

New electoral arrangements for Gateshead Council Draft Recommendations

January 2024

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A note on our mapping:

The maps shown in this report are for illustrative purposes only. Whilst best efforts have been made by our staff to ensure that the maps included in this report are representative of the boundaries described by the text, there may be slight variations between these maps and the large PDF map that accompanies this report, or the digital mapping supplied on our consultation portal. This is due to the way in which the final mapped products are produced. The reader should therefore refer to either the large PDF supplied with this report or the digital mapping for the true likeness of the boundaries intended. The boundaries as shown on either the large PDF map or the digital mapping should always appear identical.

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament.¹ We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Wallace Sampson OBE
- Liz Treacy
- Ailsa Irvine (Chief Executive)

What is an electoral review?

3 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed.
- How many wards or electoral divisions there should be, where their boundaries are and what they should be called.
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division.

4 When carrying out an electoral review the Commission has three main considerations:

- Improving electoral equality by equalising the number of electors that each councillor represents.
- Ensuring that the recommendations reflect community identity.
- Providing arrangements that support effective and convenient local government.

5 Our task is to strike the best balance between these three considerations when making our recommendations.

¹ Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

6 More detail regarding the powers that we have, as well as the further guidance and information about electoral reviews and review process in general, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why Gateshead?

7 We are conducting a review of Gateshead Council ('the Council') as its last review was completed in 2003, and we are required to review the electoral arrangements of every council in England 'from time to time'.² Additionally, as some councillors currently represent many more or fewer electors than others. We describe this as 'electoral inequality'. Our aim is to create 'electoral equality', where the number of electors per councillor is as even as possible, ideally within 10% of being exactly equal.

8 This electoral review is being carried out to ensure that:

- The wards in Gateshead are in the best possible places to help the Council carry out its responsibilities effectively.
- The number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

Our proposals for Gateshead

9 Gateshead should be represented by 66 councillors, the same number as there are now.

10 Gateshead should have 22 wards, the same number as there are now.

11 The boundaries of most wards should change; four (Deckham, Dunston Hill & Whickham East, Dunston, Teams & Riverside and Saltwell) will stay the same.

How will the recommendations affect you?

12 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your ward name may also change.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the borough or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

² Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 56(1).

Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 30 January 2024 to 8 April 2024. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed wards as the more public views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be in making our final recommendations.

15 We ask everyone wishing to contribute ideas for the new wards to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 8 April 2024 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 27 for how to send us your response.

Review timetable

17 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Gateshead. We then held a period of consultation with the public on warding patterns for the borough. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
21 March 2023	First consideration of appropriate council size
16 May 2023	Start of consultation seeking views on appropriate council size
10 July 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and proposing an appropriate council size
15 August 2023	Number of councillors decided
22 August 2023	Start of consultation seeking views on new wards
30 October 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
30 January 2024	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
8 April 2024	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
2 July 2024	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation³ states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors⁴ there are now, but also on how many there are likely to be in the five years after the publication of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for our wards.

20 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create wards with exactly the same number of electors in each; we have to be flexible. However, we try to keep the number of electors represented by each councillor as close to the average for the council as possible.

21 We work out the average number of electors per councillor for each individual local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown on the table below.

	2023	2029
Electorate of Gateshead	141,945	150,899
Number of councillors	66	66
Average number of electors per councillor	2,151	2,286

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a ward is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the ward as having 'good electoral equality'. All of our proposed wards for Gateshead are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2029.

Submissions received

23 See Appendix C for details of the submissions received. All submissions may be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2029, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2024. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 6.3% by 2029.

25 We considered the information provided by the Council and are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time. We have used these figures to produce our draft recommendations.

³ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

⁴ Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Number of councillors

26 Gateshead Council currently has 66 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and other respondents and concluded that we should consult with local people and organisations before making a decision on the number of members elected to the Council.

27 The consultation took place from 16 May 2023 to 10 July 2023. During this consultation we received 293 submissions. A total of 254 of these submissions supported a reduction in council size; all of these submissions were from local residents. Twenty-five submissions did not support a reduction in councillors. Of these submissions, 15 were from local elected representatives and 10 from local residents. The remaining submissions made comments unrelated to the consultation.

28 We carefully considered the submissions received. Those submissions supporting a reduction in council size broadly focused on the current service functions of the Council and mostly their dissatisfaction with it. In this respect, we were not persuaded that we had received sufficient evidence to support reducing the number of elected members. We concluded that the Council's original submission to retain 66 members was supported by sufficient evidence relating to the governance and decision-making role of the authority, as well as the representative role of councillors. We were therefore satisfied that retaining 66 councillors would ensure the Council could carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

29 We consequently invited proposals for new patterns of wards that would be represented by 66 councillors. As Gateshead Council elects by thirds (meaning it has elections in three out of every four years) there is a presumption in legislation⁵ that the Council have a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards. In each review of local authorities that elect by thirds, we will aim to deliver a pattern of three-member wards. However, in all cases this consideration will not take precedence over our other statutory criteria, and we will not recommend uniform patterns in the number of councillors per ward if, in our view or as is shown in evidence provided to us, it is not compatible with our other statutory criteria.

30 We received 16 submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on warding patterns. These submissions were from local residents, and all supported a reduction in council size, but none provided evidence to explain why a reduction in council size would be appropriate for Gateshead and how the Council would operate under a reduced number. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a 66-councillor council.

⁵ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009 paragraph 2(3)(d) and paragraph 2(5)(c).

Ward boundaries consultation

31 We received 39 submissions in response to our consultation on ward boundaries. These included borough-wide proposals from Gateshead Council ('the Council'). We also received a submission from Gateshead Council Liberal Democrat Group which broadly supported the submission from the Council but suggested some small changes to some boundaries and some ward name changes. The submission from Gateshead Green Party proposed that no changes be made to any ward name, ward boundary or number of councillors across the authority. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for warding arrangements in particular areas of the borough.

