

Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Northumberland County Council

Electoral review

October 2023

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A note on our mapping:

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

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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

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

2 The members of the Commission are:

- Professor Colin Mellors OBE (Chair)
- Andrew Scallan CBE (Deputy Chair)
- 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.

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

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

Why Northumberland?

7 We are conducting a review of Northumberland 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 electoral divisions ('divisions') in Northumberland 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 Northumberland

9 Northumberland should be represented by 69 councillors, two more than there are now.

10 Northumberland should have 69 divisions, three more than there are now.

11 The boundaries of most divisions should change; 11 will stay the same.

12 We have now finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Northumberland.

How will the recommendations affect you?

13 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.

14 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 have an effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums and we are not able to consider any representations which are based on these issues.

Review timetable

15 We wrote to the Council to ask its views on the appropriate number of councillors for Northumberland. We then held two periods of consultation with the public on division patterns for the county. The submissions received during consultation have informed our final recommendations.

16 The review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
15 November 2022	Number of councillors decided
22 November 2022	Start of consultation seeking views on new divisions
6 February 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 began analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
3 October 2023	Publication of final recommendations

Analysis and final recommendations

17 Legislation² states that our recommendations should not be based only on how many electors³ 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.

18 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.

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

	2022	2028
Electorate of Northumberland	251,363	266,098
Number of councillors	69	69
Average number of electors per councillor	3,643	3,856

20 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 but three (Bellingham, Rothbury and Hartley) of our proposed divisions for Northumberland are forecast to have good electoral equality by 2028.

Submissions received

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

Electorate figures

22 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2028, a period five years on 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 6% by 2028.

23 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 final recommendations.

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

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

Number of councillors

24 Northumberland County Council currently has 67 councillors. We looked at evidence provided by the Council and concluded that keeping this number the same would ensure the Council can carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

25 We therefore invited proposals for new patterns of divisions that would be represented by 67 councillors. Northumberland County Council passed a resolution requesting the electoral review is carried out as a single-member review. In these instances, the Commission will endeavour wherever possible to produce a pattern of divisions in which each division is represented by a single councillor. We will only move away from this pattern of divisions should we receive compelling evidence during consultation that an alternative pattern of divisions will better reflect our statutory criteria.

26 We received no submissions about the number of councillors in response to our consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore maintained 69 councillors for our final recommendations, an increase of two on the existing council size.

Division boundaries consultation

27 We received 69 submissions in response to our consultation on division boundaries. These included a county-wide proposal from Northumberland County Council. We also received a submission from the Green Party Group on Northumberland County Council. The remainder of the submissions provided localised comments for division arrangements in particular areas of the county.

28 The county-wide scheme provided a uniform pattern of single-councillor divisions for Northumberland. This county-wide scheme proposed that Northumberland be represented by 69 councillors representing 69 single-councillor divisions. This is an increase of two councillors on the existing number of 67 councillors, the figure upon which our division arrangements consultation was based. Northumberland County Council concluded that a division pattern of 69 councillors provided a better balance of divisions in the rural and urban areas, allowing them to best meet our three statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identities and interests and effective and convenient local government.

29 We carefully considered the proposals received and were of the view that the increase of two councillors from 67 to 69 councillors did allow for a division pattern that better met the Commission's statutory criteria. We did not, however, consider that the Council's proposed patterns of divisions resulted in good levels of electoral equality, with 20 of their 69 proposed divisions not providing for electoral equality within 10% of the average for the county. We used this division pattern, in conjunction with the other evidence received as well as a detailed virtual tour, to

develop our proposed draft recommendations. We had planned to visit Northumberland in person as part of our development of the draft recommendations, but unfortunately poor weather prevented this visit.

30 Our draft recommendations were based on the scheme submitted by Northumberland County Council. In some areas we considered that the proposals did not provide for the best balance between our statutory criteria and so we identified alternative boundaries. We also took into account local evidence that we received, which provided further evidence of community links and locally recognised boundaries.

31 Our draft recommendations were for one two-councillor division and 67 single-councillor divisions. We considered that our draft recommendations would provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

Draft recommendations consultation

32 We received 262 submissions during consultation on our draft recommendations. These included a submission from Northumberland Conservative Association (referred to in this report as 'Northumberland Conservatives') with comments on all divisions. We also received submissions on the proposed divisions from Northumberland County Council Green Party Group, Liberal Democrat Group and Labour Group.

33 We received 18 submissions from Northumberland County Council councillors, 19 submissions from representatives of parish and town councils, six submissions from representatives of local organisations, four submissions from Members of Parliament and 212 submissions from local residents.

34 The majority of the submissions focused on specific areas, particularly our proposals in the areas of Alnwick, Bellingham and Rothbury, Blyth and Seaton Valley, Cramlington, and Prudhoe.

Final recommendations

35 Our final recommendations are for 69 single-councillor divisions. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we received such evidence during consultation.

36 Having been unable to visit Northumberland as part of the development of our draft recommendations, we were able to visit during the consideration of the

evidence we received and the formulation of our final recommendations. This tour of Northumberland helped us to decide between the different boundaries proposed.

37 Our final recommendations are based on the draft recommendations with modifications to a number of divisions. We have made changes to the draft recommendations in the north of the county in the Alnwick, Bamburgh and Wooler areas. In the south of the county, we have also modified the draft recommendations in the Bedlington, Blyth, Cramlington, Morpeth and Seaton Valley areas, and have amended our proposals in Prudhoe and the surrounding area in the south-west of the county based on the submissions received. We have also made minor modifications to our proposed boundaries between Bellingham and Rothbury divisions.

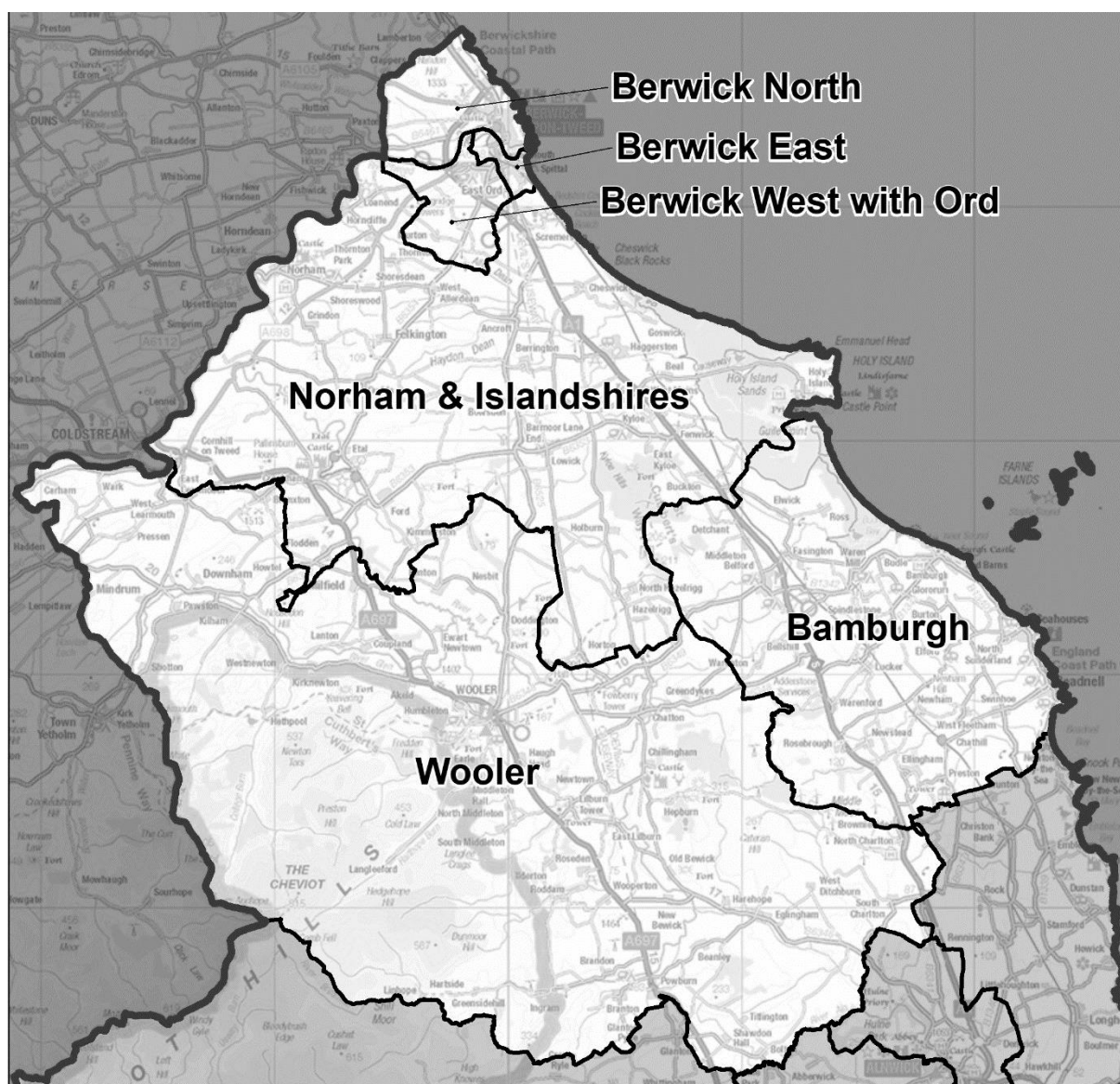
38 The tables and maps on pages 9–42 detail our final recommendations for each area of Northumberland. They detail how the proposed division arrangements reflect the three statutory⁴ criteria of:

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

39 A summary of our proposed new divisions is set out in the table starting on page 51 and on the large map accompanying this report.

⁴ Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Berwick-upon-Tweed and surrounding area



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bamburgh	1	3%
Berwick East	1	-3%
Berwick North	1	2%
Berwick West with Ord	1	-9%
Norham & Islandshires	1	-5%
Wooler	1	8%

Berwick East, Berwick North and Berwick West with Ord

40 Our draft recommendations for this area proposed three divisions unchanged from the existing divisions.

41 We received five submissions that made specific reference to these three divisions. Two local residents supported the proposal to leave Berwick North division unchanged. Ord Parish Council, as well as one local resident, wrote in support of the proposal for Berwick West with Ord. The MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, wrote in support of the Northumberland Conservative Association's submission but mentioned specific support for the retention of three unchanged divisions for Berwick.

42 Having considered the submissions for this area, our final recommendations retain divisions that are identical to the existing three divisions of Berwick East, Berwick North and Berwick West with Ord. We remain of the view that the existing division pattern in Berwick-upon-Tweed reflects the communities within the town and provides electoral equality for these electors.

43 Our final proposals are for three single-councillor divisions of Berwick East, Berwick North and Berwick West with Ord with electoral variances of -3%, 2% and -9%, respectively, by 2028.

Bamburgh, Norham & Islandshires and Wooler

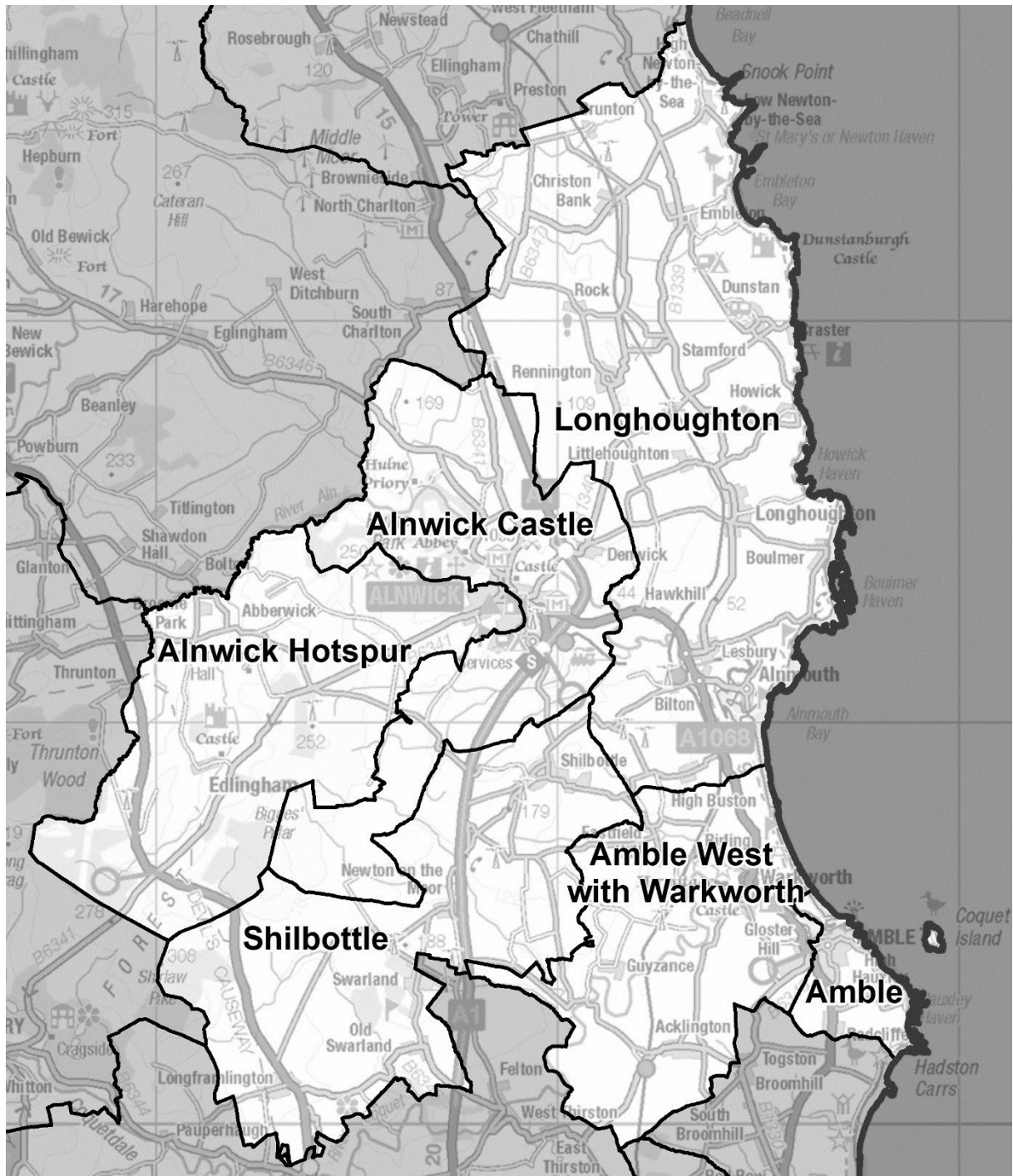
44 We received six submissions that made specific reference to these divisions. Three local residents supported the proposed Bamburgh division. One local resident suggested that Ellingham parish be included in Bamburgh division, as electors in this parish look towards Seahouses rather than Longhoughton. One local resident supported the proposed Norham & Islandshires division.

