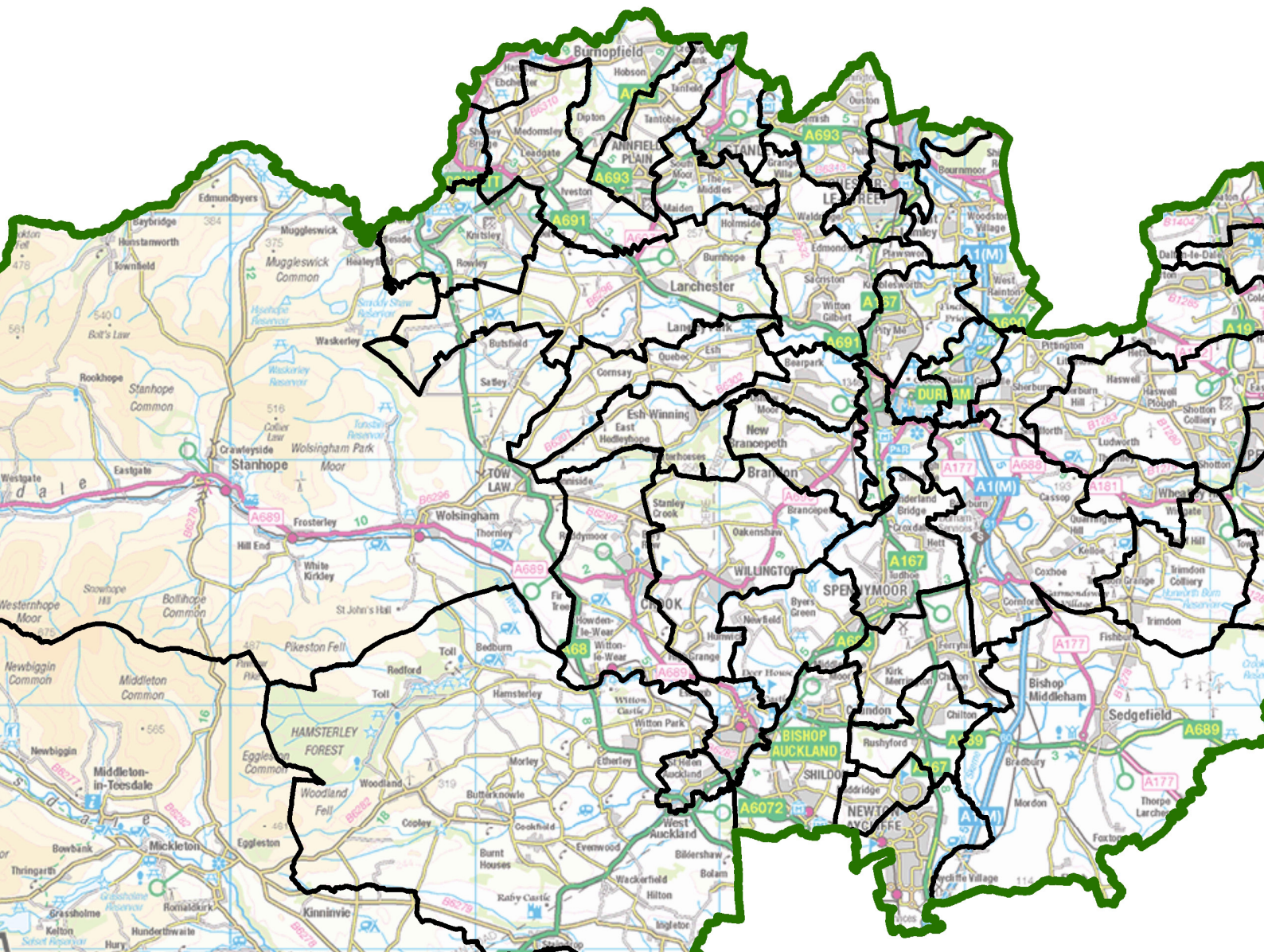


The  
Local Government  
Boundary Commission  
for England



# New electoral arrangements for Durham County Council Draft Recommendations

May 2023

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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)
- Susan Johnson OBE
- Amanda Nobbs OBE
- Steve Robinson
- Liz Treacy
- Jolyon Jackson CBE (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.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

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

## Why County Durham?

7 We are conducting a review of Durham County Council ('the Council') 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 divisions in County Durham 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 county.

## Our proposals for County Durham

9 County Durham should be represented by 98 councillors, 28 fewer than there are now.

10 County Durham should have 48 divisions, 15 fewer than there are now.

11 The boundaries of nearly all divisions should change; one 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 division you vote in, which other communities are in that division, and, in some cases, which parish council ward you vote in. Your division name may also change.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of the county or result in changes to postcodes. They do not take into account parliamentary constituency boundaries. The recommendations will not affect 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.

## Have your say

14 We will consult on the draft recommendations for a 10-week period, from 2 May 2023 to 10 July 2023. We encourage everyone to use this opportunity to comment on these proposed divisions 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 divisions to first read this report and look at the accompanying map before responding to us.

16 You have until 10 July 2023 to have your say on the draft recommendations. See page 51 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 County Durham. We then held a period of consultation with the public on division patterns for the county. The submissions received during consultation have informed our draft recommendations.

18 The review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 November 2022	Number of councillors decided
22 November 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new divisions
30 January 2023	End of consultation; we began analysing submissions and forming draft recommendations
2 May 2023	Publication of draft recommendations; start of second consultation
10 July 2023	End of consultation; we begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
28 November 2023	Publication of final recommendations





## Analysis and draft recommendations

19 Legislation<sup>2</sup> states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors<sup>3</sup> 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 divisions.

20 In reality, we are unlikely to be able to create divisions 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 local authority by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors, as shown in the table below.

	2022	2028
Electorate of County Durham	391,146	406,665
Number of councillors	98	98
Average number of electors per councillor	3,991	4,150

22 When the number of electors per councillor in a division is within 10% of the average for the authority, we refer to the division as having 'good electoral equality'. All our proposed divisions for County Durham are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2028.

## 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](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

## Electorate figures

24 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2028, a period five years from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2023. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and predicted an increase in the electorate of around 4%.

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.

<sup>2</sup> Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

## Number of councillors

26 Durham County Council currently has 126 councillors. We have looked at evidence provided by the Council and have concluded that decreasing the number of councillors by 28 to 98 will ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

27 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of divisions that would be represented by 98 councillors – for example, 98 one-councillor divisions, 49 two-councillor divisions, or a mix of one-, two- and three-councillor divisions.

28 We received 15 submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on division patterns, either in support of, or opposition to, our decision that the Council be represented by 98 councillors. However, we were not persuaded by the arguments put forward that the retention of 126 councillors or any alternative number to 98 would result in the authority being able to carry out its statutory functions in a more effective manner. Based on the evidence received, we remain satisfied that a council size of 98 will ensure the Council can function effectively both now and in the future.

## Division boundaries consultation

29 We received 71 submissions in response to our consultation on division boundaries. These included a county-wide proposal from the Joint Administration, which is composed of the four political groups that currently govern the authority (the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, the Durham Group and the Independent Group). Within this submission, alternative proposals were made by the political groups where they differed on particular boundary proposals. Another county-wide submission came from the Labour Group. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for division arrangements in particular areas of the county.

30 The proposals made by the Joint Administration provided for a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-councillor divisions for 98 councillors. The Labour Group proposed a mixed pattern of divisions based on 96 councillors. We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the proposed patterns of divisions resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used clearly identifiable boundaries.

31 A local resident stated we could create a simpler arrangement for County Durham by dividing the county into roughly equal-sized areas. They suggested the authority could be divided on a north, east, west, south and central basis. We decided not to adopt this proposal as it was not clear how the separate areas would be arranged into single-, two- or three-councillor divisions.

32 A local resident proposed that we merge several of the existing divisions. This scheme did not provide any community-based evidence in support of these proposals. Given we received two county-wide schemes that proposed divisions with strong community evidence and good electoral equality, we were not persuaded to adopt this proposal.

33 Our draft recommendations are based on a combination of both county-wide schemes we received, which each contained various proposals that reflected our statutory criteria. Our 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 the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries.

34 We visited the area to look at the various proposals on the ground. This tour of County Durham helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

## Draft recommendations

35 Our draft recommendations are for nine single-councillor divisions, 28 two-councillor divisions and 11 three-councillor divisions. 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 8–45 detail our draft recommendations for each area of County Durham. They detail how the proposed division arrangements reflect the three statutory<sup>4</sup> criteria:

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

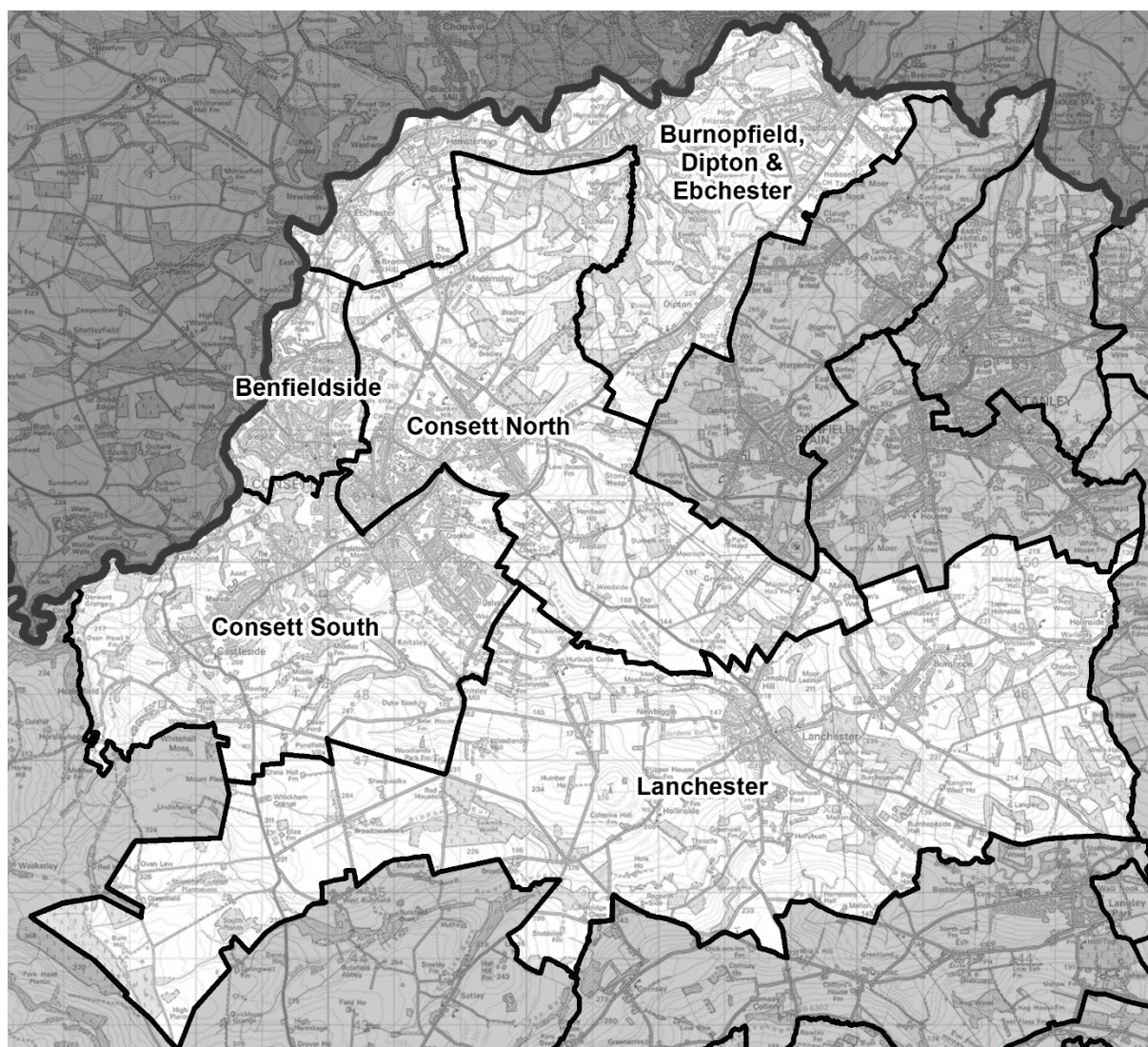
37 A summary of our proposed new divisions is set out in the table starting on page 57 and the large map accompanying this report.

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

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<sup>4</sup> Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

## Consett



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Benfieldside	2	0%
Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester	2	5%
Consett North	2	9%
Consett South	3	-1%
Lanchester	1	10%

### *Benfieldside*

39 Both county-wide schemes proposed a two-councillor Benfieldside division that expanded the current division. They both incorporated the southern Blackhill area, but the Labour Group also included the area around Laburnum Avenue and Medomsley Edge.

40 We have incorporated the southern Blackhill area and the area around Laburnum Avenue into our Benfieldside division as it will avoid the split of the broader Blackhill area across divisions. However, we were not persuaded to include Medomsley Edge in Benfieldside division, as we consider that it will fit more appropriately in our Consett North division alongside the village of Medomsley.

#### *Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester*

41 The county-wide schemes proposed significantly different divisions for the communities north of Consett town and west of Stanley parish. The Joint Administration proposed a single-councillor Burnopfield division, a two-councillor Leadgate & Medomsley division and a two-councillor Dipton & Tanfield division. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed to link Leadgate and Medomsley villages with the northern part of Consett town in a two-councillor Consett North division and proposed a two-councillor Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester division.

42 We have decided to largely adopt the Labour Group's Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester division as part of our draft recommendations. We were not persuaded by the Joint Administration's proposal to link the unparished area of Dipton with parts of Stanley parish, such as Tanfield. This is because we consider Dipton to share stronger links with Burnopfield, with the two communities linked by the A692. However, our Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester division does diverge from the one proposed by the Labour Group, by including The Dene. This is to ensure good electoral equality for our Consett North division.

43 A local resident requested Hamsterley Mill remain in a division with Medomsley and Leadgate. We decided not to adopt this proposal as we noted on our visit to the area that Ebchester, Hamsterley and Hamsterley Mill are linked together, all situated along the A694 and the Derwent River, with Leadgate and Medomsley somewhat separated from these communities by significant elevation changes. We nonetheless welcome comments as to whether a three-councillor division, which could include Leadgate and Medomsley villages, would be more appropriate for this area.

44 A local resident requested that Dipton remain wholly within one division. Our Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester division keeps the entirety of Dipton and the adjacent Flint Hill community within a single division.

45 One local resident expressed opposition to any proposal that removed Ebchester and the Consett area from County Durham, while another requested that Hamsterley Mill be linked with Rowlands Gill, the latter village situated in the borough of Gateshead. However, changing the external boundaries between Durham County Council and neighbouring local authorities falls outside the scope of the current electoral review, so no changes of this nature are being made.

### *Consett North*

46 We received significantly different proposals for the northern part of Consett. The Joint Administration proposed a single-councillor Consett North division formed predominantly of Consett town centre. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed a larger two-councillor Consett East division that combined the villages of Medomsley, Leadgate and Greencroft parish with Consett town centre.

