

Labour Group Proposed Ward Pattern for Co Durham

January 2023

Introduction

In response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Consultation for the warding patterns for County Durham, we have worked to establish a series of submissions that we as a Group feel meet with the criteria outlined by the Commission.

We have outlined our proposals for County Durham in a number of self-contained proposals that we feel meet the criteria. These are presented individually, but together they cover the entirety of County Durham. Our proposals are largely formed through grouping together whole polling districts, but there is a breakdown of each ward included in the accompanying spreadsheet for clarity.

The significant increase in the amount of electors per council seat makes it more difficult than ever to balance the need for electoral equality with the need to reflect the community identity of Communities across our County.

The Labour Group believe that no set of warding arrangements will be perfect, but we have built this proposal on the criteria the Commission have set for us.

The starting point for this has always been to achieve a balance between electoral equality and representing the identities of the many communities that make up County Durham.

By taking a balanced approach to the criteria set by the Commission, we have a strong proposal worthy of consideration. Although it must be acknowledged that because we have looked at each area trying to achieve an equal amount of electors per Councillor, this has resulted in a pattern for 96 seats rather than 98, split across 46 wards. In order to reflect this, we have calculated the Average Electorate Per Councillor as being 4236, based on a forecast electorate of 406,665 by 2028. This is reflected in the figures presented in this document and in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Where possible we have also provided further information for specific parts of County Durham. These are presented in tables underneath each set of proposals. This document should be considered alongside the accompanying spreadsheet we have provided which details our warding pattern in full.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------------|
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Proposal 1 – Consett Area.....</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>Proposal 2 – Stanley Area.....</i> | <i>9</i> |
| <i>Proposal 3 - Chester-le-Street Area</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>Proposal 4 – Seaham, Easington, Peterlee, Horden, Passfield & Castle Eden</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>Proposal 5 – Blackhalls & Wingate, Thornley, Trimdon & Sedgefield</i> | <i>27</i> |
| <i>Proposal 6 - Newton Aycliffe, Chilton, Ferryhill & Cornforth, Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe, Coundon & Spennymoor.....</i> | <i>29</i> |
| <i>Proposal 7 - Bishop Auckland, West Auckland & Shildon.....</i> | <i>32</i> |
| <i>Proposal 8 - Barnard Castle, Weardale and Evenwood.....</i> | <i>39</i> |
| <i>Proposal 9 - Willington, Crook & Tow Law</i> | <i>42</i> |
| <i>Proposal 10 – City of Durham</i> | <i>45</i> |

Proposal 1 – Consett Area

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate (2028) | Per Cllr | Variance |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------------------|----------|----------|
| Benfieldside | 2 | 8503 | 4252 | 0.37% |
| Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester | 2 | 8398 | 4199 | -0.87% |
| Consett East | 2 | 8693 | 4347 | 2.61% |
| Consett West | 3 | 12837 | 4279 | 1.02% |
| Lanchester & Burnhope | 1 | 4568 | 4568 | 7.84% |

This pattern of wards presents an excellent level of electoral equality the Consett Area.

Whilst we accept that the electors for the proposed Lanchester and Burnhope Ward is slightly higher, it is well within the 10% variance. We feel that this is justified to reflect the existing Parishes of Lanchester and Burnhope in a part of the County that is largely unparished and that this provides a very good balance between providing electoral equality and reflecting community links and identities.

Overview of Proposal

Our proposed boundaries for the Consett area begin by recognising the proximity to the northern County Boundary. In forming these proposals, we have been careful to work within existing ties that the local area has.

For this reason, we have been careful to ensure that our proposals for the Consett Area do not cross into the Stanley Town Council area, as a distinctive boundary between Consett and Stanley.

In light of this we are proposing a 2-member Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester Ward in the North of the area, which will maintain the current Burnopfield & Dipton Ward, and bring in Ebchester and Hamsterley. It is felt that each of these communities, whilst distinctive themselves, are also separate to Consett and very close to the County Boundary. In this sense, we feel that they have more in common with each other than with the town of Consett.

For Consett itself, we are proposing to split the Town between two new electoral divisions of Consett East, and Consett West, each of which would elect two members to the County Council.

The boundary between these two proposed wards has not been an easy one to establish, but we have tried to stick with main roads as the boundaries. Whilst accepting that it was necessary to use more than one electoral division to cover the town, it was also felt that Benfieldside is also a well-established area, and would also return two Councillors by expanding to take in Medomsley Edge.

We are also proposing a single-member Lanchester and Burnhope Ward. Lanchester itself is a distinct community and we feel that this should be represented in the warding pattern, but much of the existing ward is very rural and is not particularly linked with Lanchester itself. With this in mind we are proposing to bring both the Lanchester and Burnhope Parish areas into a single electoral division.

We feel that protecting the community identity of Lanchester and Burnhope as distinct parished areas needs to be balanced against the variance by 2028 being high for a single-member ward. In terms of Community identity, whilst we are not stating that everyone would necessarily know exactly where all of the parish boundaries are we feel that most residents will know whether or not they live in Lanchester or Burnhope and would therefore have a good understanding of who their local Councillor would be. The parts of the current Lanchester Ward that are outside of the parish boundary are also very remote from Lanchester itself and arguably have stronger local connections to Consett than to Lanchester.

By taking this approach, we were also able to keep the Stanley Town Council boundary between Consett and Stanley which we feel is a distinctive boundary between the two areas.

| Benfieldside | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
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| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The communities within the proposal identify strongly with Consett as ‘their town’. The travel to work/ city shop/tertiary health care route is toward Tyneside utilising the A691 which runs through the ward. Families often live within a short distance of each other utilising the same services and amenities. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The boundaries of the ward are well defined in very large part. The river Derwent (County boundary with Northumberland) being the most obvious and the C2C former railway line route before encompassing the settlement of Blackfyne and returning to Laburnum Avenue. This was largely the ward boundary prior to the last reorganisation, all be it with the novel addition of Medomsley edge. |
| Are there good transport links? | There are bus links to Consett, Newcastle and Durham from the ward and current proposals to link Medomsley Edge through to Consett via Shotley Bridge hospital would aid that cohesion |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | The proposed boundary reinstates a more cohesive community both geographically and socially and would remove the current rather arbitrary ward division line which cuts directly through housing estates leaving neighbours in differing electoral divisions. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | There is an existing community partnership; the Blackhill, Benfieldside, Bridgehill and Shotley Bridge partnership. This covers the proposed ward boundary and could extend easily to involve Blackfyne and Medomsley Edge. The whole ward would come within the Derwent Valley AAP structure. While ‘unparished’ the older settlement of Shotley Bridge has a well-supported village trust. The Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist traditions are centred within the ward and this boundary proposal would better reflect and contain their natural congregations. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as | The ward would contain three primary schools which attract the great majority of their students from within the ward. This ward proposal retains the large GP practice and community hospital. It |

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| schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | will also ensure the Blackhill shopping area is in only one ward rather than divided by the A601 |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | While Shotley Bridge is the more ancient settlement its history from swordmaking tied it to the Victorian development of the steel and coal industries which led to the building of the other communities within the ward. Its past and present are very much shared in terms of economic development and decline as well as its future as a residential area much improved in recent decades. |

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| Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Dipton and Burnopfield have long been linked as two villages at the end of the Great West Tub Way as early coal mining areas. Ebchester and Hamsterley Colliery and Mill are linked naturally by the A692. The whole division lies within the Derwent Valley AAP area |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The A692 and River Derwent to the North, up East Law and along the Derwent Walk to High Friarside thence up the Pont Burn to the ancient field boundary between Tanfield and Lanchester Parishes then Pontop Pike Lane, Fondlysett Lane and the B6168 to the A692 to the county boundary with Gateshead. |
| Are there good transport links? | The division is dissected by the A692 and A694 and is well served by buses. The Derwent Walk |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – the existing arrangements have worked well and Ebchester and Hamsterley link well with the existing ward. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | There are active community residence groups in Ebchester , Hamsterley Colliery, Hamsterley Mill, Burnopfield, and Dipton. There are village partnerships at Burnopfield and Dipton. There is an active PACT at Ebchester and Hamsterley |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | There are primary schools at Ebchester Dipton and Burnopfield. At secondary level the area is served by Consett and North Durham Academies and St Bedes RC. The area is served by Oakfields Medical Centre Dipton Surgery and The Cedars Medical group. The area is served by Burnopfield Cricket Club, The Derwent Walk, The Hobson Golf Course together with the Leisure Centres at Consett and Stanley, and a boating club at Ebchester There are Community Centres at Burnopfield, the Leazes, Hamsterley Colliery (x2) Ebchester and Dipton. The area is served by Potop RC Partnership The Methodist Circuits of North west Durham and South West Tyneside, and the Anglican churches of St James Burnopfield St Ebbas Ebchester and Christ Church Hamsterley |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Dipton and Burnopfield have been linked through coal extraction since Medieval times and through the days of the Great West Way Waggomway to the days of deep pits. This links further to the the early iron production at Derwentcote and deep mining at Hamsterley. The whole division is part of Derwent Valley AAP . The area is defined by The Pont Burn and River Derwent together with The Derwent Walk. |

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| Consett East | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The area is linked along the Roman Road “Dere Street” and the former Stanhope to Tyne Railway with its branches to Medomsley and Iveston. The whole division is linked by its heritage of coal and ironstone mining together with iron and steel production |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The communities of The Dene, Medomsley, Leadgate, Iveston, Maiden Law, Villa Real together with the majority of central Consett. The north east boundary roughly follows Hanging Stone lane from Maiden Law to Stony Heap lane, then becoming the old boundary between the Ancient Parishes of Lanchester and Tanfield until it meets the Pont Burn which it follows to its junction with the B6310, thence westwards along the Derwent Walk to its junction with Ebchester Hill |
| Are there good transport links? | There are good road links between each of the communities and good bus service linking each community to central Consett. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | As above, there are good transport links between each of the communities. In terms of public transport there is a good bus service linking each community into central Consett as the main hub. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | The area is served in general by the DVAAP while the small village of Maiden Law is served by Mid Durham AAP and a parish council. There are community partnerships serving Consett and Leadgate together with residents’ groups in Medomsley and The Dene. There are a whole range of other community groups across the division. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | All areas have discrete play areas, and share use of Allensford Park, Consett Park, Consett AFC Consett Leisure Centre and Consett Empire, and Consett Rugby Club. There are cricket clubs at Leadgate Medomsley and Consett. The C2C and Derwent Walk run through the division. The area is served by Consett Medical Centre, Oakfields Medical Centre, and Queens Road Surgery. The area is served by North West Durham Methodist Circuit, Pontop RC Partnership, and the Anglican parishes of Christ Church Consett St John Castleside and All Saints Muggleswick as well as The Consett Congregation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. There are a range of shops at Leadgate as well as the shopping facilities of Consett Town Centre. There are primary schools at Leadgate, Medomsley and Consett and the whole area is served by Consett Academy and St Bede’ RC at Lanchester |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Historically the area lies along the Roman Road Dere Street and is bisected by the former Stanhope to Tyne railway and its branches to Medomsley and Iveston. The heritage is of coal mining from medieval times to the deep pits of the 19 th and 20 th century at Medomsley Leadgate and Iveston, ironstone mining at High and Low Bradley and No 1 to No 4 at Consett as well as iron and steel production both at Consett and Bradley. The villages all look to Consett for shopping and leisure |