45 Northumberland Conservatives, in their submission, also proposed the inclusion of Ellingham parish in Bamburgh division, citing the local issues shared between Ellingham and the other parishes in Bamburgh division. They also proposed that the parishes of Eglington and Hedgeley be included in Wooler division to reflect their character as rural inland parishes, rather than include them in a division with coastal parishes.

46 Having considered these submissions, we have adopted the amendments suggested by the Northumberland Conservatives to include Ellingham parish in Bamburgh division and Eglington and Hedgeley parishes in Wooler division. In our view, these arrangements provide for a better reflection of local community identities and interests.

47 Our final recommendations are for three divisions of Bamburgh, Norham & Islandshires and Wooler. These three divisions will have electoral variances of 3%, -5% and 8%, respectively, by 2028.

Alnwick and surrounding area



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Alnwick Castle	1	4%
Alnwick Hotspur	1	-2%
Amble	1	5%
Amble West with Warkworth	1	0%
Longhoughton	1	2%
Shilbottle	1	-6%

Alnwick Castle, Alnwick Hotspur and Longhoughton

48 Alnwick is currently represented by two councillors as part of a two-councillor division. It is the only two-councillor division.

49 The Council's submission during the previous consultation proposed two single-councillor divisions of Alnwick East and Alnwick West. The Council's proposed divisions had 17% more electors than average in Alnwick East and 11% more in Alnwick West.

50 As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed the retention of a two-councillor division which had an electoral variance of 14% from the average for Northumberland. We based our decision on the poor electoral equality that was contained in the proposed two single-councillor divisions, as well as on the support for the existing two-councillor division from a political group, the existing councillors, a local organisation and a small number of local residents.

51 In response to the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received further evidence regarding the division pattern in Alnwick and the communities in the area. This included a revised division pattern for two single-councillor divisions for Alnwick from Northumberland Conservatives, discussed fully below. We also received a submission from the Northumberland County Council Liberal Democrat Group opposing a two-councillor division in Alnwick. This submission argued that many of the other towns in the county are divided between divisions and those division boundaries had not impacted on service delivery.

52 We received eight submissions from local residents opposed to a two-councillor division in Alnwick. Five of these submissions explicitly supported the proposal from Northumberland Conservatives. Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP also wrote in support of the Northumberland Conservatives' submission.

53 Councillor Swinbank (one of the two councillors for the existing division) and the Northumberland County Council Green Party Group offered support for a two-councillor division in Alnwick. One local resident also supported a two-councillor division.

54 The submission from Northumberland Conservatives proposed two single-councillor divisions of Alnwick Castle and Alnwick Hotspur. Their proposed Alnwick Castle division was comprised of the part of the existing Alnwick Town Council parish ward of Castle that covers the east of the town, as well as both parts of Denwick parish. Their proposed Hotspur division was comprised of the Alnwick Town Council parish wards of Clayport and Hotspur, as well as the part of Castle parish ward to the west of the town and the parish of Edlingham. The Northumberland Conservatives proposed a revised Longhoughton division focused on coastal parishes and included the parishes of Alnmouth and Lesbury.

55 The Northumberland Conservatives argued that Alnmouth and Lesbury parishes were a good fit for the Longhoughton division as they shared similar issues to the other coastal parishes in the proposed division. Like the Liberal Democrat Group, they argued that Alnwick should be covered by two single-councillor divisions.

56 As part of our tour of Northumberland we visited the town of Alnwick and surrounding area. We carefully considered the proposed division of the town into two single-councillors divisions, as well as the inclusion of Alnmouth and Lesbury parishes in Longhoughton division.

57 Having visited the area and considered all the submissions received during both consultations, we are persuaded that Alnwick should be represented by two single-councillor divisions. The divisions suggested by the Northumberland Conservatives provide two divisions with good electoral equality and we have adopted them as part of our final recommendations, subject to a small modification to include Fairfields and the streets off it wholly in Alnwick Castle division. In our view, using the existing town council parish ward boundary in this area would divide this community.

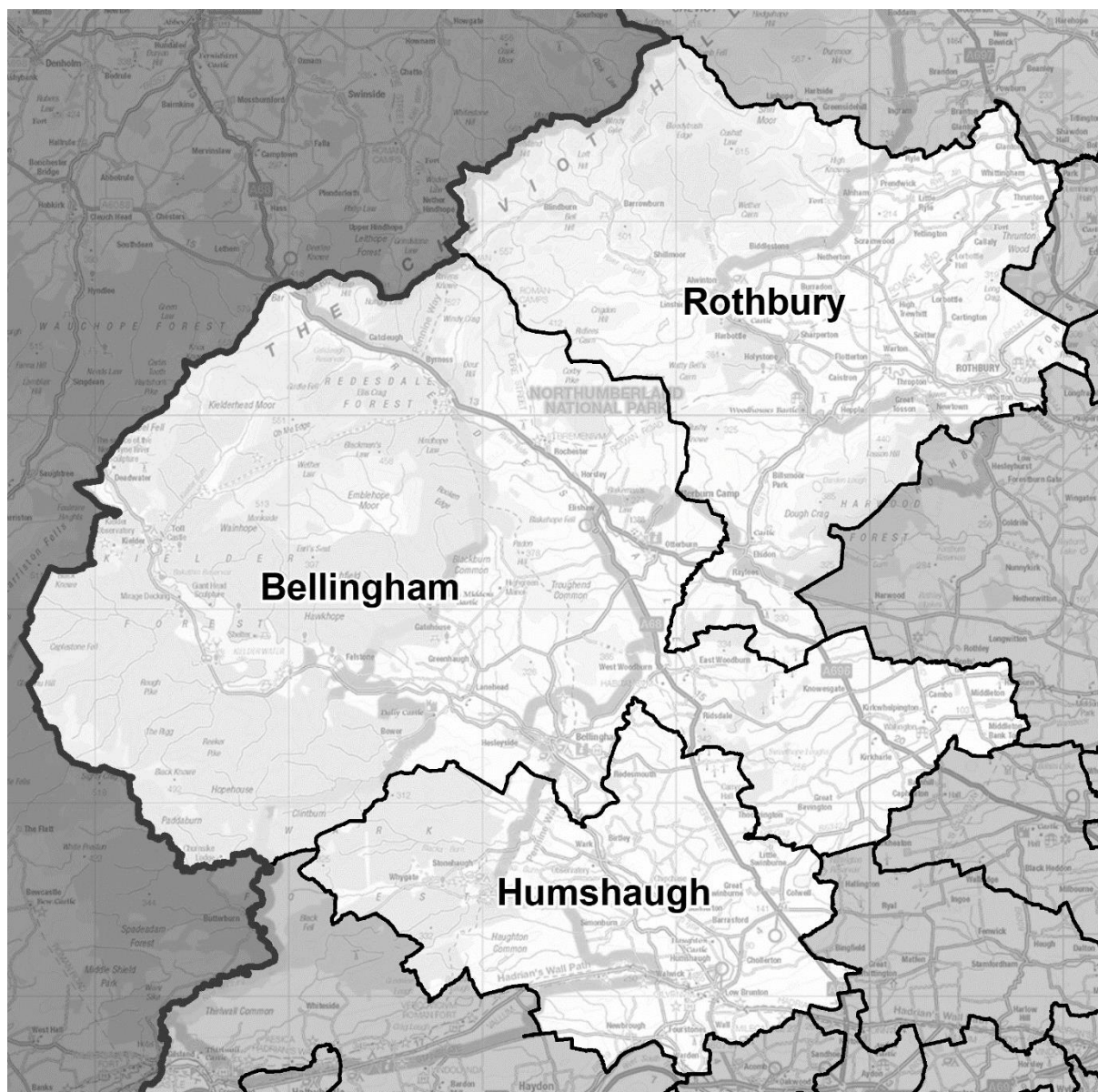
58 Our final recommendations for this area are for three single-councillor divisions of Alnwick Castle, Alnwick Hotspur and Longhoughton. These divisions will have electoral variances of 4%, -2% and 2% by 2028, respectively.

Amble, Amble West with Warkworth and Shilbottle

59 We received six submissions that directly referenced Amble and Amble West with Warkworth, all of which supported the draft recommendations for these two divisions. These representations included the submission of Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP who also explicitly supported our proposals in Shilbottle. We received no further comments on Shilbottle division.

60 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations in this area as final. These final proposals are for three single-councillor divisions of Amble, Amble West with Warkworth and Shilbottle. These three divisions will have variances of 5%, 0% and -6% by 2028, respectively.

Rural West Northumberland



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bellingham	1	-11%
Humshaugh	1	-10%
Rothbury	1	11%

Bellingham and Rothbury

61 We received around 35 submissions that referred to one of these two divisions. As part of the draft recommendations, we included the parishes of Elsdon – currently in Rothbury division – and Rothley and Wallington Demesne parishes – currently in Longhorsley division – in Bellingham division. We also proposed to move Hesleyhurst parish to Longhorsley division to include it in a division alongside its grouped parish of Brinkburn. We proposed to leave Humshaugh division unchanged.

62 The majority of the submissions we received in this area concerned our proposal to include Elsdon parish in Bellingham division. These submissions, including a response from Elsdon Parish Council, argued strongly that Elsdon parish should remain in Rothbury division. The submission from the parish council contained persuasive community evidence to support its argument, evidence that was also mentioned to varying degrees in the other submissions. We also received a submission on behalf of the parish councillors of Rothley parish and Hollinghill parish, stating their connections to the Longhorsley division and Morpeth.

63 We received a number of submissions regarding the inclusion of Brinkburn parish – currently in Shilbottle division – and Hesleyhurst parish – currently in Rothbury division – in Longhorsley division, which is discussed in the section below. These submissions argued that both parishes should be included in Rothbury division.

64 Having considered all of the submissions and having visited the area during our tours of Northumberland – both virtual and in-person – we propose to include Elsdon parish in Rothbury division. While this division is forecast to have 11% more electors than the average for Northumberland by 2028, we consider this relatively high variance is justified given the community evidence we have received from Elsdon parish.

65 As to the arguments related to Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes, we note that the two parishes are grouped and yet currently divided between divisions, with Brinkburn parish being included in the existing Shilbottle division and Hesleyhurst parish currently in the existing Rothbury division. Having investigated the various options in this area, we note that a Rothbury division that included all of these parishes would have poor electoral equality of 16% more electors than the average by 2028. We therefore include Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes in Longhorsley division as part of our final recommendations, which ensures that the grouped parishes are no longer divided between two different divisions. This decision does create a forecast electoral variance in Bellingham of -11%, but – as with Rothbury – we are persuaded that the community evidence justifies a slightly higher variance in this case. Longhorsley division is discussed in more detail in a later section.