47 Our Consett North division is largely based upon the Consett East division proposed by the Labour Group. We decided not to adopt the division suggested by the Joint Administration as it included the area around Laburnum Avenue, which we propose to place in Benfieldside division. We were also concerned that their Consett North division would split the area around Villa Real Road across divisions. While we recognise that the villages of Medomsley and Leadgate are arguably distinct from Consett town, we note the evidence provided by the Labour Group that they share good transport and community links with the town.

48 Our Consett North division differs from the one proposed by the Labour Group by including Medomsley Edge. This is because we consider Medomsley Edge should be placed in the same division as the neighbouring village of Medomsley. We have also followed the existing division boundary along the entirety of Front Street and Genesis Way, as we consider these roads to represent clear and identifiable boundaries. This division is forecast to have an electoral variance of 9% by 2028. Consequently, we cannot adopt the Labour Group's proposal to place The Dene in this division, as it would result in the division having a forecast electoral variance of 13%, which we consider too high to accept.

49 While this division most closely resembles the Labour Group's Consett East division, we consider that the name Consett North is a more accurate description and have adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

### *Consett South and Lanchester*

50 We also received differing proposals for the south of Consett and Lanchester. The Conservative Group, as part of the Joint Administration submission, proposed a two-councillor Lanchester division comprised of Lanchester, Burnhope, Greencroft and Healeyfield parishes, and the unparished areas of Moorside and The Grove. Conversely, the Derwentside Independents, Liberal Democrats and Greens proposed two single-councillor divisions named Consett South and Lanchester, which largely followed the boundaries of the Conservatives' two-councillor Lanchester division but split along the Lanchester and Healeyfield parish boundary. This proposal also differed from the Conservative proposal by placing Greencroft parish in a Leadgate & Medomsley division. All the Joint Administration's political groups agreed to propose a two-councillor Delves Lane division that expanded the current division by including the new residential development west of Genesis Way.

51 The Labour Group proposed a three-councillor Consett West division that merged the existing Delves Lane and Consett South divisions but also included Healeyfield and Muggleswick parishes. They also proposed a single-councillor Lanchester & Burnhope division, composed of Lanchester and Burnhope parishes.

52 We carefully considered the various proposals, given the distinct nature of each division pattern. We were not persuaded to adopt the Conservatives' proposal as we determined that the links between Lanchester and Burnhope parishes and Healeyfield were not particularly strong. We determined from our visit to the area that Healeyfield parish shares closer links with communities nearer to Consett, such as Moorside and The Grove, and these communities should thus be placed in the same division. This was supported by a local resident who stated that these areas have an affinity with Consett town. The Labour Group, and the Derwentside Independents, Liberal Democrats and Greens, all proposed linking Healeyfield, Moorside and The Grove communities in the same division.

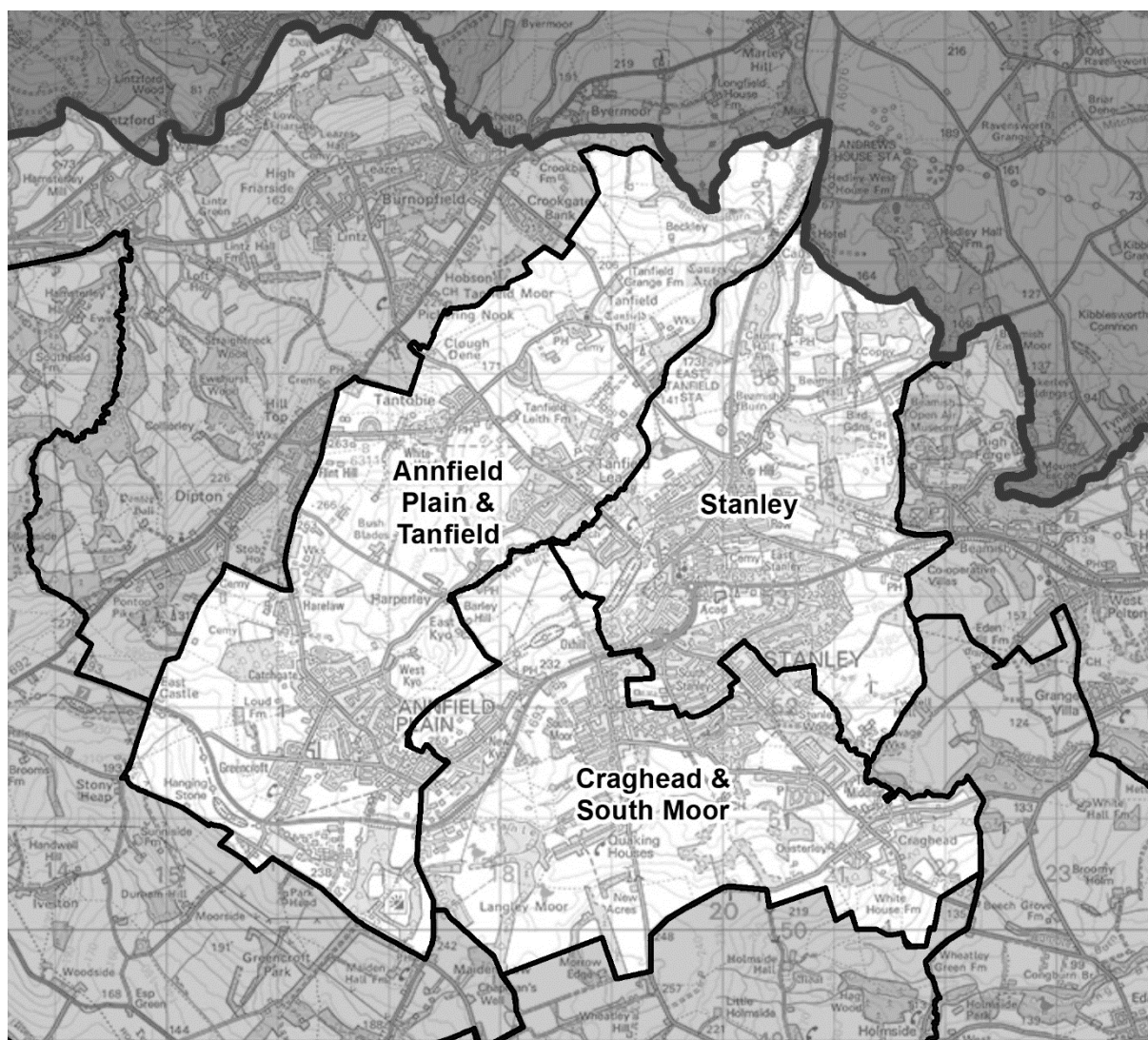
53 Our draft recommendations here most closely resemble the Consett West and Lanchester & Burnhope divisions proposed by the Labour Group. We consider that these divisions will best reflect our statutory criteria, with their Consett West division linking similar communities together and having excellent electoral equality. However, we welcome comments as to whether this division should be sub-divided, in the manner proposed by the Derwentside Independents, Liberal Democrats and Greens, who suggested we adopt a two-councillor Delves Lane division and a single-councillor Consett South division that linked Healeyfield parish, Moorside and The Grove.

54 We are retaining the division name of Lanchester, but we welcome comments as to whether the inclusion of Burnhope in the name would be appropriate.

55 Councillor Jackson of Lanchester Parish Council expressed concern that Lanchester parish would become marginalised by these proposed boundary changes, stating it would become overshadowed by the City of Durham. However, our electoral review is solely concerned with achieving the best balance of our statutory criteria when making our recommendations. We consider our Lanchester division to be reflective of communities, based on the evidence received as well as following clear and identifiable boundaries. It will also have good electoral equality by 2028. We are confident our proposed Lanchester division is a good reflection of the statutory criteria.



## Stanley



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Annfield Plain & Tanfield	2	-2%
Craghead & South Moor	2	-2%
Stanley	2	1%

### *Annfield Plain & Tanfield*

56 We have decided as part of our draft recommendations to adopt the two-councillor Annfield Plain & Tanfield division proposed by the Labour Group, which links the villages of Tanfield, Tantobie and Tanfield Lea with most of the existing Annfield Plain division. We determined that this arrangement would better reflect our statutory criteria than the Joint Administration proposal, which linked Tanfield to Dipton. As outlined in the Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester section, we were not persuaded by the Joint Administration's proposal to link the unparished area of Dipton with parts of Stanley parish. By placing Tanfield, Tantobie and Tanfield Lea in

a division with Annfield Plain, we can recommend a division that is formed of communities all within Stanley parish. This, in our view, will contribute to effective and convenient local government and better reflect community identities.

### *Craghead & South Moor*

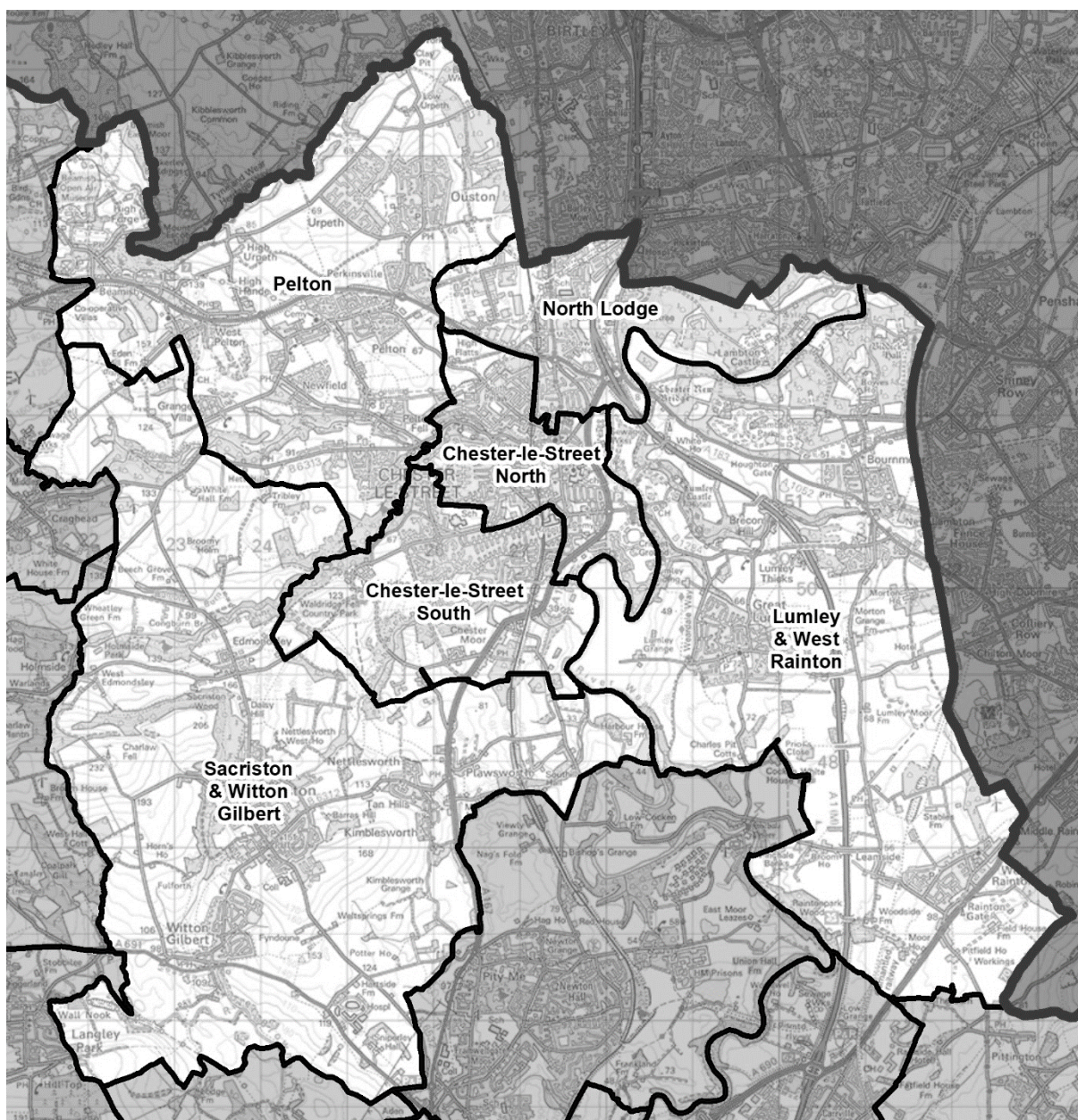
57 We have also decided to adopt the Labour Group's Craghead & South Moor division as part of our draft recommendations. We were persuaded by the strong community-based evidence provided that this division will effectively reflect the community identities and interests of the several, interlinked communities that are situated immediately south of Stanley town centre. We also note the evidence provided by the Labour Group that this division will possess clearer and more identifiable boundaries than the present Craghead & South Moor division, by following the perimeter of entire residential estates.

### *Stanley*

58 The county-wide schemes both proposed a two-councillor Stanley division but with different boundaries. The Joint Administration linked the current Stanley division with Craghead and The Middles, while the Labour Group placed a large majority of the existing Stanley division with the Shield Row and Kip Hill areas.

59 We are recommending the Labour Group's Stanley division as part of our draft recommendations. We found their argument that the town centre should be entirely in a single division that carries the Stanley name (as opposed to being in Tanfield division as at present) to be persuasive. We also consider that their proposed division will better reflect local community identities and interests than the proposal made by the Joint Administration. For example, we consider the Shield Row and Kip Hill areas to share close links with Stanley town centre and we were concerned that the Joint Administration's proposal to link these two areas with Dipton in their Dipton & Tanfield division would not reflect community interests.

## Chester-le-Street



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Chester-le-Street North	2	-2%
Chester-le-Street South	2	-9%
Lumley & West Rainton	2	-5%
North Lodge	1	-5%
Pelton	3	-3%
Sacriston & Witton Gilbert	2	0%

### *Chester-le-Street North and North Lodge*

60 In addition to the county-wide proposals, we also received two submissions that related to North Lodge parish from North Lodge Parish Council and Councillor Martin. These two submissions requested that we retain the current North Lodge division, providing evidence that highlighted the distinct nature of the North Lodge area from surrounding communities. North Lodge Parish Council explicitly requested that they should not be linked with Ouston and Pelton parishes to the west, nor Bournmoor parish to the east.

61 The existing North Lodge division is forecast to have an electoral variance of -21% by 2028 under a 98-councillor authority. We consider this too high for us to accept. We therefore cannot retain the current North Lodge division as part of the draft recommendations if we are to ensure a good level of electoral equality.

62 Therefore, to resolve this level of electoral inequality, the county-wide schemes each suggested differing boundary proposals which all expanded the North Lodge division southwards into the town of Chester-le-Street. Within the Joint Administration submission, the Conservative Group proposed a much larger two-councillor Chester-le-Street & North Lodge division that linked North Lodge parish with a substantial part of Chester-le-Street. Conversely, the Liberal Democrats and Greens proposed a single-councillor North Lodge division that made relatively minor amendments to the existing division by incorporating electors on both sides of Newcastle Road and its adjacent streets, in addition to Picktree Lane and its adjoining roads. They also proposed a two-councillor Chester-le-Street division that contained a majority of the Chester-le-Street town centre.