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| Consett West | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | This ward combines the communities that were and have developed on the western edges of the former Consett Steel Works within the ancient Lanchester Common |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | Each of the communities is discrete but linked closely to the others with known and understood boundaries. The Boundaries are the ancient parish of Muggleswick, the village of Castleside, the communities of Moorside, The Grove, Templetown, Delves Lane and Crookhall together with what are known locally as the Tesco Estate and the Berry Edge estate. |
| Are there good transport links? | There are good road and public transport links within the proposed ward, as well as the the C2C cycle path acting a spine running the whole width of the ward |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | The division is compact and consists of a series of discrete communities which link naturally together |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | The Castleside and Muggleswick areas are served by parish councils, the other parts by Derwent Valley AAP and a series of residents groups in Moorside, the Grove, Templetown, and Delves Lane. There are village and community halls across the proposed division at Muggleswick, Castleside The Grove, Delves Lane and Crookhall. There are public houses at Castleside together with WM Social clubs at Castleside and The Grove |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | There are primary schools at Castleside, Moorside, the Grove and Delves Lane, with the remainder of the area served by these and other Consett Schools. All the areas are served by Consett Academy and St Bede's RC. All areas have discrete play areas, and share use of Allensford Park, Consett Park, Consett Leisure Centre and Consett Empire, Consett AFC (which lies within the division) and Consett Rugby Club. The area is served by Consett Medical Centre and Queens Road Surgery which has an outpost at Moorside. The area is served by North West Durham Methodist Circuit, Pontop RC Partnership, and the Anglican parishes of Christ Church Consett St John Castleside and All Saints Muggleswick as well as The Consett Congregation of the Jehovah's Witnesses |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Heritage of surrounding the Consett Steel Works, Heritage of being part of Lanchester Common, spine link of C2C cycle track (the former Stanhope to Tyne railway), "suburbs" of central Consett with shopping and transport links targeted thereon. |

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| Lanchester & Burnhope | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Lanchester is an ancient village with Roman Origins. Burnhope has looked to Lanchester as its closest neighbour and larger sibling since its 19 th century growth. The surrounding rural area has always looked to Lanchester for its identity and services |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | This is a rural area without easy geographical boundaries, however the proposed ward follows the existing external boundaries of both Lanchester and Burnhope Parish Councils. With the existing Lanchester ward in particular, large parts are very rural but also without good links to Lanchester itself. |
| Are there good transport links? | The area is bisected by the A691 and by the de fact continuous Holmside lane, Peth Lane/Bank, B6296 The area is served by an hourly bus link between Lanchester and Burnhope which then links to Stanley and Newcastle. The area is also served by half hourly buses between Consett and Durham |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | By keeping both parished areas within the same electoral Division, it means that both Parish Council areas will know who their representative is on the County Council as well as protecting their identity. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Both villages are served by parish councils, and are part of the Mid Durham AAP. There are residents associations in both villages and community groups running and using community centres in each village. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | There are primary schools in both Burnhope and Lanchester. The area is served by St Bede's RC as well as North Durham and Consett Academies. Medical services are provided by Lanchester Medical Centre and the Park House Surgery and The Haven Surgery. There are well used community centres in both villages together with cricket clubs in both places and a selection of pubs, clubs and restaurants and cafes. There are play areas in both villages together with the picnic area at Malton and the Lanchester Valley Walk. The area also accesses Leisure facilities at Consett and Stanley |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | History, from the Romans at Lanchester to the 1926 Durham Gala at Burnhope. The area is part of Mid Durham AAP. These two villages are close neighbours and access to Burnhope is almost always through Lanchester. |

Proposal 2 – Stanley Area

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Annfield Plain & Tanfield | 2 | 8171 | 4086 | -3.55% |
| Craghead & South Moor | 2 | 8136 | 4068 | -3.97% |
| Stanley | 2 | 8348 | 4174 | -1.46% |

This proposal provides very good electoral equality within the Stanley area, whilst protecting community interests and identities. We feel that a pattern of three 2-member wards will provide the best balance and enable effective and convenient local government for residents. This arrangement will also provide an excellent level of electoral equality.

Overview of Proposal

Given the need to reduce the amount of Councillors on the local authority, the number of Councillors would have to reduce from the current eight to six in order to meet the requirements for electoral equality.

With this in mind, we are proposing the formation of three two-member divisions for the area.

In order to achieve electoral equality whilst still reflecting local community identity and links, we are proposing that the villages of Tanfield, Tantobie and Tanfield Lea would join most of the existing Annfield Plain Division to create a two-member Annfield Plain and Tanfield Division. We feel that this pattern would ensure that Annfield Plain, as a sizeable settlement in it's own right, maintains a distinct identity from Stanley itself, and in this vein, the smaller settlement have more in common with each other than they do with Stanley itself.

The remaining polling districts from the current Tanfield Ward would be brought into a reconstituted Stanley Division, which would result in a Stanley Ward that actually covers the Town Centre as well as parts of East Stanley, Shield Row and Havannah.

This pattern would also allow for an amended Craghead & South Moor Division, which would also include New Kyo and parts of South Stanley. Given the proximity to Stanley and the fact that the existing ward already included parts of South Stanley, it is felt that the name would remain appropriate.

Similarly with New Kyo, it is located between Annfield Plain and Stanley, and Stanley Bus Station is the main hub for wider public transport connections. As a result, it is felt that this would achieve an appropriate balance between protecting community identity and links and ensuring electoral equality as required by the criteria.

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| Annfield Plain & Tanfield | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | <p>Communities all have a common heritage in mining and farming and share common problems associated with deprivation. They have worked together through the Town Council to support activities across the ward from Annfield Plain to Tanfield Village aimed at celebrating their Heritage and promoting Wellbeing and community spirit across the ward.</p> <p>This warding pattern protects Annfield Plain and the smaller villages around Stanley, ensuring a separate identity for them as rural communities in the north of the County.</p> |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | <p>There is a natural separation between Stanley and Annfield Plain, as well as between Stanley and Tanfield Lea.</p> <p>Whilst under the existing arrangements, Tanfield is a separate electoral Division, the need to provide electoral equality has led us to bring the villages from the Tanfield ward into the same Division as most of the Annfield Plain Ward.</p> |
| Are there good transport links? | For public transport, Stanley Bus Station remains a hub for the wider area. There X72 Stanley to Newcastle Route does link Annfield Plain with White-le-Head, Tantobie, Sleepy Valley, Clough Dene and Tanfield. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government | Yes. By providing a stronger voice for rural communities that are physically separated from Stanley itself, this will ensure that the interests of these communities are better represented and will also improve electoral equality. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | The community groups within the ward include Stanley Town Council which covers the ward. There are several Community centres across the ward that offer activities and support to residents. There also is the Tanfield Lea and Annfield Plain partnerships who arrange events and support for residents, |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | <p>The ward sits well with the following facilities. There are 3 primary schools in the ward and 2 secondary schools within a mile of its boundary.</p> <p>The Louisa Leisure Centre is at Stanley. Football and Cricket Clubs are located at Annfield Plain and Tantobie. Bowls clubs are located at both White-le-Head and Stanley. There are three GP practices in the Stanley area and the Stanley Medical Group also have a site in Annfield Plain. Shopping is located in local village shops and Stanley and Annfield Plain offer a range of larger shops and increased choice.</p> |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Annfield Plain is by far the largest settlement in the new ward and is surrounded by a number of smaller distinct communities including Catchgate, Greencroft and Harelaw. We feel that these smaller communities share similar challenges to the villages of Tanfield Lea, Tanfield & Tantobie, all of which link into Stanley but would be better represented on the local authority in a two-member ward. |

| Craghead & South Moor | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
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| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The communities and villages included in this proposal are distinct from that of central Stanley and the estates that would be taken from the Stanley ward have more in common with Craghead and South Moor. It brings all South Fields into a single division with South Moor which the community already has strong links with. Holly Hill also has links into the ward being on the edge of Stanley with connections to South Moor and Craghead, the nearest school also being within the ward. The composers (Williams, Elgar, etc) and hills estates (Cheviot, Cotswold, etc) closets community links are with the famous ladies estates below so bringing them together makes sense. These boundaries would put the village of Oxhill entirely in one ward instead of being divided between South Moor and Annfield Plain wards, and it also reflects the community's close links with the nearby community of South Moor. New Kyo remains distinct from both Annfield Plain and central Stanley being situated between the two areas, however it has close ties to Oxhill so incorporating the two into a single ward reflects the nature of the community. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The areas of South Stanley that are included in these boundaries have easily definable borders as reflects the edges of entire estates rather than cutting across community lines like the previous boundaries did in South Fields and at Mendip Terrace no longer dividing wards down the middle of a street. The Hills and Composers estates also have a natural border with the woods to the East and the main roads at Humber hill to the north and Durham Road to the West. Moving the boundaries to include New Kyo creates an easily definable border at the edge of that community and the roundabout which connects the A693, A6078 and B6168. The boundaries broadly match with the natural borders of communities and avoids situations where boundaries jut out randomly like at Langley View. |
| Are there good transport links? | The ward has largely good transport links with both central Stanley and Durham City, including two bus services that run every half hour to Durham City (One through South Moor, the other through South Stanley and both going through Craghead). There is also a regular bus service through the ward connecting it to Consett and to Sunderland. Sections of the A693 also run through the ward which connects Stanley and the surrounding villages with Newcastle, Sunderland, and the rest of North Durham. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | The current boundaries have caused confusion as they run through the middle of communities and across single streets. Some of these areas are already included together by partners we work with as a council. These boundaries help reduce the confusion that we as councillors often deal with where residents are not sure who their councillors are or where our boundaries do not reflect the boundaries of communities or partner organisations. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | The proposed boundaries are entirely within the Stanley Town Council Area. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | The proposed ward fits well with the school provision in the area including Greenland, St Mary's and Bloemfontein Primary Schools. There is a good amount of leisure facilities in the area including South Moor Golf Club, South Moor Cricket Club, |

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| | <p>Craghead Bowling Club, a number of football clubs including Craghead and South Moor Junior teams. Good open spaces like South Moor Memorial Park, Craghead Millennium Green, Holly Hill Recreational Garden's, etc. There are also good youth and community facilities including Oxhill Youth Club, Stanley Young People's Club, Craghead and Quaking Houses Village Halls. As well as Burnside Family Centre and St Stephen's Community Centre in South Stanley. There is also a medical practice in Craghead.</p> |
| <p>Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community?</p> | <p>What binds these communities is that, while being part of the wider Stanley area, it is largely made up of distinct villages that consider themselves to be somewhat separate from central Stanley. Most of these areas are villages with their own names and distinct communities, those part of South Stanley included in the boundaries either share this distinctness or have closer links into South Moor and Craghead than Central Stanley due to geographic proximity.</p> |

