FINAL PROPOSAL

FOR

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

SHERWOOD FOREST UNITARY COUNCIL AND
NOTTINGHAM AND SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE UNITARY COUNCIL

A brighter future for driving growth and improving lives.
Rooted in community. Connected by place.

NORTH - SOUTH

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FOREWORD

WEST BRIDGFORD, RUSHCLIFFE

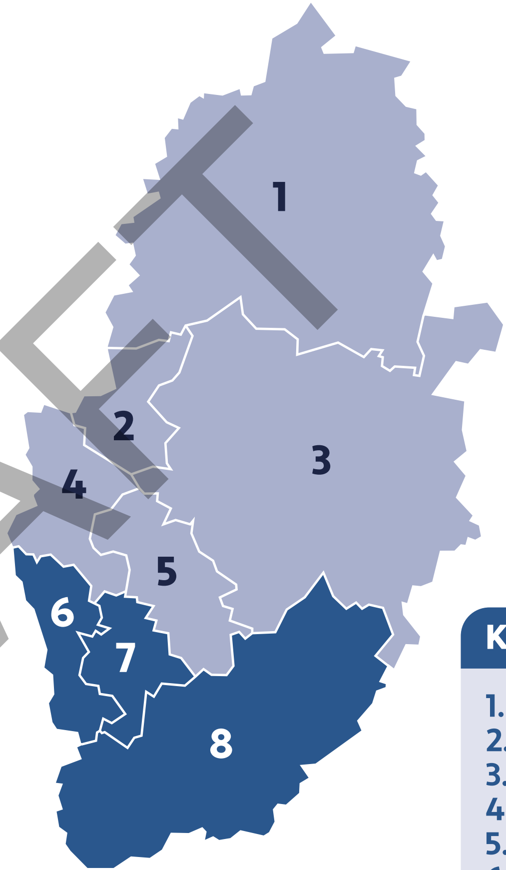
FOREWORD

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is long overdue. Our two-tier system is inefficient and fragmented; it hampers growth, is confusing to the public and stifles our ability to improve the lives of the people we serve.

Our proposal offers 'a brighter future'; one that will deliver growth and better outcomes for our residents. Of the options being presented for our area, our north-south model stands out as having the greatest potential for delivering on national priorities and improving local outcomes. It carries the greatest support of the public because the geography of our north-south model "makes sense." It aligns strongly with the government's criteria for reorganisation and best reflects how local communities interact and live their lives.

As a group of leaders, we represent 473,000 people covering over 70 percent of the geography of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We know and understand our local communities and what 'sensible geography' means in practice.

Nottingham City must expand. We all stand to gain, at a local, regional, and national level from a more prosperous Nottingham. Our proposal provides the opportunity for Nottingham to grow in a way that best maintains community cohesion beyond Nottingham and enables our whole area to thrive. Our proposal aligns with the geographic model proposed by nine of the ten councils in Derbyshire and builds on existing relationships and plans to support the delivery of the East Midlands Combined County Authority's (EMCCA) growth strategy.



Key

1. Bassetlaw
2. Mansfield
3. Newark and Sherwood
4. Ashfield
5. Gedling
6. Broxtowe
7. Nottingham
8. Rushcliffe

Figure 1: *Our option for LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, known as option 1e, creating a north-south split.*

It's often said that reorganisation is a 'once in a generation' opportunity. We believe it is. We're creating two brand new councils. Now is the time to bring local communities and public services together in a way that improves the current two-tier arrangements.

The creation of two new unitary councils - Sherwood Forest (North Nottinghamshire) and Nottingham and South Nottinghamshire (South Nottinghamshire) - is rooted in communities and connected by place. Our approach avoids the disruption and risk of complex boundary changes and linking communities together that have no shared heritage or identity.

We mustn't pretend that communities in South Nottinghamshire connect and identify with communities in North Nottinghamshire. For us, the alternative proposal (option 1b as outlined in the Options Appraisal) that puts Trent Bridge cricket ground and the home of Nottingham Forest's football ground outside of a Nottingham-based council 'makes no sense' to our communities.