63 The Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Lumley & North Lodge division comprised of Bournmoor, Great Lumley, Little Lumley and North Lodge parishes. We decided not to adopt this division as we were concerned that it linked North Lodge parish with Bournmoor parish, which was opposed by North Lodge Parish Council with evidence. On this basis, we determined that this division would not effectively reflect community identities.

64 We have decided to broadly adopt the proposals made by the Liberal Democrats and Greens as part of our draft recommendations. By making minimal changes to the current North Lodge division, we determined that their proposed divisions would best reflect the concerns raised by North Lodge Parish Council and Councillor Martin. We also consider their Chester-le-Street division provides a good reflection of our statutory criteria because it uses the most clear and identifiable boundary for a division that is predominantly focused on the commercial centre of Chester-le-Street.

65 However, our proposed divisions do differ from the ones proposed by the Liberal Democrats and Greens by not including Picktree Lane and its adjoining roads

in North Lodge division. We consider that this area should be in Chester-le-Street North division, to ensure that Chester-le-Street town centre is entirely within one division. We have also decided to name this division Chester-le-Street North, as opposed to the suggested name of Chester-le-Street, given that it is adjacent to our proposed Chester-le-Street South division.

### *Chester-le-Street South*

66 Our proposed Chester-le-Street South division is broadly based upon the existing division. We consider the current division is an effective reflection of our statutory criteria and we were not persuaded by the proposals made by the Joint Administration to significantly alter the division by incorporating Edmondsley and Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parishes. We consider these two parishes to share closer links with Sacriston and Witton Gilbert parishes and we consider their community identities and interests will be better served in our proposed Sacriston & Witton Gilbert division.

67 We have nonetheless broadly adopted the amendment proposed by the Liberal Democrats and Greens to incorporate electors north of Waldrige Road and part of Whitehill Way and its adjacent roads in this division. This will ensure that our Chester-le-Street South division will have good electoral equality, with a forecast electoral variance of -9% by 2028.

### *Lumley & West Rainton*

68 As outlined in the Chester-le-Street North and North Lodge section, we were not persuaded to adopt the Labour Group's proposal to combine Lumley and Bournmoor parishes in a division with North Lodge. We have therefore decided to recommend the Lumley & West Rainton division proposed by the Joint Administration. This proposal was supported by Councillor Heaviside, the current Lumley division councillor.

69 West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council expressed a strong preference for the parish to remain in a division with the communities that form the current Sherburn division, providing evidence of its community links with Sherburn, Sherburn Hill, Shadforth, Littleton, High Pittington and Low Pittington. The Council also opposed any proposal that would link the parish with Framwellgate and Newton Hall, as suggested by the Labour Group. It suggested that if West Rainton & Leamside parish had to be linked to any neighbouring communities, other than any of those in the existing Sherburn division, then the only practical alternative would be to link it with Belmont parish.

70 While we have avoided placing the parish in a division with Framwellgate and Newton Hall, we cannot keep the parish in the same division as Sherburn, Sherburn Hill, Shadforth, Littleton, High Pittington and Low Pittington and ensure good electoral equality across this area. For example, by excluding West Rainton &

Leamside parish from our Lumley & West Rainton division would result in a forecast electoral variance of -28% by 2028. Including West Rainton & Leamside parish in our Belmont division would also produce an anticipated electoral variance of 18% for that division. We are not persuaded that sufficient evidence has been provided to justify such variances. We nonetheless agree with the Joint Administration that adding West Rainton to the division name recognises the parish's inclusion within this division.

### *Pelton*

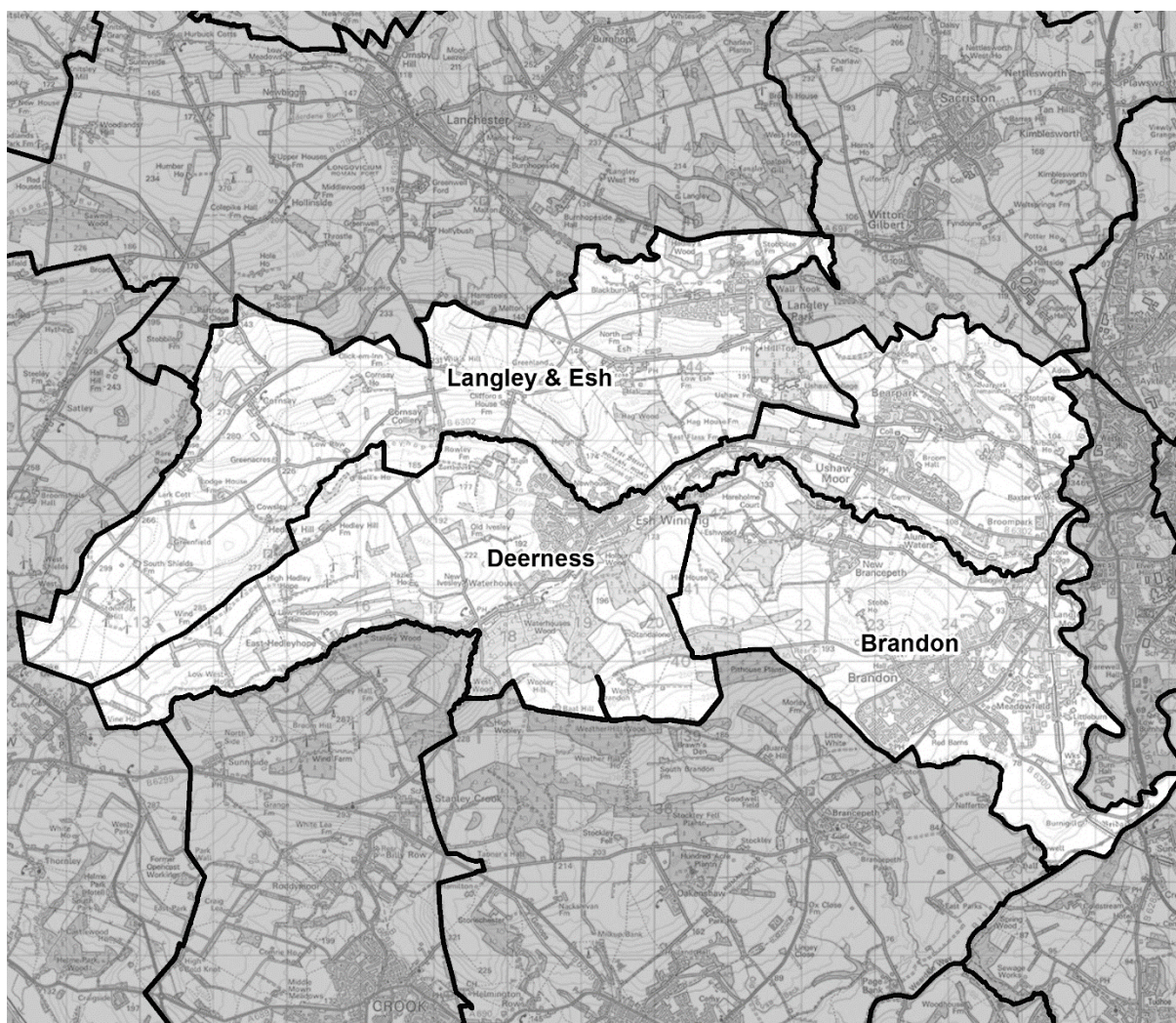
71 Our proposed Pelton division is based upon the proposals made by the Joint Administration and the Labour Group, who both expanded the existing Pelton division to incorporate the Pelton Fell area. We were persuaded this area has strong links with the Pelton community and should therefore be placed in a Pelton division. This proposed division was also supported by Ouston Parish Council, Pelton Parish Council and Urpeth Parish Council.

### *Sacrison & Witton Gilbert*

72 We received differing division proposals for the Sacrison area. The Joint Administration proposed a single-councillor Sacrison division composed of Sacrison parish and part of Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parish. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed a larger two-councillor Sacrison & Witton Gilbert division that included Edmondsley, Kimblesworth & Plawsworth, Sacrison and Witton Gilbert parishes.

73 We have decided to adopt the Labour Group's Sacrison & Witton Gilbert division as part of our draft recommendations. We were persuaded by the evidence received from the Labour Group that this division would be most reflective of community identities in the area. We also found on our visit to the area that Edmondsley and Kimblesworth & Plawsworth parishes share closer road links to Sacrison parish than to Chester-le-Street and should therefore be placed in the same division.

## Brandon and Esh



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Brandon	2	6%
Deerness	2	9%
Langley & Esh	1	0%

### *Brandon*

74 The Joint Administration proposed to retain the existing Brandon division, which is forecast to have a good level of electoral equality by 2028 under a 98-councillor scheme. The Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Brandon & Meadowfield division that was very similar to the current Brandon division but included Brancepeth and New Brancepeth. The Brandon, Meadowfield & Langley Moor Labour Party Branch requested that Brandon, Meadowfield and Langley Moor, along with Browney, remain in a single division.

75 Our proposed Brandon division includes Brandon, Meadowfield, Langley Moor, Browney and New Brancepeth. Including New Brancepeth in this division will ensure good electoral equality for our proposed Deerness and adjoining divisions. However, we have decided not to include Brancepeth, keeping it in a Willington & Hunwick division. This will also allow our proposed Willington & Hunwick division to have good electoral equality by 2028.

#### *Deerness and Langley & Esh*

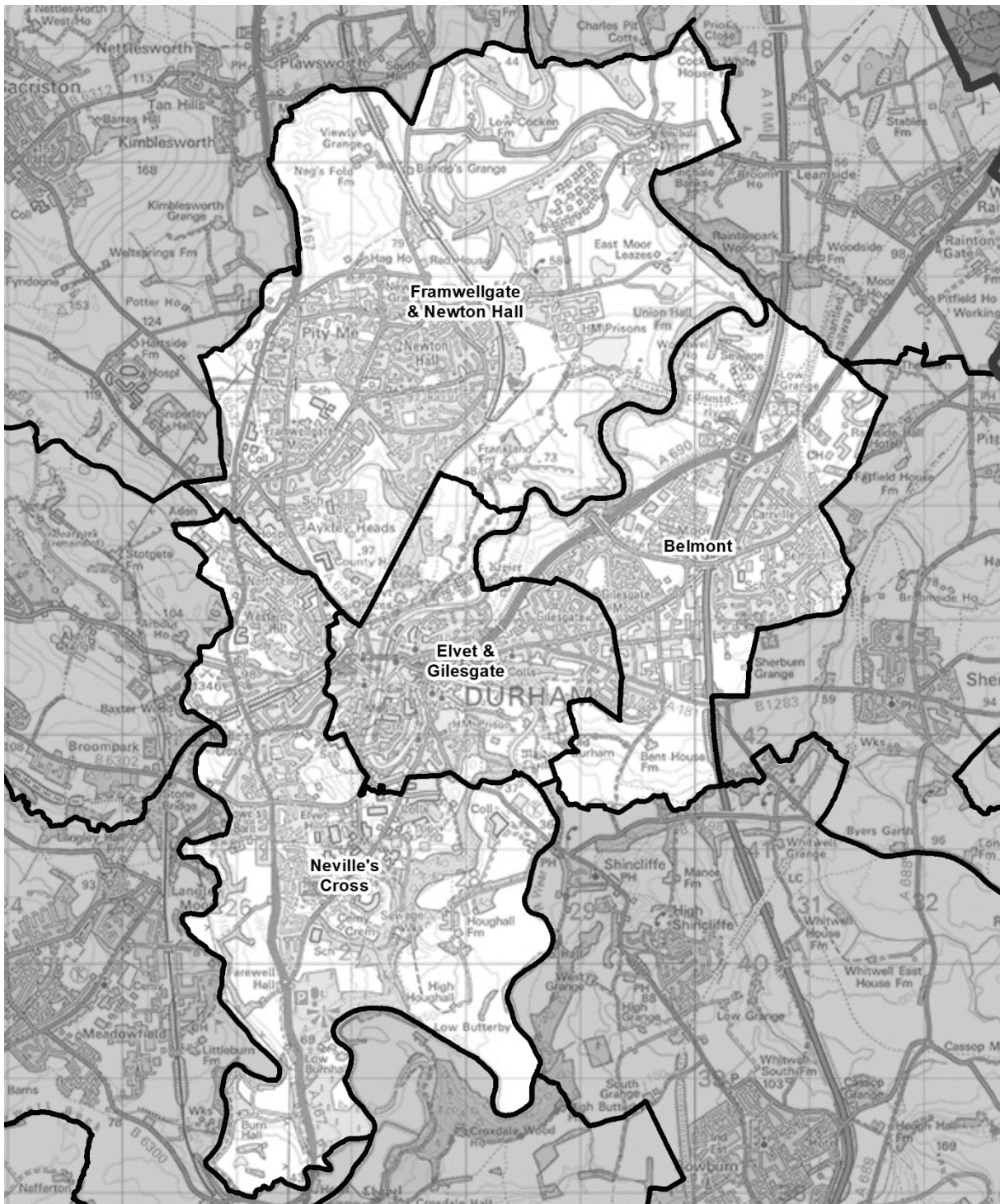
76 Both county-wide schemes proposed a two-councillor Deerness division but with differing boundaries. The Joint Administration's Deerness division differed from the current one by including the entirety of Cornsay parish and excluding Bearpark parish, placing the latter in an Esh & Witton Gilbert division. The Labour Group's only modification to the existing division was to transfer New Brancepeth into its proposed Brandon & Meadowfield division.

77 We have decided to adopt the Deerness division proposed by the Labour Group. We were concerned that the proposal made by the Joint Administration would separate Bearpark parish from the neighbouring community of Ushaw Moor and place it with communities it had weaker links with such as Witton Gilbert parish. Furthermore, we were persuaded by the evidence provided by the Labour Group that demonstrated the strong community links that exist between Bearpark and Ushaw Moor.

78 Consequently, we have also decided to largely adopt the Labour Group's single-councillor Langley & Esh division. We determined that the Joint Administration's two-councillor Esh & Witton Gilbert division would link disparate communities and separate neighbouring communities, such as Bearpark and Ushaw Moor, in addition to Sacriston and Witton Gilbert.



## Durham city



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Belmont	2	-5%
Elvet & Gilesgate	2	4%
Framwellgate & Newton Hall	3	-9%
Neville's Cross	2	-3%

### *Belmont*

79 The Joint Administration proposed a two-councillor Belmont division which reduced the size of the current division by placing the unparished area south of Sunderland Road in its proposed Elvet, Gilesgate & Shincliffe division. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Belmont & Pittington division which largely followed the Belmont parish boundary but also included the unparished area around Habgood Drive and Cuthbert Avenue, in addition to Pittington parish.

80 After careful consideration, we have decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposals to largely follow the Belmont parish boundary and include the unparished area around Habgood Drive and Cuthbert Avenue in a two-councillor Belmont division. We determined that largely following the Belmont parish boundary would contribute to effective and convenient local government. We also consider that it avoids the division of residential estates across divisions, as requested by Councillor Fletcher, a current Belmont division councillor. We nonetheless welcome comments regarding this decision. We note in particular that the Joint Administration's proposal to place the unparished area south of Sunderland Road in a division with the remainder of Elvet & Gilesgate division, and the area north of Sunderland Road in Belmont division, also results in good electoral equality.