32 The borough-wide scheme provided a uniform pattern of three-councillor wards for Gateshead. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

33 Our draft recommendations also take into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

34 We conducted a virtual tour of the area in order to look at the various different proposals on the ground. This tour of Gateshead helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

Draft recommendations

35 Our draft recommendations are for 22 three-councillor wards. We consider that our draft recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

36 The tables and maps on pages 9–24 detail our draft recommendations for each area of Gateshead. They detail how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory⁶ criteria of:

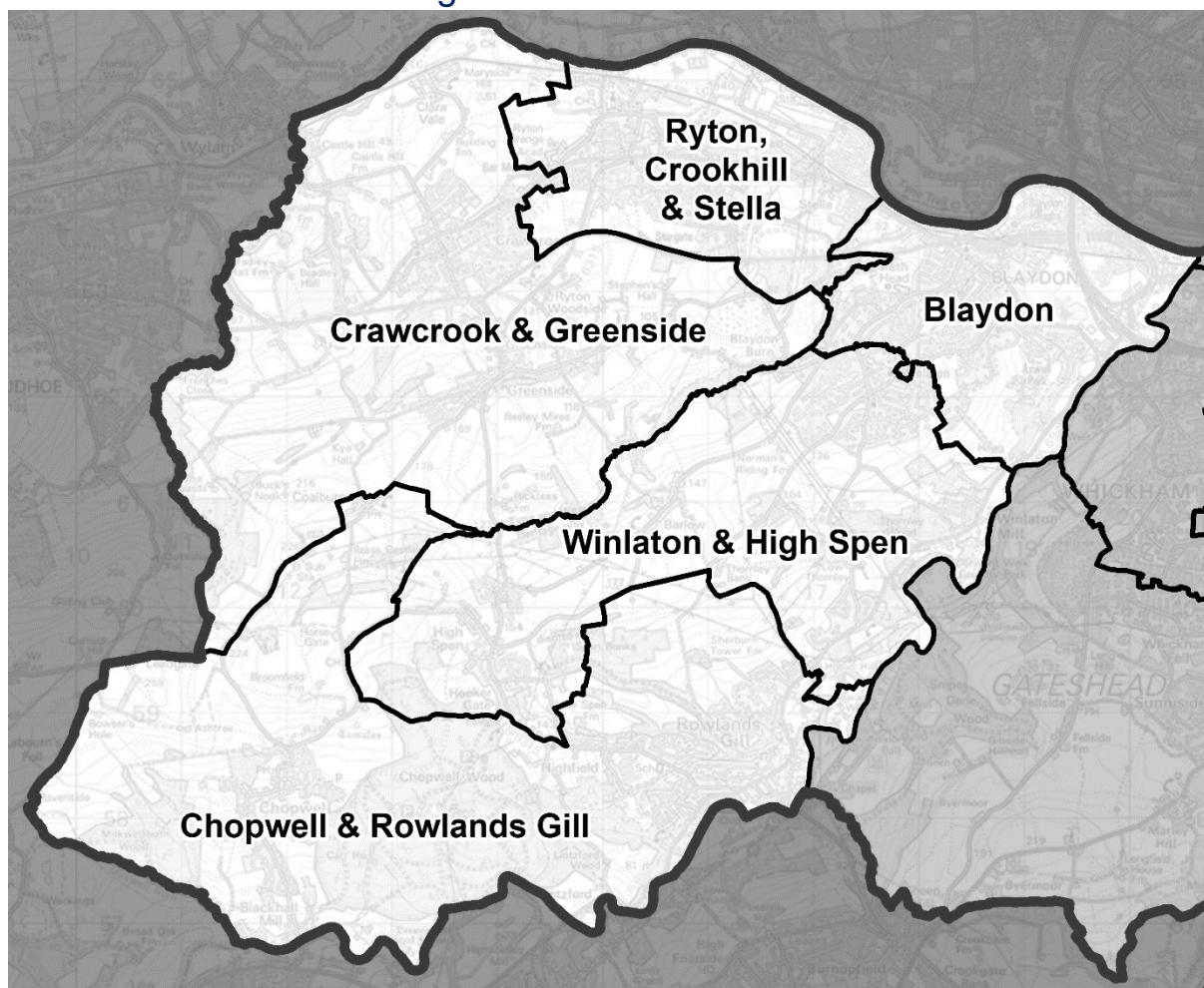
- Equality of representation.
- Reflecting community interests and identities.
- Providing for effective and convenient local government.

⁶ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

37 A summary of our proposed new wards is set out in the table starting on page 33 and on the large map accompanying this report.

38 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations, particularly on the location of the ward boundaries, and the names of our proposed wards.

West of Gateshead Borough



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Blaydon	3	5%
Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	3	9%
Crawcrook & Greenside	3	10%
Ryton, Crookhill & Stella	3	9%
Winlaton & High Spen	3	8%

Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside and Ryton, Crookhill & Stella

39 The borough-wide submission we received for this area proposed some small changes to these three wards to reduce the electoral inequality that currently exists in Ryton, Crookhill & Stella ward which will have 14% more electors per councillor than the average for Gateshead by 2029.

40 The Council proposed to move a number of electors in the Barmoor area from Ryton, Crookhill & Stella ward to Crawcrook & Greenside ward. This proposal would mean that Reasby Gardens and Fairfields would move into Crawcrook & Greenside ward along with the remainder of the Barmoor community. In addition, the Council

proposed that approximately 60 electors on Summerhill, off the B6317 Stella Road, be included in Blaydon ward.

41 The Council also proposed an amendment to the boundary between Chopwell & Rowlands Gill and Crawcrook & Greenside wards by including the small hamlet of Coalburns in Chopwell & Rowlands Gill ward. The Council noted that this would revert the settlement to its former ward with which it shares stronger community ties. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Council's proposal for this area.

42 On visiting the area on our virtual tour, we were persuaded that the Barmoor area could appropriately be included in Crawcrook & Greenside ward. We noted that Crawcrook and Ryton, via Barmoor, form a continuous community along the B6317 road and that the Barmoor area would have community ties in both directions, towards Crawcrook and towards Ryton. We also agree that moving the electors on Summerhill into Blaydon ward better reflects their close proximity to Blaydon rather than the more distant Ryton. Additionally, we have adopted the Council's proposal to include Coalburns in Chopwell & Rowlands Gill ward as we agree with the Council's reasoning that it has stronger ties to Chopwell.

43 We received one other submission that mentioned this area from a local resident. They wanted to ensure that the recent housing in Crawcrook was taken into consideration as well as ensuring that the close ties between Crawcrook, Greenside and Clara Vale continue to be recognised.

44 Our draft recommendations are as suggested by the Council in its submission for the three three-councillor wards of Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Crawcrook & Greenside and Ryton, Crookhill & Stella. These wards will have electoral variances of 9%, 10% and 9% by 2029, respectively.

Blaydon and Winlaton & High Spen

45 In addition to the transfer of approximately 60 electors from Ryton, Crookhill & Stella ward to Blaydon ward, the Council also suggested an amendment to the boundary between Blaydon and Winlaton & High Spen.