Our option places Nottingham Forest's football ground – widely associated with the City of Nottingham and currently in Rushcliffe – within the new Unitary Council that includes Nottingham City.

Equally, to align the identities of our most northern communities, bordering South Yorkshire, alongside the south of Nottinghamshire 60 miles away on the edge of Leicestershire, again 'makes no sense.'

Unlike Nottingham City Council's complex boundary change option, our north-south proposal minimises disruption and enables delivery to the Government's timetable.

Based on listening to our stakeholders, and further and more detailed consideration and analysis, we consider that our north-south model stands out as offering the greatest potential to deliver national priorities at a regional, local and neighbourhood level.

Our model:

- Is the people's choice.
- Is a recognised geography.
- Offers a financially sustainable and resilient solution, with cumulative positive net benefit of £485 million over the first five years post-vesting day and annual net positive recurring benefits of £148 million from year five onwards.
- Drives transformation through its geography and target operating model for social care.
- Improves the delivery of local government services for residents.
- Aligns with existing collaboration and connections with health and other public sector bodies.
- Best aligns with the strategic ambitions of the East Midlands Mayor.
- Accelerates and delivers housing growth and offers the best option for one of the country's core cities to grow.
- Builds on natural, organisational and transport links.

In conclusion, we are ready to move on and deliver reorganisation. It's been talked about in our area for too long.

Our proposal carries the best prospect of delivering two new, forward-thinking councils that will be financially sustainable, deliver housing and economic growth, and genuinely transform people's experience of public services.

Our north-south proposal will deliver **a brighter future for driving growth and improving lives. Rooted in community. Connected by place.**

Councillor Julie Leigh
Leader of Bassetlaw District Council

Councillor John Clarke
Leader of Gedling Borough Council

Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams
of Mansfield District Council

Councillor Paul Peacock
Leader of Newark and Sherwood District Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROBIN HOOD STATUE, SHERWOOD FOREST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our proposal for two new unitary councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire offers the most sensible and pragmatic route to delivering national and local ambitions. It lays the foundation for a new era of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver lasting change, creating two strong, sustainable councils that will drive growth, improve lives, and be truly rooted in the communities they serve.

One council for the north and one council for the south represents the only 'sensible geography' of the proposals being submitted. It avoids complex boundary changes and brings communities together that are most closely connected in terms of heritage, identity, housing, transport, and travel to work.

Sherwood Forest (North Nottinghamshire)

(Contains: Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, and Newark and Sherwood)

Nottingham and South Nottinghamshire (South Nottinghamshire)

(Contains: Broxtowe, Nottingham City Council, and Rushcliffe)

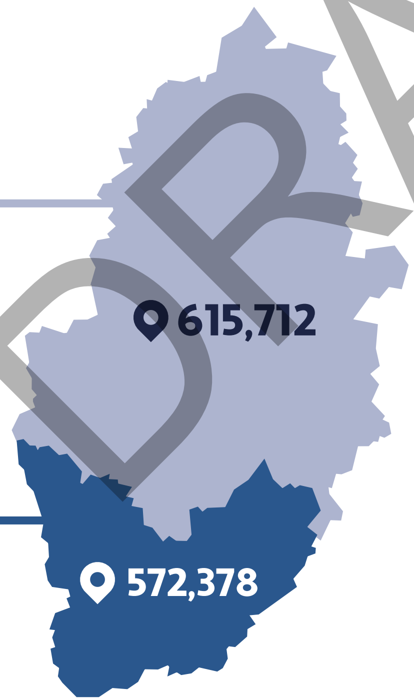


Figure 2: *Map to show the new unitary councils under our north-south model and their population sizes.*

Our proposal, in contrast to others, **offers the simplest viable route to a future-proofed model of local government** for the area, as well as providing the scale and clarity of accountability needed to work effectively with our East Midlands Mayor to maximise the benefits of devolution.

This executive summary outlines the government's criteria for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the collaborative approach we have taken, and the model proposed for LGR. It demonstrates how our model fully meets the criteria but also aspires to exceed them – delivering enhanced outcomes for our residents and businesses.

Collaboration for a brighter future

We have come together as four collaborating councils under different political leaderships and with distinct local priorities, opportunities, and challenges.