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| Stanley | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Central Stanley has quite a distinct identity in comparison to the surrounding villages that make up the other wards in this area. Bringing the Front Street into this ward makes much more sense as currently it is in Tanfield ward which causes a great deal of confusion for residents trying to contact their local Councillors. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | On one side this new boundary will start at the point that we cross the border from the Gateshead Council area into Stanley. It will cover the whole of central Stanley and all of the major amenities in the town centre. At the other side of the ward the 2 housing developments that we propose to move into the Craghead and Stanley ward are very distinct areas and in terms of demographics they have much more in common with the rest of that ward than they do with central Stanley. |
| Are there good transport links? | With this proposal, the main road through Stanley now goes through the middle of the ward whereas previously the road was split down the middle and fell into 2 different wards. Having the whole road in one ward makes much more sense. The towns bus station would now also fall within this ward and acts as a transport hub for the surrounding area. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government | The fact that Stanley Front street (which is the main shopping area in the town) is currently in the Tanfield ward has caused a great deal of confusion for residents. On a regular basis Councillors representing Tanfield and Stanley are having to redirect queries as a result of this anomaly. This confusion even extends to Council Officers on occasion – so bringing the town centre into the Stanley Ward would help the Council to deliver more effective and more convenient local government. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Stanley Town Council. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | Both of the Comprehensive / Academy Schools, the main shopping areas, leisure centre and 2 major medical facilities would all fall within the proposed ward boundary. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | This proposed boundary would cover all of the areas that people identify as central Stanley and leave the surrounding villages that have quite distinct identities as wards in their own right. |

Proposal 3 - Chester-le-Street Area

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|---------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Chester-le-Street Central | 2 | 8203 | 4102 | -3.18% |
| Chester-le-Street West | 2 | 8531 | 4266 | 0.70% |
| Lumley & North Lodge | 2 | 8905 | 4453 | 5.11% |
| Pelton | 3 | 12035 | 4012 | -5.30% |
| Sacrison & Witton Gilbert | 2 | 8332 | 4166 | -1.65% |

Our proposed warding pattern for the Chester-le-Street area provides excellent levels of electoral equality for the Chester-le-Street West and Sacrison & Witton Gilbert Wards and a very good level of electoral equality overall.

Overview of Proposals

For the Chester-le-Street Area we have tried to work within the existing boundaries of the Area Action Partnership Area for the district. The notable exception to this is the Sacrison Ward which we are proposing to join with Witton Gilbert to make a two-member Sacrison and Witton Gilbert Ward. They are in close proximity to each other, and both have better transport links with Durham City than with Chester-le-Street and together provide almost perfect electoral equality as a two-member ward. Historically, the area that is now Sacrison used to be part of Witton Gilbert Parish so there are also historic community links behind this proposal.

In the north of the area, we feel that the existing arrangements for Pelton Division have worked well, and there have been close bonds made between Pelton Parish Council, Urpeth Parish Council and Ouston Parish Council as a result of this, most notably with them recently agreeing to form a Neighbourhood Area to set up a Neighbourhood Plan. Because of the close links between these communities, we feel that the existing Pelton Division should be maintained and extended rather than be broken up as part of the boundary review.

As a result of this we are proposing to extend the current Pelton Division to also include Pelton Fell. This is because as a distinct village, Pelton Fell arguably has a lot more in common with other nearby villages such as Pelton, Perkinsville & Ouston. There are already close links with Roseberry Primary School at Newfield being the main school for many children from Pelton Fell and community ties such as an annual remembrance service at Pelton Fell Memorial Park. The cenotaph at the memorial park also includes a dedication to Sgt Steven Campbell (from Pelton) and residents from Pelton Fell often contact Pelton Councillors. The current warding arrangements have also confused officers on occasion, resulting in traffic notices for Pelton Fell regularly ending up being sent out to Pelton Division rather than to the current Chester-le-Street West / Central Councillors. We feel that the inclusion of Pelton Fell within an enlarged Pelton Division would sit well with the criteria set by the boundary commission, would ensure electoral equality and that a distinctive

boundary exists between the rural villages in the Chester-le-Street district and the Town itself.

With this in mind, we are also proposing to take the existing polling districts from the current Chester-le-Street South Division and include them within a new Chester-le-Street West Division.

The existing central Chester-le-Street polling stations which would join the existing Chester-le-Street North and Chester-le-Street East Wards, along with one polling district from the existing North Lodge Ward to create a new, two-member Chester-le-Street Central Ward. Whilst the central Chester-le-Street polling districts are to the west of the railway line, historically they were part of a Chester-le-Street Central Ward in the days of Chester-le-Street District Council. Given the history and their close proximity and links with the Town Centre, we feel that the best balance of the criteria would be moving them back into a Chester-le-Street Central Ward.

This would result in the Town Centre of Chester-le-Street being encompassed within a single ward as opposed to the current arrangements which use Front Street as a boundary. We feel that this would provide a stronger voice for the town centre, but also make it clearer to residents where the boundaries are between the new Chester-le-Street Central and Chester-le-Street West wards.

The remaining polling districts from North Lodge would join the existing Lumley Ward to form Lumley & North Lodge. Both areas have their own parishes and have more in common with each other, sitting outside of the town itself. We feel that this would help both areas to retain their distinct identities and would also result in the entirety of Lambton Park to be brought within a single electoral division. Road connections between the two areas are best served by the A183 Chester Road which links North Lodge and Bournmoor (within the existing Lumley Division).

Whilst rivers are often used as boundaries, in this case we are trying to balance the best outcome for retaining community identity whilst ensuring electoral equality across the County. On this side of Chester-le-Street we are also up against the County Boundary and the A1.

We feel that this pattern would ensue that the rural parts of the Chester-le-Street area maintain a distinct and strong voice on the local authority.

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| Chester-le-Street Central | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The proposal brings together the existing single-member CLS East and CLS North divisions with the central polling districts of the existing Chester-le-Street West division (and one PD of North Lodge) to form a compact ward with the town centre at its heart. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | All areas within the proposed division are part of the built-up area of Chester-le-Street, including the market place and town centre. In this way we feel the proposed new division better reflects the geography of Chester-le-Street than the existing divided ward pattern. For example the town centre is currently split into two different divisions along Front Street whereas the new proposal unites the town centre of Chester-le-Street in a single division. |
| Are there good transport links? | Yes – the town centre and main bus stops are at the heart of the proposed new division with bus routes radiating out to surrounding areas. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government | See above |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Chester-le-Street is currently unparished. The existing Chester-le-Street Central Residents group will benefit from having its area united in a single division rather than split into two divisions as at present. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | Most of the main facilities within CLS, including the town centre, market place, leisure centre and Riverside park and sports complex, will be within the proposed new division. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | All polling districts within the new division are part of the built-up area of the town of Chester-le-Street. |

| Chester-le-Street West | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
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| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The proposal brings the current Chester-le-Street South Ward in with parts of the current Chester-le-Street West / Central Division. In light of this, we feel that the description of Chester-le-Street West is more appropriate and representative. Under the current arrangements, the West / Central ward covered a wide area from Pelton Fell to Front Street in Chester-le-Street. We feel that this proposal will group together the remaining urban part of Chester-le-Street that is away from the centre of the Town and will preserve existing links with the villages of Waldrige and Chester Moor which are very close. Waldrige itself also has a parish council which covers a significant proportion of the ward. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The clearest boundary for this ward is that it covers the West and South urban areas within Chester-le-Street and retains its own identity, separate to that of the Town Centre. As much as possible (whilst ensuring electoral equality, the Western Boundary of this ward would be the East Coast Mainline) which is a distinct boundary through the Town. In the north east corner of the ward, Bullion Lane would become the ward boundary with the proposed Chester-le-Street Central Ward. |
| Are there good transport links? | There are good public transport links into the centre of Chester-le-Street which is the main public transport hub for both the East Coast Mainline and for bus services. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – this will ensure that the urban parts of Chester-le-Street outside of the Town Centre are still represented. The area is geographically close to the Town Centre and is also compact and can easily be travelled around. Whilst the naming of this pattern would be a significant change, most areas in this proposed ward already sit within the same electoral division under the current arrangements. The boundary between the current wards is an artificial one. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Chester-le-Street is currently unparished. The Garden Farm Estate have their own Residents Association. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities | There are a number of primary schools and The Hermitage Academy. Many people in this proposed ward will already be registered with Cestria Health Centre on Whitehill Way. This Ward would also include Cong Burn Woods (using the Cong Burn as a natural boundary between Chester-le-Street and Pelton Fell) and also Waldrige Fell Country Park. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | All polling districts within the new division are part of the built-up area of Chester-le-Street but are distinct from the Town Centre itself. We feel that this arrangement presents the best balance between the criteria set by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. |

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| Lumley & North Lodge | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | <p>In developing a warding pattern for the Chester-le-Street area we have tried as far as possible to represent the different communities we have. Our approach has sought to present a clear distinction between the built up town of Chester-le-Street itself and the many villages and distinct communities that surround it.</p> <p>North Lodge and Lumley both have their own distinct identities, and unlike the town of Chester-le-Street itself the vast majority of this ward would be covered by the respective Parish Councils of Great Lumley Parish Council, Little Lumley Parish Council Bournmoor Parish Council and North Lodge Parish Council.</p> <p>The only exception to this is a small area of North Chester-le-Street that is very close to the North Lodge Parish Council boundary and is currently part of the existing North Lodge Division.</p> <p>We feel that this arrangement would ensure that these communities outside of the Town of Chester-le-Street retain their own distinct identity.</p> |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | To the North and to the East of this Ward, the boundary would be the external boundary of County Durham. The main part of the West Boundary of this ward would be the River Wear as it runs towards the A1 and Junction 63. Whilst the A1 runs through this ward, the same was true of the existing Lumley Ward. Arguably, Junction 63 of the A1 connects the ward together. |
| Are there good transport links? | There are good public transport links into the centre of Chester-le-Street which is the main public transport hub for both the East Coast Mainline and for bus services. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | We feel that this warding arrangement would help the Council to deliver effective and convenient local government because it protects the distinct identities of communities in close proximity to the Town of Chester-le-Street. Whilst public transport links in to Chester-le-Street itself, the ward can be travelled by car and via the A183 you can travel between Lumley and North Lodge without leaving the ward. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | As above there are four parish councils in this area. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | <p>North Lodge is home to one of the two sites of the Park View Academy, which is one of the two Secondary Schools in Chester-le-Street. Many pupils will already travel to North Lodge to attend school here. Formal leisure provision sits mainly within Chester-le-Street, which has the Leisure Centre, but also The Riverside Complex. Lumley itself has two schools, Lumley Infants and Nursery School and Lumley Junior School.</p> <p>This area includes the nearby Lumley Castle and Chester-le-Street Golf Course on the bank of the River Wear.</p> <p>This warding pattern would also bring the historic Lambton Estate within a single electoral division.</p> |

