

Electoral Boundary Review – Revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituencies in Durham

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present the revised proposals of the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England and Constitution Working Group's recommendations thereon.

Background

- 2 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The Commission is currently conducting a review on the basis of rules laid down in Parliament, which must be adhered to when considering boundary reviews. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 501), and requires that every constituency (apart from two specified exceptions) must have an electorate that is no fewer than 71,031 and no more than 78,507 in size – that is 5% either side of the electoral quota of 74,769.' Legislation also states that when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may take into account:
 - a) 'Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - b) Local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015;
 - c) Boundaries of existing constituencies; and
 - d) Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.'
- 3 BCE published their initial proposals for new boundaries for consultation on 13 September, 2016. The Consultation period ran for 12 weeks, to 5 December, 2016. The proposals affecting County Durham were reported to Constitution Working Group for consideration.

Initial proposals for Durham

- 4 The BCE's initial proposal for the County of Durham would have seen six constituencies remain to be administered by the county, although each would have had boundaries modified to a greater or lesser extent when compared to the current arrangements, with consequential re-naming as appropriate.
- 5 Only one constituency would have been solely contained within the County. The other five would have crossed the county boundary taking in wards from Gateshead, Sunderland or Hartlepool council areas.

- 6 Constitution Working Group met to consider the BCE proposals 11 October, 9 & 24 November, 2016. The Group considered the proposals from a wider regional perspective acknowledging that all the major parties were to make widely differing regional submissions to BCE.
- 7 Members considered it was not possible to agree comment of the initial proposed new parliamentary constituency boundaries excepting that the separation of "Barnard Castle East" and "Barnard Castle West" electoral divisions, being the country Town of Barnard Castle, was unanimously unacceptable to all members. BCE was so advised.

Revised proposals for Durham

- 8 Under the BCE's revised proposals for the County of Durham there will be five, rather than six, constituencies, administered by the county. Each will have boundaries modified to a greater or lesser extent when compared to the current arrangements, with consequential re-naming as appropriate.
- 9 BCE now propose that four constituencies, rather than just one (as in their initial proposal), will be wholly contained within the County.
- 10 The fifth constituency will take in six wards from Stockton on Tees area.
- 11 It is proposed that six existing County divisions will become part of adjoining constituencies which would be administered by Gateshead/Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland or Hartlepool areas. Details relating to these 6 divisions/constituencies are set out at paragraphs 16, 18 and 19 below.
- 12 The Council's representation to the initial BCE proposals that the separation of "Barnard Castle East" and "Barnard Castle West" was un-acceptable was also echoed in other responses to the consultation. BCE have accepted the representations made. Both divisions are now proposed to be part of "Bishop Auckland" constituency.
- 13 A summary of the BCE's revised constituencies is set out below. A table setting out the effect of the proposals on the existing constituency arrangements is set out in Appendix 3.
- 14 The proposed Billingham and Sedgefield constituency retains seven wards from the existing Sedgefield constituency. Also included is the ward of Coxhoe from the existing City of Durham constituency, and six wards from Stockton on Tees area.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Aycliffe East	Sedgefield	6240
Aycliffe North & Middridge	Sedgefield	7790
Aycliffe West	Sedgefield	5403
Bishop Middleham & Cornforth	Sedgefield	2937
Chilton	Sedgefield	2970
Coxhoe	City of Durham	9280
Ferryhill	Sedgefield	8151
Sedgefield	Sedgefield	6274

Billingham Central	Stockton on Tees	5136
Billingham East	Stockton on Tees	4935
Billingham North	Stockton on Tees	6943
Billingham South	Stockton on Tees	4671
Billingham West	Stockton on Tees	4521
Northern Parishes	Stockton on Tees	2954
	Billingham and Sedgefield Total	78,205

- 15 The proposed Bishop Auckland constituency retains ten wards from the existing constituency. The commission propose to include Willington & Hunwick (inc Brancepeth) from the existing North West Durham & City of Durham constituencies.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Barnard Castle East	Bishop Auckland	6492
Barnard Castle West	Bishop Auckland	6319
Bishop Auckland Town	Bishop Auckland	5947
Coundon	Bishop Auckland	3010
Evenwood	Bishop Auckland	6231
Sildon & Dene Valley	Bishop Auckland	9384
Spennymoor	Bishop Auckland	8444
Tudhoe	Bishop Auckland	6079
West Auckland	Bishop Auckland	6375
Willington & Hunwick	North West Durham (pt City of Durham)	6822
Woodhouse Close	Bishop Auckland	6032
	Bishop Auckland Total	71,135

