



West Rainton and Leamside Parish Council
c/o 62 Trevelyan Place
Peterlee
County Durham
SR8 2NL

27th January 2023

Dear Sir

Consultation on Division Boundaries for Durham County Council

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council would like to make the following comments.

West Rainton & Leamside Parish is currently part of the Sherburn Electoral Division, together with Sherburn Village, Sherburn Hill, Shadforth, Littleton, High and Low Pitington and West Rainton and Leamside. It has 2 county councillors.

West Rainton & Leamside shares many interests with these communities in that:

- They are all neighbouring semi rural communities with the same ex agricultural/mining heritage
- Many residents of West Rainton have family and friends living in other parts of the division because of the area's strong community identity and shared interests and services.
- The vast majority of West Rainton primary school children, and those of the whole Sherburn division, go on to attend Belmont Community School, as it is the nearest secondary school within County Durham..
- Some primary aged children from West Rainton attend Pitington Primary
- There are registered public rights of way that directly link West Rainton to Pitington and on from there to all other communities in the division
- West Rainton shares the same Youth Service provider of Durham Area Youth (DAY). Youth services are operated from community facilities in West Rainton, Pitington, Sherburn Hill and Sherburn. Many joint events and activities take place involving young people and their families from these areas.

- All the communities use the shopping amenities and businesses at the nearby Durham Retail Park. This helps build a strong sense of local community as you invariably meet friends and family and other acquaintances when out and about using these amenities.
- Other social interaction and support exists within the existing division. E.g. Pitlington Brass Band support our carol evening held in West Raton each year free of charge.

Consequently, the community of West Rainton & Leamside has a strong historic, current and future connections with the wider community of Sherburn Division..

It is noted, that although this consultation exercise provides parish boundary and division boundary maps these only reflect the current boundaries. No details of potential proposed changes to divisional boundaries is provided.

However, it is understood that proposals have already been made and will be considered by DCC this month.

It is understood that these changes will effectively disband the existing Sherburn Division and will completely separate the community of West Rainton and Leamside for all of the other neighbouring areas within the existing division. It is understood that it is to be recommended that West Rainton, join with Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall in one division.

The Parish Council objects strongly to this proposal as:

The size of the electorate in Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall, with existing shared interests and sense of community, will far exceed that of West Raton. Consequently, there is a strong risk that the community of West Rainton will be under represented on the County Council, regardless of how many councillors were allocated to this division.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the rural side of the parish does border the rural side of Framwellgate and Newton Hall geographically on a map, West Rainton and Leamside is a totally separate community in that:

The A1(M), The River Wear and the North/South East Main Railway Line divide the 2 areas.

Only one minor road provides a link from Leamside to the outskirts of Newton Hall/Framwellgate Moor., There is no bus service on this route.

The only way to access Framwellgate Moor and Newton from the Parish direct is by car. To get a bus, residents would have to get a bus into Durham and then change buses. Such a journey could well take over an hour.

There are no public rights of way that link the Parish with Newton Hall and Framwellgate Moor and anyone travelling by cycle or on horse back would have to use the narrow minor road to cross the river. This road is extremely busy because it is largely used as a "rat run", for commuters living outside the Parish, (e.g. to access the Arncliffe Centre, Chestle Street and beyond), to bypass the congestion of Durham City.

In all practical ways, Newton Hall and Framwellgate Moor are on the other side of Durham City from the Parish – not a neighbouring community with shared interests and shared services. Consequently, there is no sense of community between the Parish and these areas.

If any proposals were to be considered to link West Rainton to any other neighbouring communities, other than any of those existing in the current Sherburn Division, then the only practical alternative would be to link the Parish with Belmont.

The reasons for this are as follows:

- Direct regular bus service through the village to Belmont
- Primary school feeds into Belmont Community Secondary School
- There is a regular bus service from West Rainton to Belmont and its own amenities and also those at the directly neighbouring Durham Retail Park and amenities at Belmont
- Direct road link to Belmont via the A690 with wide public footpaths making it a safe and easy walk from West Rainton to Carville and Belmont from West Rainton.

Whilst the Parish borders Sunderland City Council directly to the North, the bus service that goes from Durham to Sunderland is the only shared service that provides any kind of common interest with the neighbouring area of Houghton Le Spring. Consequently, there is no sense of community with the electorate of West Rainton and the nearby communities over the border e.g. Hetton.

There are also no common shared services or interests with nearby Great Lumley which has strong community links with Chester le Street.

In summary;

The Parish Council has provided evidence to support the continuation of the existing Sherburn Division.

Adding West Rainton to a division with Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall makes no sense and would be disastrous for the electorate of West Rainton and Leamside. Not only would it be under represented on the County Council, there is a strong possibility it would become a forgotten, neglected community. This option is totally unacceptable.

A division joining the Parish with other parts of the existing division, with fewer councillors, or with Belmont, or a standalone division of West Rainton and Leamside with only one councillor, would be more acceptable options.

The Parish Council urges Durham County Council and the Local Government Boundary Commission to take these comments into account.

Yours faithfully

Parish Clerk
West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council

