

Councillor Simon Tagg, Leader



Our ref:

Your ref: AJ05253

Date: 7 November 2025

Adam Jogee MP

By e-mail only: adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk

Castle House
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Dear Adam

Local Government Reorganisation: A Unitary Council for Newcastle-under-Lyme

Thank you for your correspondence of 4th November 2025, in response to my letter of 22nd October 2025, which set out our work to date on Forced Local Government Reorganisation (FLGR) and the intention of the Council to submit a proposal for a single unitary council for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

I am not sure whether you had intended for your correspondence to have been received prior to the consideration of our Cabinet report on Tuesday as it was sent after I had commenced proceedings for that meeting. I note that a further letter, with amendments, was issued later on Tuesday afternoon.

Turning to the substance of your points, I welcome your request for a meeting regarding the Council's plans. I am happy to meet with you, as I have consistently sought your support for preserving the Borough since January, and again in March, May, and July. In the meantime, I have met with Leigh Ingham MP and David Williams MP who cover part of the Borough to discuss our desire to retain the current two-tier system, as well as our ongoing options appraisal and proposals. While their views may differ due to constituency boundaries, I appreciated the opportunity to share our approach.

In your letter of 2nd September 2025, you advised that your office would contact my secretary for a date to meet. We cannot find any record of this approach but remain happy to meet at this stage. You have further noted that I passed over an opportunity to discuss the matter with you when I was leafleting in Basford, as I have done regularly since 2003 in this area, and saw you getting into your car.

I am very mindful that all politicians have a right to a private life and it would not have been appropriate to 'doorstep' you in that situation, particularly after you had raised concerns about myself and other councillors having visited your town centre advertised office to deliver a letter about FLGR in an act you described as 'intimidation', and for which we had given prior notice.

As you will have seen in the Cabinet report, we have set out the extensive work undertaken and engagement with strategic partners and key stakeholders.

On the matter of support for our proposals, I am pleased that you share my approach to have looked at a range of potential options, when you noted that you are of the view that "*Newcastle-under-Lyme has every reason to consider every single option*".

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The investigation of a single unitary for Newcastle was one of a number of options for investigation which our full Council supported looking into in March, with feedback from MHCLG provided in June. We have continued to work with our appointed consultants on analysing and shaping an appropriate preferred model. I am of the strong view that to have only considered one option would not have been a prudent approach given the variables in your government's guidance, which has continued to shift and change since the submission of interim plans.

You make reference to the amendment by your Labour colleagues which was little more than game playing, but the minutes of the Council Meeting, the reports on the agenda and public statement on the council's website prior to the meeting show that I put forward the proposal to investigate a Newcastle Unitary.

However, I am unclear whether you now support the specific proposal for a single unitary authority based on the existing Borough boundaries. This proposal reflects the wishes of Newcastle's residents and has cross-party support locally. Over 9,000 residents have signed our petition opposing a merger with Stoke-on-Trent, as proposed by your Labour colleagues in Stoke. In light of your comments, **it would be extremely helpful if you could provide a letter of support for this proposal.**

As FLGR progresses following our submission at the end of November, I expect that Ministers and civil servants may contact you to discuss Newcastle-under-Lyme's proposal. This will be an ideal opportunity for you to stand up for our Borough and make clear that a merger with Stoke-on-Trent is not acceptable.

To conclude, I remain firmly of the belief that Forced Local Government Reorganisation offers no discernible benefit to the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme. I urge you to join me in campaigning for the preservation of our well-run and effective historic Borough Council.

Once again, I ask if your office can please contact my secretary to arrange a meeting on this important subject.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader