

## **Frequently asked questions about local government reorganisation**

### **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.

The decision to launch a local government reorganisation process was taken by central government, which wants to simplify how councils are organised across the whole of England and make them more efficient, reducing costs while delivering better and more joined-up services.

This affects areas with a 'two-tier' system (as currently exists in areas like Derbyshire), and also areas which have small unitary councils (like the city council that covers Derby).

In short this means that under the Government's plans, district, borough, county and small unitary councils 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 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.

In total, 10 different councils provide services across the county:

#### **'Lower tier' councils**

The lower tier councils covering different areas of Derbyshire are Amber Valley Borough Council, Bolsover District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council,

Erewash Borough Council, High Peak Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and South Derbyshire District Council

Lower tier councils are responsible for services including:

- rubbish collection
- recycling
- housing
- benefits and council tax
- planning
- leisure

#### **‘Upper tier’ council – Derbyshire County Council**

Upper tier councils are responsible for services including:

- education
- transport
- social care
- libraries
- waste management

#### **Unitary councils – Derby City Council**

A ‘unitary council’ is responsible for providing all council services to the communities it serves.

Each of the 10 councils has its own political leadership and senior management team and sets its own share of the Council Tax bill.

#### **Town and parish councils**

Some areas also have town or parish councils which are much smaller in scale and are responsible for services, facilities and public spaces within a community such as parks, village halls, allotments, litter bins, local events, etc.

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 District?**

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?**

Below are the key dates within the Government's current timetable:

**March 2025** – Derbyshire's eight district and borough councils submitted a joint interim proposal to Government, in line in March 2025. Some further work was done to develop the options within this proposal. The updated proposal is subject to public consultation.

**30 June to 10 August 2025** – public consultation and engagement about our proposals will take place with communities across Derbyshire. We want people's views to help shape a final proposal, which must be submitted for review by Government in November. Take part in the consultation and give us your views [here](#).

**28 November 2025** – final proposals must be submitted to Government.

**Spring 2026** – Government has indicated they will provide feedback on the final proposals 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). This could include further statutory consultation on the proposal.

**2027** – Subject to the Government decision, elections to a new 'shadow' council will take place.

**2028** – most new unitary councils are expected to be in place by 2028, under the Government's current timetable for local government reorganisation.

### **What is the Government'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
- new councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks
- new councils must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens
- proposals should show how existing 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 council structures must support devolution arrangements (in Derbyshire, this means working with the [East Midlands Combined County Authority](#))
- new councils should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

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

The Government has said it would like all existing councils to work together and ideally reach agreement on the best way forward. However, the 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 – and engaging with local communities – to help produce full proposals by 28 November 2025.

These proposals must be supported by evidence that shows they meet the Government's criteria.

## **FAQs about the One Derbyshire, two councils proposal**

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

Derbyshire's eight district and borough councils submitted a joint interim proposal to Government in March 2025.

Working with the other district and borough councils, and Derby City Council, we have done some further work to develop a proposal for consultation with the public.

Our proposal would see Derbyshire's 10 existing councils be replaced by two new authorities:

- A council for northern Derbyshire
- A council for southern Derbyshire

Under the proposal, each of the two new councils will deliver all services in their local area.

There are three possible options for how the area currently covered by Amber Valley Borough Council could be included in the new structure: placed entirely in the northern council, entirely in the southern council, or with different parishes joining each of the two councils, depending on where they may best fit.

## Option A



**A north / south split of the county, with Amber Valley being part of the northern council**

**Northern council:** Amber Valley, Derbyshire Dales, High Peak, Chesterfield, Bolsover, North East Derbyshire (Population: 584,000)

**Southern council:** Derby City, South Derbyshire, Erewash (Population: 494,000)

### Benefits

Potential to boost the economic potential and output (Gross Value Added) of the northern council area

Aligns with current health and police structures

### Constraints

Northern council covers a large geographical area which may create service delivery challenges and loss of efficiencies

Growth northwest of the city may add additional financial pressures to the southern council

Potential imbalance in the demands for social care on each council

## Option B



A north / south split of the county, with Amber Valley being part of the southern council

Northern Council: High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield, Bolsover (Population: 456,000)

Southern Council: South Derbyshire, Erewash, Amber Valley, Derby City (Population: 622,000)