- 16 The proposed constituency of Blaydon includes the ward of Burnopfield and Dipton along with five wards from both Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne areas.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Burnopfield and Dipton	North West Durham	5962
Blaydon	Gateshead	6953
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	Gateshead	6954
Crawcrook and Greenside	Gateshead	6659
Ryton, Crookhill and Stella	Gateshead	6818
Winlaton and High Spen	Gateshead	6702
Benwell and Scotswood	Newcastle upon Tyne	8020
Denton	Newcastle upon Tyne	7356
Lemington	Newcastle upon Tyne	7030
Newburn	Newcastle upon Tyne	6894
Westerhope	Newcastle upon Tyne	7443
	Blaydon Total	76,791

- 17 The proposed City of Durham and Easington constituency comprises five, seven and one ward(s) from the existing constituencies of City of Durham, Easington and Sedgefield constituencies respectively.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Belmont	City of Durham	10115
Durham South	City of Durham	1619
Easington	Easington	5559
Elvet & Gilesgate	City of Durham	4081
Horden	Easington	5809
Murton	Easington	5820
Neville's Cross	City of Durham	6502
Passfield	Easington	3539
Peterlee East	Easington	5484
Peterlee West	Easington	6119
Sherburn	City of Durham	6531
Shotton and South Hetton	Easington	6413
Trimdon and Thornley	Sedgefield	9411
	City of Durham and Easington Total	77002

- 18 The proposed constituency of Hartlepool includes the wards of Blackhalls and Wingate from the existing constituencies of Easington and Sedgefield respectively along with eleven wards from Hartlepool area.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Blackhalls	Easington	6101
Wingate	Sedgefield	2913
Burn Valley	Hartlepool	5903
De Bruce	Hartlepool	5597
Fens and Rossmere	Hartlepool	7003
Foggy Furze	Hartlepool	6286
Hart	Hartlepool	6731
Headland and Harbour	Hartlepool	5358
Jesmond	Hartlepool	6179
Manor House	Hartlepool	7188
Rural West	Hartlepool	5815
Seaton	Hartlepool	6693
Victoria	Hartlepool	5448
	Hartlepool Total	77,215

- 19 The proposed constituency of Houghton and Seaham includes the wards of Dawdon, Deneside and Seaham from the existing Easington constituency along with seven wards from Sunderland area.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Dawdon	Easington	5868
Deneside	Easington	5280
Seaham	Easington	5270
Copt Hill	Sunderland	8767
Doxford	Sunderland	7563
Hetton	Sunderland	8632
Houghton	Sunderland	9016
Shiney Row	Sunderland	9719
Silksworth	Sunderland	8109
St Chad's	Sunderland	7547
	Houghton and Seaham Total	75,771

- 20 The proposed constituency of North Durham & Chester-le-Street retains all twelve wards from the existing constituency and includes one ward from the existing City of Durham constituency.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Annfield Plain	North Durham	5670
Chester-le-Street East	North Durham	2919
Chester-le-Street North	North Durham	2999
Chester-le-Street South	North Durham	5937
Chester-le-Street West Central	North Durham	5825
Craghead & South Moor	North Durham	5177
Framwellgate and Newton Hall	City of Durham	10175
Lumley	North Durham	5527
North Lodge	North Durham	2828
Pelton	North Durham	9889
Sacrison	North Durham	5357
Stanley	North Durham	6187
Tanfield	North Durham	6495
	North Durham & Chester-le-Street Total	74985

- 21 The proposed North West Durham constituency retains most of the existing constituency and includes 3 wards from the existing City of Durham constituency.

Ward/Division	Current Constituency	Electorate
Benfieldside	North West Durham	6180
Brandon	City of Durham	7146
Consett North	North West Durham	5761
Consett South	North West Durham	2886
Crook	North West Durham	8995
Deerness	City of Durham (pt North West Durham)	9018
Delves Lane	North West Durham	6026
Esh and Witton Gilbert	North West Durham and City of Durham	6192

Lanchester	North West Durham	5871
Leadgate and Medomsley	North West Durham	6440
Tow Law	North West Durham	3233
Weardale	North West Durham	6406
	North West Durham Total	74,154