81 We do not propose to include Pittington parish in our Belmont division, as suggested by the Labour Group, as we consider Pittington parish to share closer links with the communities that will comprise our recommended Pittington & Sherburn division.

82 Belmont Parish Council and two local residents requested the retention of the current division boundaries and the current allocation of three councillors. However, given the reduction in the number of councillors for the authority, it is an inevitable consequence that we must reduce the allocation of councillors per division and redraw division boundaries across the county to achieve an effective balance of our statutory criteria. Therefore, we are not able to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

### *Elvet & Gilesgate*

83 We have adopted the Labour Group's Elvet & Gilesgate division as part of our draft recommendations, which expands the current division to incorporate the Gilesgate estate, the Sunderland Road estate, and the Woodlands estate. We determined that this division would better reflect our statutory criteria than the Joint Administration's proposed Elvet, Gilesgate & Shincliffe division. This is because we consider that Shincliffe parish is distinct from the city centre. We determined that the parish would fit more appropriately in our Bowburn & Coxhoe division.

### *Framwellgate & Newton Hall*

84 Our Framwellgate & Newton Hall division is based entirely on the Joint Administration's proposals. We were persuaded by its proposal to incorporate electors residing on the new housing estate at Aykley Woods in this division, as we agree that electors here share closer links with the Framwellgate, Pity Me and Newton Hall communities to the north, rather than the city to the south.

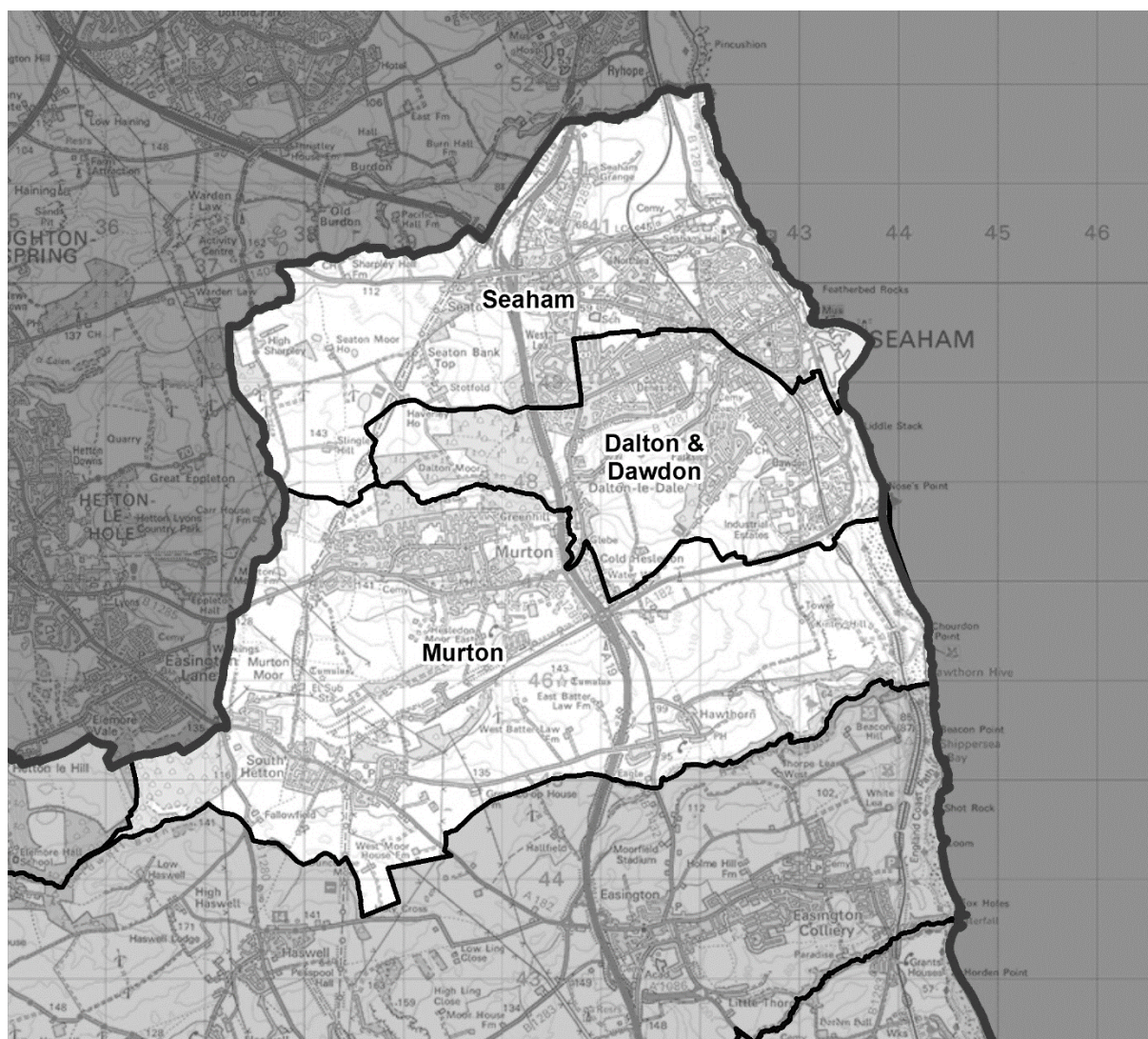
85 We did not adopt the Labour Group's proposals here as it placed West Rainton & Leamside parish in an enlarged Framwellgate & Newton Hall division. This was opposed by West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council, and we consider that such an arrangement would not be conducive to community identities and interests.

86 A local resident requested that Framwellgate Moor parish incorporate the area around Ghyll Field Road, Brackenfield Road and Priory Road, in addition to Aykley Vale and the Aykley Woods housing estate. However, changing parish boundaries falls outside the scope of this electoral review and is the responsibility of the County Council, via a community governance review.

### *Neville's Cross*

87 The Labour Group proposed to retain the existing Neville's Cross division, which is forecast to have good electoral equality by 2028. However, we have adopted the entirety of the Joint Administration's proposed Neville's Cross division without amendment. Its division has incorporated the Durham South parish ward area, which contains a substantial part of Durham University. We consider that this area fits more appropriately in a city-centric Neville's Cross division, as opposed to being included in a division with Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Coxhoe and Shincliffe parishes, as suggested by the Labour Group.

## Murton and Seaham



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Dalton & Dawdon	2	0%
Murton	2	1%
Seaham	2	9%

### *Dalton & Dawdon and Seaham*

88 We are adopting the Dalton & Dawdon and Seaham divisions proposed by the Joint Administration. With both of its divisions forecast to have a good level of electoral equality by 2028, we consider that they will ensure a better reflection of our statutory criteria than the proposals made by the Labour Group – for example, the Labour Group’s single-councillor Dawdon division is forecast to have an electoral variance of -11%, which is somewhat higher than the Joint Administration’s proposals. The proposed Dalton & Dawdon division will have excellent electoral equality and will also unite Dalton-le-Dale parish in one division, which will promote effective and convenient local government.

## *Murton*

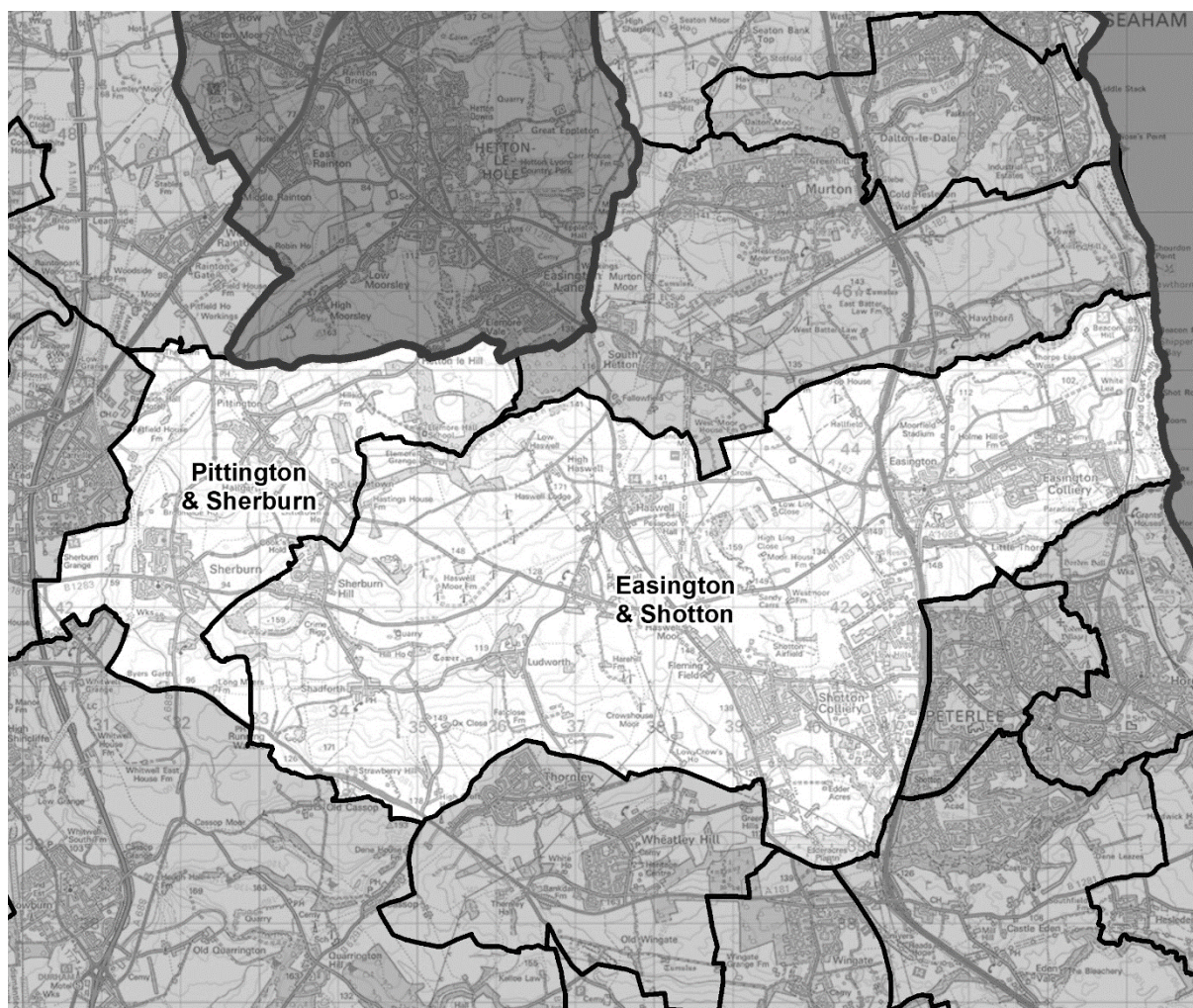
89 We are also adopting the Joint Administration's two-councillor Murton division, composed of Hawthorn, Murton and South Hetton parishes. We agree with the Joint Administration that creating a division composed of these three parishes will effectively reflect our statutory criteria. The proposed division is forecast to have very good electoral equality, with an anticipated variance of 1% by 2028. We are also content that this Murton division will reflect community identities and interests in the area, noting the evidence provided by the Joint Administration that these three parishes are linked together by bus routes and cycleways.

90 We were not persuaded by the Labour Group's proposal to link Murton parish with Deneside in a three-councillor Deneside & Murton division. As part of Seaham parish, we consider Deneside to share stronger links with the Seaham and Dawdon areas. We have consequently included the Deneside area in our proposed Dalton & Dawdon division.

91 We have decided to name this division Murton, but note the comment made by the Joint Administration that South Hetton and Hawthorn could also be added to the name. We welcome views on this during consultation, although we are mindful of not creating division names that are too long.

92 Councillor Arthur, of Seaham Town Council, requested that the Seaham Garden Village development be included in a Seaham division. This development is situated in Hawthorn parish. We decided not to adopt this suggestion, as we consider Hawthorn parish to share closer links with Murton and South Hetton parishes. We also determined that insufficient community evidence had been provided for us to potentially divide Hawthorn parish between divisions, by the means of placing Hawthorn village in our Murton division and the Seaham Garden Village development in our Dalton & Dawdon division.

## Easington, Pittington, Sherburn and Shotton



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Easington & Shotton	3	0%
Pittington & Sherburn	1	-9%

### *Easington & Shotton*

93 The county-wide schemes put forward considerably different proposals for this area of County Durham. The Joint Administration proposed a two-councillor Easington, Haswell & Shotton division that linked Easington Village parish with Haswell and Shotton parishes, in addition to most of Shadforth parish. Conversely, the Labour Group proposed a three-councillor Easington & Shotton division that also included Easington Colliery parish and Hawthorn parish.

94 Our draft recommendations are largely based upon the Labour Group's proposed division. Based on our visit to the area, we agree with the Labour Group that both Easington Colliery and Easington Village parishes are 'intrinsically linked' and share much in common. We consider that placing these two parishes in

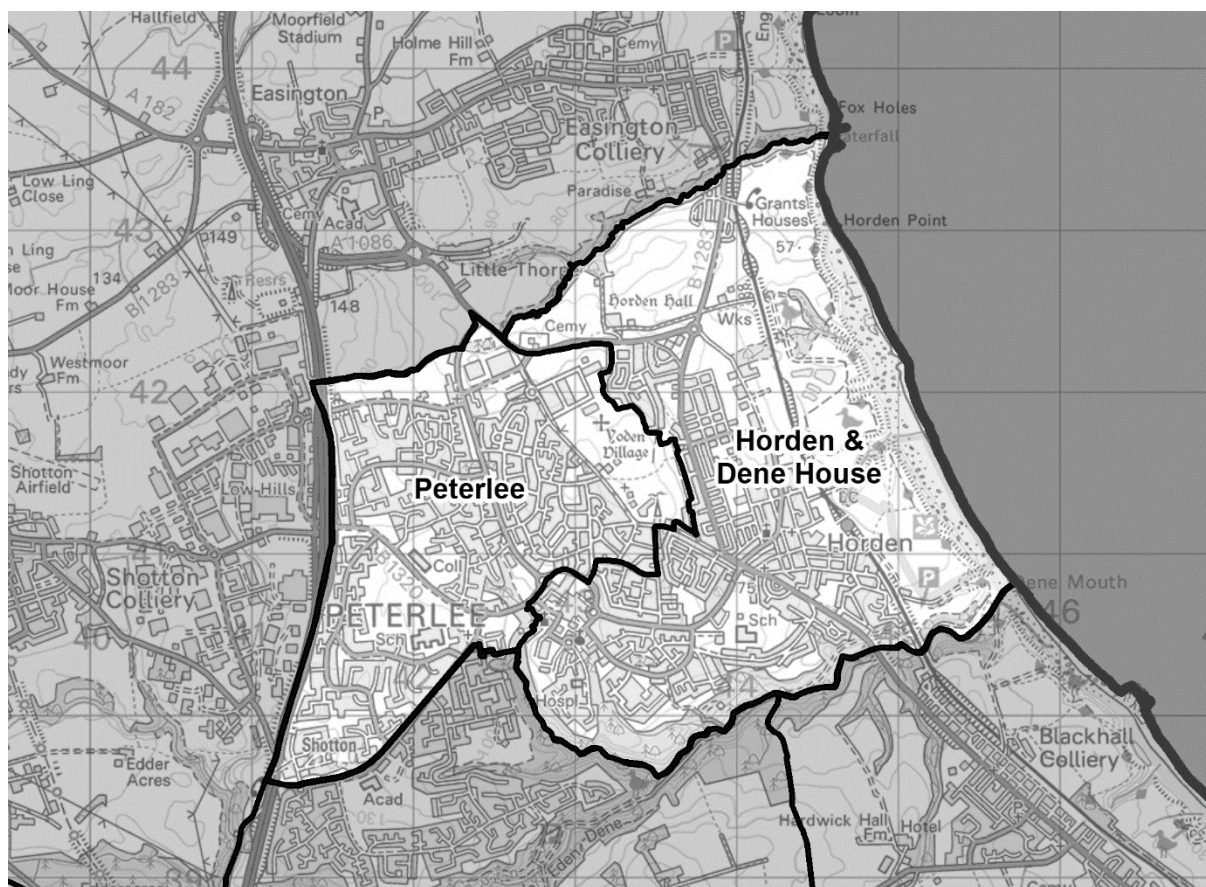
separate divisions would be harmful to community identities and interests. We were, accordingly, not persuaded by the Joint Administration's proposal to link Easington Colliery parish with Horden parish, as we determined the links between these two parishes were not as strong.