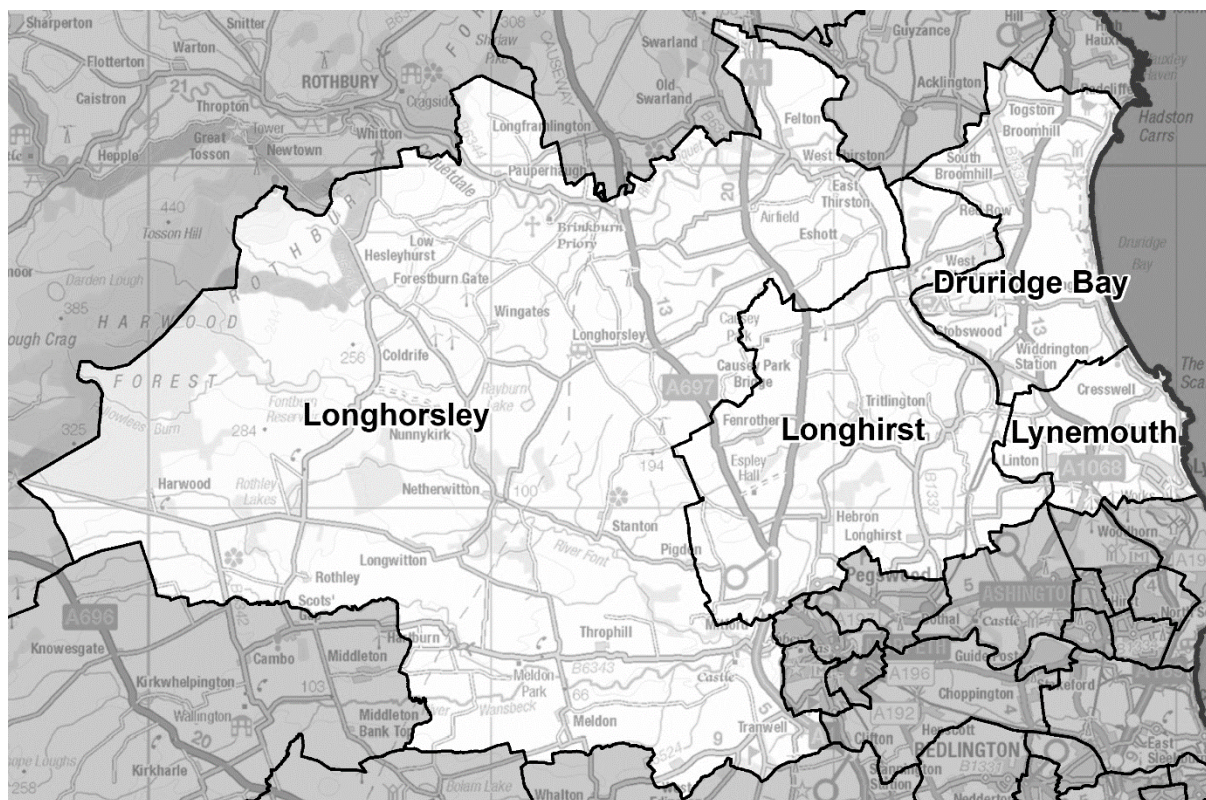
66 Our final recommendations for this area are therefore two single-councillor divisions of Bellingham and Rothbury with electoral variances of -11% and 11% by 2028, respectively.

Humshaugh

67 We received five submissions regarding our proposal to leave Humshaugh divisions unchanged. Two local residents, Chollerton Parish Council, Simonburn Parish Council and Northumberland County Council Green Party Group all supported an unchanged division.

68 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final. Our proposed single-councillor division of Humshaugh will have an electoral variance of -10% by 2028.

South Central Northumberland



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Druridge Bay	1	-1%
Longhirst	1	0%
Longhorsley	1	4%
Lynemouth	1	4%

Druridge Bay, Longhirst and Lynemouth

69 We received 10 submissions that mentioned these three divisions. Northumberland Conservatives supported all three divisions and the submission from Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP specifically supported the proposals for Druridge Bay and Lynemouth divisions. A local resident proposed an alternative division pattern for Druridge Bay, Longhirst and Longhorsley, which meant that the parish of Widdrington Station & Stobswood would no longer be split between two divisions. Six other local residents objected to an arrangement which split the parish of Widdrington Station & Stobswood. Cresswell Parish Council stated a desire to remain in Druridge Bay rather than be included in Lynemouth division due to the different demographics of the two areas.

70 The submission from the local resident proposed a Widdrington division containing part of Tritlington & West Chevington parish, as well as Ulgham, Widdrington Station & Stobswood and Widdrington Village parishes; and a Felton &

Druridge Bay division made up of East Chevington, Felton, Thirston and Togston parishes and the remaining part of Tritlington & West Chevington parish.

71 We considered these submissions and visited the area on our tour of Northumberland. We accept that our draft proposals divided Widdrington Station & Stobswood parish between divisions and that this may not reflect communities in the area. However, we note that a division arrangement which includes the entirety of the parish in our Longhirst division would produce very poor electoral equality of 25% in Longhirst division and -26% in Druridge Bay division. Equally, if we included the whole parish in our Druridge Bay division it would produce a variance of 35% for Druridge Bay and -36% for Longhirst division.

72 We considered the submission from the local resident, and whilst we noted that this proposal provided electoral equality for both divisions, it resulted in an arrangement which split Tritlington & West Chevington parish between divisions. The part of the parish that the local resident proposed to include in their Felton & Druridge Bay division would have fewer than 100 electors, which would create an unviable parish ward. As such, we have been unable to adopt these divisions as part of our final recommendations. We also noted that were Cresswell parish to remain in Druridge Bay it would have poor electoral equality of 14% more electors than the average for the county by 2028. We did not consider we had received evidence that would justify this level of electoral inequality in this area.

73 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for the single-councillor divisions of Druridge Bay, Longhirst and Lynemouth as final. These divisions will have electoral variances of -1%, 0% and 4% by 2028, respectively.

Longhorsley

74 We received 15 submissions regarding our Longhorsley division. The majority of these submissions regarded the inclusion of Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes in this division, including a response from Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council as well as 10 local residents. These submissions all argued for the inclusion of Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes in Rothbury division. We also received a submission from Thirston Parish Council and from a local resident strongly supporting the proposal to include Thirston and Felton parishes in the same division due to their very strong community ties. A submission from the parish councillors of Rothley Parish Council and Hollinghill Parish Council objected to the inclusion of Rothley in Bellingham division and stated their ties to the east and Morpeth. A submission from Wallington Demense Parish Council also stated their preference to remain in Longhorsley division rather than Bellingham division but did not offer any evidence to support their preference.

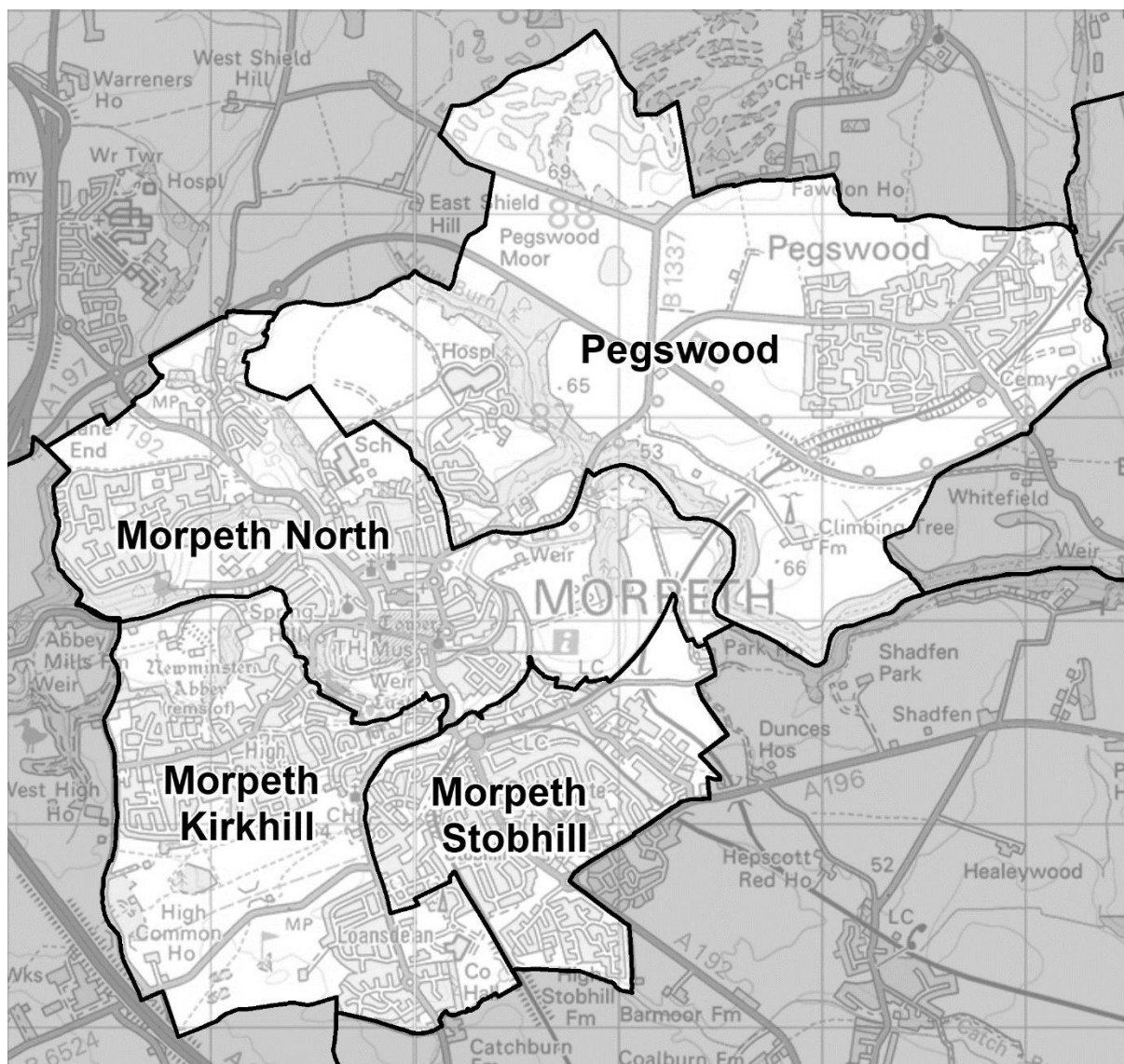
75 Having considered the submissions, our final recommendations for Longhorsley division include Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes and is extended to include Rothley and Hollinghill parishes. These are all grouped parish councils and we try

not to divide grouped parish councils wherever possible. We retain Wallington Demense parish in Bellingham division.

76 While we carefully considered the submissions from Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst parishes, we noted that their inclusion in Rothbury division would create an electoral variance of 16% in the division by 2028. We concluded that we had not been persuaded that the evidence justified this level of electoral inequality in this case. Rather than divide the grouped parish, as is currently the case, our final recommendations include both parishes in Longhorsley division. We also accept the arguments from Rothley and Hollinghill parishes about Rothley's lack of ties to Bellingham. To avoid dividing this group parish, we have included both in Longhorsley division as part of our final recommendations.

77 Our final recommendation proposes a single-councillor Longhorsley division with electoral equality of 4% by 2028.

Morpeth



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Morpeth Kirkhill	1	5%
Morpeth North	1	6%
Morpeth Stobhill	1	-2%
Pegswood	1	1%

Morpeth Kirkhill, Morpeth North, Morpeth Stobhill and Pegswood

78 The submission we received from Northumberland Conservatives supported our proposed Pegswood division and suggested minor changes to the other three divisions. They also noted that around 900 electors are due to move from Hebron parish to Morpeth parish from elections in 2025, leaving Morpeth entitled to between three and four councillors based on its forecast electorate.

79 Morpeth Town Council, in their submission, reference a Community Governance Review that was carried out in 2020-21. The outcome of this review was not communicated to us until after the publication of our draft recommendations, so we were unable to take it into account at that time. We have now received the details of the Community Governance Review, and these have been taken into account when drawing up our final recommendations.

80 The outcome of the Community Governance Review was that parts of Hebron parish, an area known as Northgate, moves into Morpeth parish. In addition, the parish boundary between Morpeth and Hepscoth has been amended to follow the A192 and A196. The housing development at South Field remains in Hepscoth parish.

81 Morpeth Town Council, as part of their submission, suggested that the revised boundaries of Morpeth could be represented by four councillors and provided an alternative division pattern for four Morpeth divisions: Morpeth Central, Morpeth Kirkhill, Morpeth North and Morpeth Stobhill.

82 Northumberland Conservatives proposed that our draft recommendations could be amended by moving South Field out of Morpeth Stobhill, transferring Loansdean Wood, The Kylins and Sweethope Dean from Morpeth Kirkhill to Morpeth Stobhill. They also proposed to revert the boundary between Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth North to follow the existing boundary.

83 The Labour Group proposed a small amendment to Morpeth Kirkhill division to add the part of Hepscoth parish to the west of the railway line into the town into Morpeth Kirkhill division. They proposed this to allow a small number of electors around Catchburn Farm to be included in a Morpeth division.

84 Councillor Wearmouth, the current Morpeth Kirkhill councillor, supported the submission of the Northumberland Conservatives and stated that he considered the four single-councillor division proposal of Morpeth Town Council to be impractical.

85 Of the three submissions from local residents, all regarded the inclusion of South Field in Morpeth Stobhill, with two in favour of the proposal and one against it.

86 Having considered the submissions and having visited Morpeth, and in particular South Field and Northgate, as part of our tour of Northumberland, we are proposing to adopt the revised division pattern suggested by Northumberland Conservatives.

87 We spent a significant amount of time investigating whether it was possible to provide a division pattern for the Morpeth area that would see it represented by four councillors. We concluded it was not possible for two main reasons. Firstly,

allocating four councillors for Morpeth would require Northumberland to be represented by 70 councillors. This increase of one councillor would negatively impact on the electoral equality of divisions across the county, requiring amendments to divisions which were well supported by the evidence we have received. Secondly, the proposed division pattern from Morpeth Town Council does not provide for good electoral equality for the areas around the town. An arrangement which removes the St George's Park development from Pegswood division and the Northgate development from Longhirst division would leave those divisions with over 30% fewer electors than other divisions.

