

County Durham

Personal Details:

Name: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]
Postcode: [REDACTED]
Organisation Name: (Member of the public)

Comment text:

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I live at Hamsterley Mill and am very concerned about the proposed boundary changes. I fully endorse the conclusions of the local residents enclosed below.

Consultation with residents on Local Boundary Commission proposals

The Executive Committee of our Residents' Association would like to alert you to the Local Government Boundary Commission's proposed changes for our local area and ask for your support in the consultation period for this which ends on July 1st.

The background to this is that the Local Government Boundary Commission, the independent body which draws electoral boundaries, has decided that the number of councillors in Co. Durham should be reduced from the present 126 to 98. They believe this will ensure councillors represent a similar number of electors and that that these divisions can help the Council work effectively.

Following this, the Boundary Commission is proposing that the existing Leadgate and Medomsley Division which also includes several local villages – Ebchester, Hamsterley, Hamsterley Mill, High Westwood, The Dene - be included in the proposed Consett North Division.

On your behalf Hamsterley Mill Residents' Association will object to these proposals because we believe if this proposal goes ahead it will be a very different and difficult agenda to address for the following reasons.

Why we are against this proposal:

- The existing Leadgate/Medomsley Division is predominantly a rural based Division, with extremely limited transport links particularly for the rural villages. It has no direct correlation with the ever-expanding urban conurbation of Consett Town.
- Most electors within the Leadgate/Medomsley Division want to maintain the rural relationships and not be considered co-joined to the Consett township. We fear Hamsterley Mill will not get appropriate levels of financial support via councillors, especially when in a small hamlet associated with a larger township. Our needs as rural communities will not be well served in Consett North division with its predominantly urban issues and priorities.
- It is felt Medomsley is in the proposed boundary to make up the numbers required for a larger township. The Dene will be split from Medomsley and become part of Burnopfield/Dipton/Ebchester Division.
- Para 43 in the Local Boundary Commission's report refers to Ebchester, Hamsterley, Hamsterley Mill all being linked along the A694 in the Derwent Valley "with Leadgate and Medomsley somewhat separated from these communities by significant elevations". There is no reference in the report that both Burnopfield/Dipton (in a completely different valley to the A694 villages) are further separated from the communities on the A694 by even more significant elevations.
- Para 47 states that the Consett North Division would be split by the Villa Real Road yet the Boundary Commission has used the entirety of Front Street and Genesis Way (Para 48) as "clear and identifiable boundaries" between the divisions of Consett North and South, indicating a lack of continuity or double standards in the Boundary Commission decision-making progress.
- Para 42 refers to the introduction of Greencroft Parish with Consett Town Centre (an unparished area) yet the Boundary Commission declined the Joint Administration (Durham Council) proposal for the amalgamation of the Dipton Division (unparished) with Tanfield Division (parished), another example of a lack of continuity being exercised by the Boundary Commission decision makers.
- High Westwood and The Dene (which is closer to the Medomsley village than Medomsley Edge) are being included in the proposed Burnopfield/Dipton/Ebchester division whilst Medomsley village and Medomsley Edge are included in the proposed Consett North Division.
- There is a cluster of communities across the existing Leadgate/Medomsley Division eg. CofE church communities across Hamsterley, Ebchester, Leadgate, Medomsley and Medomsley Community Action Group which encourage real partnership linked to community-based groupings across villages. Splitting this area into different divisions would cause significant disruption to groups working together for the benefit of the whole community.
- There has been no consultation from the Boundary Commission with the local representatives or local councillors.

We support an alternative community proposal for the divisional boundaries as follows:

- The current division of Leadgate/Medomsley (6,850 electors) is amalgamated with the current Burnopfield/Dipton division (6,212 electors) to create a 3 Councillor Division entirely rural based with a cumulative total electorate of circa 13,000 electors.
- The Electors/Councillors would be circa 13,000/3 Councillors, giving 4,335/Councillor which is +4.4% within the accepted +/-10% Elector/Cllr

threshold.

- This new amalgamated division would be called The Derwent and Pont Valley Division, therefore no one village has predominance over the other villages across the new division and reflects the complete rurality of the whole area.
 - Consett North becomes a one Member division based solely on the Town Centre Conurbation with an expected electorate of circa 4,255 with a +2.7% within the +/- 10% elector threshold.
 - Maiden Law (240 Electors) within the Greencroft Parish is proposed to be assigned to the Annfield Plain/Tanfield Division (Stanley Town Council ward) to balance and improve elector equality across the North Durham area ensuring parish boundaries are not compromised.
- I trust that you will amend your proposals in line with the views of constituents who know the area.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Attached Documents:

None attached