

City of Durham Parish Council

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Mr Stuart Timmiss
Head of Planning and Assets
Durham County Council
County Hall
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Dear Stuart,

Proposal to amend the Durham City Neighbourhood Area boundaries

At its meeting held on Thursday 22 November 2018 the City of Durham Parish Council passed the following resolution:

This Parish Council, having assumed responsibility for producing a Neighbourhood Plan, wishes to amend its Designated Neighbourhood Area so that it is the same as that of the Parish, and resolves to make a formal application to the County Council to amend the Durham City Neighbourhood Area boundaries, providing such information as the County Council recommends to achieve this end.

This letter is the formal application that the City of Durham Parish Council wishes to make the changes described below.

The amendments sought

Please refer to the attached map, which was provided by your department's spatial policy team. We wish to align the Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area with the Parish Boundaries. This requires two amendments:

1. The removal of the area to the north of Aykley Heads, which is unparished. This comprises the streets of Aykley Farm and Dunholme Close, containing about 20 houses.
2. The addition of Gilesgate Bank and the streets leading off it. This has about 200 houses with about 500 inhabitants.

The reasons for the changes

The current extent of the Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area was defined with reference to the boundaries of the County Council Electoral Divisions prior to the 2013

Council elections. There was a boundary revision which took effect at that election, and the boundaries of the new City of Durham Parish are aligned with the current Electoral Divisions. This accounts for the discrepancies which the Parish Council is now seeking to resolve.

We understand that the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, at S61G (4), says that in determining an application to amend a Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area the authority must have regard to (a) the desirability of designating the whole of the area of a parish council as a neighbourhood area, and (b) the desirability of maintaining the existing boundaries of areas already designated as neighbourhood areas.

Making the Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area coterminous with the Parish will be beneficial in many ways:

- In assessing planning applications it will not be necessary to determine whether or not the site is in the Plan Area. This will be beneficial to applicants, interested parties, case officers, and planning committees at both the Parish and County level.
- The Parish Council will be monitoring the operation of the Plan when it is approved. Again, this task will be eased if the Parish and the Plan Area are the same.
- The Parish has no powers in the area to the north of Aykley Heads and keeping this area in the Plan Area would raise expectations to no good effect.
- During the public events during the Regulation 14 consultation held a year ago our volunteers were approached by people from the Gilesgate Bank area who wanted to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and who were disappointed that this was not possible.
- The draft Neighbourhood Plan has policies that would be beneficial to the Gilesgate Bank area, in particular Heritage Policies H1, H2 and H4. All of this area sits within the Durham City Centre Conservation Area. Policies G1 and G2 (Green Spaces) would also be beneficial, since this area contains Gilesgate Green.
- The Parish would be able to achieve a uniformity of approach to all of its area. There are some costs, admittedly not very large, in monitoring the Neighbourhood Plan, and Council tax payers would meet this cost fairly.

There are very few, if any, benefits in maintaining the existing boundaries. The area to the north of Aykley Heads has no listed buildings. There have been only five planning applications since the Unitary Authority was set up in 2009, all approved: two extensions, one conservatory, and two for works on trees protected by a TPO.

The focus of the emerging Durham City Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council considers that the changes will not affect the focus of the emerging Plan. No changes will be needed to the policies and only minor changes to the supporting text in order to list the assets that now fall within the purview of the Plan. There is no change to the intent or the general thrust of any of the Policies.

Invitation

The Parish Council invites Durham County Council to confirm acceptance of the alterations as described in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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<http://cityofdurham.parish.durham.gov.uk/>