88 Having concluded that a pattern of three single-councillor divisions therefore worked best for Morpeth in context of the arrangement for the whole county, we were mindful that some areas of the town would be required to remain in divisions with neighbouring parishes. We considered the alternative pattern suggested by Northumberland Conservatives.

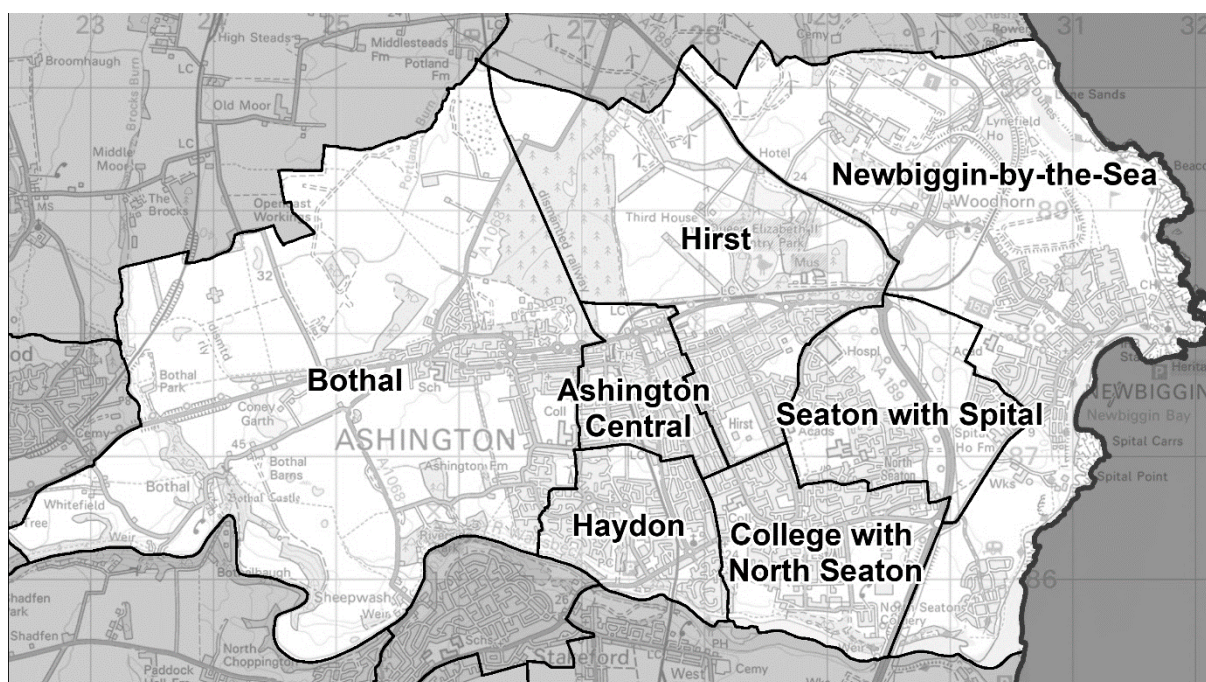
89 We concluded that this pattern was the best reflection of our statutory criteria for the town. We agree that the existing boundary between Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth North better reflects those communities by retaining Castle Close in Morpeth Kirkhill. We are also of the view that the amendment between Morpeth Kirkhill and Morpeth Stobhill provides for a boundary that is more identifiable than that of our draft recommendations.

90 We also propose that the South Field area remains in Choppington & Hepscoth division. We visited the area and considered that electors in this development were likely to use Morpeth for their service needs. However, its inclusion in a Morpeth division would see a split within the parish of Hepscoth. On balance, and having carefully considered all of the options, we are of the view that retaining the whole of Hepscoth parish in a single division provides for the best reflection of our statutory criteria. We propose to make no changes to our draft proposals for the Pegswood division which will continue to consist of Pegswood parish and the St George's Park area of Morpeth.

91 We are unable to make the small change suggested by the Labour Group as this would require the creation of a parish ward of 15 electors within Hepscoth parish. We do not consider that any parish ward of under 100 electors provides for effective and convenient local government so we do not propose to make this change.

92 Our four divisions for Morpeth and Pegswood are the single-councillor divisions of Morpeth Kirkhill with a variance of 5%, Morpeth North at 6%, Morpeth Stobhill at -2% and Pegswood at 1% by 2028.

Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Ashington Central	1	-7%
Bothal	1	-7%
College with North Seaton	1	-1%
Haydon	1	-3%
Hirst	1	-7%
Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	1	3%
Seaton with Spital	1	9%

Ashington Central, Bothal, College with North Seaton, Haydon, Hirst, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Seaton with Spital

93 We only received two submissions that mentioned our proposals in Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. The submissions from Ashington Town Council and Northumberland Conservatives both supported all seven divisions.

94 The Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council submission asked that the town council ward allocation be amended to give all four wards two councillors. At this stage, our proposed allocation of ward councillors reflects the forecast number of electors for each. If a town council wishes to make changes to the number of councillors per ward, it can do so by means of a Community Governance Review in conjunction with Northumberland County Council.

95 We therefore confirm as final our seven divisions in this area. Our final recommendations will see seven single-councillor divisions of Ashington Central,

Bothal, College with North Seaton, Haydon, Hirst, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Seaton with Spital with electoral variances of -7%, -7%, -1%, -3%, -7%, 3% and 9% by 2028, respectively.

Bedlington and surrounding area



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bedlington Central	1	6%
Bedlington East	1	2%
Bedlington West	1	10%
Choppington & Hepscott	1	-5%
Sleekburn	1	-6%
Stakeford	1	-2%

Bedlington Central, Bedlington East and Bedlington West

96 We received three submissions that focused on Bedlington. Northumberland Conservatives proposed amendments to all three divisions and two local residents supported this revised proposal.

97 Northumberland Conservatives proposed The Wyndings estates move back into Bedlington West division. They also suggested that the part of West Bedlington that we proposed to include in Bedlington East division (the town council ward of Park Road) is included in Bedlington Central. This means that the parish of West Bedlington is only divided between two divisions rather than three, as per the draft recommendations. Northumberland Conservatives also proposed a Bedlington East division which used the railway line as its boundary, as opposed to both the existing division and our draft recommendations which include a portion of East Bedlington parish to the west of the railway line in a division with the parts of the parish to the east. Northumberland Conservatives stated that the railway line is the stronger boundary in this area with limited places to cross it within the existing division.

98 We propose to adopt these amendments which we agree make for a more identifiable division pattern, in particular by using the railway line as a stronger boundary than the existing arrangement. We also agree that dividing a parish between fewer divisions is better for the effective and convenient local government of electors in those divisions.

99 Our final recommendations for Bedlington are for three single-councillor wards of Bedlington Central, Bedlington East and Bedlington West. These divisions will have electoral variances of 6%, 2% and 10% by 2028, respectively.

Choppington & Hepscott, Sleekburn and Stakeford

100 We received around 15 submissions relating to these three divisions, including a revised proposal from Northumberland Conservatives. They proposed a revised pattern that works in conjunction with their proposals in Morpeth and Bedlington.

101 Northumberland Conservatives proposed to include the South Field development in Choppington & Hepscott division, as discussed in the Morpeth section of this report. They also proposed a division more focused on Stakeford than our draft recommendations, arguing that our proposals had divided the Stakeford community. Finally, they proposed a Sleekburn division that included the communities of West Sleekburn and East Sleekburn together with electors along the A1147 (such as Bomarsund). They stated that these communities share issues in common with the other communities in the proposed division.

102 Choppington Parish Council objected to the inclusion of electors on River Bank in our proposed Sleekburn division. They also opposed our proposal to include Hepscott parish in a division with Choppington, stating the lack of ties between the two communities. They did not submit any revised proposals for the parish.

103 We received a number of submissions from Hepscott parish, which opposed the parish's inclusion in a division with Choppington and stated stronger ties to Morpeth and to the Longhorsley division, in which they are currently located. These arguments included a submission from Hepscott Parish Council. However, this representation was focused on the party-political consequences of the proposed change and as such we cannot consider this argument given our political impartiality.

104 In addition, we received a submission from Ian Lavery MP who stated that historically Hepscott and Choppington had been part of different predecessor authorities and Hepscott may be better placed in a division with areas from that previous authority (Castle Morpeth) like Ponteland and Stannington.

105 Having considered all the submissions and having visited the area on our tour of Northumberland, we propose to adopt the revised proposal submitted by Northumberland Conservatives.

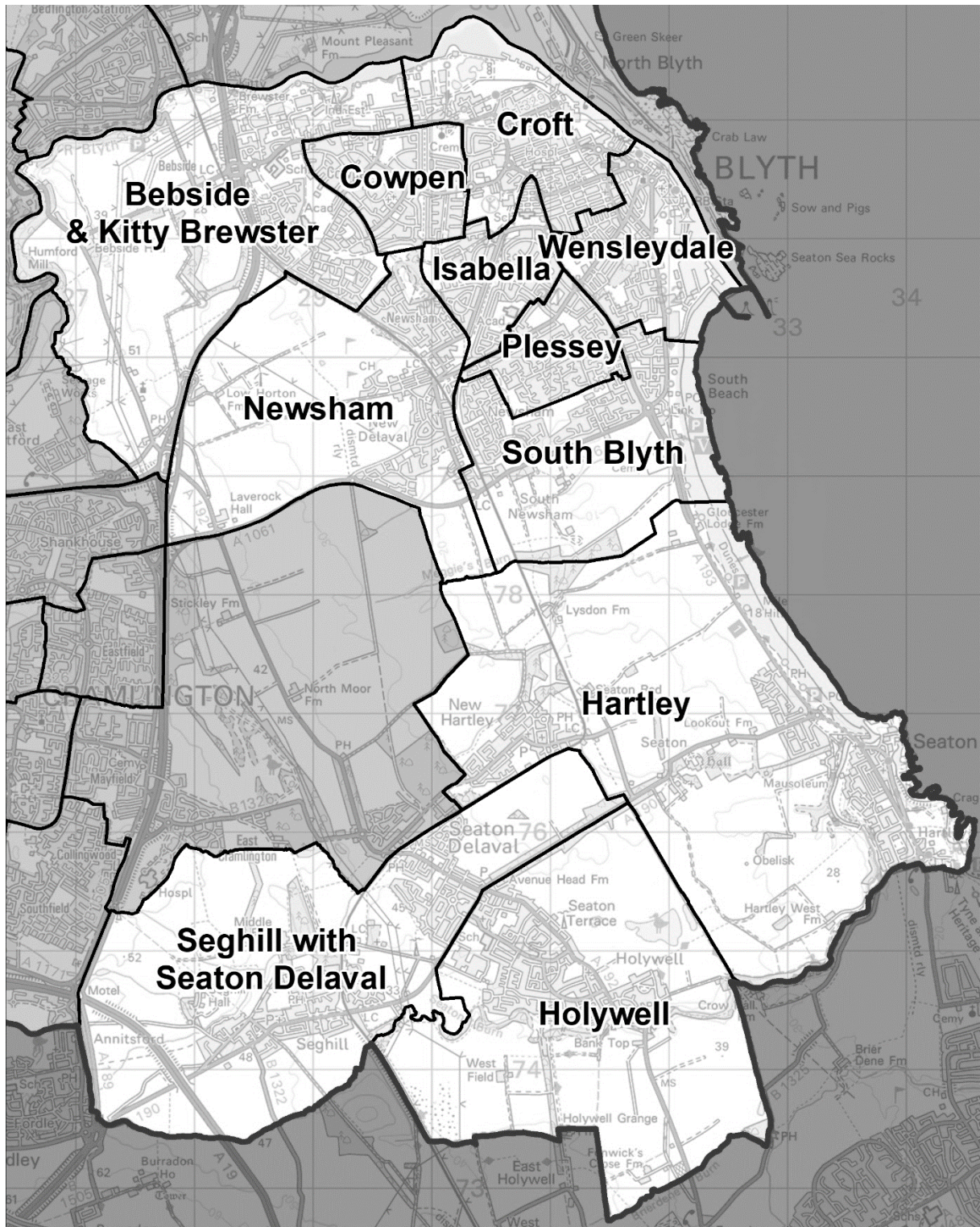
106 We note the strong feelings of many of the respondents in this area. However, the limitations of providing a pattern of single-councillor divisions often has the consequence of grouping together areas that do not share particularly strong ties to facilitate electoral equality. We prefer to combine areas than to divide existing communities and parishes.

107 In our view, it is not possible to include Hepscoth in a division pattern with Morpeth and meet all three of our statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identity and interests and effective and convenient local government. Nor is it possible to provide a division pattern for Choppington and East Bedlington parishes without including other areas. We consider that it is more appropriate for Choppington to be paired with Hepscoth parish than expanding the division into the Ashington and Blyth areas.

108 Having carefully considered the evidence and the options in the area, we are of the view that the revised proposal from Northumberland Conservatives provides for the best division pattern for the area by avoiding a split of Hepscoth parish and wholly including it in Choppington & Hepscoth division, which we propose to rename to add the name of Hepscoth parish. We also consider that the proposed Stakeford division is most reflective of the community in that area and avoids dividing the Stakeford community. Having considered all the different divisions arrangements we noted that it is necessary to divide Choppington parish between three divisions due to the number of electors who live in the parish. We consider that the Sleekburn division as well as our proposal for Choppington & Hepscoth and Stakeford divisions best reflects this.