### *Pittington & Sherburn*

95 We have decided to largely adopt the single-councillor Pittington & Sherburn division proposed by the Joint Administration. We consider that the parishes of Pittington and Sherburn Village share strong community links and should remain in the same division. We determined that the Labour Group's proposal, which would link Pittington parish and Belmont parish in the same division, would connect parishes with weaker community links.

96 However, the Joint Administration's single-councillor Pittington & Sherburn division is forecast to have an electoral variance of 13% by 2028, which we consider too high to accept. We have therefore decided to transfer Sherburn Hill from their proposed Pittington & Sherburn division into our proposed Easington & Shotton division. This will result in a Pittington & Sherburn division with a forecast electoral variance of -9%, meaning it will have good electoral equality. Furthermore, placing Sherburn Hill in our Easington & Shotton division ensures that the entirety of Shadforth parish is in one division. We consider that this will aid effective and convenient local government. We consider that this modification will reduce the electoral variance of this division and is preferable to the one suggested by the Joint Administration, which was to divide Pittington parish and place Low Pittington in a Lumley & West Rainton division. We determined that separating Pittington parish across divisions would not reflect community identities and interests, nor contribute to effective and convenient local government.

## Horden and Peterlee



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Horden & Dene House	2	-1%
Peterlee	2	5%

### *Horden & Dene House*

97 In a 98-councillor authority, a division formed of Horden parish alone would have too many electors to achieve good electoral equality as a single-councillor division, but also too few electors to accommodate a two-councillor division. It is therefore necessary to link Horden parish in a division with adjoining areas to achieve a good level of electoral equality.

98 The county-wide proposals offered alternative solutions. The Joint Administration proposed a two-councillor Horden division that contained Horden and Easington Colliery parishes. We decided not to adopt this division, because we consider Easington Colliery to share closer links with Easington Village parish.

99 The Labour Group instead proposed a two-councillor Horden & Dene House division, asserting that Horden parish shares close links with the Dene House area of Peterlee parish. We observed on our visit to County Durham that the Horden area



had good road links with the Dene House area. We are content that this arrangement will reflect our statutory criteria and have adopted this division as part of our draft recommendations.

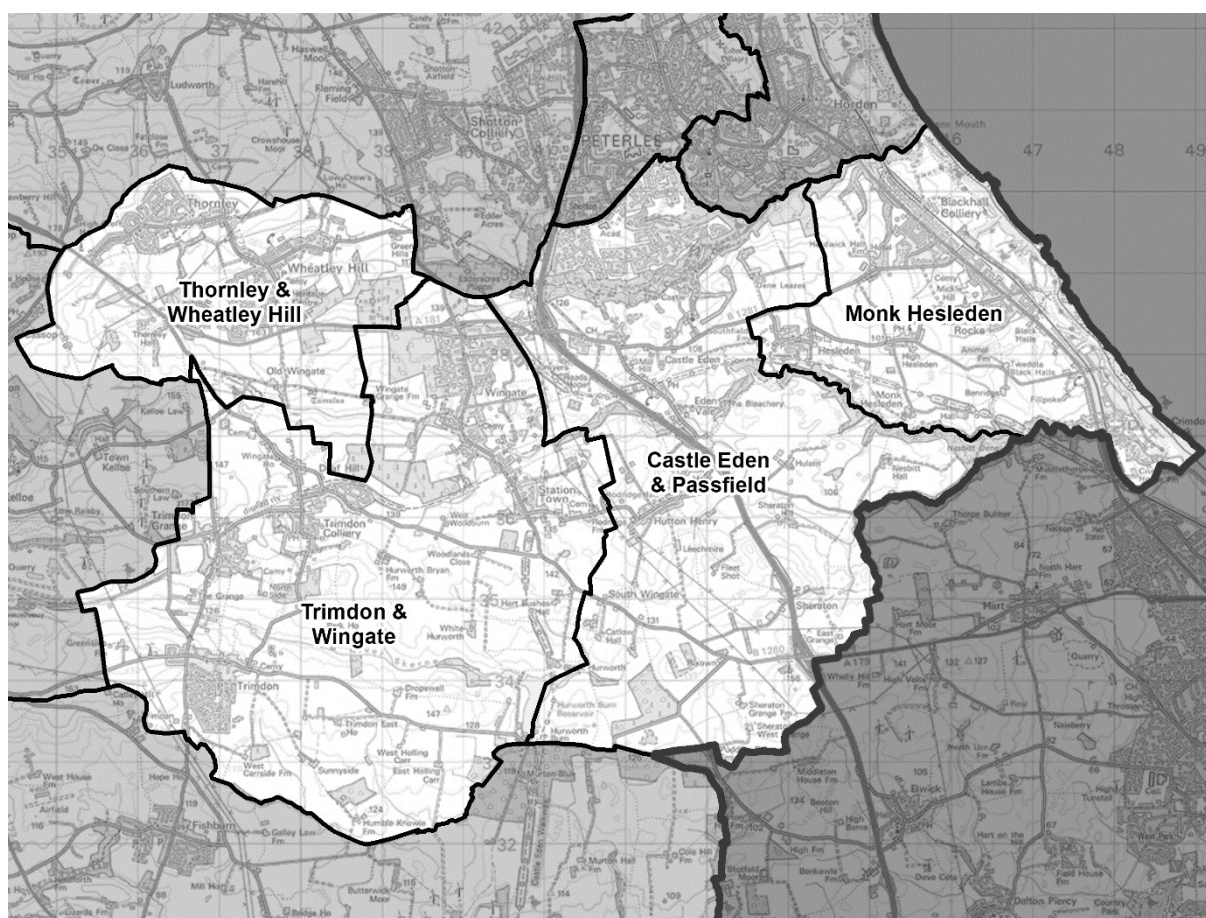
100 We have made a minor modification to the Labour Group's Horden & Dene House division by placing the boundary in the Dene House area along Edenhill Road and Kirkstone Avenue to create a clearer and more identifiable division boundary.

#### *Peterlee*

101 The parish of Peterlee is too large to be represented by three councillors, so we must therefore adopt a pattern of divisions for Peterlee that subdivides the town to achieve a good level of electoral equality. The Joint Administration proposed a three-councillor Peterlee division composed of Peterlee parish, except for the Passfield area, which it placed in a single-councillor Castle Eden & Passfield division. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Peterlee division composed of the Acre Rigg, Eden Hill and Howletch areas, and transferring the Dene House area into a Horden & Dene House division. The Group also placed the Passfield area in a single-councillor Castle Eden & Passfield division.

102 We have based our draft recommendations on the two-councillor Peterlee division proposed by the Labour Group. This is a consequence of our decision to place the Dene House area in a Horden & Dene House division. As outlined in the Horden & Dene House section, we consider that linking Dene House with Horden parish is the most effective way for us to ensure good electoral equality in this area. As a consequence, this means it is not possible to place the Dene House area in a larger three-councillor Peterlee division.

## Monk Hesleden, Thornley, Trimdon and Wingate



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Castle Eden & Passfield	1	8%
Monk Hesleden	1	10%
Thornley & Wheatley Hill	1	6%
Trimdon & Wingate	2	6%

### *Castle Eden & Passfield, Monk Hesleden and Trimdon & Wingate*

103 With the current Passfield division forecast to be under-represented by 2028, both county-wide schemes proposed a single-councillor division which expanded the division by linking the Passfield area with Castle Eden parish. However, the Joint Administration's division also incorporated the Hutton Henry part of Hutton Henry & Station Town parish, Sheraton with Hulam parish and Nesbitt parish. The Labour Group instead proposed that the entirety of Hutton Henry & Station Town parish, in addition to Sheraton with Hulam parish and Nesbitt parish, be included in a two-councillor Blackhalls & Wingate division, along with Wingate and Monk Hesleden parishes.

104 The Joint Administration proposed that Wingate parish be linked with Trimdon and Trimdon Foundry parishes and the Station Town area of Hutton Henry & Station

Town parish in a two-councillor division. It also proposed a single-councillor Monk Hesleden division composed solely of Monk Hesleden parish.

105 Given the significant differences between the division arrangements for this area, we very carefully considered the proposals received. As part of our draft recommendations, we have decided to adopt the Joint Administration's three divisions for this area of the county. This is because, under a 98-councillor scheme, the Labour Group's proposed two-councillor Blackhalls & Wingate division would have a forecast electoral variance of 12%, which we consider too high to accept. We were also concerned that its Blackhalls & Wingate division did not have strong internal road links. This was noted by the Joint Administration, which stated in its submission that poor road and transport links exist to the west of Monk Hesleden parish. On the other hand, we consider the Castle Eden & Passfield division proposed by the Joint Administration to have adequate road links, with its constituent communities linked by the A19.

106 Based on the evidence received from the Joint Administration, we also consider a single-councillor division for Monk Hesleden parish provides the best balance of our statutory criteria, creating a division for a parish that is somewhat distinct from communities immediately to its west. We have adopted the name of Monk Hesleden but would welcome comments on whether the retention of the Blackhalls name would be more appropriate.

107 We are also adopting the Trimdon & Wingate division proposed by the Joint Administration. This is because we decided not to recommend the single-councillor Trimdon division proposed by the Labour Group, as that division under a 98-councillor scheme, would have an electoral variance of 11%, which would not provide for good electoral equality.

108 Wingate Parish Council, Councillor Higgins and a local resident all requested that the current Wingate division be extended to include the entirety of Hutton Henry & Station Town parish. We did not adopt this proposal as it would result in the relatively high electoral variance of 11%.

109 Councillors Crute and Deinali suggested that we merge the existing Blackhalls and Wingate divisions into a larger two-councillor division. We decided against adopting this proposed division as it is forecast an electoral variance of 18%.

#### *Thornley & Wheatley Hill*

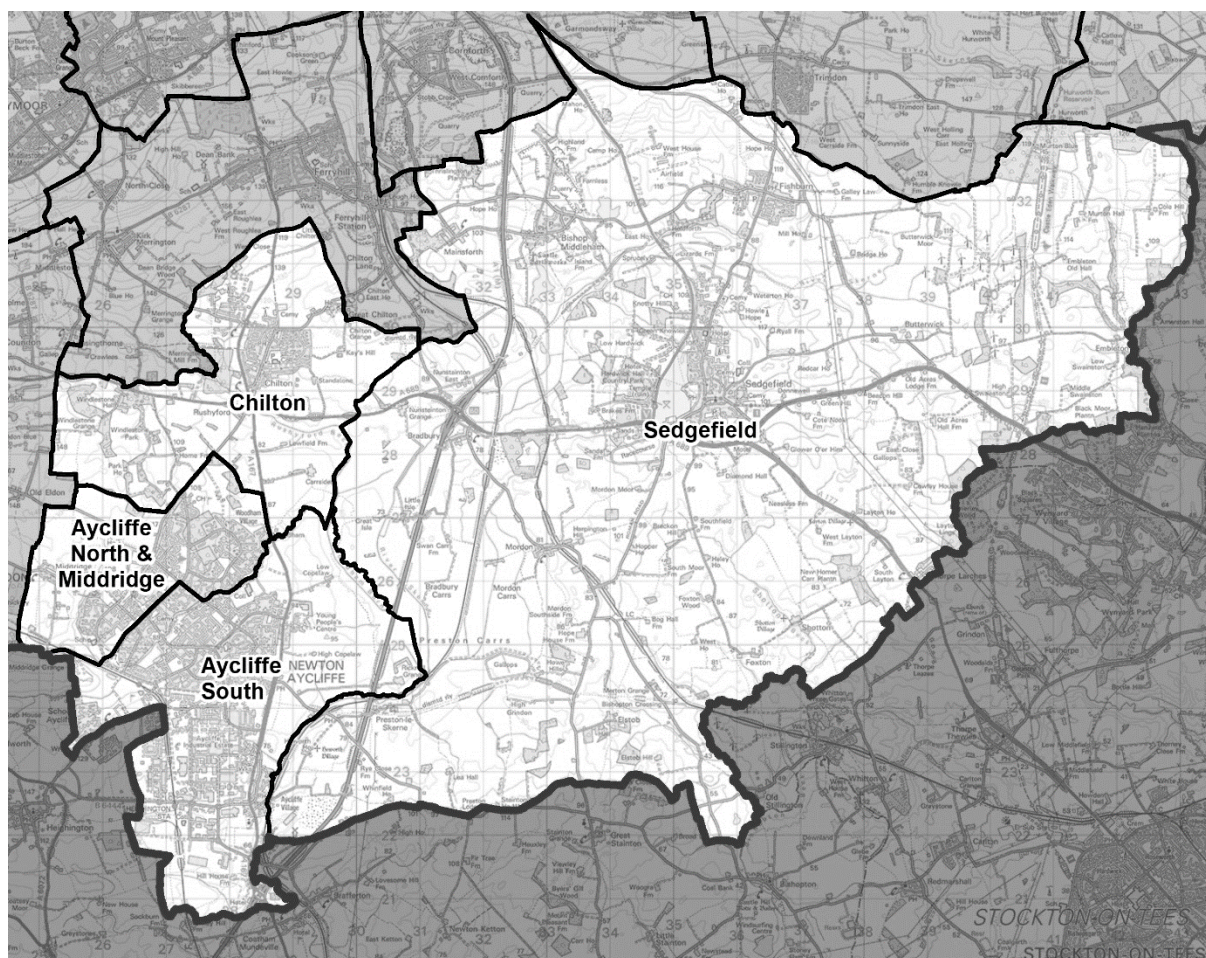
110 Our proposed Thornley & Wheatley Hill division is based upon the proposals made by the Joint Administration and the Labour Group, who both proposed a single-councillor division comprised of Thornley and Wheatley Hill parishes. We agree with the county-wide proposals that this division will link two closely related

communities together and will result in a division with a satisfactory level of electoral equality.