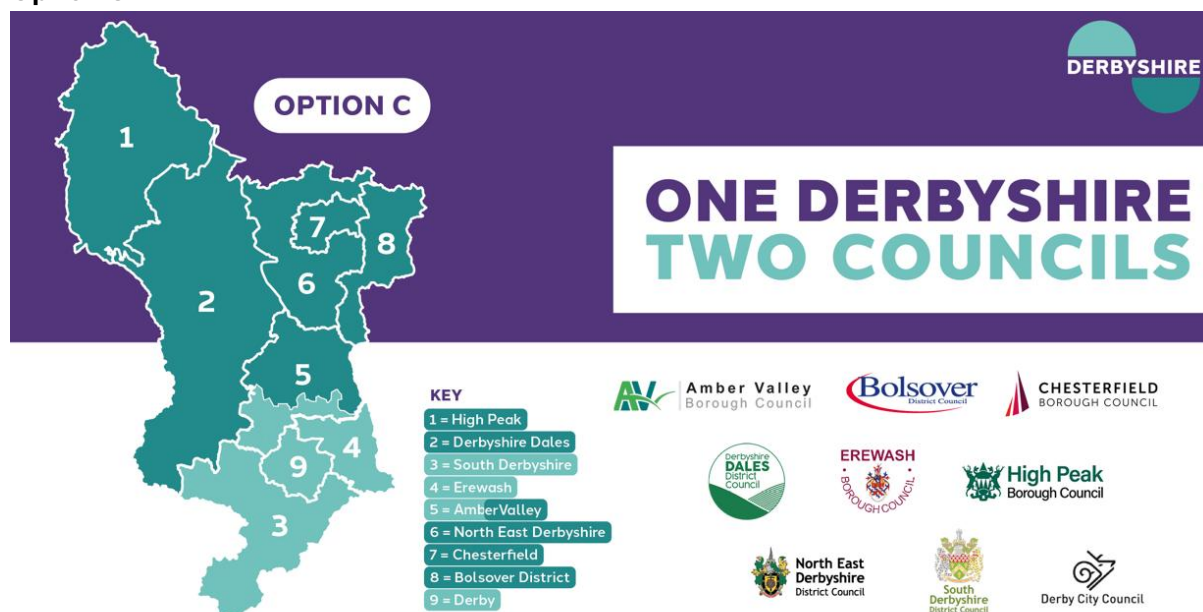
### Benefits

- More equal geographical areas
- Provides growth potential for both councils
- Better reflects commuting patterns

### Constraints

- Disparity in population and the economic potential and output (Gross Value Added) between council area

## Option C



A north / south split of the county, with different parishes from Amber Valley joining each of the two councils, depending on where they best fit.

**Northern Council:** High Peak, Derbyshire Dales, North East Derbyshire, Chesterfield, Bolsover, parishes of Amber Valley\* (Population: 567,000)

(\*Shipley, Heanor and Loscoe, Denby, Kilburn, Belper, Hazelwood, Shottle and Postern, Ildridgehay and Alton, Ashleyhay, Alderwasley, Ripley, Codnor, Aldercar and Langley Mill, Ironville, Riddings, Somercotes, Alfreton, Swanwick, Pentrich, South Wingfield, Crich, Dethick, Lea, and Holloway.)

**Southern Council:** Derby City, Erewash, South Derbyshire, parishes of Amber Valley\* (Population: 511,000) (\*Kirk Langley, Mackworth, Kedleston, Ravensdale Park, Weston Underwood, Quarndon, Turnditch and Windley, Duffield, Holbrook, Horsley, Horsley Woodhouse, Smalley, Mapperley.)

