

## **Local Government Reorganisation**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is devolution?**

In England, devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from national to local government.

The current Government has made devolution a priority and set out plans to create a new network of Strategic Authorities that will cover the whole of England by 2029. The new authorities will be led by elected mayors and will cover a number of local council areas.

Derbyshire is already covered by a strategic authority, since the election of the East Midlands Mayor and establishment of the [East Midlands Combined County Authority](#) in 2024.

The Government explained these plans in an [English Devolution White Paper](#), published in December 2024.

This paper also set out plans for local government reorganisation.

#### **What is local government reorganisation?**

Local government reorganisation is the process by which the geographic remit and the roles and responsibilities of local authorities are restructured.

As part of its plans for devolution, the Government announced a programme of local government reorganisation in areas with a 'two-tier' system (as currently exists in areas like Derbyshire), and also of small unitary councils (like the city council that covers Derby) that are part of or neighbour such areas.

In short this means that under the Government's plans, district, borough, county and small unitary councils will no longer exist. They will be replaced by new unitary councils which will provide all council services to the communities they cover.

The Government believes that local government reorganisation, together with devolution over a larger strategic area, will improve public services and support economic growth.



## **What is the current structure of local government in Derbyshire?**

Derbyshire is a two-tier area served by eight district and borough councils and a county council. The councils currently serving Derbyshire's communities (excluding Derby) are:

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- Bolsover District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Derbyshire Dales District Council
- Erewash Borough Council
- High Peak Borough Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- South Derbyshire District Council

The city of Derby is contained within the boundary of Derbyshire, but all council services are provided by Derby City Council, which is already a unitary council.

Some areas also have town or parish councils – such as Church Broughton or Melbourne Parish Councils in South Derbyshire. These councils are not covered by the Government's plans for local government reorganisation and will not be directly impacted by the proposed changes.

## **What does this mean for South Derbyshire?**

Unless there is a complete reversal of the policy set out in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, there is currently no route by which we (or Derbyshire County Council or any other of the borough / district councils listed above) can continue to operate as a council in the future.

As things stand, we will become part of a larger unitary council. Most new unitary authorities are expected to be in place by April 2028.

Be reassured that we will continue to put our communities first – and our services will continue to operate as normal until then – while we work through the local government reorganisation process alongside our partners.

## **Can councils opt out of this process?**

We cannot opt out. All councils must follow the process that is set out in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, and 'no change' is not an option.

The Government has been clear that it wants all councils in two-tier areas and neighbouring smaller unitary councils to bring forward proposals for reorganisation. It intends to deliver this process as quickly as possible, including through legislation, where it becomes necessary to ensure progress.

### **What is timeline for this to happen?**

- 21 March 2025 – deadline for the submission of interim proposals to Government. You can see the interim proposal submitted by South Derbyshire District Council and the other seven Derbyshire district and borough councils [on our LGR webpage](#). It is important to remember that this is just an interim proposal – local people will be invited to have their say before any final decision is made.
- Late spring / summer 2025 – consultation and engagement will take place with communities across Derbyshire, to ask for people's views on the preferred option for local government reorganisation before any final proposal is submitted for review by Government.
- 28 November 2025 – final proposals must be submitted to Government
- Spring 2026 – Government has indicated they will provide feedback on the final proposals – recognising that more than one may be submitted by the existing councils that serve Derbyshire and Derby - setting out next steps (including when we can expect a final decision on the future model of unitary local government for Derbyshire to be made).
- 2028 – most new unitary councils are expected to be in place by 2028, under the Government's current timetable for local government reorganisation.

### **What was the Secretary of State's criteria for unitary local government proposals?**

Government set out criteria which local councils must follow when drawing up proposals, which include:

- A proposal should seek to achieve the establishment of a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned.
- Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

### **What if councils don't agree on one plan?**

Government has said it would like all existing councils to collaborate and ideally reach a consensus on the best way forward. However, Government anticipates that in many county areas different final proposals will be submitted.

### **Who will have the final say?**

The final decision on proposals for local government reorganisation will be taken by the Government.

Council leaders are responsible for holding discussions with other council leaders in Derbyshire and Derby to help produce full proposals by 28 November 2025.

These proposals must be supported by evidence that shows they meet the Secretary of State's criteria for unitary local government and that there has been widespread consultation and engagement with the public, businesses and other public sector organisations.

### **The Derbyshire districts joint interim proposal**

#### **What is your interim proposal for local government reorganisation in Derbyshire?**

We, along with most councils across Derbyshire, have joined forces to submit an interim proposal to Government, which put the needs of our communities at its heart.

We support the creation of **two unitary councils** covering the whole of Derbyshire – one in the north and one in the south.

This initial work has established two options of equal merit that meet the Government's requirements:

- Amber Valley Borough Council would be part of a northern unitary council, alongside High Peak Borough Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, and Bolsover District Council. A separate southern unitary council would be formed by Derby City Council, South Derbyshire District Council, and Erewash Borough Council.
- In the second option, the structure remains the same, except Amber Valley Borough Council would move from the northern unitary council to join the southern unitary council instead.

Both options maintain the integrity of the historic county of Derbyshire and reflect the existing boundaries of the district, borough and city councils.

This was submitted to Government in March 2025, in line with their timetable for initial proposals to be put forward.

The plan is then to work with our local communities later on in 2025 to get your views on our proposal before any final decisions are made.

#### **Why do you think creating two unitary councils is the best option for Derbyshire?**

This is a complex issue, but our key priority is to make sure the needs of our communities are met. We believe that two unitary councils – one for the south and one for the north – would:

- Keep councils connected to local people – with councils big enough to deliver but close enough to care.
- Provide effective and value for money services – and the staff and funding going forward to continually improve the services residents receive.
- Protect Derbyshire's historic boundaries in terms of the area councils cover – including the city of Derby, which is a key centre of economic growth for the county.
- Meet the Government's criteria for reorganisation – if we don't, or where agreement can't be reached, Government has indicated it will impose a solution that they think works best for Derbyshire.

### **Which services would the new unitary councils provide?**

Under the current system some services such as social care and highways are provided by Derbyshire County Council, while others such as bin collections, planning, housing and leisure centres are provided by Derbyshire's district and borough councils.

Under the new system, each of the two new unitary councils would provide all council services to their area, rather than being split between the two tiers of local government as currently happens.

### **Will you be closing any of the main council offices?**

We are committed to ensuring councils have a strong and visible presence in their communities. However, there will be opportunities to rationalise our 'assets' including council offices and we will consider this as part of the next phase of our work towards the development of our final proposal.

### **Will council tax go up or down following reorganisation?**

The new unitary councils will set the level of council tax for households in the areas that they cover. There will need to be consolidation of levels as the council tax rates currently set are different in each of the existing district and borough council areas. It means some rates may go up whilst others may go down depending on where you live.

### **How can I have a say on the proposals?**

We will be carrying out an extensive consultation and engagement programme in the late spring / early summer of 2025 – to gather views from everyone within our communities to understand their needs and views before we draw up our final proposal.

This will include residents, businesses, and our workforce, as well as the various partner organisations and community / voluntary groups that we routinely work with.

More information about how you can get involved will be shared as soon as possible.

Once a proposal has been submitted, it will be for the Government to decide on whether it should be taken forward and there will be a further statutory consultation at that time. This will likely take place mid to late 2026.