111 Ludworth Community Centre expressed a preference for the status quo, stating that Ludworth village, which is currently in the existing Trimdon & Thornley division, is well served by the current arrangements. However, we consider it appropriate to place the village in our Easington & Shotton division, as this allows the entirety of Shadforth parish to be in one division, which will aid effective and convenient local government.

112 Councillor Trippett of Trimdon Parish Council stated that any changes to division boundaries must take into account and not cross any parliamentary boundaries. However, we are not required to have regard for existing or proposed parliamentary constituency boundaries as part of our review. These are reviewed by the Boundary Commission for England, a separate body.

## Newton Aycliffe and Sedgelyield



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Aycliffe North & Middridge	2	7%
Aycliffe South	3	-5%
Chilton	1	-8%
Sedgelyield	2	-5%

### *Aycliffe North & Middridge and Aycliffe South*

113 The Newton Aycliffe area is currently divided into three divisions on a North, East and West basis – this arrangement was supported by a local resident. The Joint Administration proposed to largely retain this arrangement but transferred the area covered by the current Simpasture parish ward from the existing Aycliffe West division to an Aycliffe East division. On the other hand, the Labour Group merged the current Aycliffe East and Aycliffe West divisions into a three-councillor Aycliffe South division.

114 We have decided to adopt the proposals made by the Labour Group for the Newton Aycliffe area. We determined from our visit to the area that its proposed division boundaries are clearer and more identifiable. We consider that the Joint

Administrations proposals, which retained the division boundary between Aycliffe East and Aycliffe West divisions along the rear of MacMillan Road, to be less clear.

115 We have retained the name and boundaries of the current Aycliffe North & Middridge division. This was supported by a local resident, who provided evidence of the strong community links between Newton Aycliffe and Middridge parish.

#### *Chilton*

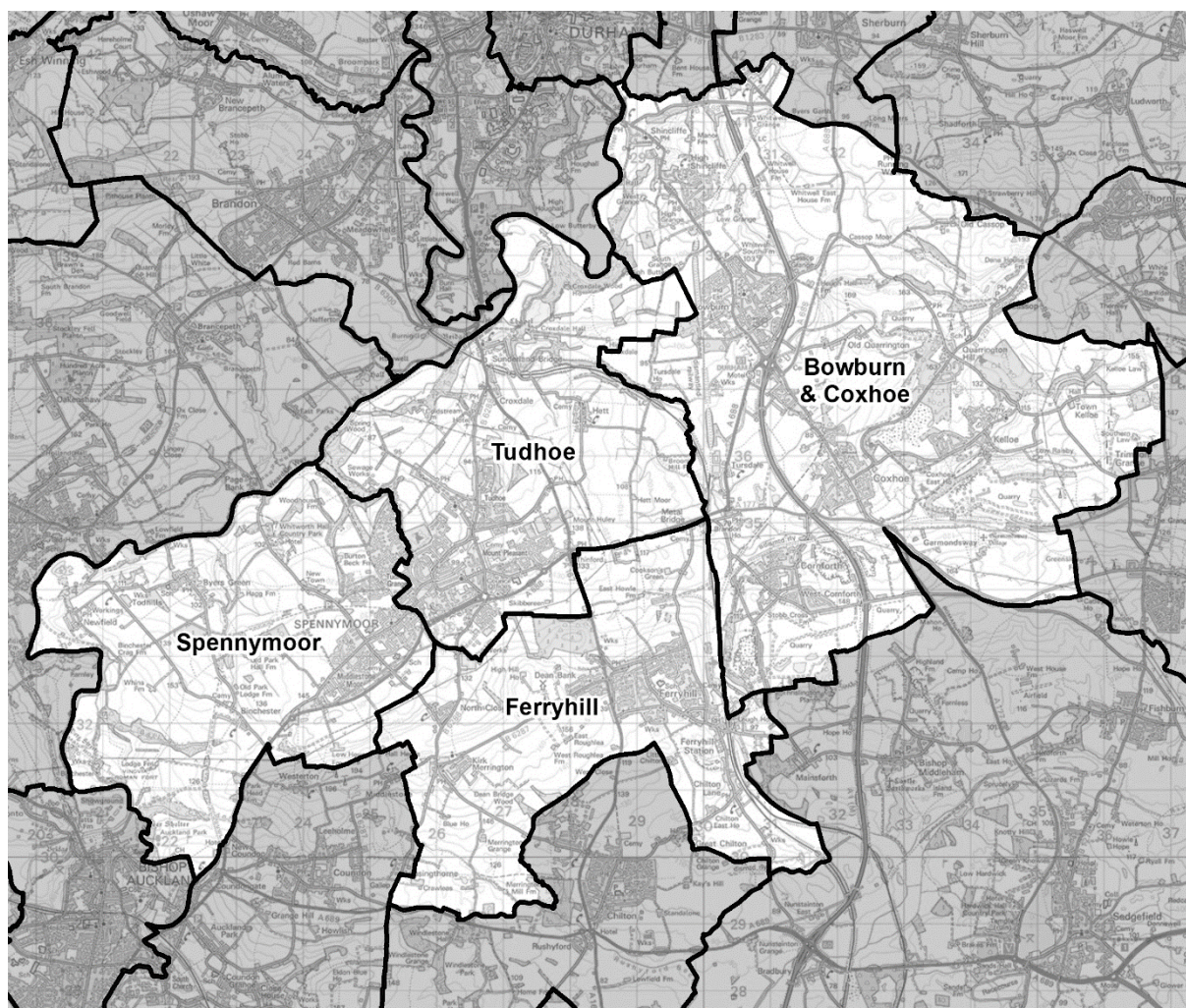
116 We have decided to retain the existing Chilton division as part of our draft recommendations, as proposed by the Joint Administration and the Labour Group. The current division is anticipated to have good electoral equality in 2028 and we are content that it sufficiently reflects community identities in the area.

#### *Sedgefield*

117 We are adopting the proposals put forward by the Joint Administration and the Labour Group for Sedgefield division. Both county-wide schemes expanded the current division to incorporate Bishop Middleham parish. Sedgefield Town Council and a local resident supported this proposal. These two submissions strengthened our view that our recommendations for Sedgefield division will effectively reflect community identities and interests in this area.

118 One local resident opposed any proposal that removed Fishburn from County Durham. However, changing the external boundaries between Durham County Council and its neighbouring local authorities falls outside the scope of the current electoral review, so no changes of this nature are being made.

## Bowburn, Coxhoe, Ferryhill and Spennymoor



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bowburn & Coxhoe	3	7%
Ferryhill	2	-2%
Spennymoor	2	10%
Tudhoe	2	8%

### *Bowburn & Coxhoe*

119 Our proposed three-councillor Bowburn & Coxhoe division represents a combination of the Joint Administration's and the Labour Group's separate proposals for this area of the county. We were persuaded by the Joint Administration's proposal to include Cornforth parish in a division with Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Coxhoe and Kelloe parishes, noting the evidence provided that demonstrated the close geographic links the parish has with Coxhoe.

120 We were also persuaded by the Labour Group's proposal to include Shincliffe parish in a division with Cassop-cum-Quarrington, Coxhoe and Kelloe parishes.

These parishes are all linked by the A177 and the B6291 and we note the evidence provided by the Labour Group that they are also connected by local bus routes. As outlined in the section detailing our proposed Elvet & Gilesgate division, we were not persuaded by the Joint Administration's proposal to link Shincliffe in a division with the Elvet and Gilesgate areas.

121 We propose to name this division Bowburn & Coxhoe, as these two villages are the largest settlements in this division. We consider that this name best reflects the communities that will make up this division.

122 A local resident requested that the Park Hill area be included in Coxhoe parish. However, changing parish boundaries is the responsibility of the County Council, via a community governance review.

### *Ferryhill*

123 We have adopted the Joint Administration's two-councillor Ferryhill division, which linked Ferryhill parish with Kirk Merrington and North Close villages. While the Labour Group and a local resident suggested including Cornforth in a division with Ferryhill parish, we concluded that it would be less reflective of our statutory criteria. This is because we consider Cornforth parish to share closer links with communities in our Bowburn & Coxhoe division, as justified in the previous section.

124 While Kirk Merrington and North Close both form part of Spennymoor parish, we established from our visit to the area that they are distinct from Spennymoor town itself. We were persuaded by the evidence provided by the Joint Administration that the villages have strong links with Ferryhill parish via the B6287. Councillor Ranyard of Spennymoor Town Council stated that this arrangement would be acceptable and to allocate the remainder of Spennymoor parish four councillors and achieve good electoral equality.

125 Councillor Bowron of Ferryhill Town Council opposed changes to the current Ferryhill division and the current allocation of three councillors. However, as outlined in the Belmont section, given the reduction in the number of councillors for the authority, we must reduce the allocation of councillors per division and redraw division boundaries across the county to achieve an effective balance of our statutory criteria.

### *Spennymoor*

126 The county-wide schemes proposed different divisions for the area covered by the current three-councillor Spennymoor division. The Joint Administration and Councillor Ranyard broadly followed the boundaries of the existing division, both making relatively minor modifications to create a two-councillor division to achieve good electoral equality. Conversely, the Labour Group proposed a three-councillor



division that included the unparished area of Coundon and its surrounding villages, in addition to Newfield and Binchester.

127 Our proposed two-councillor Spennymoor division represents a combination of these two proposals. We were not persuaded to link Coundon and its surrounding villages with Spennymoor, as we were persuaded by the evidence received from the Joint Administration that these communities share closer links with Dene Valley, Eldon and Shildon. However, we determined from our visit to the area that Binchester and Newfield possess better road links with Spennymoor than with Coundon and should thus be incorporated into our Spennymoor division. This view was shared by a local resident, who stated that Binchester and Newfield are distinct from Coundon.

128 Councillor Ranyard proposed that this division be named Spennymoor West. We consider insufficient community evidence had been provided to support this name change but we welcome comments on whether this name is preferable during the current consultation.

#### *Tudhoe*

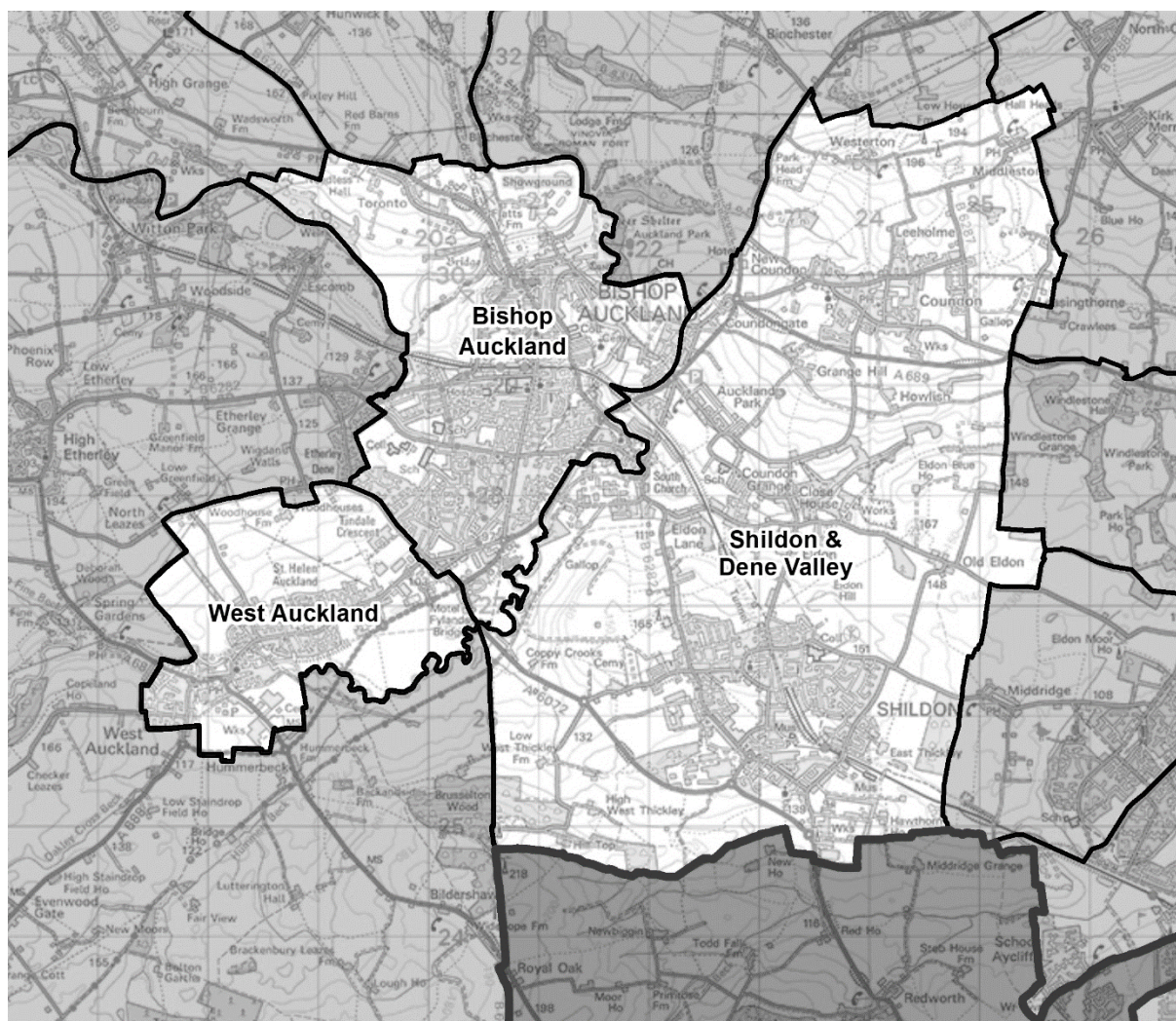
129 Our Tudhoe division is based largely upon the proposal made by the Joint Administration and Councillor Ranyard. We were persuaded by their separate proposals to include the parish of Croxdale & Hett within a Tudhoe division, as we agree that the parish has weak road and community links to Coxhoe parish, with the natural link towards Tudhoe and Spennymoor. We were not persuaded to adopt the Labour Group's Kirk Merrington & Tudhoe division, as we consider Kirk Merrington village to share closer links with Ferryhill, as outlined in the Ferryhill section.

130 The Joint Administration and Councillor Ranyard proposed to transfer electors in and around the Canterbury Close, Mayfields, Dale and Mere areas to their respective Tudhoe and Spennymoor East divisions to achieve good electoral equality. We were not persuaded to adopt their proposed boundary alignments as we consider neither will ensure particularly clear nor identifiable division boundaries. Instead, we have placed the boundary to the rear of Oxclose Crescent and included the Dundas Street and Jackson Street area in our Tudhoe division. We determined this boundary to be stronger and will avoid the present split of Spennymoor town centre between divisions, which will aid effective and convenient local government.

131 The Joint Administration, the Labour Group and Councillor Ranyard all avoided splitting the housing estate near the Merrington Lane Industrial Estate. This estate is currently split across divisions, and we agree that uniting it in our proposed Tudhoe division will contribute to effective and convenient local government.