### Benefits

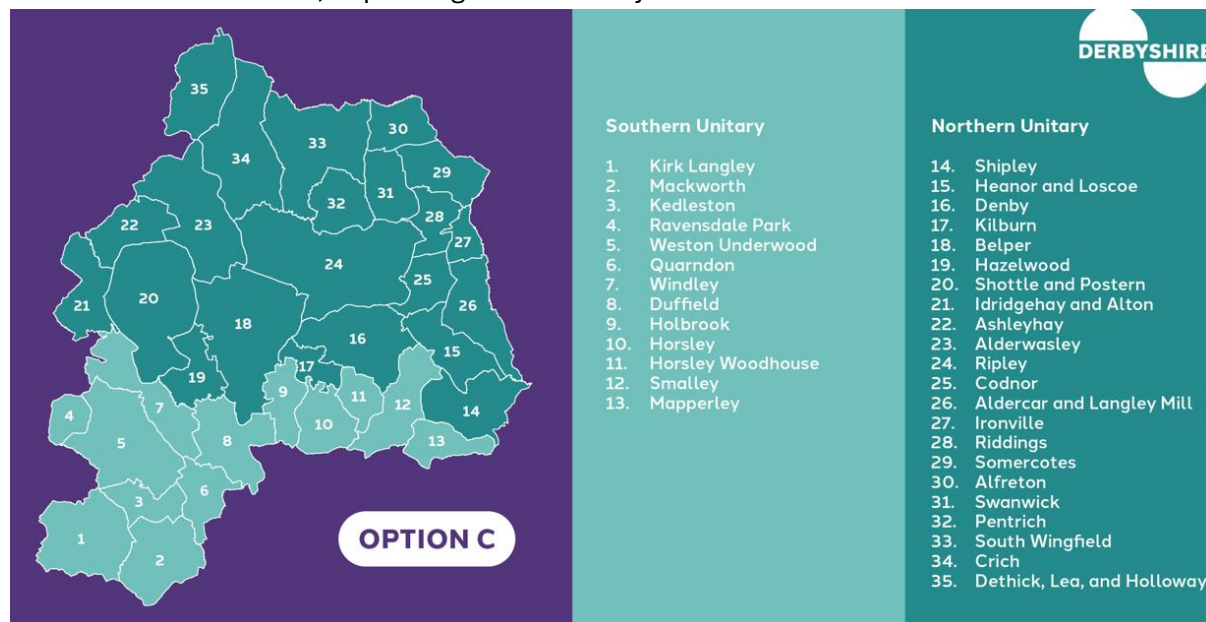
More balanced population and demand for services between the council areas

### Constraints:

Potentially more complex to split between the north and south, including the need for boundary changes

Disaggregation of services may be more complex

The map below shows the detail of option C - with different parishes from Amber Valley joining each of the two councils, depending on where they best fit.



### **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 – proposing new councils that:

- keep councils connected to local people – big enough to deliver but close enough to listen and respond to local needs
- can provide effective and value for money services – and the staff and funding 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
- 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
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### **What are the benefits of your proposals?**

#### **Big enough to deliver but close enough to listen and respond to local needs**

Derbyshire stretches from the borders of Manchester to Leicestershire, encompassing diverse communities from rural Peak District villages to market towns and the city of Derby.



Our approach recognises that local services cannot be one-size-fits-all. Two councils will be large enough to deliver efficiently whilst remaining close enough to our communities to understand and meet local needs.

The two new councils will collaborate where it makes sense to do so but can also tailor services to the needs of the local the areas they serve.

## **Opportunities for savings**

Early forecasts suggest this restructure could save between £56m - £93m\* over five years through:

- Reduced duplication of services
- Fewer council buildings
- Fewer councillors and senior managers
- Better economies of scale

*\* Note: These figures are estimated using figures of similar Local Government Reorganisations. They do not take account of Derbyshire's particular circumstances and are indicative only.*

## **Maintains Derbyshire's historic border**

Our proposal protects Derbyshire's historic boundaries in terms of the area councils cover – including the city of Derby, which is a key centre of economic growth.

## **Creates new opportunity for our future**

At a strategic level, reorganisation offers opportunities to:

- Eliminate artificial boundaries that can hamper service delivery
- Create stronger local leadership with enhanced capacity for transformation and modernisation
- Develop more strategic approaches to economic development, regeneration and county-wide infrastructure development
- Improve coordination between local services and external partners
- Strengthen Derbyshire's voice in regional and national forums

The new councils will also be able to work more efficiently with the new East Midlands Mayor and East Midlands Combined County Authority, which guides large-scale investment across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

## **Meets Government criteria**

Importantly, this approach also meets the Government's criteria for reorganisation – if councils don't come up with a viable proposal for their areas, the Government has indicated it will impose (through legislation) a solution that it thinks will work for Derbyshire.