Together, we are united in our determination to deliver the best future for our communities so that Nottingham and Nottinghamshire can play its fullest part in supporting the government's 'Plan for Change', and the future growth and success of our area and country.

This collaboration has been built on shared recognition of the need for reform; data-driven understanding of service performance and cost; and a shared commitment to retaining strong local identity and accountability. The extent of collaboration, which has transcended politics, underscores that our proposal represents a consensus approach, not a unilateral plan by any single council. The joint working has continued throughout the preparation of the final submission and is a contributory factor in receiving one of the largest responses to the public engagement in all the existing two-tier areas. All the Nottinghamshire councils (including upper tier Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Councils) have worked closely together, including sharing data, service information and common evidence, even after respective councils have declared their preferred option.

Despite differing views on what model for the future of local government best serves Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, we all agree that creating financially sustainable unitary councils is of fundamental importance for the future of local government in the area.

Indeed, it is only through creating sustainable, resilient, and efficient councils that we will be able to address the challenges we collectively face.

Why our proposal creates a brighter future

Having regard to the government criteria, here's why our option creates a brighter future for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire:

- **Sensible geography** - our proposal draws communities together that identify and connect with each other; that have a shared heritage, and mutual travel to work and housing market areas. It avoids complex boundary changes.
- **Community empowerment and localism** - the north-south councils, given their closer alignment to communities and connection to their place, offer a strong basis for Area Committees and devolution of decision-making and service delivery.
- **Financial sustainability and transformation** - analysis shows that our proposal meets the criteria and offers a financially sustainable and resilient future, through the operational efficiencies of our geography and the platform for further transformation.

- **Devolution and growth** - our proposal aligns the new unitary councils with the pipeline of growth interventions being developed across the area of the East Midlands Mayor. Our north-south proposal mirrors the north-south proposals for Derby/ Derbyshire and offers the greatest potential for the growth of Nottingham city and the delivery of a long-term supply for housing growth.
- **Public support and people's choice** - public engagement shows the strongest support for our proposal, with respondents highlighting its "**sensible geography.**"
- **Fair and equitable** - our proposal works for the whole area creating single-tier local governance that is most balanced in terms of population, need, demand, resources, and democratic representation. It creates a more even geographic split, ensuring fairer representation for Town and Parish Councils, giving southern communities a stronger voice while preserving parish-level input.
- **Delivery, partnership, and practicality** - built on existing partnership structures, our proposal aligns with current NHS, police, and voluntary sector collaborations. It is practical, can be delivered according to the government's timetable, and reflects where people live and work for a coherent local authority structure.

Taking account of all the factors, the two new unitary councils we propose will secure greater and clearer accountability, simpler governance, resilient finances, and bring effective, efficient, and modern services, closer to residents.

Our place: Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

The historic city and county of Nottinghamshire is situated centrally in England and covers 832 square miles (2,156 sq. km). It has three distinct areas: the urban conurbation of Nottingham city; the towns and villages in the north-west which grew out of the textiles and coal industries; and the rural areas to the east and south with their prosperous market towns and villages.

Newark Market Place

It is a place rich in heritage, history, and culture, where innovation flourishes. More recently, traditional industries (for example, coal, textile, and clothing) which supported entire communities and multiple generations, have transitioned to new patterns of employment. Automative, servicing, and manufacturing industries, small businesses, and start-ups across a range of sectors, along with logistics and distribution companies now provide the foundations for a strong and vibrant local economy that continues to grow and expand.

Nottingham is a young, creative, and entrepreneurial city with a diverse range of industrial strengths including the creative and digital, health and life sciences, low carbon clean technology and advanced manufacturing sectors. Nottingham has world class research capabilities driving innovation and growth and is home to two high-performing universities.

There are seven district/borough councils in the area and one unitary authority, Nottingham City Council. Nottinghamshire County Council is the upper tier authority covering the seven non-metropolitan councils - Ashfield District Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Mansfield District Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council. In addition, local communities are served by 233 Town and Parish Councils.