132 Councillor Ranyard proposed that this division be named Spennymoor East. As outlined in the Spennymoor section, we welcome views as to whether our divisions for Spennymoor should be renamed on an east and west basis.

## Bishop Auckland and Shildon



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bishop Auckland	3	1%
Shildon & Dene Valley	3	1%
West Auckland	1	6%

### *Bishop Auckland*

133 Both the county-wide schemes submitted proposals for a three-councillor division composed entirely of Bishop Auckland parish. We agree that such an arrangement will provide the best reflection of our statutory criteria, with their proposed divisions both forecast to have a good level of electoral equality. We also consider that a division formed entirely by the area covered by the town council will aid convenient and effective local government.

134 We also note that both schemes proposed to incorporate the unparished South Church area in their divisions. We agree with both the Joint Administration and the

Labour Group that the South Church area shares close links with Bishop Auckland parish, and they should thus be placed in the same division.

135 We propose to name this division Bishop Auckland, as suggested by the Labour Group, as opposed to Bishop Auckland Town, as per the Joint Administration proposal. We consider that the Town suffix is no longer appropriate given the division will now cover the whole of Bishop Auckland parish, as opposed to the town centre, as at present.

### *Shildon & Dene Valley*

136 The Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Shildon division which largely followed the boundaries of the existing division, albeit with some modifications that, in its view, would better reflect community links. Alternatively, the Joint Administration linked Eldon, Dene Valley and Shildon parishes with the unparished area of Coundon in a three-councillor Shildon & Dene Valley division.

137 We have largely adopted the three-councillor Shildon & Dene Valley division proposed by the Joint Administration. This is because we consider that its proposal to link Coundon with Eldon, Dene Valley and Shildon parishes is preferable to the Labour Group's proposal that placed Coundon in a division with western Spennymoor. We were persuaded by the evidence presented by the Joint Administration that Coundon has significant commonalities with Eldon, Dene Valley and Shildon parishes.

138 The Joint Administration suggested placing the unparished villages of Leasingthorne, Middlestone and Westerton in a Ferryhill division. We decided against adopting this arrangement, as we consider that following the Spennymoor parish boundary to be clearer and more identifiable. In any case, the Joint Administration stated that they did not have a strong opinion regarding which division these villages were placed in.

139 Eldon Parish Council expressed opposition to any substantial changes to the current Shildon & Dene Valley division and strongly opposed any reduction to the number of county councillors that represent the area. While the inclusion of Coundon is a relatively large change to the existing division, our proposed Shildon & Dene Valley is to be represented by three councillors, the same as present. An allocation of three councillors to this division will ensure good electoral equality, with the division forecast an electoral variance of 1% in 2028.

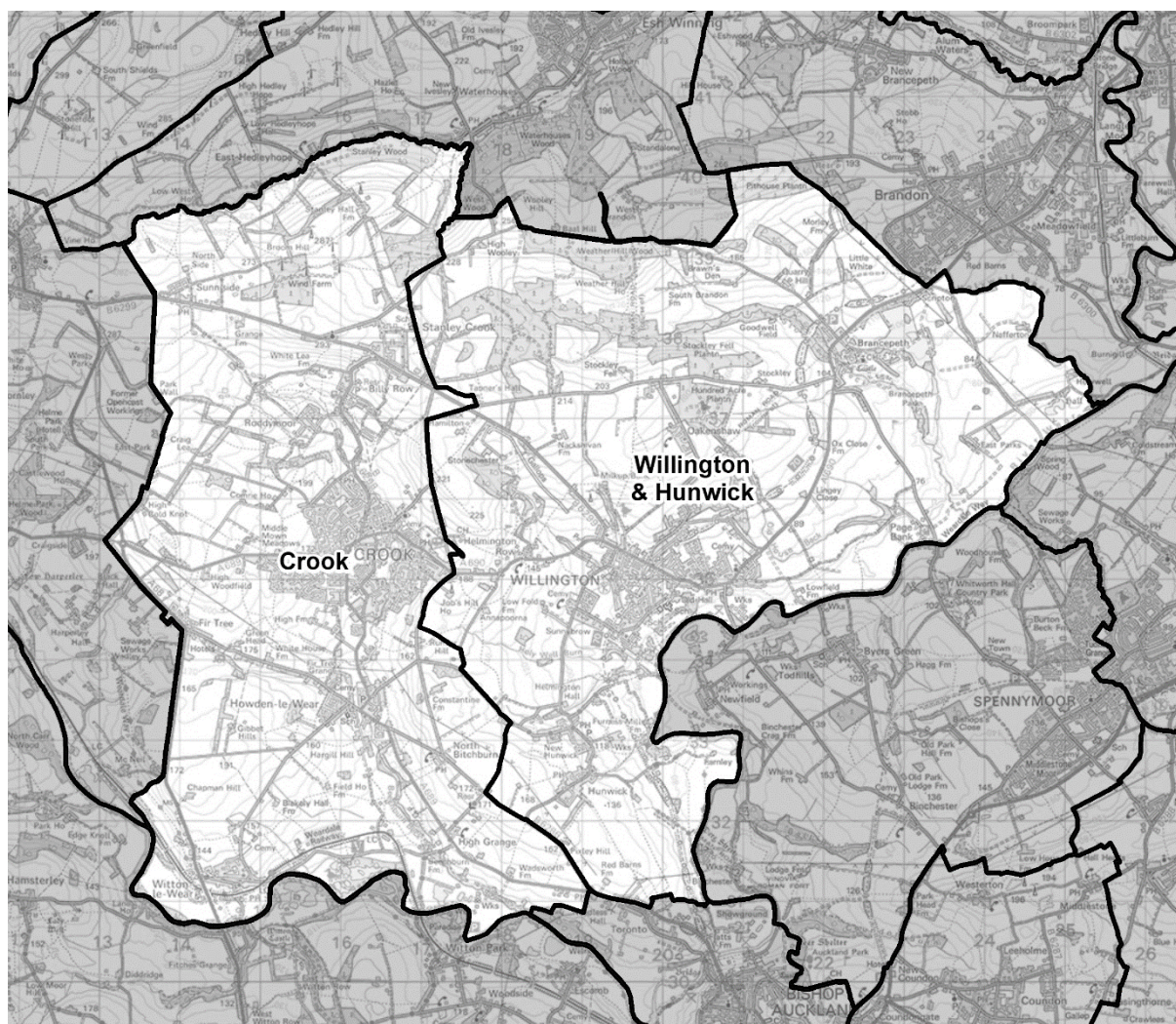
140 A local resident requested that the current Shildon & Dene Valley division be split into smaller divisions, arguing that Shildon requires its own division. We decided not to adopt this proposal, as we consider insufficient community evidence had been provided to demonstrate how a separate Shildon division would better reflect our statutory criteria than our proposed three-councillor Shildon & Dene Valley division.

### *West Auckland*

141 We received significantly different proposals for West Auckland division. The Joint Administration suggested a single-councillor division comprised of West Auckland parish and the unparished area of St Helen Auckland. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed to expand the current two-councillor division and incorporate the entirety of Etherley parish and the Witton parish ward of Evenwood & Barony parish.

142 We have adopted the Joint Administration's single-councillor West Auckland division as part of our draft recommendations. We were persuaded that a compact, single-councillor division focused upon the closely linked communities of St Helen Auckland and West Auckland would best reflect community identities and interests. We also note the evidence provided by Councillor Potts which stated that West Auckland and St Helen Auckland are distinct from the communities immediately to the west and north.

## Crook and Willington



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Crook	3	-7%
Willington & Hunwick	2	-8%

### *Crook*

143 Our proposed three-councillor Crook division is based almost entirely upon the Joint Administration’s proposals. We were persuaded by their decision to include the villages of Howden-le-Wear and Witton-le-Wear within a Crook division. The Joint Administration stated that these closely linked villages are joined by Hargill Road but are currently split across divisions, the latter being included in the current Weardale division. We agree that uniting them both in a division with Crook town will reflect community identities and interests.

144 Conversely, we consider the Labour Group’s proposal to place Howden-le-Wear, North Bitchburn and High Grange in a division with Willington and Hunwick to

be less reflective of community identities and interests. We consider the three former villages to share closer links with Crook, with good road connections between these communities via the A689.

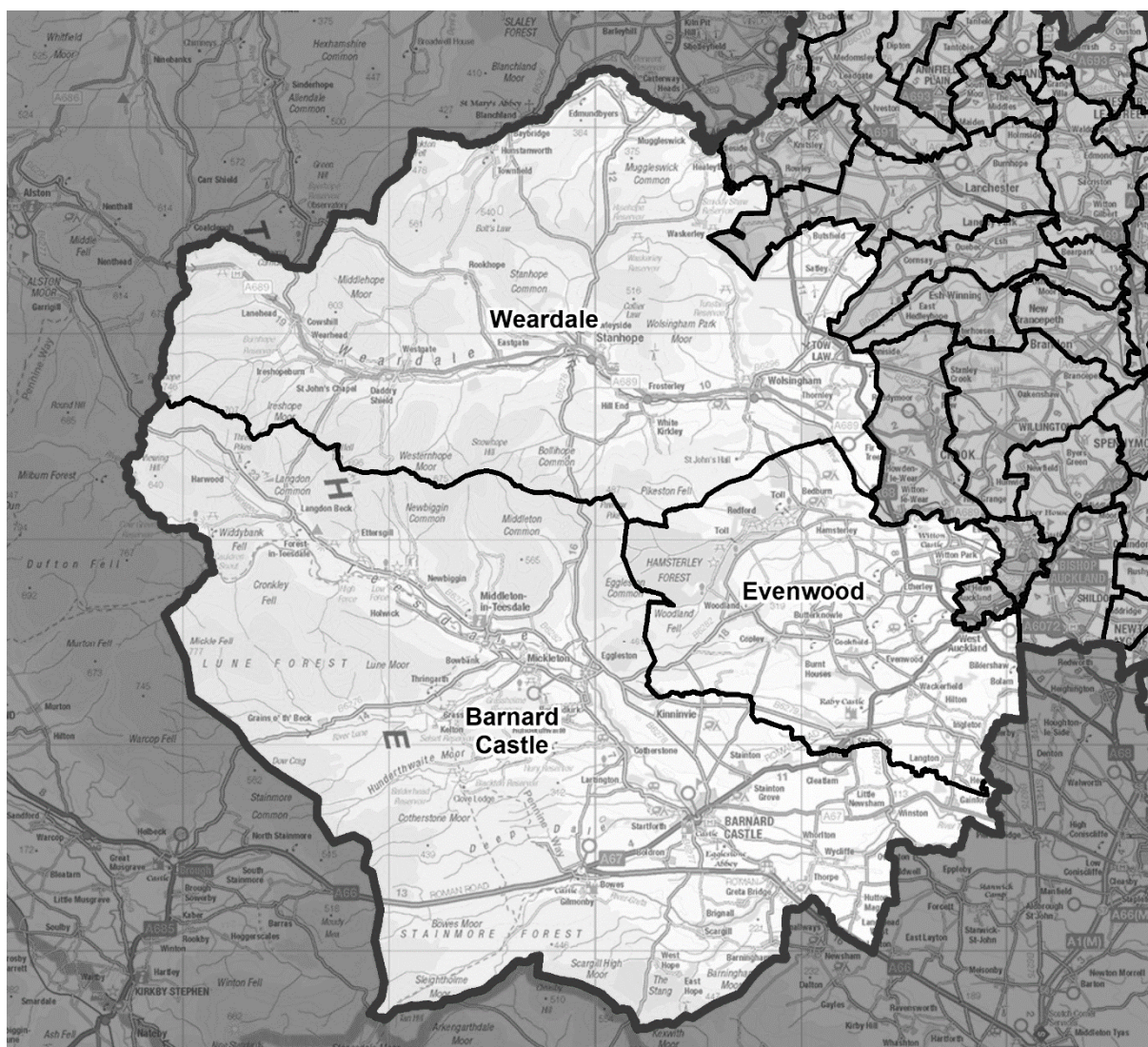
### *Willington & Hunwick*

145 The Labour Group proposed a two-councillor Willington division based upon the existing Willington & Hunwick division but excluded Brancepeth parish and included Howden-le-Wear, North Bitchburn and High Grange. However, as outlined in the previous section, we were not persuaded to link these three villages in a division with Willington and Hunwick, preferring to place them in our Crook division.

146 Therefore, we are broadly adopting the two-councillor Willington & Hunwick division proposed by the Joint Administration, albeit with some modifications that in our view will better reflect our statutory criteria. We decided not to include Newfield and Binchester in this division, as proposed by the Joint Administration, instead placing both villages in our Spennymoor division. We consider that these villages share closer links with Spennymoor and are separated from Willington by the River Wear.

147 To facilitate this amendment and retain good electoral equality, we have decided to include Helmington Row in our Willington & Hunwick division. The Joint Administration indicated that the village is equidistant between both Crook and Willington, so it could therefore be placed in either division, but did state that the village could be placed in a Crook division to ensure that Helmington Row and Crook are both within the proposed Bishop Auckland parliamentary constituency. However, we are not legally required to consider parliamentary constituency boundaries, either existing or proposed, when developing our recommendations. In any case, achieving good electoral equality across our proposed divisions takes precedence.

## Teesdale and Weardale



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Barnard Castle	3	-1%
Evenwood	3	-10%
Weardale	2	-2%

### *Barnard Castle and Evenwood*

148 The county-wide schemes proposed significantly different proposals for the area covered by the current Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West divisions. The Joint Administration largely retained these two divisions but proposed some modifications to ensure good electoral equality. Alternatively, the Labour Group proposed a three-councillor Barnard Castle division which united Barnard Castle parish in the same division, and also linked parishes east and west of Barnard Castle parish within a single division.



149 The Teesdale Branch Labour Party and a local resident proposed three-single councillor divisions for this area. We decided not to adopt these proposals as we consider the Urban ward of Marwood parish and Startforth parish to be closely linked to Barnard Castle. We consider placing these areas in separate divisions from Barnard Castle parish would not reflect community identities and interests.

150 After careful consideration of the county-wide proposals, given the considerable differences between each, we have decided to largely follow the Labour Group's proposal by adopting a three-councillor Barnard Castle division. We determined that placing the entirety of Barnard Castle parish in a single division would aid effective and convenient local government.

151 We also received significantly different proposals for the area covered by the current Evenwood division. The Labour Group proposed to essentially merge the current Evenwood and Weardale divisions into a larger three-councillor Evenwood & Weardale division. We were not persuaded to adopt this division, as we determined from our visit to the area that the road links across this division are not particularly strong, noting that roads in this area broadly run from east to west, as opposed to north-south.

152 The Joint Administration proposed a two-councillor Evenwood division that incorporated the Witton Park and Escomb areas and transferred Cockfield and Woodland parishes to its Barnard Castle East and Barnard Castle West divisions, respectively.

153 As part of our draft recommendations, we are recommending a three-councillor Evenwood division, that incorporates the Witton Park and Escomb areas, as proposed by the Joint Administration, but also several more parishes to the south as suggested by the Labour Group. By creating a larger three-councillor Evenwood division, we can create a pattern of divisions for the rural west that ensures good electoral equality, adequately reflects road and community links, and allows us place Barnard Castle parish in a single division. We consider that our proposed Barnard Castle and Evenwood divisions provide the best reflection of our statutory criteria, but would welcome comments on these divisions during consultation.