## **Have you considered other options?**

Leaders of the district and borough councils, together with Derby City Council, have been working together in response to the Government's request for proposals for local government reorganisation.

A range of potential options were explored and assessed in line with our priority to put people and places first, along with the Government's criteria for reorganisation.

We believe the proposal and options we have set out put us in the strongest position to create councils which are big enough to deliver, but close enough to listen and respond to our communities.

### **Are there any other proposals for Derbyshire?**

Derbyshire County Council submitted a separate initial proposal to the Government in March 2025, which would also see Derbyshire split into two unitary councils – one new council covering all of Derbyshire (except Derby city), and the current Derby City Council. This was submitted before the change in the political administration at the county council in May 2025 and, at the time of writing, their formal position is unclear.

### **How will these changes be paid for?**

Initial estimates suggest that the one-off costs to move services and set up the two new councils could be between £15m - £25m\*. This will be funded from a mix of existing council reserves and Government support.

*\* Note: These figures are estimated using figures of similar Local Government Reorganisations. They do not take account of Derbyshire's particular circumstances and are indicative only.*

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

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

### **What will it mean for my council services?**

If you live in a borough or district, where services are split between a district or borough and the county council, it means your services will ultimately be provided by a single 'unitary' council.

If you live in Derby, all your services will continue to be provided by a single council, but the area covered by the council might change.

### **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 definitely be opportunities to rationalise our 'assets' including council offices and we will consider this as part of the development of our plans.

### **Will Council Tax go up or down following reorganisation?**

The new councils would not take over until April 2028 and it's too early to say what would happen then as many other factors affect levels of Council Tax.

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

Council services have an impact on the everyday lives of people and organisations across our communities – and it's important that local people have a say about how these services are delivered in the future.

You can have your say in our public consultation running between **Monday 30 June and Sunday 10 August 2025**. Your views will be used to shape our final proposal to the Government in November 2025.

Our consultation seeks views from people across the whole of Derbyshire, including residents, businesses, and our workforce, as well as the various partner organisations and community / voluntary groups that we routinely work with.

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.

Take part in the consultation [here](#).

### **FAQS about the consultation**

#### **When is the consultation open?**

You can have your say in our public consultation running between Monday 30 June and Sunday 10 August 2025.

#### **How can I take part?**

The easiest way to have your say in the consultation is to complete the online questionnaire [here](#). You will be provided with background information, and the questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete.

We will be running some engagement sessions across the district if you would like to discuss the plans in person. More information about these sessions will be published shortly.

#### **Can I request a printed copy of the questionnaire**

Hard copies of the questionnaire are available on request – please contact Public Perspectives:

Email: [Derbyshire@publicperspectives.co.uk](mailto:Derbyshire@publicperspectives.co.uk)

Freephone: 0800 533 5386 (please leave a message and they will call you back)

### **Can I request the questionnaire in an alternative format?**

If you need help or support to respond to the consultation, or would like the questionnaire in an alternative format (large print, British Sign Language etc) or language please contact Public Perspectives:

Email: [Derbyshire@publicperspectives.co.uk](mailto:Derbyshire@publicperspectives.co.uk)

Freephone: 0800 533 5386 (please leave a message and they will call you back)

### **Who is carrying out the consultation?**

The consultation is being conducted on behalf of Derbyshire's eight borough and district council, and Derby City Council, by an independent and specialist research company called Public Perspectives This is to ensure the consultation process is robust and impartial.

### **Will my answers be anonymous?**

Your personal details are managed securely and within data protection laws. Your responses are anonymous and confidential, which means your personal information will not be reported alongside your answers. Each of the partner council privacy notices will apply and anonymised data will be shared between councils. Please visit the following to read Public Perspectives' privacy notice:

[www.publicperspectives.co.uk/data-security-and-privacy/](http://www.publicperspectives.co.uk/data-security-and-privacy/)

### **Why do you want to know my postcode as part of the questionnaire?**

You don't have to provide your postcode information when completing the questionnaire, but it is valuable as it helps us build a picture of the views of people from different parts of the county.

Your responses are anonymous and confidential, which means your personal information will not be reported alongside your answers.

### **Are my personal details protected, if I choose to share this information?**

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