46 The existing boundary between the two wards currently follows California and then runs to the rear of properties on California to the north and Derwent View. The Council proposed that Eastlands, East Park Gardens, Parkside Avenue and West Park Gardens be included in Winlaton & High Spen ward. It proposed that Clara Street, Florence Street and May Street, as well as Northlands and Ramsay Street, remain in Blaydon ward. This boundary also means that all of California is included in Winlaton & High Spen. The Council stated that this change will be welcomed by local residents. The Liberal Democrat Group are in agreement with the Council for these wards. A submission from a local resident also stated that California should be

considered part of the Winlton community and should not be divided between Blaydon and Winlton & High Spen as is currently the case.

47 Having visited the area on our virtual tour, we were concerned that the Council's proposal did not follow the most identifiable boundary in this area, and we propose to make a small amendment to its suggested boundary. Specifically, we propose to also include Northlands in Winlton & High Spen ward as opposed to Blaydon. This small amendment means that approximately 260 electors will move from Blaydon ward to Winlton & High Spen ward. We consider that our proposed amendment will ensure a more clearly identifiable ward boundary on the ground.

48 In the absence of any other submissions for this area, we are eager to hear from electors as to whether they feel our draft recommendations reflect their community identity and follow readily identifiable boundaries on the ground.

49 Our draft recommendations are for the two three-councillor wards of Blaydon, with an electoral variance of 5%, and Winlton & High Spen, with a variance of 8%, by 2029.

Whickham



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Dunston Hill & Whickham East	3	8%
Whickham North & Swalwell	3	-3%
Whickham South & Sunnyside	3	-7%

Whickham North & Swalwell and Whickham South & Sunnyside

50 The large village of Whickham is currently divided between the three-councillor wards of Dunston Hill & Whickham East, Whickham North and Whickham South & Sunnyside.

51 The Council proposed to make some amendments to the current boundary between Whickham North ward (which they proposed to rename Whickham North & Swalwell) and Whickham South & Sunnyside. Its proposed boundary would result in the transfer of Elm Court and Regency Drive from Whickham South & Sunnyside ward to Whickham North & Swalwell ward. The Council also proposed to move the boundary that currently runs northeast along Fellside Road and then south along Burnthouse Lane so that it runs south along Fellside Road and onto Oakfield Road. This means that all electors to the north of Oakfield Road are included in Whickham North & Swalwell ward. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the Council's proposal for this area. We received no further comments on wards for this area.

52 Having examined the area as part of our virtual tour, we were persuaded that the amendments suggested by the Council would provide a stronger and more identifiable boundary between the wards of Whickham North & Swalwell and Whickham South & Sunnyside. We have therefore decided to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. The Council proposed two further changes to the boundary between Whickham North & Swalwell and Dunston Hill & Whickham East which we discuss in the section below.

Dunston Hill & Whickham East

53 The Council's proposed Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward has four amendments when compared to the existing ward.

54 The Council proposed to amend the boundary with Whickham North & Swalwell in two places. Firstly, it proposed to run the boundary between the two wards along the entirety of Whaggs Lane, whereas the existing boundary runs to the rear of numbers 1-51 (odd) Whaggs Lane. The Council also proposed to run a revised boundary to the south of Garden House Cemetery and then north along Duck Pool Lane North, as opposed to the existing boundary which runs to the north of the cemetery.

55 The Council proposed to amend the boundary between Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward, and Dunston & Teams and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards. Its proposed boundary between Dunston Hill & Whickham East and Dunston & Teams would see an area bounded by the A1 to the north, Park Terrace to the west, and Glebe Terrace to the south and east move from Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward to Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward. The Council stated that electors on the streets to the north of Glebe Terrace and south of the A1 are part of the Dunston community and should be included in that ward.

56 The Council's final proposed change in this area was to transfer Westminster Drive, Woodburn Gardens and the streets off them from Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward to Lobley Hill & Bensham ward.

57 The Liberal Democrat Group proposed to move the Central Nursery site from Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward to Lobley Hill & Bensham ward as they said the site, which is due to be developed, is part of the Lobley Hill community.

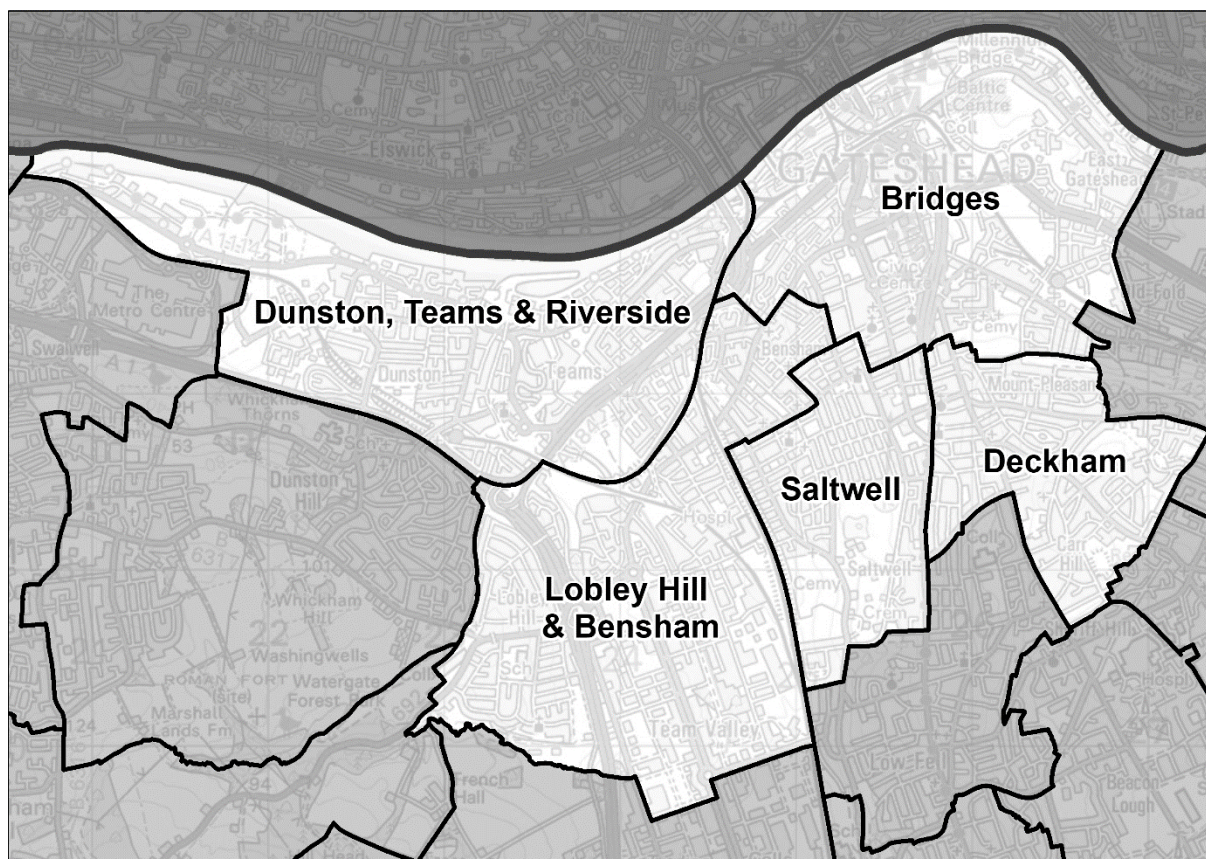
58 We considered the proposals submitted by both the Council and the Liberal Democrats and had concerns with both. The Liberal Democrats stated that the development site at the Central Nursery would be part of the Lobley Hill community. However, we were not convinced that there was sufficient evidence to ascertain this given the development is yet to be started and, geographically, the site appears to be adjacent to Dunston Hill.