154 A local resident requested that changes be made to the external boundary of Woodland parish. However, changing parish boundaries is the responsibility of the County Council, via a community governance review, and cannot be changed as part of our electoral review.

### *Weardale*

155 Given our decision not to recommend the Labour Group's proposed Evenwood & Weardale division, we have therefore adopted the Joint Administration's two-councillor Weardale division. We consider this proposed division will have good

forecast electoral equality and will link communities with similar interests together. We were also persuaded by the inclusion of Tow Law parish in this division, which has good links with Wolsingham via the B6297.

156 Wolsingham parish is currently split between divisions. This proposal avoids splitting parishes across divisions, which will aid effective and convenient local government and, in our view, better reflect community identities.

157 We have included Satley parish in this division, as per the Joint Administration's proposal, but we welcome comments as to whether it would fit more appropriately in our Langley & Esh division.

158 We have also included Muggleswick parish in Weardale division. The Labour Group had suggested incorporating it in its Consett West division, but we consider that, as a rural parish, it would be more appropriate to place it in a more sparsely populated Weardale division.

159 The Joint Administration stated that this division could be split into two single-councillor divisions, with one centred upon Stanhope and the other focused upon Wolsingham and Tow Law. We did not adopt this proposal as the Joint Administration indicated that such an arrangement may break long-standing and important links between the villages in the area. We nonetheless welcome views regarding such a proposal during the current consultation.



## Conclusions

160 The table below provides a summary as to the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality in County Durham, referencing the 2022 and 2028 electorate figures against the proposed number of councillors and divisions. A full list of divisions, names and their corresponding electoral variances can be found at Appendix A to the back of this report. An outline map of the divisions is provided at Appendix B.

### Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2022	2028
Number of councillors	98	98
Number of electoral divisions	48	48
Average number of electors per councillor	3,991	4,150
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	5	0
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

#### Draft recommendations

Durham County Council should be made up of 98 councillors serving 48 divisions representing nine single-councillor divisions, 28 two-councillor divisions and 11 three-councillor divisions. 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 divisions for Durham County Council. You can also view our draft recommendations for Durham County Council on our interactive maps at [www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/county-durham](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/county-durham)

### Parish electoral arrangements

161 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different divisions it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

162 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority division arrangements. However, Durham County Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

163 As a result of our proposed division boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for City of Durham, Peterlee, Spennymoor and Stanley.

164 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for City of Durham parish.

#### Draft recommendations

City of Durham Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Aykley Heads	1
Elvet & Gilesgate	6
Neville's Cross	8

165 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Peterlee parish.

#### Draft recommendations

Peterlee Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Acre Rigg	5
Dene House	4
Eden Hill	4
Howletch	4
Passfield	5

166 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Spennymoor parish.

#### Draft recommendations

Spennymoor Town Council should comprise 22 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Byers Green	1
Low Spennymoor and Tudhoe Grange	5

Merrington	1
Middlestone	4
Spennymoor	6
Tudhoe	5

167 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Stanley parish.

#### Draft recommendations

Stanley Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Annfield Plain	2
Catchgate	2
Craghead and South Stanley	3
Havannah	3
South Moor	3
Stanley Hall	4
Tanfield	3



## Have your say

168 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 county or just a part of it.

169 If you agree with our recommendations, please let us know. If you don't think our recommendations are right for County Durham, we want to hear alternative proposals for a different pattern of divisions.

170 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](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

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

172 Submissions can also be made by emailing [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk) or by writing to:

**Review Officer (County Durham)**  
**LGBCE**  
**PO Box 133**  
**Blyth**  
**NE24 9FE**

173 The Commission aims to propose a pattern of divisions for County Durham 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.

174 A good pattern of divisions 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.



175 Electoral equality:

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

176 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?

177 Effective local government:

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

178 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.lqbce.org.uk](http://www.lqbce.org.uk) A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

179 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.

180 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.

181 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 Durham County Council in 2025.



## Equalities

182 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 Durham County Council

	Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Annfield Plain & Tanfield	2	7,957	3,979	0%	8,171	4,086	-2%
2	Aycliffe North & Middridge	2	8,362	4,181	5%	8,851	4,426	7%
3	Aycliffe South	3	11,571	3,857	-3%	11,793	3,931	-5%
4	Barnard Castle	3	11,658	3,886	-3%	12,265	4,088	-1%
5	Belmont	2	7,477	3,739	-6%	7,862	3,931	-5%
6	Benfieldside	2	8,154	4,077	2%	8,337	4,169	0%
7	Bishop Auckland	3	12,206	4,069	2%	12,604	4,201	1%
8	Bowburn & Coxhoe	3	12,414	4,138	4%	13,260	4,420	7%
9	Brandon	2	8,700	4,350	9%	8,768	4,384	6%
10	Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester	2	8,492	4,246	6%	8,712	4,356	5%
11	Castle Eden & Passfield	1	4,439	4,439	11%	4,466	4,466	8%
12	Chester-le-Street North	2	8,071	4,036	1%	8,153	4,077	-2%

	<b>Division name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2022)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2028)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
13	Chester-le-Street South	2	7,504	3,752	-6%	7,550	3,775	-9%
14	Chilton	1	3,584	3,584	-10%	3,823	3,823	-8%
15	Consett North	2	8,867	4,434	11%	9,005	4,503	9%
16	Consett South	3	11,314	3,771	-6%	12,275	4,092	-1%
17	Craghead & South Moor	2	7,975	3,988	0%	8,136	4,068	-2%
18	Crook	3	11,196	3,732	-6%	11,520	3,840	-7%
19	Dalton & Dawdon	2	8,236	4,118	3%	8,307	4,154	0%
20	Deerness	2	8,514	4,257	7%	9,081	4,541	9%
21	Easington & Shotton	3	11,887	3,962	-1%	12,454	4,151	0%
22	Elvet & Gilesgate	2	7,964	3,982	0%	8,668	4,334	4%
23	Evenwood	3	10,648	3,549	-11%	11,230	3,743	-10%
24	Ferryhill	2	7,914	3,957	-1%	8,147	4,074	-2%
25	Framwellgate & Newton Hall	3	10,746	3,582	-10%	11,322	3,774	-9%
26	Horden & Dene House	2	8,144	4,072	2%	8,203	4,102	-1%
27	Lanchester	1	4,511	4,511	13%	4,568	4,568	10%
28	Langley & Esh	1	4,017	4,017	1%	4,160	4,160	0%

	<b>Division name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2022)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2028)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
29	Lumley & West Rainton	2	7,508	3,754	-6%	7,917	3,959	-5%
30	Monk Hesleden	1	4,341	4,341	9%	4,573	4,573	10%
31	Murton	2	7,946	3,973	0%	8,412	4,206	1%
32	Neville's Cross	2	7,745	3,873	-3%	8,010	4,005	-3%
33	North Lodge	1	3,773	3,773	-5%	3,935	3,935	-5%
34	Pelton	3	11,526	3,842	-4%	12,035	4,012	-3%
35	Peterlee	2	8,525	4,263	7%	8,700	4,350	5%
36	Pittington & Sherburn	1	3,659	3,659	-8%	3,781	3,781	-9%
37	Sacrison & Witton Gilbert	2	7,695	3,848	-4%	8,332	4,166	0%
38	Seaham	2	8,905	4,453	12%	9,027	4,514	9%
39	Sedgefield	2	7,575	3,788	-5%	7,873	3,937	-5%
40	Shildon & Dene Valley	3	12,106	4,035	1%	12,601	4,200	1%
41	Spennymoor	2	8,671	4,336	9%	9,134	4,567	10%
42	Stanley	2	8,141	4,071	2%	8,348	4,174	1%
43	Thornley & Wheatley Hill	1	4,308	4,308	8%	4,394	4,394	6%
44	Trimdon & Wingate	2	8,406	4,203	5%	8,824	4,412	6%



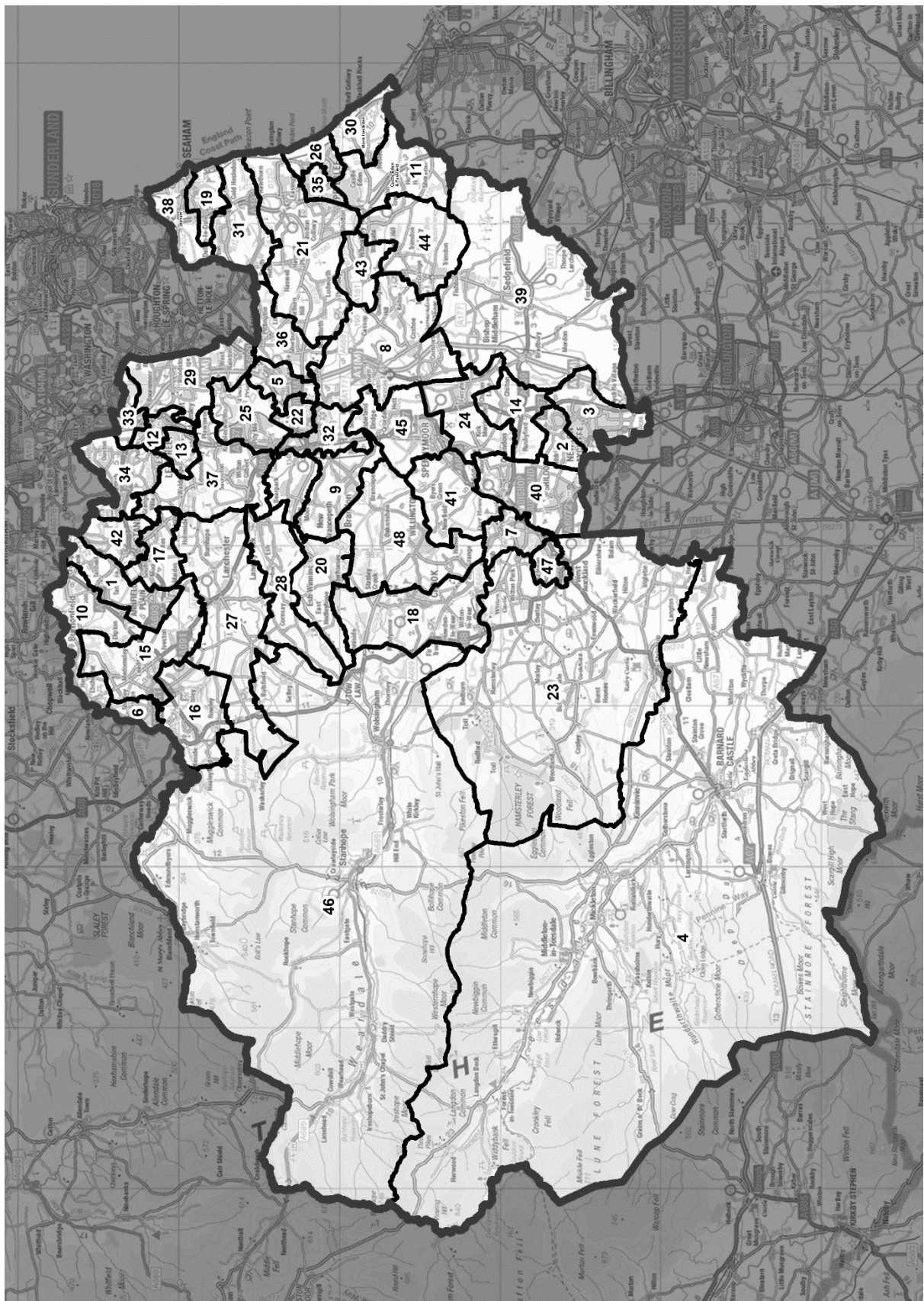
Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
45 Tudhoe	2	8,516	4,258	7%	8,929	4,465	8%
46 Weardale	2	7,960	3,980	0%	8,136	4,068	-2%
47 West Auckland	1	4,110	4,110	3%	4,411	4,411	6%
48 Willington & Hunwick	2	7,208	3,604	-10%	7,602	3,801	-8%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>391,146</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>406,665</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>3,991</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>4,150</b>	<b>–</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Durham County Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral division varies from the average for the county. 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	Division name	Number	Division name
1	Annfield Plain & Tanfield	30	Monk Hesleden
2	Aycliffe North & Middridge	31	Murton
3	Aycliffe South	32	Neville's Cross
4	Barnard Castle	33	North Lodge
5	Belmont	34	Pelton
6	Benfieldside	35	Peterlee
7	Bishop Auckland	36	Pittington & Sherburn
8	Bowburn & Coxhoe	37	Sacrison & Witton Gilbert
9	Brandon	38	Seaham
10	Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester	39	Sedgefield
11	Castle Eden & Passfield	40	Sildon & Dene Valley
12	Chester-le-Street North	41	Spennymoor
13	Chester-le-Street South	42	Stanley
14	Chilton	43	Thornley & Wheatley Hill
15	Consett North	44	Trimdon & Wingate
16	Consett South	45	Tudhoe
17	Craghead & South Moor	46	Weardale
18	Crook	47	West Auckland
19	Dalton & Dawdon	48	Willington & Hunwick
20	Deerness		
21	Easington & Shotton		
22	Elvet & Gilesgate		
23	Evenwood		
24	Ferryhill		
25	Framwellgate & Newton Hall		
26	Horden & Dene House		
27	Lanchester		
28	Langley & Esh		
29	Lumley & West Rainton		

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/county-durham](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/county-durham)

## Appendix C

### Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at:

[www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/county-durham](http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/county-durham)

#### *Political Groups*

- Brandon, Meadowfield & Langley Moor Labour Party Branch
- Durham County Council Conservative Group
- Durham County Council Labour Group
- Durham Liberal Democrats Group
- Teesdale Branch Labour Party
- The Joint Administration running Durham County Council

#### *Councillors*

- Councillor R. Arthur (Seaham Town Council)
- Councillor S. Bowron (Ferryhill Town Council)
- Councillor R. Crute and S. Deinali (Durham County Council)
- Councillor C. Fletcher (Durham County Council)
- Councillor P. Heaviside (Durham County Council)
- Councillor J. Higgins (Durham County Council)
- Councillor V. Jackson (Lanchester Parish Council)
- Councillor C. Martin (Durham County Council)
- Councillor R. Potts (Durham County Council)
- Councillor D. Ranyard (Spennymoor Town Council)
- Councillor P. Trippett (Trimdon Parish Council)

#### *Local Organisations*

- Ludworth Community Centre

#### *Parish and Town Councils*

- Belmont Parish Council
- Eldon Parish Council
- North Lodge Parish Council
- Ouston Parish Council
- Pelton Parish Council
- Sedgfield Town Council

- Shincliffe Parish Council
- Urpeth Parish Council
- West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council
- Wingate Parish Council

*Local Residents*

- 43 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 <a href="http://www.nalc.gov.uk">www.nalc.gov.uk</a>
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.

Local Government Boundary Commission for  
England  
1st Floor, Windsor House  
50 Victoria Street, London  
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**Telephone:** 0330 500 1525

**Email:** [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

**Online:** [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk)

[www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk)

**Twitter:** @LGBCE