109 Our final recommendations for this area are three single-councillor divisions of Choppington & Hepscoth, Sleekburn and Stakeford with electoral variances of -5%, -6% and -2% by 2028, respectively.

Blyth and Seaton Valley parishes



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Bebside & Kitty Brewster	1	-5%
Cowpen	1	1%
Croft	1	-1%
Hartley	1	13%
Holywell	1	4%
Isabella	1	-9%
Newsham	1	9%
Plessey	1	-7%
Seghill with Seaton Delaval	1	8%
South Blyth	1	3%
Wensleydale	1	-6%

Whole area

110 We received around 107 submissions that made comment on our draft recommendations in the parishes of Blyth and Seaton Valley. Northumberland Conservatives submitted a revised proposal for part of the area. They supported the draft recommendations for Bebside (subject to renaming the division Bebside & Kitty Brewster), Cowpen, Holywell, Seghill with Seaton Delaval and Wensleydale.

111 Their revised proposal included a division that crossed the parish boundaries of Cramlington and Seaton Valley to create a Cramlington East & Double Row division, which is discussed fully in the section below. This proposal facilitated for a Hartley division that included all New Hartley Village (except Dorchester Court) which we divided between our Hartley and New Delaval & New Hartley divisions as part of our draft recommendations. Northumberland Conservatives also proposed to restore the existing Isabella, Newsham, Plessey and South Blyth divisions in Blyth subject to some small changes, discussed below.

112 Northumberland County Council Labour Group proposed a similar arrangement with their proposed Newsham division made up of the bulk of the existing Newsham division with a few area transferring to a revised Cramlington East division discussed in the section below.

Hartley, Holywell and Seghill with Seaton Delaval

113 We received 89 submissions regarding our proposed New Delaval & New Hartley division, all of which were opposed to our suggested arrangement which split the village of New Hartley between divisions. These submissions came from local residents as well as Ian Levy MP, Councillor Chicken (Seghill with Seaton Delaval division), Councillor Henderson (Seaton Valley Community Council), Friends of Holywell Dene, New Hartley Community Association, New Hartley First School, New Hartley Residents' Club, Seaton Sluice & Old Hartley Residents' Association, Seaton

Sluice Community Association and Seaton Valley Community Council. Northumberland County Council Labour Group proposed to maintain the division of New Hartley but proposed that it be divided between our proposed Hartley division and their revised Cramlington East division (discussed in the section below).

114 The representations we received offered a wealth of evidence illustrating the strong sense of community ties across the village. The submissions argued that the community ties would be undermined and broken by our proposed arrangement.

115 To address these concerns, the revised proposal from Northumberland Conservatives was for a Hartley division that included the whole of New Hartley Village except for Dorchester Court. This produced a division with an electoral variance of 10% from the average for Northumberland by 2028.

116 We studied the many informative submissions for this area, and we visited the village as part of our tour of Northumberland. We were able to see from this visit that our draft proposals did not provide for effective and convenient local government for the village, nor did they reflect the strong community ties in the area.

117 We have therefore adopted the revised proposal from Northumberland Conservatives for Hartley division as part of our final recommendations, subject to one change. We propose to include Dorchester Court in Hartley division, as we consider not including it would split community ties in the area. Our proposed Hartley division will have an electoral variance of 13% more electors than the average for the county by 2028. We consider that this relatively high level of electoral inequality is justified in this area to ensure that our final recommendations do not divide the New Hartley community.

118 Our final recommendations for this area are for three single-councillor divisions of Hartley, Holywell and Seghill with Seaton Delaval. These divisions will have electoral variances of 13%, 4% and 8% by 2028, respectively.

Bebside & Kitty Brewster, Cowpen and Wensleydale

119 In addition to the support for these divisions from Northumberland Conservatives we also received support for them from five local residents.

120 We agree with the suggestion from Northumberland Conservatives to rename Bebside division to Bebside & Kitty Brewster and propose this name is adopted.

121 Our final recommendations for this part of Blyth are for three single-councillor divisions of Bebside & Kitty Brewster, Cowpen and Wensleydale. These three divisions have electoral variances of -5%, 1% and -6% by 2028, respectively.

Croft, Isabella, Newsham, Plessey and South Blyth

122 Northumberland Conservatives' revised proposal for these five divisions was to restore the existing Newsham division and accept our proposed South Blyth division, subject to a small change to the boundary between the two. They also proposed to restore the existing Isabella division, reversing our proposal to include electors in the triangle bounded by Princess Louise Road, Railway Terrace and Renwick Road in Croft division. They stated that this area works well in its current division of Isabella.

123 In addition, Northumberland Conservatives proposed to amend the boundary between Isabella and Plessey divisions from Sixth Avenue to Tenth Avenue to provide electoral equality in both divisions. This included the bulk of 'The Avenues' in the same division, and Northumberland Conservatives argued that these roads have more in common with electors to the north in Isabella division than to the south in Plessey division. Finally, they proposed that the Newsham division be restored, with the exception of the small area to the west of the A189 (which they agreed should be included in Bebside & Kitty Brewster) and a small number of electors in Park Farm Villas, Railway Cottages and Rayburn Court (which they proposed to include in South Blyth to provide for electoral equality in Newsham division and to reflect that they have more in common with electors in South Blyth than the new development in progress in Newsham).

124 We received six other submissions, including that of Ian Levy MP, which supported the revised proposals made by Northumberland Conservatives.

125 We considered the Newsham division proposed by the Labour Group and we note that it is, with the exception of a handful of electors on the Cramlington side of the disused railway line, the same as the division proposed by Northumberland Conservatives we propose to adopt.

126 Our final recommendations adopt the changes suggested by Northumberland Conservatives for these divisions. These proposals work well in conjunction with the changes in the Hartley area of Seaton Valley parish and we consider they are reflective of the local communities across Blyth and reflect the other submissions we have received.

127 Our final recommendations for this area of Blyth are for five single-councillor divisions of Croft, Isabella, Newsham, Plessey and South Blyth with electoral variances of -1%, -9%, 9%, -7% and 3% by 2028, respectively.

Cramlington



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Cramlington East & Double Row	1	-2%
Cramlington Eastfield	1	2%
Cramlington North	1	7%
Cramlington North West	1	-9%
Cramlington South East	1	-3%
Cramlington South West	1	-9%
Cramlington Village	1	1%

Cramlington

128 We received around 16 submissions that referenced all or part of Cramlington. The submission from Northumberland Conservatives supported the proposed divisions for Cramlington Eastfield, Cramlington North, Cramlington North West, Cramlington South West and Cramlington Village. They proposed amendments to Cramlington East and Cramlington South East to facilitate a revised division pattern in the Hartley area. They suggested that the Double Row area of Seaton Valley parish be included in a division they proposed to call Cramlington East & Double

Row. They also proposed that the Collingwood community be wholly contained in Cramlington South East division and not divided between Cramlington East and Cramlington South East, as included in our draft recommendations.

129 Cramlington Town Council asked that we reconsider the electoral forecasts for Cramlington Village as well as consider the number of town councillors allocated to the town council wards. They also argued that Barns Park should remain part of Cramlington Village division, as it is isolated from the rest of Cramlington South East division by the A1171 dual carriageway.

130 Councillor Flux, the county councillor for Cramlington West, supported the draft recommendations in Cramlington North West and Cramlington South West. Councillor Flux also suggested that a solution to splitting Hartley in the neighbouring Seaton Valley parish would be to include the Double Row area in a Cramlington East division, as suggested by the Northumberland Conservatives' proposal. Councillor Flux suggested that councillors for these two areas had a history of working together and that the area had stronger ties to Cramlington than it did to the Newsham area of Blyth.

131 Councillor Swinburn, the county councillor for Cramlington Village, wrote to oppose the inclusion of Barns Park in Cramlington South East division. They argued that Barns Park had strong ties to Cramlington Village and that the A1171 dual carriageway formed a significant boundary between the two areas.

132 The Labour Group proposed a revised Cramlington East division consisting of the southern portion of our proposed New Delaval & New Hartley division, our proposed Cramlington East division and the village of East Hartford, which we proposed to include in Cramlington North West division.

133 Of the remaining submissions from local residents, seven were also in opposition to the removal of Barns Park from Cramlington Village division, three were in support of the Cramlington Eastfield and Cramlington North divisions and one was in support of the changes suggested by Northumberland Conservatives.

Cramlington Eastfield, Cramlington North, Cramlington North West and Cramlington South West.

134 In light of the support for these four divisions we propose to make no changes to our draft recommendations, other than a small modification to the southern boundary of Cramlington South West that affects no electors, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendations as final.

135 Our final recommendations for this part of Cramlington are for four single-councillor divisions of Cramlington Eastfield, Cramlington North, Cramlington North

West and Cramlington South West with electoral variances of 2%, 7%, -9%, and -9%, respectively, by 2028.

Cramlington East & Double Row, Cramlington South East and Cramlington Village

136 We propose to adopt the changes suggested by Northumberland Conservatives for Cramlington East & Double Row and Cramlington South East. Having visited the area on our tour of Northumberland, we are persuaded that there are ties between the area of Double Row and Cramlington East that make a division containing the two areas to be appropriate. We also note that such a division enables us to propose a revised division pattern in Seaton Valley, as discussed above. We also consider that the proposed division pattern better reflects the community in the Collingwood area of Cramlington by ensuring it is wholly contained within Cramlington South East division.

137 In addition to these amendments, we propose to return the Barns Park area to Cramlington Village division, as requested by a number of respondents. We accept that this area has strong ties to Cramlington Village.

138 We looked at the forecasts for Cramlington Village, as suggested by Cramlington Town Council. We remain content that the forecasts provided to us at the start of the review of Northumberland are robust and represent the best information currently available. While we acknowledge electorate forecasts are an inexact science, we must agree the electorate forecasts at the start of the reviews, as continually changing electorate forecasts would make it difficult to conduct electoral reviews effectively.

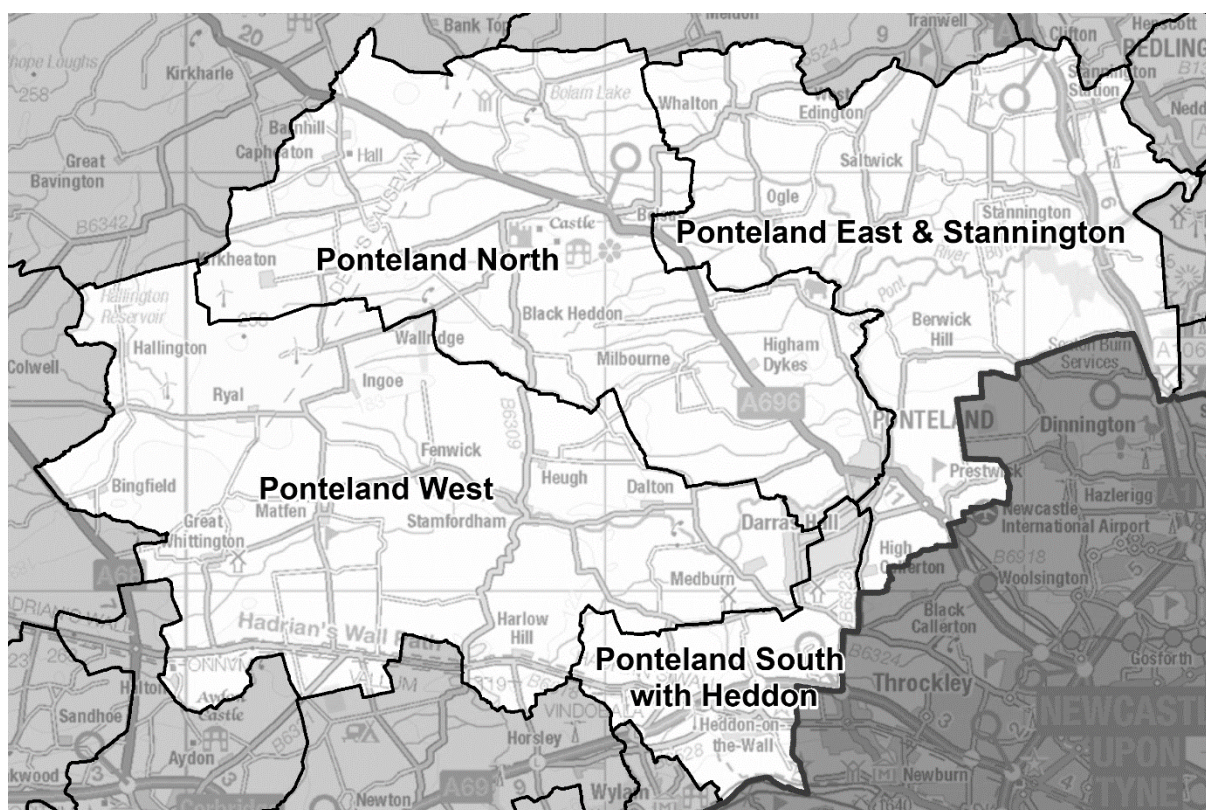
139 We also noted the comments from Cramlington Town Council on the number of councillors allocated to the town council wards. As part of an electoral review, we do not alter the total number of parish and town councillors. We are of the view that such changes should only arise as a consequence of a Community Governance Review, and the only changes we make to parish electoral arrangements are as a direct consequence of our proposed wards and divisions. As Cramlington Town Council has 12 town councillors and seven county council divisions, it is necessary for two town council wards to have a single town councillor. In the event that Cramlington Town Council is of the view that its total number of councillors should be increased, it could do so via a Community Governance Review conducted by Northumberland County Council.