The English Devolution White Paper and LGR criteria

The government's English Devolution White Paper sets out six clear criteria against which it has invited our area to submit LGR proposals, that will simplify local authority structures, enhance local democratic accountability, and drive economic growth. The criteria are:

1. A single tier of local government.
2. Councils of a size that are efficient, sustainable, and local.
3. Delivery of high-quality, sustainable local services.
4. Strong local support.
5. Strategic leadership and commitment to devolution.
6. Local identity and strong community engagement.

In this proposal, we demonstrate how our option fully meets, and aspires to exceed, all the government's criteria and provides a clear path to ensuring high-quality, sustainable local services, neighbourhood and democratic renewal, civic pride, and strong strategic leadership.

In addition, the submission proposes some considerations for the transition period up to 2028, as well as suggestions for reform and transformation by the new unitary councils after vesting day.

Fulfilling the six criteria for reorganisation

The following section demonstrates, in summary, how our proposal fully meets the government's criteria for LGR:

1 **Proposals should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government:**

Our proposal would see the abolition of all nine current Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils (districts/boroughs, county, and city), and the creation of a single tier of local government comprising two new unitary councils, based on existing district boundaries.

View from Gedling

2 Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity, and withstand financial shocks:

The two new unitary councils would serve populations of approximately 615,700 and 572,300, respectively. These figures are in line with the government's stated population guidelines for new unitary councils, as well as striking a balance between economies of scale, accessibility and local identity and resilience.

The proposed reorganisation brings Nottingham City's population size in line with other major UK core cities, Sheffield (566,000), Manchester (568,000), and Liverpool (496,000). This enhances its strategic parity and influence as well as its financial sustainability. At the same time, our proposal ensures a sustainable and viable remaining area, maintaining balanced governance and service delivery across Nottinghamshire.

There is minimal difference between the baseline financial position of the two options (1b and 1e) being proposed for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. However, the 'sensible geography', together with the delivery model for future services, in our north-south proposal we will drive through realisable efficiencies along with real service transformation. This ensures that both unitary authorities in our option deliver improved services and outcomes for our residents while carrying the prospect of a financially sustainable and resilient future, with cumulative positive net benefit of £485million over the first five years post-vesting day and annual net positive recurring benefits of £148million from year five onwards.

3 Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens:

At every stage of this proposed reorganisation, our commitment remains clear, to keep residents at the heart of all we do. From reducing fragmentation to improving responsiveness, our proposal will simplify access, enhance visibility of leadership, and ensure that services are designed with, and for, the communities they serve. We recognise that this transformation must deliver not just operational efficiency, but genuine improvement in the lives of residents.

The current two-tier system creates duplication, administrative complexity, inconsistent service delivery, and unclear and confusing accountability, all of which lead to inefficiency. There are marked differences in deprivation, health, and economic opportunity across the area, which require their own distinct strategies. Public engagement shows that residents want local government to focus on the basics - high-quality, reliable services, value for money, and clear accountability.

Refuse collecting, Nottingham City

Our proposal:

- Integrates and consolidates social care, education, planning, housing, public health, environmental services, and community safety within each sovereign unitary authority, significantly reducing fragmentation and inefficiency, while driving joined up approaches that generate improved outcomes. Adult social care (ASC) for instance, will be reimagined to focus on independence, early support, and place-based integration, prioritising dignity, and access to community support.

- Supports place-based delivery tailored to local needs, integrated health and care models, improved local partnerships and neighbourhood working.

- Prioritises high quality services through clearer accountability, local delivery, and better value for money, preserving, where beneficial, existing local systems and partnerships that drive high performance at the same time as putting in place the foundations for transformation and public service reform.

- Is driven by a broader objective, to build stronger trust between residents and local government. By ensuring councils are more visible, accountable, and culturally connected to their communities, we can better understand local priorities and deliver high-quality services that truly meet those needs and improve lives.

4 Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views:

The work to shape a joint vision, determine and appraise viable options, and develop our proposal has been collaborative throughout, driven by a deep and experienced understanding of local needs. This has been supplemented by an extensive LGR engagement programme, that gathered views from residents, staff, and stakeholders across the region to inform the final proposals. The results show a noticeably higher level of positivity and support for our proposal, partly attributed to respondents' views that it offers a more sensible geographical alignment and a cleaner north-south arrangement across the county.

