate on Genesis Way, with which there are much weaker connections

There are a range of local amenities that are accessed by residents of The Grove, Moorside and Healeyfield almost exclusively. Deneburn Stores in The Grove has a post office and is open 24/7. There are a number of shops/food outlets on Derby Drive in Moorside that are used by people in The Grove and Castleside also. A small Co-op supermarket is to be built in the middle of the area adjacent to Castleside Industrial Estate. The Stanfordham Pub in Moorside closed a few years back, so now residents there use The Grove Club, The Horse & Groom (which is on the boundary of Healeyfield and Moorside), and Castleside Club and The Fleece in Castleside.

There are four primary schools in Castleside, Moorside and The Grove: Castleside Primary School, Moorside Primary School, The Grove School, and St Pius Catholic School. It is common for residents at any of the villages to use any of those primary schools. This is especially the case for parents of Moorside to use Castleside Primary, and in particular Catholic parents of any of the three villages to use St Pius, with it being the only Catholic School.

Castleside, Moorside and The Grove are connected directly by the final stretch of the A692 trunk road. All three villages are connected by direct service buses which adds further to them being a distinct community. To get to Delves Lane people would need to change at Consett.

Delves Lane and the new estates around Genesis Way are distinctly separate to Castleside, Moorside and The Grove. Although part of the so-called ‘Greater Consett’ area, they are not served by direct bus links to each other. The housing on Genesis Way much more closely resembles that of the new estate in Templetown, adding further credence to those areas being attached, and forming a distinct boundary between The Grove and the rest of Consett and Delves Lane. The woodland and green areas north of The Grove further establish provide a natural barrier between The Grove and the new estates/town centre.

As the LGBCE report notes, it makes no sense to put Healeyfield in a division with Lanchester. Although the more rural parts of Healeyfield

border Lanchester, the largest population centre of the Healeyfield parish is Castleside, with 90% of Healeyfield residents residing in Castleside. Castleside has clear links to Moorside and The Grove. To get to Lanchester it is necessary to get to Consett and then get the Durham bus. Thus, it makes more sense for Healeyfield to be incorporated into a division with Moorside and The Grove to better reflect it being a distinct community that is closely attached to the Greater Consett area, rather than Lanchester/Durham.

In conclusion, there is a strong argument that a division composed of Healeyfield, Moorside and The Grove reflects this area's identity and interests. This is a discrete community in the wider Consett area and creating a single member division for it would provide for effective local governance whilst also achieving electoral equality. It would significantly improve the final boundaries if the proposed 3-member Consett South and Lanchester division was instead a 2-member division with a 1-member division of Healeyfield, Moorside, and The Grove.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Dominic Haney

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Attached Documents:

None attached