140 We considered the alternative proposal from the Labour Group but do not propose to adopt it for reasons: we were persuaded that New Hartley Village should not be divided between divisions, which this proposal continues to do; we were not persuaded that East Hartford has sufficient ties to the remainder of their proposed Cramlington East division; and the removal of East Hartford from Cramlington North

West division would leave that division with 21% fewer electors than the average for the county by 2028, which their proposal does not seek to remedy.

141 Our final recommendations for this part of Cramlington are for three single-councillor divisions of Cramlington East & Double Row, Cramlington South East and Cramlington Village with electoral variances of -2%, -3% and 1%, respectively, by 2028.

Ponteland and surrounding area



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Ponteland East & Stannington	1	4%
Ponteland North	1	3%
Ponteland South with Heddon	1	8%
Ponteland West	1	-3%

Ponteland East & Stannington, Ponteland North, Ponteland South with Heddon and Ponteland West

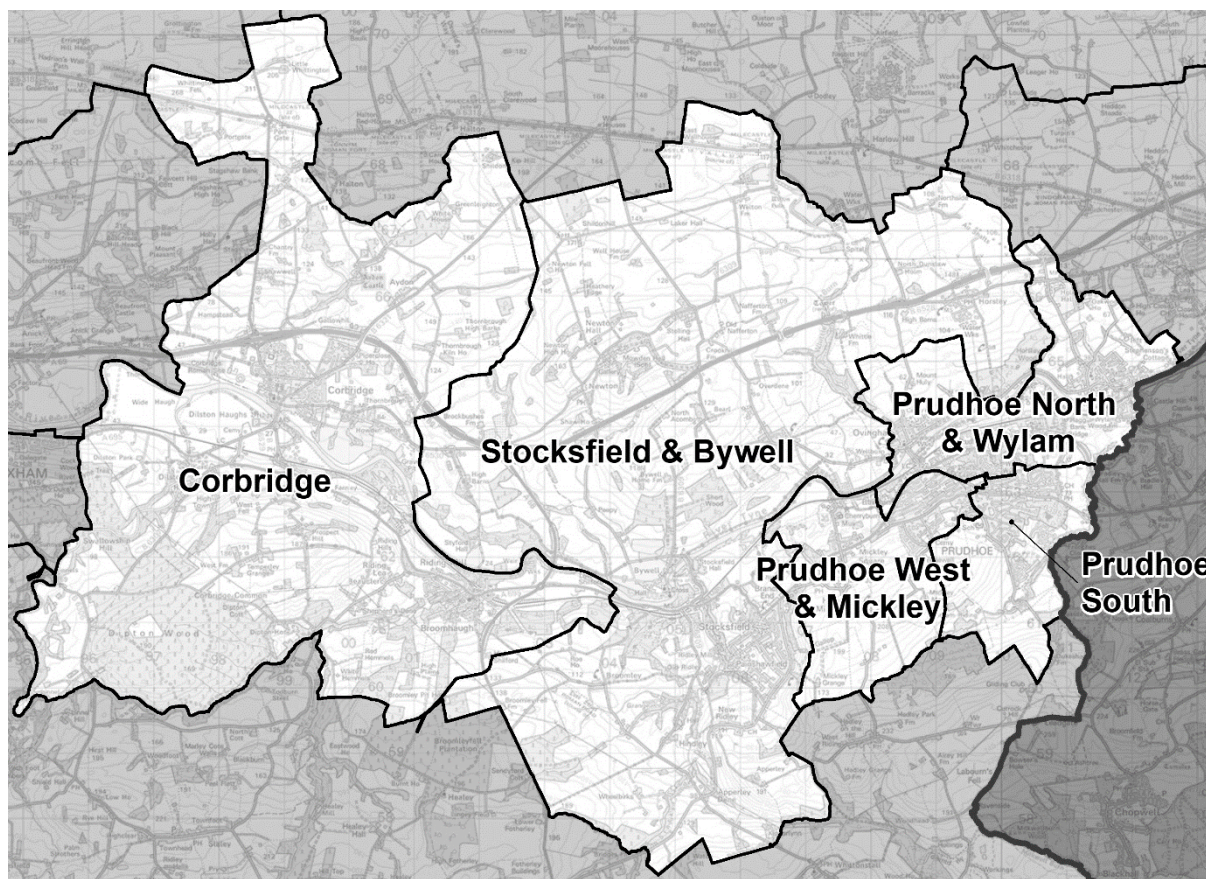
142 We received 25 submissions that covered the four Ponteland divisions. Northumberland Conservatives fully supported the draft recommendations. Twenty-four local residents also wrote in support of the draft recommendations either in support of all four divisions, or for the division they reside in.

143 We also received an alternative division pattern from a local resident that proposed that the urban area of Ponteland should be covered by two divisions, with another two divisions covering the rural parishes surrounding the town. This proposal involved moving some parishes to other divisions such as Humshaugh and contained three out of the four divisions with very poor electoral equality of 14%, 15% and -17%.

144 Given these poor variances and the overwhelming support in other submissions for the draft recommendations, we confirm our draft recommendations for this area as final.

145 Our final recommendations for Ponteland are for four single-councillor divisions of Ponteland East & Stannington, Ponteland North, Ponteland South with Heddon and Ponteland West with variances of 4%, 3%, 8% and -3%, respectively, by 2028.

Prudhoe and surrounding area



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Corbridge	1	6%
Prudhoe North & Wylam	1	4%
Prudhoe South	1	10%
Prudhoe West & Mickley	1	4%
Stocksfield & Bywell	1	-9%

Prudhoe North & Wylam, Prudhoe South, Prudhoe West & Mickley and Stocksfield & Bywell

146 We received 25 submissions for our proposed divisions of Prudhoe North, Prudhoe South and Stocksfield. The overarching theme of these submissions was objection to the inclusion of the new housing at Prudhoe Hall in our Stocksfield division rather than in a division with Prudhoe South.

147 The Northumberland Conservatives submitted a revised pattern of divisions for Prudhoe. Their revised proposals were for four divisions of Prudhoe North & Wylam, Prudhoe South, Prudhoe West & Mickley and Stocksfield & Bywell. Their proposed Prudhoe North division comprised the Prudhoe Town Council parish ward of Castlefields & Low Prudhoe as well as the parishes of Wylam and Ovingham. Their proposed Prudhoe South division comprised the Prudhoe Town Council parish

wards of West Wylam and Prudhoe Hall and contained all of the new housing development to the south of the town. Their suggested Prudhoe West & Mickley division combined the Prudhoe Town Council parish wards of Castle & Eltringham, Mickley and Prudhoe West & Halfway. Finally, their proposed Stocksfield & Bywell division included the parishes of Bywell, Horsley, Ovington and Stocksfield.

148 Councillor Stewart, a local councillor in Prudhoe, supported the Northumberland Conservatives' proposal, arguing that the parishes of Wylam and Ovingham had very close ties to Prudhoe for schooling, shopping and leisure facilities. Guy Opperman MP, the Member of Parliament for Hexham, also wrote in support of the revised pattern suggested by Northumberland Conservatives, emphasising the links between Wylam, Ovingham and Prudhoe.

149 Councillor Dale, the Councillor for the existing division of Stocksfield & Broomhaugh, supported Northumberland County Council's proposal at the previous stage to leave the division unchanged. They opposed our draft recommendation to include the Prudhoe Hall development in a Stocksfield division. Like Prudhoe Town Council, the councillor suggested that the Eltringham area in west Prudhoe would be better accommodated in a Stocksfield division. They also proposed that the parish of Hedley in South Tynedale division be moved into a Stocksfield division. The Labour Group also proposed a small change that moved some electors in the west of Prudhoe to Stocksfield division.

150 Prudhoe Town Council made a revised proposal that suggested that the west of Prudhoe should be included in a division with the parish of Stocksfield rather than the south of the town.

151 Of the submissions made by local residents, all opposed the exclusion of the Prudhoe Hall development, referred to as Cottier Grange and Humbles Wood, from a Prudhoe South division. A number of these submissions expressed support for the revised proposal from Northumberland Conservatives.

152 Having considered all these submissions and having visited the area on our tour of Northumberland, as well as studying the plans for the housing developments in south Prudhoe, we have concluded that electors in Prudhoe Hall are an integral part of the community in the south of the town and should be included in Prudhoe South division.

153 Having considered the alternative proposals submitted to us, we considered whether we could propose three divisions solely within Prudhoe and Stocksfield parishes, with the parish of Stocksfield paired in a division with Mickley and the Eltringham area of Prudhoe Town. We could not identify a division pattern that reflected these aims and provided for good electoral equality.

154 As part of our tour, we also visited the parishes of Ovingham and Wylam. Northumberland Conservatives had suggested that these parishes be included in Prudhoe North & Wylam division to help facilitate a division pattern of four single-councillor divisions covering Bywell, Horsley, Ovingham, Ovington, Prudhoe, Stocksfield and Wylam parishes. We were persuaded by the argument that these parishes have strong connections with Prudhoe.

155 Our final recommendations adopt the revised pattern for these four divisions as proposed by Northumberland Conservatives. This arrangement includes the Prudhoe Hall area in a Prudhoe South division. We do not propose to add the parish of Hedley to a Prudhoe division, as was suggested to us, as we have not been persuaded that it should be moved from its existing division of South Tynedale, a division that has received support during our consultations.

156 Our final recommendations are, therefore, for four single-councillor divisions of Prudhoe North & Wylam, Prudhoe South, Prudhoe West & Mickley and Stocksfield & Bywell with electoral variances of 4%, 10%, 4% and -9%, respectively, by 2028.

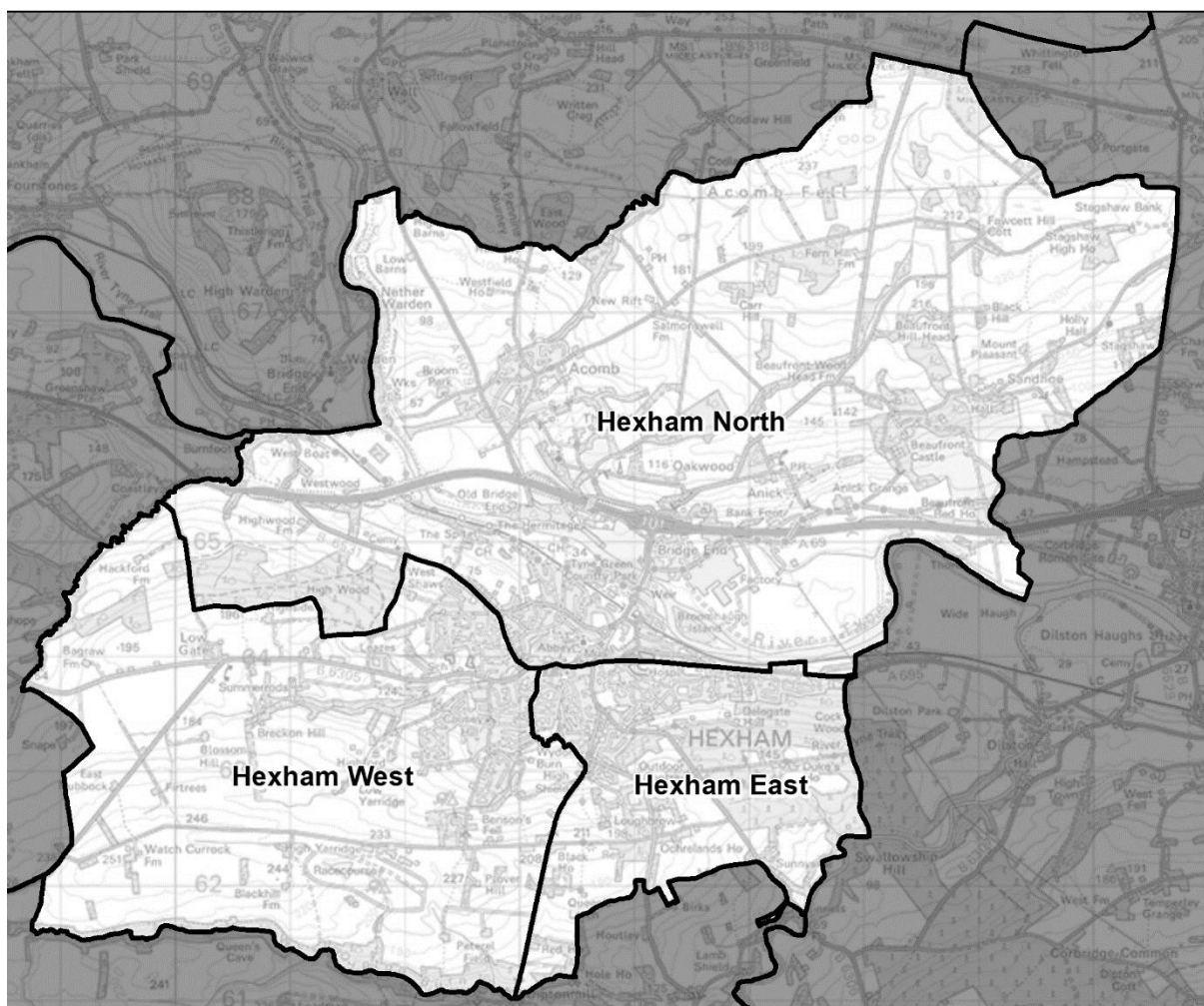
Corbridge

157 Of the three submissions we received that mentioned Corbridge division, all related to the inclusion of the parish of Broomhaugh & Riding in the division. Two submissions from local residents were in support of the proposal, whilst Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council collated local comments that showed a mixture of support and concern regarding their inclusion in Corbridge division.