59 We were concerned that the proposed changes suggested by the Council did not provide for clear and identifiable ward boundaries and, given the limited evidence received in submissions during the first round of consultation, we were also concerned that we had not received sufficient community identity evidence to justify the changes.

60 The Council's proposal to run the boundary between Dunston Hill & Whickham East and Whickham North & Swalwell wards to the south of Garden House Cemetery and Beechgrove Allotments would divide Duck Pond Lane North between wards, whereas maintaining the existing boundary does not. We propose, therefore, to maintain the existing boundary rather than divide the area. The Council also proposed to move the area bounded by the A1, Park Terrace and Glebe Terrace from Dunston Hill & Whickham East ward to Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward, asserting that the area is part of the Dunston community. These electors are separated from Dunston by the A1 which appears to form a major boundary between them and the Dunston community. We do not consider we have received sufficient evidence to adopt this change but are eager to hear from local residents in this area with evidence as to their community identities and interests. We have also not adopted the proposal to include the Westminster Drive and Woodburn Gardens areas in Lobley Hill & Bensham ward, as proposed by the Council. The existing boundary in this area that follows the Tanfield Railway Path appears to be a stronger and more identifiable boundary than the boundary proposed by the Council. Finally, we propose that the boundary along Whaggs Lane continues to follow the rear of properties numbered 1-51 (odds) as this avoids dividing the street between wards. We again, however, welcome further evidence from interested parties in this area as to where they feel their community ties are.

61 Our draft recommendations are for the three three-councillor wards of Dunston Hill & Whickham East, Whickham North & Swalwell and Whickham South & Sunnyside. All three wards will have good electoral equality with variances 8%, -3% and -7%, respectively, by 2029.

Central Gateshead



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Bridges	3	7%
Deckham	3	-6%
Dunston, Teams & Riverside	3	-10%
Lobley Hill & Bensham	3	0%
Saltwell	3	-9%

Bridges and Dunston, Teams & Riverside

62 In addition to the Council's proposed changes outlined in the earlier section, it also proposed to amend the boundary between Bridges ward and Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward. It proposed to include the Askew Road Development – a housing development not yet started that lies to the north of the A184 Askew Road – in Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward. The Council did not state why this development is more appropriately included in this ward. The Council also proposed to include the Windmill Hills area in Bridges ward rather than Lobley Hill & Bensham ward stating that it better reflects the geography of the area. The Liberal Democrat Group were in agreement with the Council's proposals in this area. We received no other submissions that mentioned these wards.

63 Having carefully considered the Council's suggested ward boundaries, we agree that the inclusion of the Windmill Hills area in Bridges ward makes both geographical sense and also unites an area that is currently divided between Bridges and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards. We are eager to hear further evidence during the current consultation from the Windmill Hills community as to where its community ties lie. In addition to this, we propose that the Askew Road development is included in Bridges ward. Whilst there are currently no electors on this development site, the plans suggest to us that access from the development site will be onto Askew Road and potentially across Askew Road into the Windmill Hills area rather than towards Dunston.

64 We noted that the Council proposed to include this area in its Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward but we concluded that the plans for the development seem to suggest a strong connection to Windmill Hills, and that it should be included in Bridges ward. We accept it is difficult to assess the future community ties of electors not yet in place, so we are very happy to consider further evidence on this matter during the current consultation. We do note that this proposal will result in an electoral variance of -10% in Dunston, Teams & Riverside ward but we consider that the strong boundaries and community ties of the existing ward support this variance. We also propose to make one further amendment to the boundary between Bridges ward and Felling ward, which is discussed later in this report.

Lobley Hill & Bensham and Saltwell

65 The Council's proposals for the Lobley Hill & Bensham ward include the proposal outlined in paragraph 55 as well as the proposals in the Windmill Hills area mentioned above. In addition to this the Council proposed to move 'The Racecourse' estate from Lobley Hill & Bensham ward to Saltwell ward to improve electoral equality in Saltwell ward. The Council noted that whilst the estate is separated from the rest of Saltwell ward by the East Coast Main Line, there is a road link to the Saltwell area beneath the railway line. The Council also proposed to move Ventnor Crescent and Ventnor Gardens from Saltwell ward into Low Fell ward to improve electoral equality.

66 The Liberal Democrat Group did not propose to move Ventnor Crescent and Ventnor Gardens into Low Fell ward stating they have stronger ties to the Saltwell community. The Liberal Democrats also proposed that Lobley Hill & Bensham ward be renamed Lobley Hill & Team Valley to reflect the large part of Team Valley located in the ward. A local resident objected to the inclusion of Bensham in a ward with Lobley Hill and suggested it had stronger ties to Bridges. Another resident suggested that Chowdene, Low Fell and Saltwell wards be combined.

67 Having considered the evidence received, we propose that the existing Saltwell ward is retained. We also propose that, subject to the inclusion of Windmill Hills in Bridges ward, the existing Lobley Hill & Bensham ward is also retained. As

part of our virtual tour of Gateshead we studied these proposals and noted that 'The Racecourse' estate is located to the south of the B601 Lobley Hill Road and that vehicular access to the estate is via Victoria Road which comes off Lobley Hill Road. We also noted that the estate's only connection to Saltwell was via pedestrian access under the railway line along Armstrong Road, rather than a road link as detailed in the Council's submission. We accept that this pedestrian access may be well used but concluded that there was limited evidence offered of community ties between the two areas. We have concluded that the railway line provides a stronger and more identifiable boundary in this area and will therefore provide for effective and convenient local government.

