

Mathew Evans

Derwenthorpe Residents' Association Chair
Derwenthorpe, York

Review Officer (York)

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
7th Floor, Bunhill Row
London
EC1Y 8YZ

19th June 2026

**Re: City of York Council Electoral Review – Draft Recommendations – Objection
to Proposed Splitting of Derwenthorpe**

Dear Review Officer,

I write as Chair of the Derwenthorpe Residents' Association (DRA) in response to the draft recommendations published on 28 April 2026 for changes in wards in the City of York. Some of the proposed changes would split the Derwenthorpe community across three separate council wards (Tang Hall & Derwenthorpe (ward 21), Osbaldwick (ward 17), and Derwent (ward 5)). In the image below the extent of the Derwenthorpe estate is shown in the black dashed line, with the proposed ward boundaries in red.



The current proposal splits Derwenthorpe along the cycle path and around the ponds. The cycle track and ponds are exactly the features that were designed into the whole neighbourhood to encourage car free travel and to manage the rainfall runoff into the local streams.

Splitting the neighbourhood like this would be a very negative move for what was designed to be a single coherent residential neighbourhood and community. The DRA respectfully urges the Commission to reconsider this proposal before finalising its recommendations in September 2026, on the grounds that it conflicts with the Commission's own statutory criteria.

The statutory criteria

The Commission's reviews are required to balance three statutory criteria: electoral equality; reflection of community identity and interests; and the facilitation of effective and convenient local government. While electoral equality is important, the Commission's own guidance makes clear that it must be balanced against the other two criteria and that communities should not be divided unnecessarily in pursuit of numerical precision.

Derwenthorpe is a coherent, planned community with a strong and distinct identity

Derwenthorpe is not an arbitrary patch of streets, but a purposefully designed neighbourhood developed by the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) as one of the first large-scale low-carbon communities in Northern England. The development was

conceived as a whole from the outset, with a shared design language, communal green spaces, restricted car access, and a mixed-tenure model that integrates affordable and market-rate housing throughout the estate. The Super Sustainability Centre (SSC) provides both a central community facility used on a daily basis by residents, local schools, and community groups, is the source of hot water which is piped around the neighbourhood as part of the district heating scheme and acts as the central distribution point for internet and television. The physical layout of the development – with identifiable perimeter roads, distinct architectural design, and clear boundaries – constitutes exactly the kind of strong, easily identifiable boundary the Commission seeks when drawing ward lines.

Derwenthorpe has received multiple national and regional design awards for its exceptional unified exercise in place-making and was designed as one of the North of England's first large scale low carbon communities. Derwenthorpe is also referred to as a good practice example in the National Design Guide. Derwenthorpe's boundary is coherent and expressed clearly by way of its layout, housing design and landscape.

Derwenthorpe is also a 'Building Scheme' in the laws covering covenants. This status places a greater obligation for the estate as a whole to be managed in accordance with the schemes 'objects' and the covenants that apply to everyone. The scheme acts as a "local law" for the estate, a significant power that doesn't normally apply to standard restrictive covenants. Residents' titles and covenants across Derwenthorpe protect the estate's consistent design, appearance and character for everyone living here. Dividing Derwenthorpe into 3 wards would undermine the effective management and design consistency of Derwenthorpe as a homogeneous place and community".

This distinct identity is not merely architectural. Derwenthorpe has its own active Residents' Association (derwenthorpe.co.uk), which provides an organised, representative voice for the community. We note that the Commission's own guidance cites the existence of a residents' association as one of the key indicators of community identity. There is also a range of Derwenthorpe activities ranging from the book clubs, wine club, and film clubs to a nature group and activities for children. The community is brought together by a range of weekly, monthly and seasonal events and activities, and is noticeably cohesive. Splitting Derwenthorpe across three wards would mean that no single councillor holds primary responsibility for the community as a whole, diluting the effectiveness of that representation and complicating residents' ability to engage with their elected representatives on matters of shared concern.

Derwenthorpe residents share many common concerns that are unusual to the development. The district heating scheme, a common source of internet, estate charges etc., are all common concerns for all residents. Each of these is unusual and

non-standard, and so requires additional effort by councillors to grasp the underlying details in order to represent Derwenthorpe residents.

The proposal conflicts with the community identity criterion

The Commission's summary guidance asks whether a proposed ward reflects "where local people go for shops, medical services, leisure facilities", whether there are "community groups" representing the area, and whether there are "natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries". Derwenthorpe satisfies all three tests as a self-contained entity. Splitting it does not.

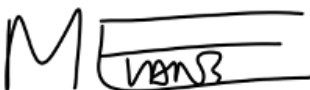
Placing parts of Derwenthorpe in different wards would group residents with communities whose interests, built environment, and history differ substantially from those of Derwenthorpe. It would create wards that do not correspond to any meaningful community unit, making them harder for residents to identify with and harder for councillors to represent coherently. This is precisely the outcome the community identity criterion is designed to prevent.

The proposal conflicts with the effective and convenient local government criterion

Many of the issues that affect Derwenthorpe residents – including maintenance of shared communal spaces, the sustainability infrastructure of the estate, and JRHT's ongoing stewardship of the development – affect the community as a whole. Dividing responsibility for these matters across three ward councillors would make effective advocacy considerably more difficult, and would create uncertainty about which ward councillor residents should approach. The Commission's guidance states that wards should be "coherent and use sensible and identifiable boundaries"; the proposed split does not meet this test.

I trust the Commission will give this objection due weight, alongside the substantial body of evidence that Derwenthorpe constitutes a distinct and coherent community. I am happy to provide any further information or local evidence that would assist the review.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ME' followed by a stylized surname, likely 'Evans'.

Mathew Evans

Chair, Derwenthorpe Residents' Association