Consultation period

- 22 Having considered the evidence presented to them following the publication of their initial proposals for new parliamentary boundaries, BCE have decided that the evidence is such that it is appropriate to revise their initial proposals in some areas. Therefore, as they are required to do (under the legislation), on 17 October, 2017 BCE published their report – Revised proposals for new constituency boundaries in North East – alongside 8 others, one for each of the other regions in England.
- 23 BCE are now consulting on their revised proposals for the statutory eight week period, from 17 October, 2017 to 11 December, 2017. Unlike the initial consultation period, there is no provision in the legislation for further public hearings, nor is there a repeat of the four week period for commenting on the representations of others.
- 24 BCE are encouraging everyone to use this last opportunity to contribute to the design of the new constituencies to assist them in making informed decisions before they make recommendations to the Government in September 2018.
- 25 BCE's main focus during this final consultation is on those constituencies they have revised since their initial proposals.
- 26 BCE ask that, in responding, due consideration is given to the tight constraints placed on them by the rules set by Parliament. Most importantly:-
- BCE cannot recommend constituencies that have electorates that are more than 5% above or below the electoral quota (apart from the two covering the Isle of Wight).
 - BCE are obliged by law to use the Parliamentary electorate figures as they were in the statutory electoral register published December 2015. They therefore cannot base their proposals for this constituency review on any subsequent electorate figures.
 - BCE are basing their revised proposals on local government ward boundaries (as at May 2015) as the building blocks of constituencies. Exceptional and compelling evidence would need to be provided to persuade them that splitting a ward across two constituencies is necessary or appropriate.
 - BCE have constructed constituencies within regions, so as not to cross regional boundaries. Particularly compelling reasons would need to be given to persuade them that they should depart from this approach.
- 27 These issues mean BCE encourage anyone making a representation on a particular area to bear in mind the knock-on effects of their counter proposals.

BCE have to consider any such representations across the whole region/country. Any counter proposal will have an impact on neighbouring constituencies and further afield.

- 28 The Commission are particularly asking for two things. First, expressions of support for their revised proposals. And second, if objecting to their proposals, to put forward counter-proposals which are in accordance with the rules to which they are working.
- 29 At the final stage, the Commission will take into consideration any written representations received during the eight-week consultation period for the revised proposals and will decide whether any final modifications are needed in the light of those representations. Once the Commission has decided on the final recommendations for the whole of England, they will submit a formal report to the Government detailing their final recommendations, which will conclude the review process.
- 30 On 16 November 2017, the Constitution Working Group considered the BCE's revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries. Members were highly critical of the BCE revised proposals.
- 31 The Group recommended that Council considers submitting a response to BCE, which categorically rejects the revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituencies as they might apply across County Durham.
- 32 A letter to this effect has been agreed with group leaders, and is enclosed at Appendix 2.

Recommendations and reasons

- 33 That Council agrees to submit the objection to the BCE's revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries across County Durham as set out at Appendix 2.
- 34 That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services is requested to send the letter on behalf of the Council to BCE before the consultation closes on 11 December 2017.

Background papers

- 35 The Boundary Commission for England – North East Initial proposals for Parliamentary boundaries.

Council 26 October 2016 & 7 December 2016 and

The Boundary Commission for England – Revised proposals for new constituency boundaries in the North East.

Contact: David Collingwood Tel: 03000 261 201

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None specific within this report

Staffing – None specific within this report

Risk – None specific within this report

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None specific within this report

Accommodation – None specific within this report

Crime and Disorder – None specific within this report

Human Rights – None specific within this report

Consultation – As explained in the report, the Constitution Working Group has considered the consultation document. The consultation period closes on 11 December 2017.

Procurement – None specific within this report

Disability Issues – None specific within this report

Legal Implications – The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 requires the Boundary Commission to conduct a review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries, and make recommendations to Government, every 5 years (next being September, 2018). The rules the Boundary Commission currently have to work to will result in a recommendation for 600 constituencies, down from the current 650 constituencies, with each having an electorate between 71,031 and 78,507 this being +/- 5% of the defined electoral quota of 74,769 for each of the proposed constituencies.

Appendix 2: County Council response to BCE revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

Boundary Commission for England & www.bce2018.org.uk
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries – 2018
Response to Boundary Commission for England' Revised Proposals**

The Council's Constitution Working Group (CWG), an all-party group, has discussed BCE's revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries as they affect County Durham. The CWG's deliberations of BCE's revised proposals boundaries were reported to a meeting of the Council on 6 December 2017, where the CWGs concerns and comments were endorsed.

Members were highly critical of, and would object in the strongest possible terms, to the BCE revised proposals for the county area.

It is noted with concern that we are not considering minor re-alignments here. It is inconceivable that the electorates concerned, and all those other interested individuals/parties can effectively consider and meaningfully respond to the revised proposals before the consultation closes on 11 December 2017.

The revised proposals are a complete across-the-board change to BCE's initial proposals with significant changes for the electorate of the County. Members are particularly concerned with the proposals to divide the existing "City of Durham" constituency between 5 revised constituencies and the existing "Easington" constituency between 3 revised constituencies and 3 local authority areas.