68 We also propose to retain Ventnor Crescent and Ventnor Gardens in Saltwell ward as suggested by the Liberal Democrats. This allows us to retain the existing Saltwell ward with an electoral variance of 9% fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2029. We consider that maintaining the existing ward provides the best balance of our three statutory criteria but are keen to receive more evidence during the current consultation to help inform our final recommendations. We do not propose to adopt the suggested name of Lobley Hill & Team Valley as suggested by the Liberal Democrats. We noted that the Team Valley is an almost wholly unpopulated industrial and commercial area, whereas Bensham contains a significant number of electors and should be recognised in the name of the ward. We therefore propose to retain the existing name of Lobley Hill & Bensham.

69 With regards to the local resident's suggestion that Bensham be included in Bridges ward, this would result in Bridges ward having an electoral variance of 38% by 2029 and Lobley Hill a variance of 31%. These variances are, in our view, too high and do not offer an effective balance of our statutory criteria. The other suggestion to combine Chowdene, Low Fell and Saltwell wards would require a ward represented by nine councillors. The Commission does not believe that a ward with more than three councillors represents effective and convenient local government and would dilute the accountability of councillors to their electorate.

Deckham

70 The Council proposed that Deckham ward remain unchanged, and the Liberal Democrat Group supported this. A local resident suggested that the boundary between Deckham and Low Fell run to the rear of the houses on Valley Drive so that they are all included in Low Fell. The current boundary runs along Valley Drive.

71 Having considered the submissions received we propose that Deckham ward remain unchanged. We considered the small revision to the boundary but concluded that Valley Drive is a stronger and more identifiable boundary.

72 Our draft recommendation for Central Gateshead are for the five three-councillor wards of Bridges, Deckham, Dunston, Teams & Riverside, Lobley Hill &

Bensham and Saltwell. These five wards will have electoral equality of 7%, -6%, -10%, 0% and -9% by 2029, respectively.

East of Gateshead Borough



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Felling	3	-7%
Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay	3	-6%
Wardley & Leam Lane	3	0%
Windy Nook & Whitehills	3	-6%

Felling and Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay

73 Felling ward is forecast to have electoral inequality by 2029 with 13% fewer electors per councillor than the average for Gateshead. To resolve this inequality the Council proposed to move two small areas into this ward. It proposed to move Fleming Gardens, Hall Gardens, Squires Gardens and Sunningdale Close, which all lie to the south of Rectory Road, from Windy Nook & Whitehills ward. It also proposed to move Burnside, Parkin Gardens and Wardle Gardens from Pelaw & Heworth ward to Felling ward. The Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed changes, with the addition of suggesting that Pelaw & Heworth ward be named

Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay to recognise all three communities in the ward. A local resident also suggested this name change.

74 Having considered the proposals submitted here we propose to adopt the Council's suggested wards as they are the most appropriate way to improve the electoral equality for Felling ward. We also adopt the Liberal Democrats' suggested name of Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay to reflect the make-up of the ward.

75 In addition, we propose one further change to Felling ward. The existing ward boundary appears to divide a coherent community around Bishops Park Road between the wards of Bridges and Felling. We therefore propose to transfer the whole area (Angel Avenue, Bede Gardens, Beech Street and Fleetwood Way) from Bridges ward to Felling ward. We are interested to hear local views on this small proposed change which we consider provides a more identifiable boundary and recognises the community ties of electors in this area.

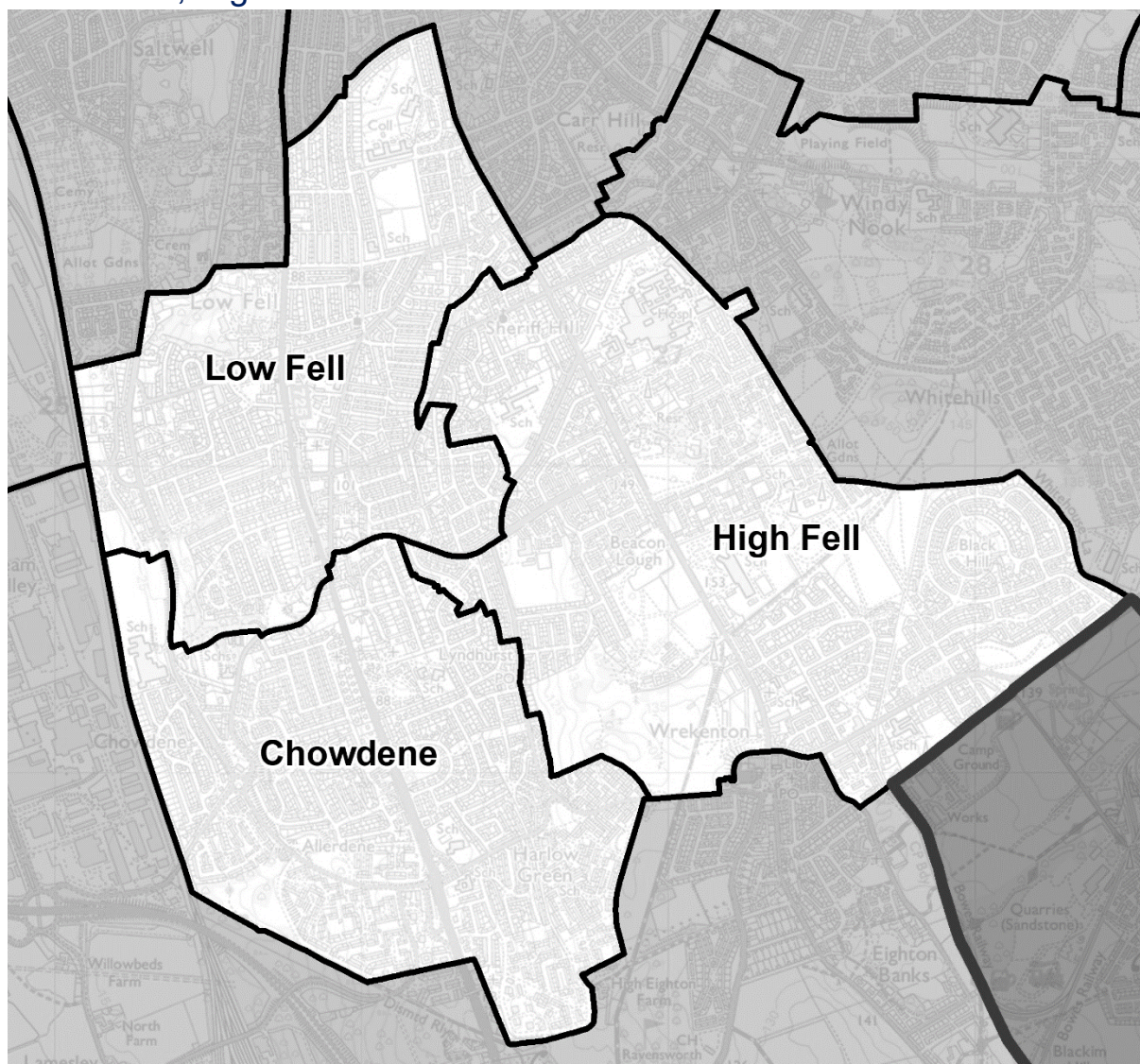
Wardley & Leam Lane and Windy Nook & Whitehills