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| <p>Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community?</p> | <p>Both of the existing wards cover half of the Lambton Estate and this would be brought within a single electoral division. A Lumley & North Lodge ward would provide good electoral equality for a two member ward and ensure that the parished areas to the North and East of Chester-le-Street retain a distinct identity from the Town itself.</p> |
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| Pelton | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
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| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | <p>The current arrangements grouping together Pelton Parish Council Urpeth Parish Council and Ouston Parish Council have worked well and have resulted in closer ties between these communities.</p> <p>Due to these close links and the existing boundaries, we feel that any new warding pattern should seek to retain these Parish Councils within the same electoral division.</p> <p>Ouston and Urpeth have a parish boundary in between them, but in reality residents of Urpeth Grange have most of the local services and connections in Ouston itself, including two primary schools, the local community centre and a petrol station (including a Post Office). Whilst there is a bus service from Urpeth Grange into Chester-le-Street itself, most bus connections are instead from Ouston.</p> <p>Ouston itself is bordered to the east by the East coast mainline which is a boundary between the village and most of North Lodge. As a result of this, Ouston shares significantly closer links with Urpeth Grange, Perkinsville and Pelton itself than it does with North Lodge.</p> <p>The southern boundary of Ouston Parish borders Pelton Parish and Perkinsville which also share close links between them. Many residents of Perkinsville have allotments owned and maintained by Ouston Parish Council, and the polling station for Perkinsville is the Perkinsville Methodist Church (which is in Ouston Parish). Many residents from both Ouston and Urpeth areas are registered at The Lavendar Centre at Pelton, which is also the closest DCC library. The nearest cemetery is Holy Trinity Church, Pelton.</p> <p>The parish boundaries between Pelton and Urpeth result in part of what looks like the village of Pelton actually being in Urpeth Parish, and splits the villages of High Handenhold and West Pelton between them.</p> |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | <p>This ward sits on the northern boundary of County Durham and is protected by greenbelt from the conurbation of Gateshead. To the east of Ouston is also the East Coast Mainline and to the east of Perkinsville is the Drum Industrial Estate.</p> <p>These villages are distinct and separate from both Chester-le-Street and from Stanley, and in order to provide for electoral equality, we are proposing to also bring the existing settlement of Pelton Fell into the ward.</p> <p>Pelton Fell has a distinct and unique identity as a former pit village with a proud history. There are existing links with parts of Pelton Fell being very close to Pelton and the parish boundary for Pelton ending along Station Lane.</p> <p>Whilst Pelton Fell is unparished, as a village it has much more in common with other nearby villages than it does with the middle of Chester-le-Street.</p> |

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| | These boundaries would be clearly identifiable from the town of Chester-le-Street. |
| Are there good transport links? | <p>Pelton Fell already shares the 28 and 29 bus services, linking it to Grange Villa, West Pelton, Pelton Lane Ends, Beamish Museum, Beamish Village High Handenhold, Pelton, Perkinsville and Ouston (as well as further afield to Chester-le-Street, to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to Gateshead and to Newcastle.</p> <p>Go North East operate an hourly 703 Service running out from Chester-le-Street, serving Pelton Fell, Pelton, Pelton Lane Ends and Newfield. There is also a school bus from Pelton Fell, via Grange Villa to Roseberry Primary School at Newfield.</p> |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – the current arrangements for Pelton Division have worked well and community links have continued to strengthen. In light of this we feel that the interests of Pelton Fell would be better served in the future as part of a wider Pelton Ward as Pelton Fell has a lot more in common with other villages and communities in the area than it does with the middle of Chester-le-Street under the current arrangements. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | <p>This area includes Pelton Parish Council, Urpeth Parish Council and Ouston Parish Council.</p> <p>There is also the Newfield and Pelton Lane Ends Residents' Association, the Grange Villa Residents' Association and the Perkinsville Residents' Association.</p> <p>Pelton Community Association, Grange Villa Community Enterprise, Ouston Community Association and the Pelton Fell Community Partnership.</p> |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | <p>Within the proposed Pelton Division there are five primary schools; Ouston Primary School (part of Jigsaw Learning Trust), St Benet's Catholic Primary School (part of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust), Pelton Community Primary School (part of the Beamish and Pelton Federation), Pelton Roseberry Primary School and West Pelton Primary School (part of The Acorn Federation).</p> <p>The closest secondary Schools are Park View Academy, Chester-le-Street, The Hermitage Academy, Chester-le-Street, the North Durham Academy, Stanley. Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy, Birtley.</p> <p>There are GP surgeries at The Lavendar Centre, Pelton and at The Villages Medical Group which operates in Pelton Fell, Pelton, and Craghead.</p> <p>In the north of the Division some residents are registered at GP surgeries outside of the County Boundary in Birtley and some will also be registered in practices down in Chester-le-Street.</p> <p>In terms of leisure facilities, there are a number of play areas in the proposed ward and one of the projects that both Ouston and Urpeth Parish Councils have been working on is the re-instatement of a BMX Track in the open space between Ouston and Urpeth Grange.</p> |

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| | <p>There is an award winning youth facility at Room 14 at Pelton Community Centre and there are football facilities at Ouston Football Club and at Roseberry Playing Fields. The nearest Leisure Centre is in Chester-le-Street.</p> |
| <p>Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community?</p> | <p>The close proximity of the boundaries between the existing parish Councils links this area as a community. Even to the extent that whilst all three parish councils now have their own war memorial, the timings of services on Remembrance Sunday are staggered to ensure that residents do not have to choose between them and so that they are not competing with each other.</p> <p>The nature of villages in close proximity to each other also brings these areas together – and they are physically distant from Chester-le-Street itself.</p> |

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| Sacriston & Witton Gilbert | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The expansion of the ward would take in the village of Witton Gilbert which already has strong links with Sacriston, its nearest large village. There has been historic links between these villages- families have members who live in either village, residents from Witton Gilbert use the local amenities at Sacriston, there are transport links, education links as well as the Christian worshipping community parochial parish boundaries include this area. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The boundaries take in the parish boundaries of: Wilton Gilbert Sacriston Edmondsley Kimbleworth, Nettlesworth & Plawsworth |
| Are there good transport links? | Yes- road network easily links the ward. There are 4 buses an hour (from 2 different routes), which would link the expanded ward with the current ward. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes, a number of issues and services are the same across these villages, and this would help with planning. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Across the newly proposed ward there would be 4 Parish Councils, and 4 village halls/parish centres which have their own community groups ran from them. There is the Witton Gilbert Education Trust, who provide support, following the old parish boundaries of Witton Gilbert which includes part of Sacriston and Nettlesworth. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | Residents at Witton Gilbert mostly use the medical centre at Sacriston, and access the shops at Sacriston. Some parents send their children to the school in the other village. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Historic links with a shared history. Sacriston and part of Nettlesworth came within the boundary of the old/ancient parish of Witton Gilbert. A large number of families have members that live in both villages. |

Proposal 4 – Seaham, Dawdon, Deneside & Murton, Easington & Shotton, Horden & Dene House, Peterlee, Passfield & Castle Eden

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate | Per Cllr | Variance |
|-------------------------|-------|------------|----------|----------|
| Dawdon | 2 | 7532 | 3766 | -11.10% |
| Deneside & Murton | 3 | 13278 | 4426 | 4.49% |
| Easington & Shotton | 3 | 12049 | 4016 | -5.19% |
| Horden & Dene House | 2 | 8042 | 4021 | -5.08% |
| Passfield & Castle Eden | 1 | 3990 | 3990 | -5.81% |
| Peterlee | 2 | 8861 | 4431 | 4.59% |
| Seaham | 1 | 4102 | 4102 | -3.16% |

We feel that our warding pattern for proposal 4 provides reasonable levels of electoral equality, but we feel that allowances have to be made for the fact that this area is heavily confined by both the North Sea and by the County Boundary. In light of this we have sought to achieve a warding pattern that strikes a balance between achieving electoral equality and the need to ensure that community ties and identities are maintained.

Whilst the forecast electorate is slightly outside of the variance for the Dawdon Ward, this still fits well with the existing boundaries of the North Sea and the Railway line to create a clear, identifiable boundary that represents community links and identity. In these circumstances we feel that this is the best balance we can achieve between the criteria set by the Boundary Commission.

Overview of Proposals

Starting in Seaham, in order to provide electoral equality across the County, we have had to accept that the amount of Councillors in this area would have to reduce from the current 8, to just six.

In doing so we have become more constrained by the County Boundary and the North Sea. In light of this, we are proposing to maintain a 2-member Dawdon Ward by extending the existing boundary North to take in East Shore Village. We feel that this will also improve on the existing arrangements by making the ward boundary significantly more identifiable. The East Shore Village Estate is contained by polling district ERC which will result in the railway line becoming the main boundary between the Dawdon Ward and the Seaham Ward.

As a result of the need for electoral equality and moving the East Shore Village estate into the Dawdon Ward, the remaining polling districts of the Seaham Ward then provide excellent electoral equality for a single-member ward, with a much more identifiable boundary with the Dawdon Ward.

There is no getting around the fact that Deneside and Murton are very proud and distinctive communities in their own right, but in order to meet the requirements for electoral equality, we are proposing to bring them together, with the community and parish council of South Hetton. This will establish a three-member Deneside and Murton Ward with a good level of electoral equality. This area consists of three very distinct communities, but given their close proximity, we feel that this arrangement would both protect their identities and ensure effective and convenient local Government. Murton and South Hetton both have links across the County boundary into Sunderland, as well as to the A19 in County Durham. The best road link with Deneside is the B1285.

For Easington we are proposing to create a three-member ward by bringing the remaining polling districts of the Shotton and South Hetton Ward, along with two polling districts from the current Trimdon and Thornley, into the existing Easington Division.

As per the table above, this will provide very good electoral equality for a three-member ward. All of the settlements are situated in the East Durham coalfields area.

Easington colliery and Easington village are intrinsically linked and have been connected for decades. The residents from the village have to travel into the colliery to access health services, chemists, and for some shops. Residents in both community's access community groups and events planned within these settlements and an identity of Easington is established as a place.

Hawthorn settlement has formed part of the same division and residents have to use buses to access services in Easington or otherwise travel into neighbouring Seaham or Peterlee townships.

The joining of Shotton, and Haswells into this ward proposal will enable the identity of these communities to continually thrive as independent – they will not change identity or interest only have an additional councillor to represent their voice.

Ludworth is a small settlement in the vicinity of Haswell Plough and it makes sense to include them into the ward to elevate their identity since they have also stepped over into the constituency of Easington otherwise it would have stood out on the peripheral.

As this is a rural part of the community, most public transport links into to Peterlee which provides wider connections.

We are proposing to create a two-member Horden & Dene House Division by expanding the existing Horden Ward to include the Dene House part of Peterlee. This is achieved by taking in the polling district ECA and extending the Horden Boundary along part of the Castle Eden Burn and blunts beck, as well as the Castle Dene Shopping Centre. This area already shares close links with Horden and includes The Dene Academy, Dene House Primary School and Peterlee Community Hospital.