158 Having considered these submissions and noted that removing the parish from Corbridge division would result in that division having 14% fewer electors than the average for Northumberland by 2028, we propose to confirm our draft recommendation as final.

159 Our final recommendations for Corbridge division will see it have a variance of 6% by 2028.

Hexham



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Hexham East	1	-1%
Hexham North	1	-10%
Hexham West	1	-8%

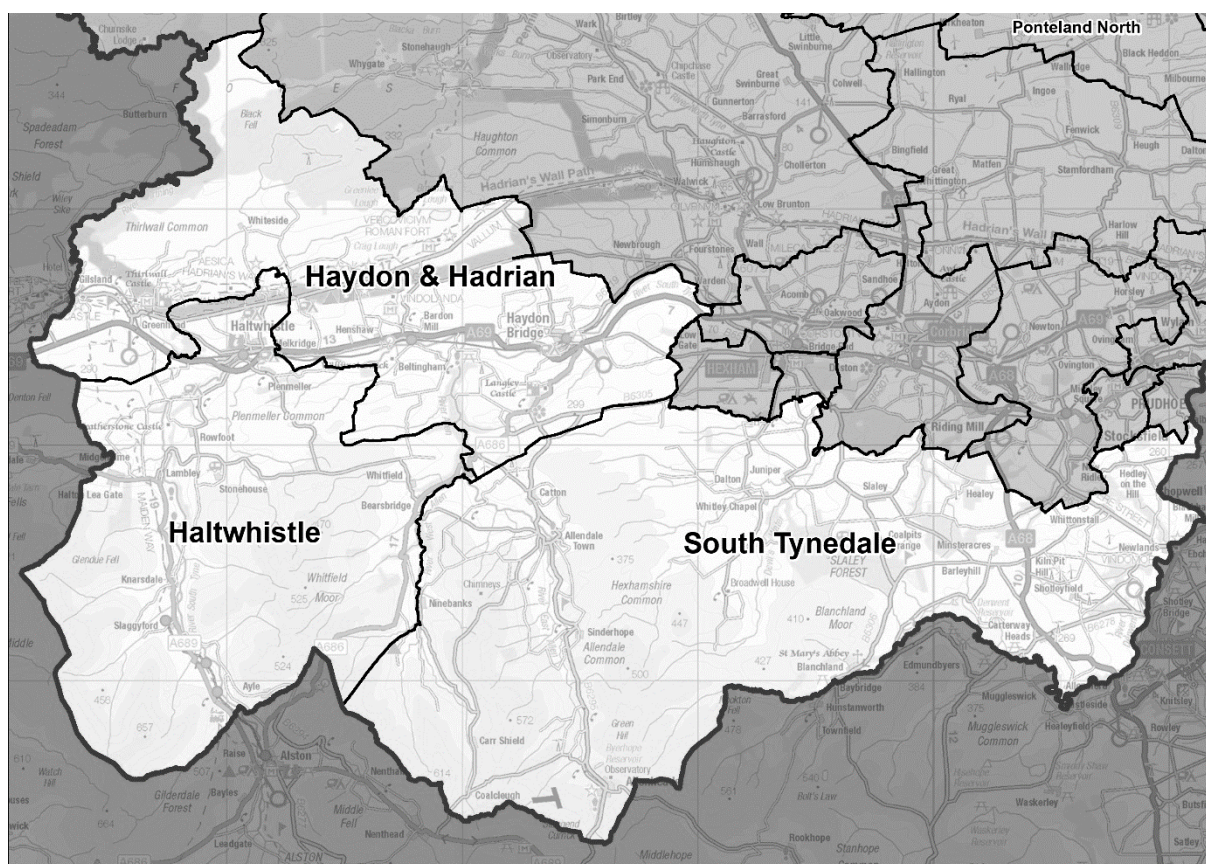
Hexham East, Hexham North and Hexham West

160 We received 11 submissions that mentioned our proposals in Hexham. Northumberland Conservatives and nine local residents all supported the draft recommendations, however one suggested that the boundary between Hexham West and Hexham East should not run up St Cuthberts Lane and should run along Halgut Burn.

161 We looked at the alternative boundary proposed but using Halgut Burn as the boundary would produce poor electoral equality of -15% in Hexham East division.

162 We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Hexham as final. These are for three single-councillor divisions of Hexham East, Hexham North and Hexham West with variances of -1%, -10% and -8%, respectively, by 2028.

Rural South Northumberland



Division name	Number of councillors	Variance 2028
Haltwhistle	1	-2%
Haydon & Hadrian	1	-4%
South Tynedale	1	4%

Haltwhistle, Haydon & Hadrian and South Tynedale

163 We only received two submissions that mentioned our proposals in Rural South Northumberland. The submissions from a local resident and Northumberland Conservatives both supported all three divisions.

164 Our final recommendations are for three divisions of Haltwhistle, Haydon & Hadrian and South Tynedale as per the existing divisions. These three divisions will have electoral variances of -2%, -4% and 4%, respectively, by 2028.

Conclusions

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

Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2022	2028
Number of councillors	69	69
Number of electoral divisions	69	69
Average number of electors per councillor	3,643	3,856
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	9	3
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	2	0

Final recommendations

Northumberland should be made up of 69 councillors serving 69 divisions representing 69 single-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 the Northumberland County Council. You can also view our final recommendations for Northumberland on our interactive maps at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/northumberland

Parish electoral arrangements

166 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.

167 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 warding arrangements. However, Northumberland 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.

168 As a result of our proposed ward 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 Alnwick, Amble by the Sea, Ashington, Blyth, Choppington, Cramlington, East Bedlington, Hexham, Morpeth, Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Ponteland, Prudhoe, Seaton Valley, West Bedlington and Widdrington Station & Stobswood

169 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Alnwick parish.

Final recommendations

Alnwick Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Castle	9
Hotspur	9

170 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Amble parish.

Final recommendations

Amble Town Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Amble Central	2
Amble East	4
Amble West	3

171 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Ashington parish.

Final recommendations

Ashington Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Ashington Central	3
Bothal	3
College	3
Haydon	3
Hirst	3
Seaton	3

172 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Blyth parish.

Final recommendations

Blyth Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing eight wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bebside & Kitty Brewster	2
Cowpen	2
Croft	2
Isabella	2
Newsham	2
Plessey	2
South Blyth	2
Wensleydale	2

173 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Choppington parish.

Final recommendations

Choppington Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Choppington	3
Stakeford	4
West Sleekburn	2

174 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Cramlington parish.

Final recommendations

Cramlington Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Cramlington East	1
Cramlington Eastfield	2
Cramlington North	2
Cramlington North West	1
Cramlington South East	2
Cramlington South West	2
Cramlington Village	2

175 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for East Bedlington parish.

Final recommendations

East Bedlington Parish Council should comprise eleven councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
East Bedlington	7
Sleekburn	4

176 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Hexham parish.

Final recommendations

Hexham Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Gilesgate	3
Leazes	5
Priestpopple	6

177 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Morpeth parish.

Final recommendations

Morpeth Town Council⁵ should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing five wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Kirkhill	4
North	5
Northgate	1
St George's Park	1
Stobhill	4

178 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Newbiggin-by-the-Sea parish.

Final recommendations

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council should comprise eight councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Newbiggin East	2
Newbiggin North	2
Newbiggin South	3
Newbiggin West	1

⁵ Parish wards for Morpeth Town Council will be effective at elections in 2025.

179 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Ponteland parish.

Final recommendations

Ponteland Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Ponteland East	2
Ponteland North	4
Ponteland South	3
Ponteland West	3

180 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Prudhoe parish.

Final recommendations

Prudhoe Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Castle and Eltringham	3
Castlefields & Low Prudhoe	2
Mickley	1
Prudhoe Hall	4
Prudhoe West & Halfway	3
West Wylam	2

181 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Seaton Valley parish.

Final recommendations

Seaton Valley Community Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing four wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Double Row	1
Holywell	2
Seaton Sluice & New Hartley	3
Seghill with Seaton Delaval	3

182 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for West Bedlington parish.

Final recommendations

West Bedlington Town Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Bedlington Central	4
Bedlington West	5

183 We are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Widdrington Station & Stobswood parish.

Final recommendations

Widdrington Station & Stobswood Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing three wards:

Parish ward	Number of parish councillors
Stobswood	1
Widdrington Station East	3
Widdrington Station West	3

What happens next?

184 We have now completed our review of Northumberland. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2025.

Equalities

185 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

Final recommendations for Northumberland

	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	Alnwick Castle	1	3,631	3,631	0%	4,021	4,021	4%
2	Alnwick Hotspur	1	3,622	3,622	-1%	3,798	3,798	-2%
3	Amble	1	3,408	3,408	-6%	4,060	4,060	5%
4	Amble West with Warkworth	1	3,534	3,534	-3%	3,863	3,863	0%
5	Ashington Central	1	3,515	3,515	-4%	3,602	3,602	-7%
6	Bamburgh	1	3,807	3,807	5%	3,957	3,957	3%
7	Bebside & Kitty Brewster	1	3,549	3,549	-3%	3,655	3,655	-5%
8	Bedlington Central	1	4,008	4,008	10%	4,106	4,106	6%
9	Bedlington East	1	3,876	3,876	6%	3,933	3,933	2%
10	Bedlington West	1	3,912	3,912	7%	4,232	4,232	10%
11	Bellingham	1	3,360	3,360	-8%	3,446	3,446	-11%

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 %
12 Berwick East	1	3,492	3,492	-4%	3,729	3,729	-3%
13 Berwick North	1	3,501	3,501	-4%	3,917	3,917	2%
14 Berwick West with Ord	1	3,226	3,226	-11%	3,492	3,492	-9%
15 Bothal	1	3,521	3,521	-3%	3,605	3,605	-7%
16 Choppington & Hepscoth	1	3,250	3,250	-11%	3,674	3,674	-5%
17 College with North Seaton	1	3,741	3,741	3%	3,801	3,801	-1%
18 Corbridge	1	3,854	3,854	6%	4,089	4,089	6%
19 Cowpen	1	3,816	3,816	5%	3,894	3,894	1%
20 Cramlington East & Double Row	1	3,716	3,716	2%	3,770	3,770	-2%
21 Cramlington Eastfield	1	3,838	3,838	5%	3,941	3,941	2%
22 Cramlington North	1	4,049	4,049	11%	4,131	4,131	7%
23 Cramlington North West	1	3,389	3,389	-7%	3,504	3,504	-9%
24 Cramlington South East	1	3,672	3,672	1%	3,757	3,757	-3%

	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 %
25	Cramlington South West	1	1,834	1,834	-50%	3,519	3,519	-9%
26	Cramlington Village	1	3,803	3,803	4%	3,896	3,896	1%
27	Croft	1	3,730	3,730	2%	3,808	3,808	-1%
28	Druridge Bay	1	3,504	3,504	-4%	3,803	3,803	-1%
29	Haltwhistle	1	3,703	3,703	2%	3,789	3,789	-2%
30	Hartley	1	3,903	3,903	7%	4,371	4,371	13%
31	Haydon	1	3,660	3,660	0%	3,744	3,744	-3%
32	Haydon & Hadrian	1	3,619	3,619	-1%	3,689	3,689	-4%
33	Hexham East	1	3,718	3,718	2%	3,816	3,816	-1%
34	Hexham North	1	3,366	3,366	-8%	3,460	3,460	-10%
35	Hexham West	1	3,431	3,431	-6%	3,541	3,541	-8%
36	Hirst	1	3,513	3,513	-4%	3,596	3,596	-7%
37	Holywell	1	3,914	3,914	7%	4,028	4,028	4%
38	Humshaugh	1	3,383	3,383	-7%	3,454	3,454	-10%
39	Isabella	1	3,428	3,428	-6%	3,505	3,505	-9%

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 %
40 Longhirst	1	3,381	3,381	-7%	3,857	3,857	0%
41 Longhorsley	1	3,594	3,594	-1%	4,020	4,020	4%
42 Longhoughton	1	3,875	3,875	6%	3,934	3,934	2%
43 Lynemouth	1	3,696	3,696	1%	4,015	4,015	4%
44 Morpeth Kirkhill	1	3,966	3,966	9%	4,062	4,062	5%
45 Morpeth North	1	3,952	3,952	8%	4,083	4,083	6%
46 Morpeth Stobhill	1	3,723	3,723	2%	3,779	3,779	-2%
47 Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	1	3,883	3,883	7%	3,976	3,976	3%
48 Newsham	1	3,802	3,802	4%	4,189	4,189	9%
49 Norham & Islandshires	1	3,553	3,553	-2%	3,675	3,675	-5%
50 Pegswood	1	2,844	2,844	-22%	3,887	3,887	1%
51 Plessey	1	3,457	3,457	-5%	3,579	3,579	-7%
52 Ponteland East & Stannington	1	3,679	3,679	1%	4,013	4,013	4%
53 Ponteland North	1	3,847	3,847	6%	3,954	3,954	3%