76 The Council's scheme for these two wards, again supported by the Liberal Democrat Group, proposes moving an area between the two wards. The Council stated that electors on the estate between Wealcroft to the north and Leam Lane to the south, and immediately north of Roman Road Primary School, identify as being part of the Leam Lane community and should be moved from Windy Nook & Whitehills ward to Wardley & Leam Lane ward. We received no other submissions regarding these two wards.

77 Having considered the proposals put forward by the Council and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group, we propose to adopt them as part of our draft recommendations. We would, however, welcome further evidence from all interested parties in this area as to where they consider their community ties lie to help inform our final recommendations.

78 Our proposals for the east of the borough are for the four three-councillor wards of Felling, Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay, Wardley & Leam Lane and Windy Nook & Whitehills. All four wards will have good electoral equality by 2029 at -7%, -6%, 0% and -6%, respectively.

Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Chowdene	3	-4%
High Fell	3	-1%
Low Fell	3	-5%

Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell

79 High Fell ward has a forecast electoral variance of 11% fewer electors per councillor than the average for Gateshead by 2029. To resolve this the Council proposed to move a small number of electors from Low Fell to High Fell. These electors are in properties on Beacon Lough Road, Borrowdale Gardens and Easedale Gardens. The Council also proposed to amend the boundary between Chowdene ward and Low Fell ward to include all of the Chowdene community in Chowdene ward. The current warding arrangement appears to divide the community

by including the streets to the north and east of Chowdene Bank in Low Fell ward. These proposals were supported by the Liberal Democrat Group.

80 We received two submissions from electors in the area to the north and east of Chowdene Bank asking to remain in Low Fell ward but not giving supporting evidence for their request.

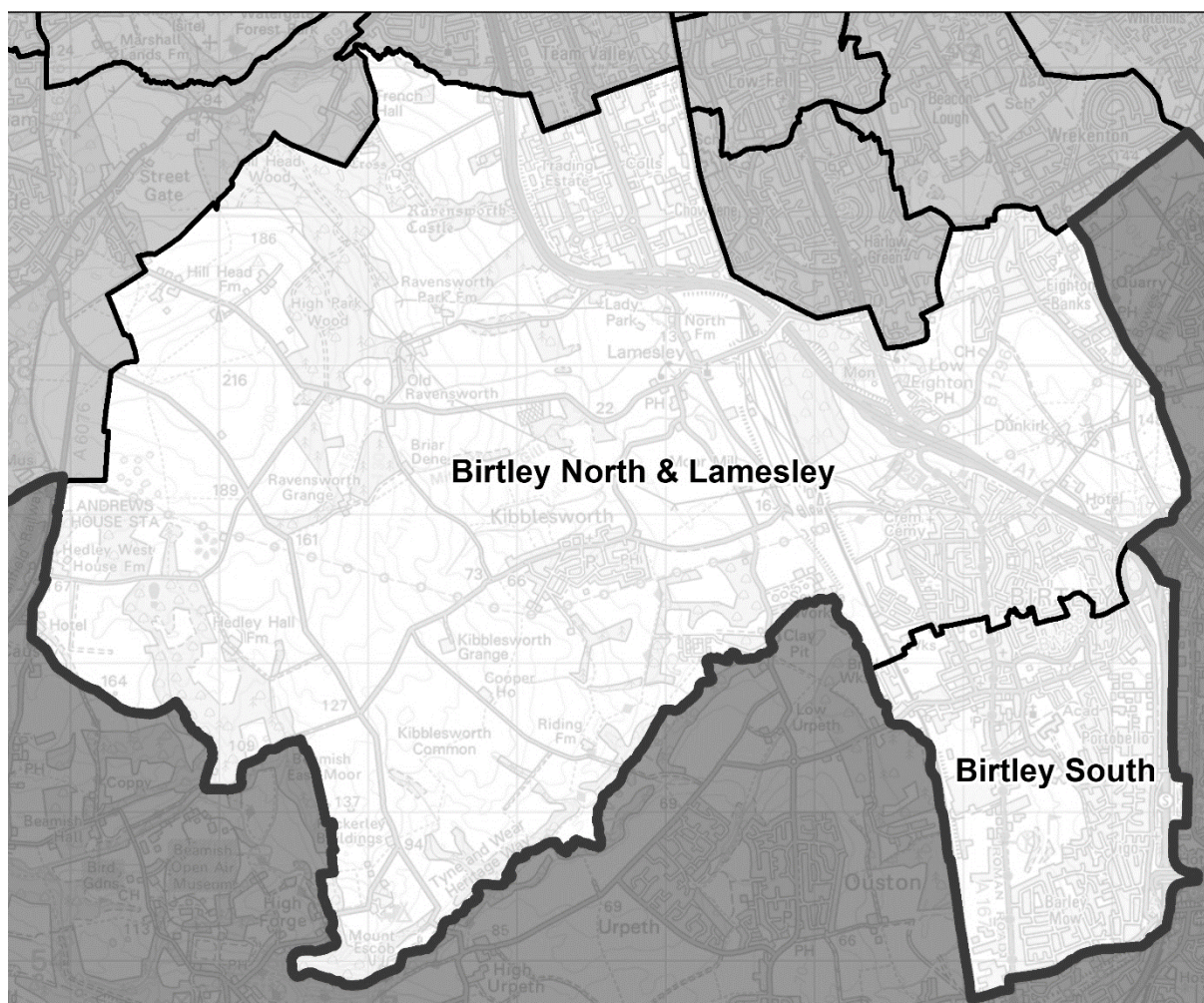
81 Having carefully considered the submissions received, we propose to adopt the Council's suggested wards. High Fell ward requires the transfer of some electors to ensure it has good electoral equality in the future and we are content with the suggestion of the Council as to the electors that should be moved. We do make one small change to retain all of Troutbeck Gardens in Chowdene ward and to make sure that the minimal number of roads are divided between these wards.

