

## 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.

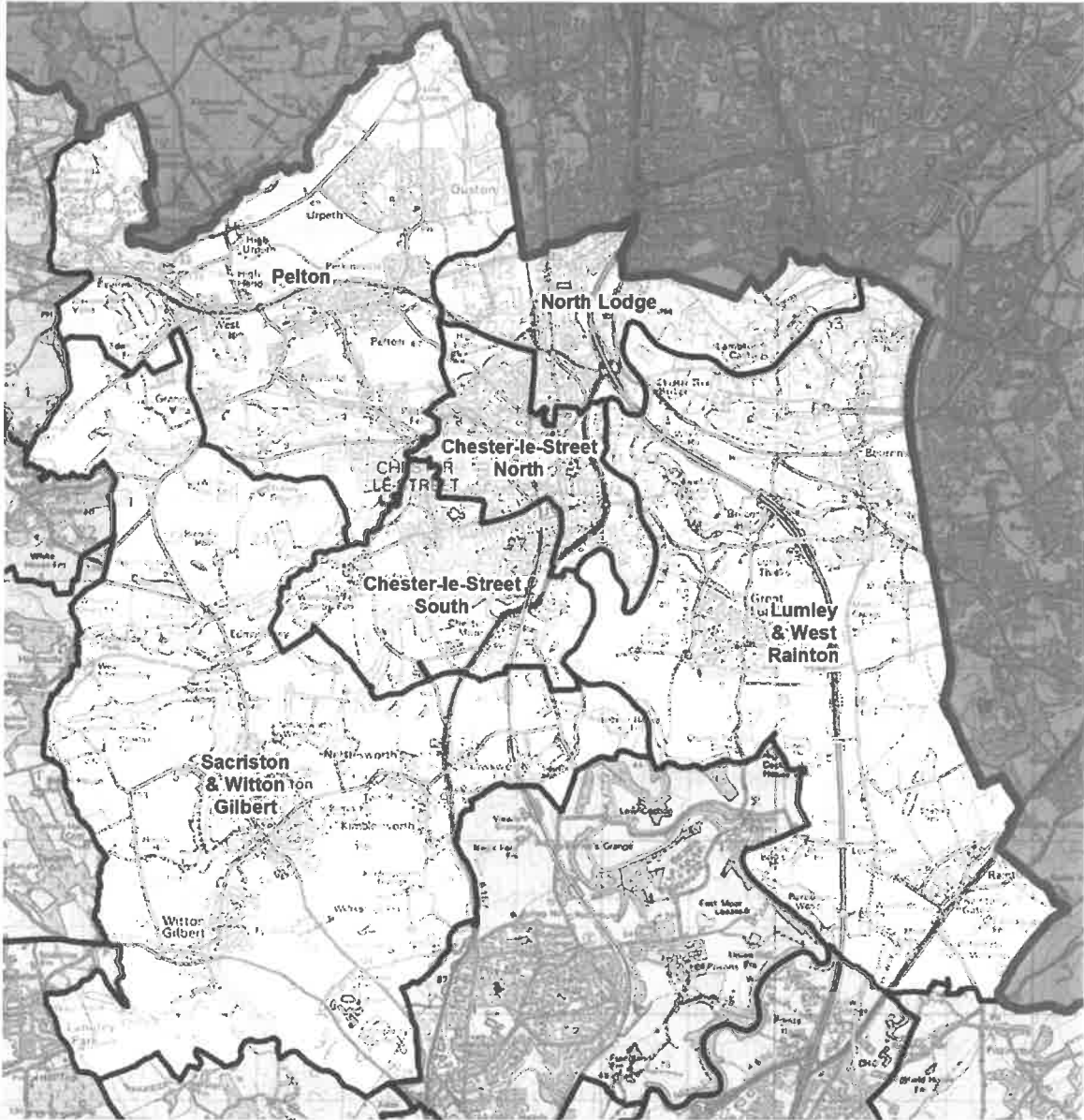
37 A summary of our proposed new divisions is set out in the table starting on page 57 and the large map accompanying this report.

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.

## 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, Littletown, 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, Littletown, 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.





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

## 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%

	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 %
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%



	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 %
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	Sacriston & 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 Wellington & Hunwick	2	7,208	3,604	-10%	7,602	3,801	-8%
Totals	98	391,146	-	-	406,665	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,991	-	-	4,150	-

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.



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	Sacriston & Witton Gilbert
9	Brandon	38	Seaham
10	Burnopfield, Dipton & Ebchester	39	Sedgefield
11	Castle Eden & Passfield	40	Shildon & 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)