I can confirm that this Council categorically rejects BCEs revised proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries as they might apply to County Durham.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Lynch
Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Durham County Council

APPENDIX 3				
Current Constituency	Ward/Division		Electorate	Proposed Constituency
Bishop Auckland	Barnard Castle East		6,492	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Barnard Castle West		6,319	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Bishop Auckland Town		5,947	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Coundon		3,010	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Evenwood		6,231	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Ferryhill (pt) - Merrington (BAAHB)	Rest Ferryhill - Sedgfield	See Sedgfield	Billingham and Sedgfield
Bishop Auckland	Shildon & Dene Valley		9,384	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Spennymoor		8,444	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Tudhoe		6,079	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	West Auckland		6,375	Bishop Auckland
Bishop Auckland	Woodhouse Close		6,032	Bishop Auckland
City of Durham	Belmont		10,115	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Brandon		7,146	North West Durham
City of Durham	Coxhoe		9,280	Billingham and Sedgfield
City of Durham	Deerness (pt) - exc Cornsay (NWDOC) & Hedleyhope (NWDOD)	Rest Deerness - North West Durham	9,018	North West Durham
City of Durham	Durham South		1,619	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Elvet & Gilesgate		4,081	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Esh & Witton Gilbert (pt) - Witton Gilbert (DMB)	Rest Esh & Witton Gilbert - North West Durham	6,192	North West Durham
City of Durham	Framwellgate & Newton Hall		10,175	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
City of Durham	Nevilles Cross		6,502	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Sherburn		6,531	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Trimdon & Thornley (pt) - Ludworth (DKC)	Rest Trimdon & Thornley - Sedgfield	See Sedgfield	City of Durham and Easington
City of Durham	Willington & Hunwick (pt) - Brancepeth (DQA)	Rest Willington & Hunwick - North West Durham	See North West Durham	Bishop Auckland
Easington	Blackhalls (pt) - exc Station Town (SMA)	Rest Blackhalls - Sedgfield	6,101	Hartlepool
Easington	Dawdon		5,868	Houghton and Seaham
Easington	Deneside		5,280	Houghton and Seaham
Easington	Easington		5,559	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Horden		5,809	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Murton		5,820	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Passfield		3,539	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Peterlee East		5,484	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Peterlee West		6,119	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Seaham		5,270	Houghton and Seaham
Easington	Shotton & South Hetton		6,413	City of Durham and Easington
Easington	Trimdon & Thornley (pt) - Haswell Plough (EEA)	Rest Trimdon & Thornley - Sedgfield	See Sedgfield	City of Durham and Easington

<u>Current Constituency</u>	<u>Ward/Division</u>		<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Proposed Constituency</u>
North Durham	Annfield Plain		5,670	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Chester-le-Street East		2,919	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Chester-le-Street North		2,999	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Chester-le-Street South		5,937	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Chester-le-Street West Central		5,825	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Craghead & South Moor		5,177	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Lumley		5,527	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	North Lodge		2,828	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Pelton		9,889	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Sacrison		5,357	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Stanley		6,187	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North Durham	Tanfield		6,495	North Durham and Chester-le-Street
North West Durham	Benfieldside		6,180	North West Durham
North West Durham	Burnopfield & Dipton		5,962	Blaydon
North West Durham	Consett North		5,761	North West Durham
North West Durham	Consett South		2,886	North West Durham
North West Durham	Crook		8,995	North West Durham
North West Durham	Delves Lane		6,026	North West Durham
North West Durham	Deerness (pt) - Cornsay (NWDOC) and Hedleyhope (NWDOD)	Rest Deerness - City of Durham	See City of Durham	North West Durham
North West Durham	Esh & Witton Gilbert (pt) - exc Witton Gilbert (DMB)	Rest Esh & Witton Gilbert - City of Durham	See City of Durham	North West Durham
North West Durham	Lanchester		5,871	North West Durham
North West Durham	Leadgate & Medomsley		6,440	North West Durham
North West Durham	Tow Law		3,233	North West Durham
North West Durham	Weardale		6,406	North West Durham
North West Durham	Willington & Hunwick (pt) - exc Brancepeth (DQA)	Rest Willington & Hunwick - City of Durham	6,822	Bishop Auckland
Sedgefield	Aycliffe East		6,240	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Aycliffe North & Middridge		7,790	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Aycliffe West		5,403	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Bishop Middleham & Cornforth		2,937	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Blackhalls (pt) - Station Town (SMA)	Rest Blackhalls - Easington	See Easington	Hartlepool
Sedgefield	Chilton		2,970	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Ferryhill (pt) - exc Merrington (BAAHB)	Rest Ferryhill - Bishop Auckland	8,151	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Sedgefield		6,274	Billingham and Sedgefield
Sedgefield	Trimdon & Thornley (pt) - exc Ludworth (DKC) and Haswell Plough (EEA)	Rest Trimdon & Thornley - City of Durham and Easington	9,411	City of Durham and Easington
Sedgefield	Wingate		2,913	Hartlepool
Sedgefield	Heighington & Coniscliffe	Darlington BC	3,276	Darlington
Sedgefield	Hurworth	Darlington BC	2,867	Darlington
Sedgefield	Sadberge & Middleton St George	Darlington BC	4,598	Darlington