82 We are recommending the Council's proposed boundary between Chowdene and Low Fell as we consider that the existing ward boundary does appear to divide the Chowdene community. We did note the two residents who were opposed to this change and are therefore particularly interested to hear further views from this area, ideally with evidence to show community ties, either to the Low Fell or Chowdene area.

83 We do note that the Chowdene community cannot be wholly contained in this ward due to the existence of the Lamesley parish boundary. We could not include the whole of the Chowdene community in this ward without having to propose a parish ward within Lamesley parish with fewer than 100 electors. The Commission's view is that such a parish ward would not be viable and therefore not provide effective and convenient local government for those electors. This small anomaly could be resolved via a Community Governance Review, the responsibility for which lies with the local authority.

84 Our draft recommendations provide for the three three-councillor wards of Chowdene, High Fell and Low Fell with electoral equality of -4%, -1% and -5%, respectively, by 2029.

Birtley and Lamesley



Ward name	Number of councillors	Variance 2029
Birtley North & Lamesley	3	3%
Birtley South	3	6%

Birtley North & Lamesley and Birtley South

85 Lamesley is currently the only parish within Gateshead and is wholly contained within the current Lamesley ward. This ward also contains part of the Eighton Banks, Teams Valley and Wrekenton areas as well as the north of the town of Birtley. The remainder of the town is contained within Birtley ward.

86 The Council proposed some small changes to the boundary between Lamesley and Birtley wards to form a more identifiable boundary and avoid dividing streets between wards. It also suggested renaming Birtley ward to Birtley South. The detail of the Council's proposal would see Fellside, Highridge and Mount Road move from Lamesley ward to Birtley South ward. All of Maple Avenue, Birch Crescent and Bewicke View are united in Lamesley ward rather than being divided between Birtley and Lamesley wards, as at present, and Northside is moved into Birtley South.

87 The Liberal Democrat Group did not support the transfer between wards of either Northside or Maple Avenue and stated that these areas fit more naturally within the current warding arrangements. The Group therefore proposed retaining the existing arrangements here. It also proposed that Lamesley ward be named Birtley North & Lamesley. A local resident proposed that Birtley be divided into three wards that cover just the town itself, and another resident proposed that Birtley be moved to the Durham Council area. It should be noted that we cannot make changes to the external boundaries of local authorities as part of this electoral review.

88 Having considered all of the submissions we agree with the Council that the boundary between the two wards needs to be amended to use more identifiable boundaries. We are not persuaded by the Liberal Democrat Group's proposal to keep the existing boundary because we consider that it divides streets between wards and note that it has also become defaced over time so that it runs through individual properties.

89 Our proposed boundary is similar to that proposed by the Council but with amendments to take into consideration some of the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We agree that Birch Crescent and Maple Avenue are currently divided arbitrarily. We propose to wholly include them in Birtley South ward which we consider reflects their community ties but also their road access which is southwards. We also agree that Bewicke View and Northside are divided in an unfortunate manner, and we propose that they are wholly included in Birtley North & Lamesley ward – we propose to adopt the name suggested by the Liberal Democrats for this ward. We agree with the Council that Fellside, Highridge and Mount Road should be included in Birtley South, but we have made some small amendments to the Council's proposed boundary to ensure that Edward Road, Fellcross, Jacksons Place and Sanders Gardens are not divided between wards. All, except Fellcross, are included in Birtley North & Lamesley ward.

90 Our draft recommendations provide for the two three councillor wards of Birtley North & Lamesley and Birtley South with electoral variances of 3% and 6%, respectively, by 2029.

Conclusions

91 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in Gateshead, referencing the 2023 and 2029 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and wards. A full list of wards, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the wards is provided at Appendix B.

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2023	2029
Number of councillors	66	66
Number of electoral wards	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	2,151	2,286
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendations

Gateshead Council should be made up of 66 councillors serving 22 wards representing 22 three-councillor wards. The details and names are shown in Appendix A and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 shows the proposed wards for Gateshead Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Gateshead Council on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/gateshead

Have your say

92 The Commission has an open mind about its draft recommendations. Every representation we receive will be considered, regardless of who it is from or whether it relates to the whole borough or just a part of it.

93 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you do not think our recommendations are right for Gateshead, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of wards.

94 Our website is the best way to keep up to date with progress on the review and to have your say www.lgbce.org.uk

95 Each review has its own page with details of the timetable for the review, information about its different stages and interactive mapping.

96 Submissions can also be made by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk or by writing to:

Review Officer (Gateshead)
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
PO Box 133
Blyth
NE24 9FE

97 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of wards for Gateshead which delivers:

- Electoral equality: each local councillor represents a similar number of electors.
- Community identity: reflects the identity and interests of local communities.
- Effective and convenient local government: helping your council discharge its responsibilities effectively.

98 A good pattern of wards should:

- Provide good electoral equality, with each councillor representing, as closely as possible, the same number of electors.
- Reflect community interests and identities and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
- Help the council deliver effective and convenient local government.

99 Electoral equality:

- Does your proposal mean that councillors would represent roughly the same number of electors as elsewhere in Gateshead?

100 Community identity:

- Community groups: is there a parish council, residents' association or other group that represents the area?
- Interests: what issues bind the community together or separate it from other parts of your area?
- Identifiable boundaries: are there natural or constructed features which make strong boundaries for your proposals?

101 Effective local government:

- Are any of the proposed wards too large or small to be represented effectively?
- Are the proposed names of the wards appropriate?
- Are there good links across your proposed wards? Is there any form of public transport?

102 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations will be placed on deposit at our offices and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

103 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers. This includes your name, postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

104 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

105 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the all-out elections for Gateshead in 2026.

Equalities

106 The Commission has looked at how it carries out reviews under the guidelines set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It has made best endeavours to ensure that people with protected characteristics can participate in the review process and is sufficiently satisfied that no adverse equality impacts will arise as a result of the outcome of the review.