The remaining part of the current Peterlee East Ward would join the existing Peterlee West Division to become a two-member Peterlee Ward. As well providing a reasonable level of electoral equality this ensures that most of the Town is brought within a single electoral division.

The existing Passfield Division is a compact single-member ward but would not provide electoral equality under a reduced Council size. As a result of this we are proposing to extend it to include the Castle Eden Parish Council area. This will ensure electoral equality. In considering Passfield it should also be noted that the existing boundary with Peterlee will be maintained and that Castle Eden is a well-defined area located nearby and is linked via the A19. To the South of Castle Eden, Crimdon Beck provides a clear boundary as does Hesleden to the East. We feel that this provides the best balance of the criteria set by the Commission for this community.

Proposal 5 – Blackhalls & Wingate, Sedgefield, Thornley and Trimdon

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Blackhalls & Wingate | 2 | 9269 | 4635 | 9.41% |
| Sedgefield | 2 | 7873 | 3937 | -7.07% |
| Thornley | 1 | 4394 | 4394 | 3.73% |
| Trimdon | 1 | 4604 | 4604 | 8.69% |

Our proposed pattern for Blackhalls & Wingate, Sedgefield, Thornley and Trimdon provide a reasonable level of electoral equality whilst maintaining existing the community identities as much as possible.

With regard to Wingate in particular, we did consider a separate ward which would have included both Station Town and Hutton Henry. Unfortunately, it would have had a significant impact on the proposed warding arrangements for both the remaining Blackhalls Ward, and also on Castle Eden and Passfield. On balance we felt that whilst there was merit in a pattern that kept a separate Wingate Ward, we did not feel that a ward including both Blackhall Rocks and Passfield would fairly represent Community Identity or respect natural boundaries in this part of the County.

Overview of Proposal

We are proposing to merge most of the existing Blackhalls Ward with Wingate. Whilst the electors per Councillor for this is slightly high, it is less than 10% variance and we feel that this arrangement would best reflect the existing links between Wingate, Station Town and Hutton Henry, as well as ensuring a clear distinction between this rural part of County Durham and the town of Peterlee to the North.

Our proposal for Sedgefield involves maintaining the current arrangements (which we feel work well) with the addition of Bishop Middleham to ensure good electoral equality for a two member ward. Bishop Middleham is very close to both Sedgefield and to Fishburn and has its own Parish Council which would move entirely into the Sedgefield Ward.

We are proposing to separate the existing Trimdon and Thornley Division into two separate single-member wards. This is in order to better reflect community identity and links. In terms of public transport, whilst all of the Trimdons are connected by a single bus service, it is difficult for residents to travel between the different parts of the ward. To travel from Thornley or Wheatley Hill to Trimdon by public transport would require travelling out of the ward and changing buses in either Wingate or Kelloe. Trimdon and Thornley have different refuse collection days, and are looked after by different teams within the Council's Clean and Green Department. Trimdon is in a different Area Action Partnership to Thornley and Wheatley Hill. Of the three community associations in the ward, all three are based in the

Trimdon side of the ward. We feel that in light of this, the close Community links within the Trimdon part of the ward should be recognised in a separate electoral division.

By separating these into two distinct wards, we feel that community links and identity would be better reflected in the warding pattern, and it would also sit much better with the new parliamentary boundaries due to come into force for the next General Election.

Proposal 6 - Newton Aycliffe, Chilton, Ferryhill & Cornforth, Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe, Coundon & Spennymoor

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Aycliffe North & Middridge | 2 | 8851 | 4426 | 4.47% |
| Aycliffe South | 3 | 11793 | 3931 | -7.20% |
| Chilton | 1 | 3823 | 3823 | -9.75% |
| Ferryhill & Cornforth | 2 | 9042 | 4521 | 6.73% |
| Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe | 2 | 8633 | 4317 | 1.90% |
| Spennymoor & Coundon | 3 | 13372 | 4457 | 5.23% |

Our proposed warding pattern provides a reasonable level of electoral equality whilst balancing the community identities across this part of the County. The biggest outlier here is Chilton, which under the current arrangements is almost 20% over. In light of this we feel that the benefits of retaining the existing boundaries outweigh the slightly high variance on electoral equality for the ward.

It should also be noted that the proposed Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe Ward provides very good electoral equality as part of this pattern.

In terms of Aycliffe South, we feel that this is a reasonable balance to the fact that the Town is so close to the County boundary, and that the existing boundary with Aycliffe North and Middridge could be maintained under this ward pattern. This will simplify the warding arrangements within the Town and lead to clearer and more identifiable boundaries whilst still providing a good level of electoral equality.

Overview of Proposal

We feel that the existing warding arrangement for Newton Aycliffe have worked well, however in order to achieve electoral equality under a smaller Council size, Newton Aycliffe would have to go down from an area with seven Councillors to five.

Our starting point for this has been the existing warding arrangements, which we feel have worked well. As a result of this, we are proposing to merge the current Aycliffe West and Aycliffe East to create a three member Aycliffe South.

We recognise that the current wards of Aycliffe West and Aycliffe East are very different from one another, with Aycliffe East covering the oldest parts of the town and the community links between them are limited. Unfortunately, even under the current arrangements (and were the Council size not being reduced), the current boundaries of Aycliffe West would not be justifiable as they vary significantly from the required number of electors. In proposing to merge them, it is also felt that the ward name would have to be changed to Aycliffe South to

better reflect the new ward. This ward will also have clear natural and constructed boundaries formed from roads such as Burnhill Way to the North, the A1 to the South, Burn Lane to the East and School Aycliffe to the West.

The existing Aycliffe North and Middridge Ward would retain its existing boundaries but lose one seat. As per the table above, this would meet the requirement for a reduced amount of Councillors without a warding pattern reaching out beyond the boundary of the town.

It is also worth noting that Newton Aycliffe sits at the southern boundary of Co Durham, so the options under a reduced council size are limited.

For Chilton, we are proposing retaining a single-member ward. This is because even with a reduced Council size, this arrangement presents a reasonable level of electoral equality. We feel that community identity and links can be best met by retaining the current arrangements.

We are proposing removing Kirk Merrington from the Ferryhill Ward. We feel that this has significantly stronger links with Tudhoe, Spennymoor and Coundon. Instead we are proposing a two member Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe Ward which will provide a very good level of electoral equality whilst protecting the identities of both communities.

Ferryhill will instead take in Cornforth and would become a two-member ward. This will provide a clear boundary to the west of Ferryhill and will be a better reflection of the community links and transport links between Ferryhill and Cornforth. The ward name would also reflect the two parish areas in the Division.

Spennymoor will join Coundon and take in one polling district from the existing Shildon and Dene Valley. This will provide a reasonable level of electoral equality, and bring Auckland Park and Grange Hill into the new ward. This would ensure a three member ward primarily linked by the A688.

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| Ferryhill & Cornforth | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | West Cornforth and Ferryhill are part of the same AAP (4together partnership), projects have been funded that cross over between the two areas. These have included employability programmes, skills and youth work. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | Losing Kirk Merrington would mean that there is a clear cut off point to the west of the ward. Ferryhill school would sit on the boundary edge and therefore an easily identifiable boundary. The east side is split nicely by the main road heading east from Ferryhill Station (Mainsforth Road). As you approach Mainsforth village, turning north would be within the boundary. Turning South would take you into Bishop Middleham and the Sedgefield ward. |
| Are there good transport links? | The 56 Arriva bus is a direct link between Cornforth and Ferryhill. It runs every 30 minutes and links up with Durham and Bishop Auckland. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – this would result in a much more rational ward boundary as Ferryhill has a lot more links with Cornforth than it does with Kirk Merrington. Having the ward consist of two distinct settlements makes the boundaries easily identifiable for residents. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Two parish Councils, Ferryhill and Cornforth with no overlap of other towns and villages. Currently Kirk Merrington which is situated in the Ferryhill Ward is part of Spennymoor Town Council and Bishop Middleham in the Cornforth Ward also has its own parish council. The Ladder Centre in Ferryhill work very closely with the Cornforth partnership to deliver community activities and employability support. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | Between Ferryhill and Cornforth they supplement each other nicely. For example, in Ferryhill there is no supermarket but there in Cornforth. The good transport links would also give Cornforth access to Ferryhill Doctors and dental clinic, something Cornforth doesn't have. The community centre in Cornforth has a variety of uses but for large scale events, Ferryhill Sport and Education Centre can be used. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | There is a strong sense of community between Ferryhill and Cornforth. It stems from the mining industry in which members of both communities worked at Thrislington and Mainsforth colliery. Both areas have strong community groups such as resident associations and community activists that work side by side to achieve positive change. |

Proposal 7 - Bishop Auckland, West Auckland & Shildon

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Bishop Auckland | 3 | 12840 | 4280 | 1.04% |
| Shildon | 2 | 8700 | 4350 | 2.69% |
| West Auckland | 2 | 9079 | 4540 | 7.16% |

This proposal will provide an excellent level of electoral equality for both Bishop Auckland and for Shildon Ward. Whilst the West Auckland Ward has a slightly higher variance, we feel that this arrangement better reflects the rural communities to the West of Bishop Auckland itself and that this is a good balance of the criteria set by the Boundary Commission.

Overview

For Bishop Auckland we are proposing an enlarged three-member ward that would cover the full Bishop Auckland Town Council area (and add just one additional polling district that already relates well to the Town. This would provide a very good level of electoral equality. This replaces the existing arrangement of a two-member Bishop Auckland Town Ward and a two-member Woodhouse Close Ward which would be very difficult to maintain in light of the reduction in Council Seats. Furthermore, we feel that most residents of this proposed division will already identify as living in Bishop Auckland, so this will better reflect community links and make the boundaries significantly more identifiable to residents.

We are also proposing a two member Shildon Division, with slightly amended boundaries to better reflect community links. This would also provide a good level of electoral equality, whilst protecting historic community links with Shildon.

For West Auckland, we feel that the current arrangements have worked well and that grouping together of the smaller communities to the West of Bishop Auckland in a more rural ward makes sense. This ward would include West Auckland and St Helen Auckland in the South, but would extend northwards, covering the areas of Bishop Auckland outside of the Town Council Boundary. In order to ensure electoral equality, this ward would also take in Witton Castle, High Etherley, Low Etherley and Toft Hill. This would be within 10% of the ideal number of electors for a two-member ward, but would best reflect the rural communities in the area.