	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 %
54	Ponteland South with Heddon	1	4,046	4,046	11%	4,155	4,155	8%
55	Ponteland West	1	3,683	3,683	1%	3,746	3,746	-3%
56	Prudhoe North & Wylam	1	3,916	3,916	7%	4,004	4,004	4%
57	Prudhoe South	1	3,739	3,739	3%	4,226	4,226	10%
58	Prudhoe West & Mickley	1	3,906	3,906	7%	4,012	4,012	4%
59	Rothbury	1	4,059	4,059	11%	4,280	4,280	11%
60	Seaton with Spital	1	3,418	3,418	-6%	4,207	4,207	9%
61	Seghill with Seaton Delaval	1	4,069	4,069	12%	4,165	4,165	8%
62	Shilbottle	1	3,414	3,414	-6%	3,640	3,640	-6%
63	Sleekburn	1	3,568	3,568	-2%	3,630	3,630	-6%
64	South Blyth	1	3,878	3,878	6%	3,959	3,959	3%
65	South Tynedale	1	3,929	3,929	8%	4,005	4,005	4%
66	Stakeford	1	3,678	3,678	1%	3,766	3,766	-2%
67	Stocksfield & Bvwell	1	3,416	3,416	-6%	3,494	3,494	-9%

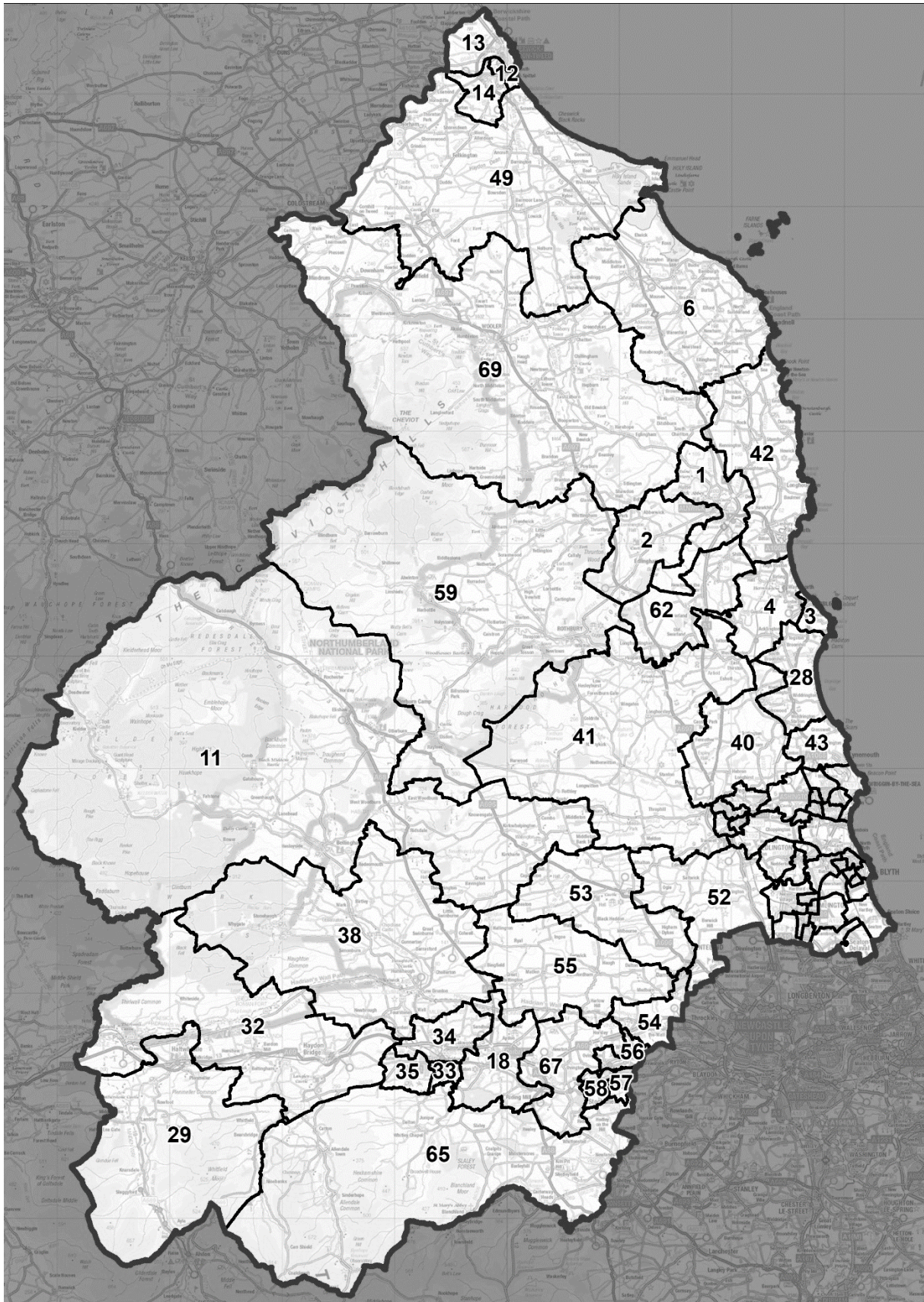
Division name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2022)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2028)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
68 Wensleydale	1	3,536	3,536	-3%	3,612	3,612	-6%
69 Wooler	1	4,060	4,060	11%	4,176	4,176	8%
Totals	69	251,363	–	–	266,098	–	–
Averages	–	–	3,643	–	–	3,856	–

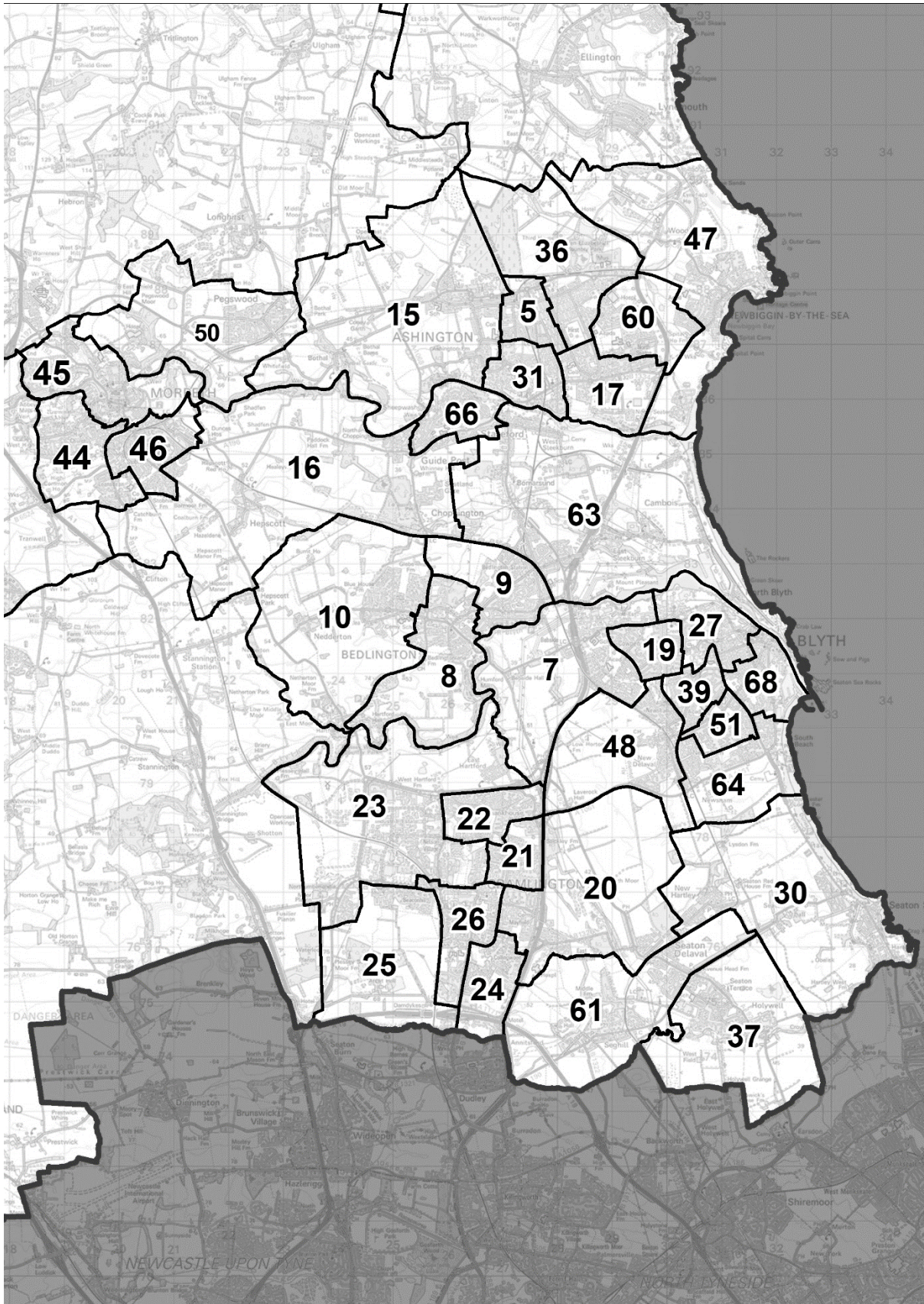
Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Northumberland County Council.

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	Name	Number	Name
1	Alnwick Castle	36	Hirst
2	Alnwick Hotspur	37	Holywell
3	Amble	38	Humshaugh
4	Amble West with Warkworth	39	Isabella
5	Ashington Central	40	Longhirst
6	Bamburgh	41	Longhorsley
7	Bebside & Kitty Brewster	42	Longhoughton
8	Bedlington Central	43	Lynemouth
9	Bedlington East	44	Morpeth Kirkehill
10	Bedlington West	45	Morpeth North
11	Bellingham	46	Morpeth Stobhill
12	Berwick East	47	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
13	Berwick North	48	Newsham
14	Berwick West with Ord	49	Norham & Islandshires
15	Bothal	50	Pegswood
16	Choppington & Hepscott	51	Plessey
17	College with North Seaton	52	Ponteland East & Stannington
18	Corbridge	53	Ponteland North
19	Cowpen	54	Ponteland South with Heddon
20	Cramlington East & Double Row	55	Ponteland West
21	Cramlington Eastfield	56	Prudhoe North & Wylam
22	Cramlington North	57	Prudhoe South
23	Cramlington North West	58	Prudhoe West & Mickley
24	Cramlington South East	59	Rothbury
25	Cramlington South West	60	Seaton with Spital
26	Cramlington Village	61	Seghill with Seaton Delaval
27	Croft	62	Shilbottle
28	Druridge Bay	63	Sleekburn
29	Haltwhistle	64	South Blyth
30	Hartley	65	South Tynedale
31	Haydon	66	Stakeford
32	Haydon & Hadrian	67	Stocksfield & Bywell
33	Hexham East	68	Wensleydale
34	Hexham North	69	Wooler
35	Hexham West		

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/northumberland

Appendix C

Submissions received

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

www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/northumberland

Political Groups

- Northumberland Conservative Association
- Northumberland County Council Green Party Group
- Northumberland County Council Labour Group
- Northumberland County Council Liberal Democrat Group

Councillors

- Councillor D. Carr (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor E. Chicken (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor A. Dale (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor S. Dungworth (Seaton Valley Community Council)
- Councillor D. Ferguson (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor B. Erskine (Blyth Town Council)
- Councillor B. Flux (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor C. Greenwell (Ponteland Town Council)
- Councillor J. Henderson (Seaton Valley Community Council)
- Councillor C. Jones (Blyth Town Council)
- Councillor V. Jones (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor M. Murphy (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor M. Swinbank (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor M. Swinburn (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor G. Renner-Thompson (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor G. Stewart (Northumberland County Council)
- Councillor A. Varley (Ponteland Town Council)
- Councillor R. Wearmouth (Northumberland County Council)

Members of Parliament

- Ian Lavery MP (Wansbeck CC)
- Ian Levy MP (Blyth Valley BC)
- Guy Opperman MP (Hexham CC)
- Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP (Berwick-upon-Tweed CC)

Local Organisations

- Friends of Holywell Dene
- New Hartley Community Association
- New Hartley First School
- New Hartley Residents' Club
- Seaton Sluice Community Association
- Seaton Sluice & Old Hartley Residents' Association

Parish and Town Councils

- Ashington Town Council
- Brinkburn & Hesleyhurst Parish Council
- Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council
- Chollerton Parish Council
- Choppington Parish Council
- Cramlington Town Council
- Cresswell Parish Council
- Elsdon Parish Council
- Hepscott Parish Council (two submissions)
- Morpeth Town Council
- Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council
- Prudhoe Town Council
- Ord Parish Council
- Rothley and Hollinghill Parish Council
- Seaton Valley Community Council
- Simonburn Parish Council
- Thirston Parish Council
- Wallington Demesne Parish Council

Local Residents

- 212 local residents

Appendix D

Glossary and abbreviations

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

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