Appendices

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Gateshead

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Birtley North & Lamesley	3	6,746	2,249	5%	7,061	2,354	3%
2	Birtley South	3	6,641	2,214	3%	7,261	2,420	6%
3	Blaydon	3	6,898	2,299	7%	7,216	2,405	5%
4	Bridges	3	5,668	1,889	-12%	7,328	2,443	7%
5	Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	3	6,722	2,241	4%	7,446	2,482	9%
6	Chowdene	3	6,427	2,142	0%	6,608	2,203	-4%
7	Crawcrook & Greenside	3	7,420	2,473	15%	7,544	2,515	10%
8	Deckham	3	6,256	2,085	-3%	6,429	2,143	-6%
9	Dunston Hill & Whickham East	3	6,553	2,184	2%	7,423	2,474	8%
10	Dunston, Teams & Riverside	3	5,984	1,995	-7%	6,207	2,069	-10%
11	Felling	3	5,935	1,978	-8%	6,391	2,130	-7%
12	High Fell	3	6,579	2,193	2%	6,770	2,257	-1%
13	Lobley Hill & Bensham	3	6,580	2,193	2%	6,868	2,289	0%
14	Low Fell	3	6,308	2,103	-2%	6,505	2,168	-5%

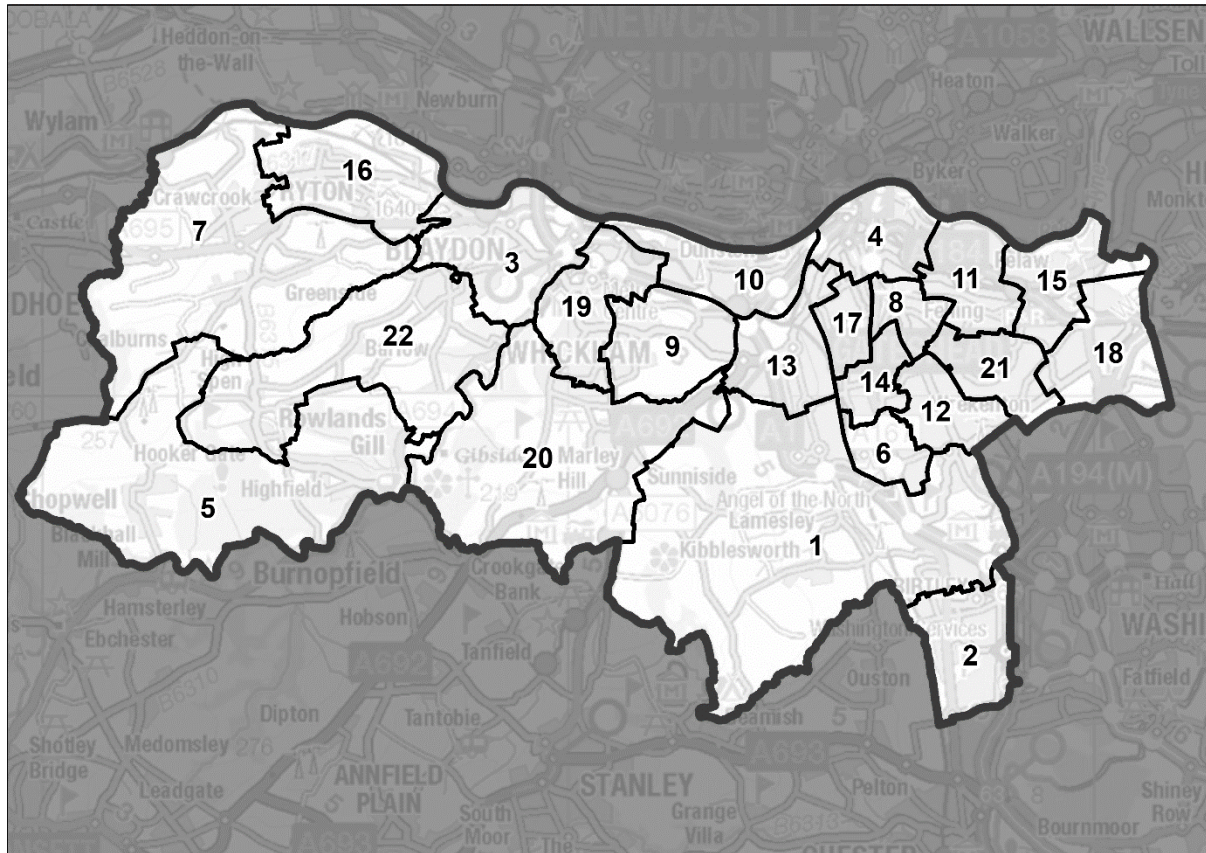
	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2023)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2029)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
15	Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay	3	6,293	2,098	-2%	6,420	2,140	-6%
16	Ryton, Crookhill & Stella	3	6,486	2,162	1%	7,444	2,481	9%
17	Saltwell	3	6,008	2,003	-7%	6,264	2,088	-9%
18	Wardley & Leam Lane	3	6,391	2,130	-1%	6,826	2,275	0%
19	Whickham North & Swalwell	3	6,438	2,146	0%	6,624	2,208	-3%
20	Whickham South & Sunnyside	3	6,219	2,073	-4%	6,349	2,116	-7%
21	Windy Nook & Whitehills	3	6,296	2,099	-2%	6,472	2,157	-6%
22	Winlaton & High Spen	3	7,060	2,353	9%	7,406	2,469	8%
	Totals	66	141,945	-	-	150,899	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,151	-	-	2,286	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gateshead Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower-than-average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Outline map



Number	Ward name	Number	Ward name
1	Birtley North & Lamesley	12	High Fell
2	Birtley South	13	Lobley Hill & Bensham
3	Blaydon	14	Low Fell
4	Bridges	15	Pelaw, Heworth & Bill Quay
5	Chopwell & Rowlands Gill	16	Ryton, Crookhill & Stella
6	Chowdene	17	Saltwell
7	Crawcrook & Greenside	18	Wardley & Leam Lane
8	Deckham	19	Whickham North & Swalwell
9	Dunston Hill & Whickham East	20	Whickham South & Sunnyside
10	Dunston, Teams & Riverside	21	Windy Nook & Whitehills
11	Felling	22	Winlaton & High Spen

A more detailed version of this map can be seen on the large map accompanying this report, or on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/gateshead

Appendix C

Submissions received

*All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:
www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/gateshead*

Local Authority

- Gateshead Council

Political Groups

- Gateshead Council Liberal Democrat Group
- Gateshead Green Party

Local Residents

- 36 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral inequality	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. We only take account of electors registered specifically for local elections during our reviews.
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents

Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) was set up by Parliament, independent of Government and political parties. It is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government.

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