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| Bishop Auckland | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Nearly all of this proposed division covers the town of Bishop Auckland itself, with additional smaller settlements including Rosemount and South Church (previously part of the Shildon and Dene Valley division); it also includes the small village of Toronto. What links all of these smaller communities is that local residents would overwhelmingly state, when asked, that they live “in Bishop Auckland”; this is notable in South Church (where the Parish Church of St Andrew Auckland is located, as well as St Andrew’s primary school) where local residents generally do not associate with the current division Shildon & Dene Valley, and indeed regularly already assume themselves to be part of Bishop Auckland. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The boundaries are easily identifiable: coming from Coronation or Shildon, the division would start at the bottom of the hill. Otherwise the remainder of the division is mostly the clearly-identifiable towns of Bishop Auckland and Toronto; any further beyond Toronto on the main road leading to Crook/Willington would be outside the division. |
| Are there good transport links? | Roads connect all the settlements within the division. Public transport links are generally poor in the whole of this area of the county, but Arriva buses connect all areas through Bishop Auckland town. The town itself connects by bus to nearby Shildon, as well as further afield to Durham City, Darlington, Crook, Tow Law, Stanhope, Newcastle and other large conurbations, as well as the smaller villages in between (e.g. Eldon, Heighington). Bishop Auckland also has a railway station which connects the division to Saltburn (via Shildon Newton Aycliffe, Darlington, Middlesbrough, Redcar, etc.) on the “Bishop Line” served by Northern Rail (Bishop Auckland is the terminus, so all trains are in one direction). A seasonal service is also sometimes provided to the Weardale towns of Woosingham, Frosterley and Stanhope. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | The proposed ward replaces two existing divisions (Bishop Auckland Town and Woodhouse Close) as well as small parts of Shildon and Dene Valley (e.g. South Church and Rosemount). It will help the council to deliver effective local government as it will make Bishop Auckland, which is a continuous entity in most people’s minds, a single local government entity. It will also give some areas currently outside of the divisions of Bishop Auckland and Woodhouse Close a more natural home, most notably South Church. This will prevent issues which frequently occur whereby residents of South Church contact the council and councillors representing Bishop Auckland, only for them to have to refer the matter to the councillors for Shildon and Dene Valley. Because a significant portion of residents of South Church “feel” that they are part of Bishop Auckland, it will be a more natural fit for them. It will also coincide more neatly with the Bishop Auckland Town Council area, which is currently split across Bishop Auckland Town and Woodhouse Close divisions. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Bishop Auckland Town Council covers by far the largest area of the division in both area and population, which is the entire town of Bishop Auckland. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as | There are three secondary schools in this proposed division: Bishop Barrington, King James and St John’s. |

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| <p>schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities?</p> | <p>The current schools in Woodhouse Close and Bishop Auckland divisions would join with St Andrew's (currently Shildon and Dene Valley division) in the proposed new Bishop Auckland. We do not anticipate any negative consequence of this; as might be expected from what has previously been stated, St Andrew's is already considered to be "a Bishop Auckland school" by many residents.</p> <p>Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre would be in the proposed Bishop Auckland division and is connected to other parts of the division by bus. Other recreational facilities such as parks are spread across the proposed division.</p> <p>Medical and dental practices can be found across the proposed division, as well as Bishop Auckland General Hospital; the hospital is connected to the rest of the division by bus which stops directly outside the site.</p> <p>Supermarkets are located near Bishop Auckland railway station; additional shopping and leisure is available in the town centre, and in nearby Tindale Crescent Retail Park (including supermarkets, retail and food offerings) which is connected by bus to the main town and surrounding towns and villages.</p> |
| <p>Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community?</p> | <p>The whole proposed ward is dominated by the large town of Bishop Auckland: the community "feels" continuous, even in the smaller villages such as South Church which are adjacent to the larger town. The community appears cohesive across the whole division. The proposed ward is almost completely co-terminus with the external boundary of Bishop Auckland Town Council. The only exception is the addition of the other half of Polling District BADA (the southern half of which is already included within the Town Council area).</p> |

| Shildon | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
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| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Nearly all of this proposed division covers the town of Shildon; the other area included are far smaller, and do have a separate identity within their own village, e.g. people residing in Eldon certainly do not identify as Shildon residents; people in Close House and Eldon Lane do not identify as part of Shildon town either, but it is not generally true to say that they identify as part of the parish council area “Dene Valley”, nor as part of any other settlement such as nearby Bishop Auckland and Coundon. In the example of South Church, however, most local residents would identify strongly with Bishop Auckland over anything else, and so it is sensible to remove this from the current division of Shildon and Dene Valley, and adding it to the Bishop Auckland division. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | Boundaries of the town of Shildon are easily identifiable (from Eldon, the top of Eldon Bank marks the start; from Middridge, the end of the country road; from Rosemount, the bottom of Busty Bank; from Tindale Bypass, the roundabout itself marks the end of Shildon). Each additional small settlement within the proposed division has a clear entrance sign in most cases, but the lines blur; however, this would be true whichever division they were in. The transition from Coronation to Rosemount and onto South Church is marked clearly by reaching the bottom of Busty Bank (once you started to climb the bank, you’d be in Shildon division; from the bottom you would be in Bishop Auckland). There is no danger of being unclear which division it is on the Middridge side. As for the other entry to the division, from the south, that is from Redworth which marks the start of a new council area, Darlington Borough Council, and as such there is a clear boundary as Shildon is the last town and indeed the last division in DCC. |
| Are there good transport links? | Roads connect the settlements within the division. Public transport links are generally poor in the whole of this area of the county, but Arriva buses connect Shildon to Eldon, Eldon Lane, Coronation, Coundon Grange, and indeed into settlements which are proposed to be in other divisions (e.g. South Church which we propose to be in Bishop Auckland division). All buses which pass through the smaller settlements (e.g. Coronation, Eldon Lane) pass through Shildon, continuing on to Newton Aycliffe and Darlington in one direction, and Bishop Auckland in the other. The town of Shildon is also connected to these places, but has additional buses through service 1/1X which go to Darlington in one direction (via Heighington but not Newton Aycliffe), and Bishop Auckland in the other, continuing on to Crook and Tow Law. Shildon also has a railway station which connects the division to Bishop Auckland in one direction, and to Saltburn (via Newton Aycliffe, Darlington, Middlesbrough, Redcar, etc.) in the other. Although there is no bus stop at Shildon station, buses do stop within a short walk and it has (free) parking. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | The proposed ward removes some areas of the current division (Shildon and Dene Valley) and puts them in a more natural home, most notably South Church being moved to Bishop Auckland division. This will prevent issues which frequently occur whereby residents of South Church contact the council and councillors representing Bishop Auckland, only for them to have to refer the matter to the councillors for Shildon and Dene Valley. Because a |

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| | <p>significant portion of residents of South Church “feel” that they are part of Bishop Auckland, it will be a more natural fit for them. Conversely, anyone living in the town of Shildon will naturally continue to contact the representatives for Shildon.</p> |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | <p>Shildon Town Council covers by far the largest area of the division in both area and population, which is the entire town of Shildon. The village of Eldon is represented separately by Eldon Parish Council. The villages of Close House, Coronation, Coundon Grange, Bridge Place and Eldon Lane (note: not the same as Eldon) are all part of Dene Valley Parish Council; the area covered by DVPC also covers some areas which this proposal moves into other divisions, notably Auckland Park (moving into Spennymoor and Coundon), Rosemount and South Church (both into Bishop Auckland). While it would be preferable not to separate the parish council area across three divisions, each individual community is so small in terms of population that it proved very difficult to keep them together without imbalacing things elsewhere.</p> |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | <p>There is no secondary school in the current division of Shildon and Dene Valley, and the proposed new division of Shildon will not impact that as there will continue to be no secondary school.</p> <p>There are currently five primary schools in the current division of Shildon and Dene Valley. Prince Bishops, Timothy Hackworth, St John’s C of E and and Thornhill schools would all be in the new Shildon division, whereas St Andrew’s would be in Bishop Auckland. We do not anticipate any negative consequence of this; as might be expected from what has previously been stated, St Andrew’s is already considered to be “a Bishop Auckland school” by many residents.</p> <p>Shildon Sunnydale Leisure Centre would be in the proposed Shildon division and is connected to other parts of the division by bus via a short walk to Shildon town centre bus station (King William Interchange).</p> <p>Medical practices are found in both Eldon Lane and Shildon, and both are on bus routes for residents who live in other parts of the division; dental services are available in Shildon, and are again connected by buses to other parts of the division.</p> <p>Convenience stores and WMCs can be found in the smaller communities such as Eldon Lane, but for a wider shopping experience residents can travel by bus to Shildon within the same ward; however, there is no supermarket beyond B&M Bargains and Shildon does not have a bank. For residents of the whole proposed division of Shildon, the nearest banks and supermarkets would be found in Bishop Auckland or Newton Aycliffe (both accessible by bus).</p> |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | <p>The whole town of Shildon is a continuous unit, so there is no difficulty in defining this as “a community”. It would be dishonest to claim that the settlements of Eldon, Eldon Lane, Close House, Bridge Place and Coronation consider themselves to part of Shildon, because they do not. However, they likewise do not associate themselves generally with any other community (e.g.</p> |

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| | <p>Bishop Auckland or Coundon). Their populations are all very small, meaning it is impossible to consider a single-member division to cover these smaller settlements separately from a large conurbation such as Shildon. As such, while the whole division is certainly *not* one single community, it is true to say that this would be true for any alternative proposal, given the unique identity of every small community in this division.</p> |
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| West Auckland | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | St Helen Auckland and West Auckland are the largest settlements in the south of the ward, which extends northwards to take in rural areas to the West of Bishop Auckland itself. These communities have very different needs to the Town of Bishop Auckland itself and relate much more closely to the current arrangements which we have sought to preserve. Lots of groups now operate throughout the electoral division. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The current boundary has served our community well and we'd like the boundary to remain as it currently stands. The electoral division whilst made up of several villages all interact with one another and there is a cohesiveness between villages and residents. |
| Are there good transport links? | The road infrastructure is good, the bus service is connected through the proposed electoral division. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes, as this is an existing two seat ward, and it has settled communities who know the electoral boundaries. Over times lots of groups now operate with the electoral division. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . West Auckland has a parish council. . Witton Park, Escomb and Etherley Dene residents' association . Witton Park and West Auckland Bloom Group . Newswatch newsletter covers the electoral division. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | . Escomb and Witton Park have primary schools which are predominately fed from nurseries from within the current electoral boundary. Witton Park and Escomb residents access the GP surgeries at St Helen Auckland. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | We have lots of groups that now operate over the electoral division such as the village in bloom groups, refuse collection groups, newsletter that covers the electoral division. |

Proposal 8 - Barnard Castle, Weardale and Evenwood

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Barnard Castle | 3 | 12326 | 4109 | -3.01% |
| Weardale & Evenwood | 3 | 13098 | 4366 | 3.07% |

The proposed ward pattern provides very good level of electoral equality for both wards.

Overview of Proposal

With Barnard Castle we are once again up against the external boundary of County Durham. In light of this we are proposing to merge most of the existing Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West wards into a three-member Barnard Castle Ward. In order to achieve this we have had to move parts of Barnard Castle East, including Staindrop out of the ward, but as above this presents excellent electoral quality for the ward whilst maintaining the existing community links of the two wards covering Barnard Castle and the surrounding areas.

For the current Weardale and Evenwood wards it has proven very difficult to balance community links and identity with the need for electoral equality due to their rural nature. As a result of this we are proposing to merge the current Weardale and Evenwood wards into a single three-member ward. As shown in the table above, this provides excellent electoral equality for Barnard Castle and reasonable electoral equality for Weardale and Evenwood but also protects the very rural nature of the many smaller communities that this ward would cover whilst protecting a distinct identity and links that already exist within this part of the County.

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| Barnard Castle | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Yes – we feel that the current warding arrangements for Barnard Castle have worked well. We feel that merging most of the existing wards into a larger three-member ward for the Town would be the best option to balance the criteria set by the Commission. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | Most of the boundary for this ward is the County Boundary itself. The main difference from the current arrangements would be that there would no longer be an internal boundary within the Town, and that Staindrop would move into a different ward. |
| Are there good transport links? | Most of the transport links use Barnard Castle as the main hub. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – it will provide electoral equality, and simplify the current arrangements for residents in the area. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | There are a large amount of parish councils in this area representing this very rural part of County Durham. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | The main hub is Barnard Castle itself, but most of the communities in this part of the Council are very rural by nature. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Rurality and the local connections with Barnard Castle. |

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| Weardale and Evenwood | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | Yes – it is very difficult to in rural parts of the County to establish boundaries that provide for electoral equality whilst ensuring that community interests and identities are protected. We are proposing to merge the current Weardale Ward with a large part of the existing Evenwood ward, with the addition of the Staindrop Parish Council area. We feel that a large three-member ward is the best way to balance the criteria set by the Commission. |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | Where possible we have tried to retain the existing boundaries of both the Weardale and Evenwood Wards. The main differences are around Evenwood itself, where High Etherley, Low Etherley, Witton Castle and Toft Hill have joined an enlarged West Auckland Division. Staindrop Parish Council area would also be moved from Barnard Castle into the new Weardale and Evenwood Division. |
| Are there good transport links? | This is the most rural part of County Durham and due to the size different parts of the ward have connections to different towns in County Durham. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Yes – it will provide electoral equality without an unnecessary pattern of internal boundaries. Due to the size this is a big area to cover, but we felt on balance that a pattern of smaller wards with less clear boundaries would not result in more effective and convenient local government. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | There are a large amount of parish councils in this area representing this very rural part of County Durham. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | We have tried to maintain the existing links represented by the current ward pattern in this part of the County as much as possible. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | Building on the existing links that we have in light of the need for a reduced number of Councillors on the local authority. |

Proposal 9 - Willington, Crook & Tow Law

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Crook & Tow Law | 3 | 11480 | 3827 | -9.66% |
| Willington | 2 | 8478 | 4239 | 0.07% |

The proposed warding pattern provides excellent level of electoral equality for the Willington Ward whilst also presenting a reasonable level of electoral equality for a Crook and Tow Law ward.

Overview of Proposal

We are proposing to merge the existing Tow Law ward with most of the existing Crook Ward to best protect community links and identity whilst ensuring electoral equality across the County. The rural part of the existing Crook ward will instead join our proposed Willington ward.

We feel that the existing arrangements for Tow Law have worked well, and that as Crook is the nearest sizeable settlement these would fit together well in a single electoral division.

The existing links in each ward have worked well and were it not for the need to reduce the amount of Councillors as part of this review, we would have tried to protect the existing arrangements. Whilst there are rural parts of this proposed ward, they are geographically close together.

We are also proposing a Willington Ward that will keep most of the existing Willington & Hunwick Ward, with the exception of Brancepeth, which will join the new Brandon & Meadowfield Ward. In addition to this, three rural polling districts south of Crook itself will also move into the Willington Ward. This will create a two-member ward representing a number of rural communities, with Willington as the largest settlement and being fairly central. We feel that this will help to protect the community ties and identities of the many communities in this part of the County that remain distinct from Bishop Auckland and from Crook. Due to the increase in villages, we suggest that Willington would be the most appropriate name for the new ward, which presents a good balance between ensuring electoral equality and protecting community links and identity in light of a reduction in the size of the Council.

| Willington | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
|---|--|
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | <p>Howden-le -Wear and Hunwick are similar villages with a mix of new housing estates and older housing. Each village has a primary school and secondary age pupils commute to secondary schools in the larger towns. Community groups from both Villages have been in contact to gain from the experience of projects completed. Hunwick and Willington have a long history of being a joint division. The Hunwick Community, Social and Environment Group is currently working with Greater Willington Town Council and Northern Heartlands, a community arts organisation supporting County Durham communities, on a heritage and wellbeing project that links Hunwick and Willington via the old railway line. Northern Heartlands projects have, and continue to include Willington and Hunwick schools. Hunwick, Willington and Howden-le -Wear have a history of coal mining, brickworks and old railway lines initially for the transportation of coal. Willington and Hunwick is connected by the old railway line, originally built to transport coal. The old railway line is now a walkway/bridlepath which continues to connect the villages. St Stephen's and St Paul's Churches of Willington and Hunwick respectively share the same priest and the Methodist Open Door Church in Willington supports families which includes those in Hunwick and Howden-le-Wear, through its many practical and advice projects. In addition, all of the three Villages have walking, running and cycling routes. All three villages have groups involved in history projects which link together.</p> |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The boundaries are identifiable by the rural nature of the area which is farmland spaced between the built up housing of the three main areas. |
| Are there good transport links? | This is a rural area and as such it has not enjoyed frequent or regular transport links in recent years. However, there are bus services between Hunwick and Willington and a service from Bishop Auckland to Howden- le -Wear with a stop on the edge of Hunwick. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | Given the similarities including the history, populations and geography of the Villages it will build more cohesive communities and provide for more support between communities and a more effective and convenient delivery of local services. Relationships between community groups is already strong and this will help to make them stronger. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | Greater Willington Town Council is based in Willington and covers Sunnybrow, Oakenshaw and Willington. Howden-le-Wear has a community centre where residents meet for interest focussed groups. Hunwick established a new community, social and environment group in 2020. Willington and Hunwick have their own well-established cricket clubs. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | All three villages have primary schools and there is a secondary school based in Willington. Willington has a number of shops including a small Cooperative supermarket, post office, greengrocer, butchers and a variety of other retail offers on the High Street. Howden-le- Wear has a butcher, and one stop shop. There are leisure facilities at the Spectrum Leisure Centre, Willington, Cricket Clubs at Hunwick and Willington and Willington has medical facilities in Willington. Walking, cycling, |

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| | running, walking and horse riding routes are well established in all three villages. There are equestrian Centres in Willington and Hunwick. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | The rural nature, history and small village community culture bind this area. |

Proposal 10 – City of Durham

Electoral Equality

| Proposed Ward | Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|----------------------------|-------|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Belmont & Pittington | 2 | 8991 | 4496 | 6.13% |
| Brandon & Meadowfield | 2 | 9115 | 4558 | 7.59% |
| Coxhoe & Durham South | 3 | 12775 | 4258 | 0.53% |
| Deerness | 2 | 9081 | 4541 | 7.19% |
| Elvet & Gilesgate | 2 | 8668 | 4334 | 2.31% |
| Framwellgate & Newton Hall | 3 | 12661 | 4220 | -0.37% |
| Langley & Esh | 1 | 4414 | 4414 | 4.20% |
| Nevilles Cross | 2 | 7900 | 3950 | -6.75% |
| Sherburn | 1 | 3891 | 3891 | -8.14% |

The Framwellgate & Newton Hall and Coxhoe & Durham South Divisions provide the outstanding levels of electoral equality in this part of the County. Most of the proposed wards provide a good level of electoral equality. Overall we feel that this pattern provides a good level of electoral equality whilst balancing Community identities and ties.

Overview of Proposals

In light of the need to reduce the size of the Council, we are proposing to create a two-member Belmont and Pittington Ward. This would result in part of the existing Belmont Division taking in High Pittington and Low Pittington from the existing Sherburn Ward to create a two-member Belmont and Pittington Ward. This would include the polling districts from Belmont Parish Area plus the non-parished polling district DDE and would provide a reasonable level of electoral equality.

Whilst High and Low Pittington are distinct villages, separate from the City of Durham, they are geographically close to Belmont and are linked by Pittington Lane. The 65 bus service connects Belmont with Low Pittington.

Maintaining the River Browney as its eastern boundary we are proposing to retain a Brandon Ward, which would extend to the south west to include Brancepeth and to the North West to take in New Brancepeth. This would result in a justifiable level of electoral equality whilst maintaining a two-member ward for a distinct part of County Durham. The River Deerness would then become the northern boundary of the division, and with both Brancepeth and New Brancepeth within a single electoral division, the boundaries would become much clearer and more identifiable for residents.

We are proposing to merge the existing Coxhoe & Durham South Wards together to create a three-member ward with a very good level of electoral equality. Whilst this covers a large

area, this ward has good connections into Durham City by bus, connecting High Shincliffe, Bowburn and Coxhoe.

The existing Deerness Ward would lose New Brancepeth and would become a two-member ward, with a justifiable level of electoral equality.

The boundaries and the name are easily identifiable especially given that the ward follows the river Deerness, the valley travels the entire length of the ward with all villages with the exception of the Village of New Brancepeth being in the valley. The boundaries are therefore very natural and are already very well established.

Elvet & Gilesgate would take four non-parished polling districts from the current Belmont Ward in order to provide a good level of electoral equality to maintain a two-member ward. This ward covers the heart of Durham City and we feel that in principle a two-member ward works well for this area, as long as it does not encroach on other parished areas.

We are proposing that the existing ward of Framwellgate and Newton Hall takes in West Rainton from the existing Sherburn Ward. Whilst this arrangement is not ideal, we have tried to achieve electoral equality across County Durham. This arrangement enables Sherburn to be retained as a single member ward and also provides an excellent level of electoral equality for Framwellgate and Newton Hall.

Most of the existing Esh and Witton Gilbert Ward will be retained, except for Witton Gilbert itself which will join Sacriston. The remaining polling districts will provide a good level of electoral equality but we are proposing to rename the ward in light of this change as Langley & Esh.

Nevilles Cross was so far over the variance for our current Council size that the electorate already provides a good level of electoral equality for a two member ward and therefore we are not proposing to change this.

We are proposing to keep a smaller, single-member Sherburn Ward which would see High and Low Pitlington joining Belmont, and West Rainton joining Framwellgate & Newton Hall. We feel that Sherburn should remain as a separate ward from Durham, and that this presents a reasonable balance between reflecting community identity and ensuring electoral equality across our County.

| Deerness | How does the proposal meet the criteria |
|---|---|
| Does it reflect community interests and identities? | The proposed ward hugely reflects community interests and identities. The strongest of these being that these are all former mining villages with major mines having being located particularly in Bearpark and Broompark. There are huge community links with many children in Ushaw Moor and Bearpark attending schools in either villages. Many people travel within the ward to carry out work and access services for instance many people in Bearpark use the General Practice Surgery located in Ushaw Moor. Children also attend two primary schools in Esh Winning |
| Are the boundaries easily identifiable? | The boundaries and the name are easily identifiable especially given that the ward follows the river Deerness, the valley travels the entire length of the ward with all villages with the exception of the Village of New Brancepeth being in the valley. The boundaries are therefore very natural and are already very well established. |
| Are there good transport links? | A number of public bus routes run through the entirety of the ward linking the villages together for instance the Arriva 48 service links Bearpark and Ushaw Moor together. In addition to this the Arriva 43 service runs through almost the entirety of the ward through Ushaw Moor and Esh Winning. Gateshead Central Buses number 47 and 52 also well connect the majority of the villages 52 runs through Bearpark, Waterhouses and East Hedleyhope. |
| Will it help the Council deliver effective, convenient local government? | This ward is almost identical to the current ward of Deerness with the loss of the village of New Brancepeth and the hamlet of Alum Waters. The ward would almost entirely be within one UK Parliamentary Constituency, City of Durham. |
| What type of community groups are there in the area? | The ward is largely covered by the Brandon and Byshottles Parish Council (Broompark and Ushaw Moor), Bearpark Parish Council, Cornsay Parish Council and East Hedleyhope Parish Council. There are a number of different associations and community groups. The vast majority of the ward is part of the Mid Durham Area Action Partnership a partnership which aims to solve problems and inequalities throughout the area. |
| How does the proposed ward fit with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping, medical facilities? | The proposed ward fits well with facilities such as schools, leisure facilities, shopping and medical facilities. For instance, people living in Bearpark use the shops in Ushaw Moor in particular the Pharmacy. |
| Is there anything particular that binds this area as a community? | These communities are all former mining communities. There are huge links between the different villages within the valley |

Example Ward Pattern Variances

| Current County Division | Number of Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Annfield Plain | 2 | 6017 | 3009 | -6.79% |
| Aycliffe East | 2 | 6491 | 3246 | 0.56% |
| Aycliffe North and Middridge | 3 | 8851 | 2950 | -8.59% |
| Aycliffe West | 2 | 5302 | 2651 | -17.86% |
| Barnard Castle East | 2 | 7410 | 3705 | 14.79% |
| Barnard Castle West | 2 | 6721 | 3361 | 4.12% |
| Belmont | 3 | 10584 | 3528 | 9.31% |
| Benfieldside | 2 | 6584 | 3292 | 2.00% |
| Bishop Auckland Town | 2 | 6376 | 3188 | -1.22% |
| Bishop Middleham and Cornforth | 1 | 2888 | 2888 | -10.52% |
| Blackhalls | 2 | 6410 | 3205 | -0.70% |
| Brandon | 2 | 7778 | 3889 | 20.50% |
| Burnopfield and Dipton | 2 | 6368 | 3184 | -1.35% |
| Chester-le-Street East | 1 | 2908 | 2908 | -9.90% |
| Chester-le-Street North | 1 | 3030 | 3030 | -6.12% |
| Chester-le-Street South | 2 | 5908 | 2954 | -8.47% |
| Chester-le-Street West Central | 2 | 6105 | 3053 | -5.42% |
| Chilton | 1 | 3823 | 3823 | 18.45% |
| Consett North | 2 | 6015 | 3008 | -6.82% |
| Consett South | 1 | 4265 | 4265 | 32.15% |
| Coundon | 1 | 3181 | 3181 | -1.44% |
| Coxhoe | 3 | 10772 | 3591 | 11.25% |
| Craghead and South Moor | 2 | 5883 | 2942 | -8.86% |
| Crook | 3 | 9515 | 3172 | -1.73% |
| Dawdon | 2 | 6256 | 3128 | -3.08% |
| Deerness | 3 | 10071 | 3357 | 4.01% |
| Delves Lane | 2 | 6702 | 3351 | 3.83% |
| Deneside | 2 | 5360 | 2680 | -16.96% |
| Durham South | 1 | 2003 | 2003 | -37.94% |
| Easington | 2 | 6547 | 3274 | 1.43% |
| Elvet and Gilesgate | 2 | 5946 | 2973 | -7.89% |
| Esh and Witton Gilbert | 2 | 6824 | 3412 | 5.72% |
| Evenwood | 2 | 6593 | 3297 | 2.14% |
| Ferryhill | 3 | 8551 | 2850 | -11.69% |
| Framwellgate and Newton Hall | 3 | 10745 | 3582 | 10.97% |
| Horden | 2 | 5289 | 2645 | -18.06% |
| Lanchester | 2 | 6215 | 3108 | -3.72% |
| Leadgate and Medomsley | 2 | 6850 | 3425 | 6.12% |
| Lumley | 2 | 6001 | 3001 | -7.03% |
| Murton | 2 | 5799 | 2900 | -10.16% |
| Nevilles Cross | 2 | 7900 | 3950 | 22.39% |
| North Lodge | 1 | 3288 | 3288 | 1.87% |
| Passfield | 1 | 3473 | 3473 | 7.61% |
| Pelton | 3 | 10455 | 3485 | 7.98% |
| Peterlee East | 2 | 5620 | 2810 | -12.94% |
| Peterlee West | 2 | 5994 | 2997 | -7.14% |
| Sacrison | 2 | 5901 | 2951 | -8.58% |
| Seaham | 2 | 5378 | 2689 | -16.68% |
| Sedgefield | 2 | 6844 | 3422 | 6.03% |
| Sherburn | 2 | 6936 | 3468 | 7.45% |
| Shildon and Dene Valley | 3 | 10150 | 3383 | 4.83% |
| Shotton and South Hetton | 2 | 6817 | 3409 | 5.61% |
| Spennymoor | 3 | 9249 | 3083 | -4.48% |
| Stanley | 2 | 6324 | 3162 | -2.03% |
| Tanfield | 2 | 6431 | 3216 | -0.37% |
| Tow Law | 1 | 3494 | 3494 | 8.26% |
| Trimdon and Thornley | 3 | 9802 | 3267 | 1.23% |
| Tudhoe | 2 | 7265 | 3633 | 12.55% |
| Weardale | 2 | 6655 | 3328 | 3.10% |
| West Auckland | 2 | 7182 | 3591 | 11.26% |
| Willington and Hunwick | 2 | 7238 | 3619 | 12.13% |
| Wingate | 1 | 3376 | 3376 | 4.60% |
| Woodhouse Close | 2 | 5956 | 2978 | -7.73% |
| Total | 126 | 406665 | | 63 |

| Proposed Ward Pattern | Number of Seats | Electorate 2028 | Per Cllr | Variance |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Annfield Plain & Tanfield | 2 | 8171 | 4086 | -3.55% |
| Aycliffe North & Middridge | 2 | 8851 | 4426 | 4.47% |
| Aycliffe South | 3 | 11793 | 3931 | -7.20% |
| Barnard Castle | 3 | 12326 | 4109 | -3.01% |
| Belmont & Pittington | 2 | 8991 | 4496 | 6.13% |
| Benfieldside | 2 | 8503 | 4252 | 0.37% |
| Bishop Auckland | 3 | 12840 | 4280 | 1.04% |
| Blackhalls & Wingate | 2 | 9269 | 4635 | 9.41% |
| Brandon & Meadowfield | 2 | 9115 | 4558 | 7.59% |
| Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester | 2 | 8398 | 4199 | -0.87% |
| Chester-le-Street Central | 2 | 8203 | 4102 | -3.18% |
| Chester-le-Street West | 2 | 8531 | 4266 | 0.70% |
| Chilton | 1 | 3823 | 3823 | -9.75% |
| Consett East | 2 | 8693 | 4347 | 2.61% |
| Consett West | 3 | 12837 | 4279 | 1.02% |
| Coxhoe & Durham South | 3 | 12775 | 4258 | 0.53% |
| Craghead & South Moor | 2 | 8136 | 4068 | -3.97% |
| Crook & Tow Law | 3 | 11480 | 3827 | -9.66% |
| Dawdon | 2 | 7532 | 3766 | -11.10% |
| Deerness | 2 | 9081 | 4541 | 7.19% |
| Deneside & Murton | 3 | 13278 | 4426 | 4.49% |
| Easington & Shotton | 3 | 12049 | 4016 | -5.19% |
| Elvet & Gilesgate | 2 | 8668 | 4334 | 2.31% |
| Ferryhill & Cornforth | 2 | 9042 | 4521 | 6.73% |
| Framwellgate & Newton Hall | 3 | 12661 | 4220 | -0.37% |
| Horden & Dene House | 2 | 8042 | 4021 | -5.08% |
| Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe | 2 | 8633 | 4317 | 1.90% |
| Lanchester & Burnhope | 1 | 4568 | 4568 | 7.84% |
| Langley & Esh | 1 | 4414 | 4414 | 4.20% |
| Lumley & North Lodge | 2 | 8905 | 4453 | 5.11% |
| Nevilles Cross | 2 | 7900 | 3950 | -6.75% |
| Passfield & Castle Eden | 1 | 3990 | 3990 | -5.81% |
| Pelton | 3 | 12035 | 4012 | -5.30% |
| Peterlee | 2 | 8861 | 4431 | 4.59% |
| Sacrison & Witton Gilbert | 2 | 8332 | 4166 | -1.65% |
| Seaham | 1 | 4102 | 4102 | -3.16% |
| Sedgefield | 2 | 7873 | 3937 | -7.07% |
| Sherburn | 1 | 3891 | 3891 | -8.14% |
| Shildon | 2 | 8700 | 4350 | 2.69% |
| Spennymoor & Coundon | 3 | 13372 | 4457 | 5.23% |
| Stanley | 2 | 8348 | 4174 | -1.46% |
| Thornley | 1 | 4394 | 4394 | 3.73% |
| Trimdon | 1 | 4604 | 4604 | 8.69% |
| Weardale & Evenwood | 3 | 13098 | 4366 | 3.07% |
| West Auckland | 2 | 9079 | 4540 | 7.16% |
| Willington | 2 | 8478 | 4239 | 0.07% |
| Total | 96 | 406665 | | 46 |

* Please note updated Electorate Per Cllr as a result of 96 seat ward pattern.

| Council Size Calculator | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| No. Cllr (enter figure to adjust) | 96 |
| | |
| Electorate | 406,665 |
| Average Electorate Per Councillor | 4236 |

| Range | | |
|-------|------|------|
| -10 | 0 | +10 |
| 3812 | 4150 | 4660 |

| Variance stats = Current Based on 2028 figures | |
|--|----|
| Between 0% and 10% | 22 |
| Between -10% and 0% | 23 |
| Less Than -10% | 9 |
| Greater than 10% | 10 |

| Variance stats = Example Based on 2028 figures | |
|--|----|
| Between 0% and 10% | 26 |
| Between -10% and 0% | 19 |
| Less Than -10% | 1 |
| Greater than 10% | 0 |

| | |
|---|------|
| Average Eletrorate Per Candidate for (98) 2028 | 4236 |
| Average Eletrorate Per Candidate for (126) 2028 | 3228 |

| Exanple Ward Pattern Ward Split | Totols |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| One Member | 8 |
| Two Member | 26 |
| Three Member | 12 |