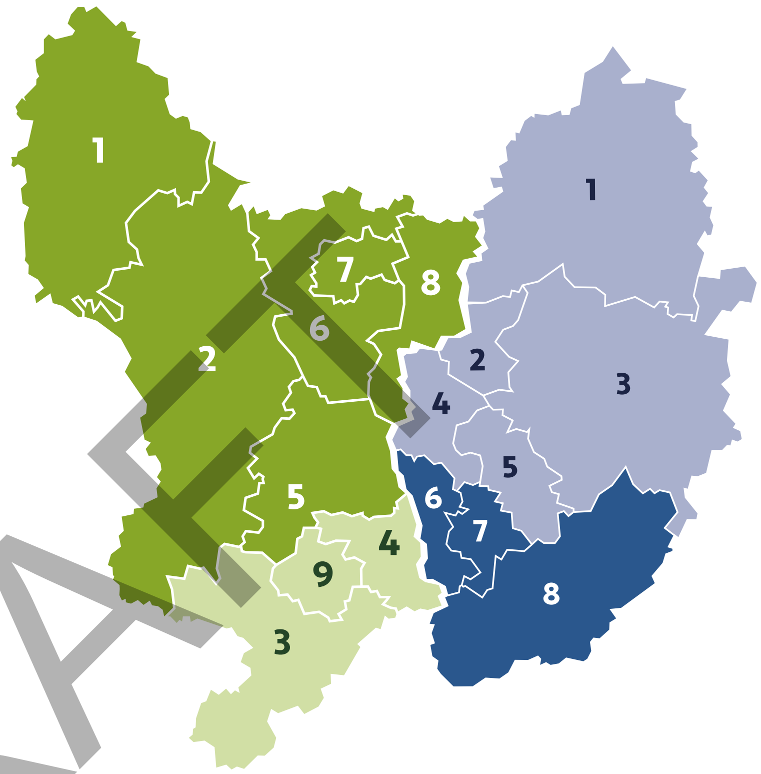
> "This seems like a more logical and fair option, a more natural split between the north and the south of the county."
>
> *- Urban participant, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LGR engagement exercise.*

Subsequent work on our proposal has been led by a cohesive and effective partnership programme board comprising leaders and chief executives. This has provided a continued focus on local needs and clear direction to working groups and workshops.

5 New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements:

Our proposal effectively supports devolution arrangements, in the context of the already existing EMCCA. We are recognised by EMCCA as an important growth area in their emerging regional strategy. Our proposal brings councils together within EMCCA's 'Heartlands' and 'Super Cluster' spatial zones (with further information to follow) and is therefore better aligned with the emerging Mayoral Spatial Development Strategy than the alternative options. Across the EMCCA region, our proposal aligns well with our neighbours in Derbyshire, who are also proposing a similar north-south arrangement for LGR. Already, north-south 'cross border' relationships have been developed, across and beyond local government, to develop a pipeline of future growth opportunities.

Our proposal provides a strong foundation to build on these existing relationships and deliver mayoral ambitions for greater business development, improving skills and driving housing growth. It also maximises opportunities for transformational benefits of public service reform to address health and financial challenges in our local communities and providing a stronger voice for those communities.



Derbyshire Key

1. High Peak
2. Derbyshire Dales
3. South Derbyshire
4. Erewash
5. Amber Valley
6. North East Derbyshire
7. Chesterfield
8. Bolsover District
9. Derby

Nottinghamshire Key

1. Bassetlaw
2. Mansfield
3. Newark and Sherwood
4. Ashfield
5. Gedling
6. Broxtowe
7. Nottingham
8. Rushcliffe

Figure 3: *Proposed Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire options for LGR. (Derbyshire has presented four different north-south options, this map presents their option A, with the alternative three north-south options showing Amber Valley in the south or being split between northern and southern unitary councils.)*

6 New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment:

Arrangements are already in place to encourage and support local communities to have an active involvement in society and to contribute to the decisions and services that impact their quality of life, for example, tenant engagement boards, youth and seniors' councils, town centre partnerships, friends of parks groups, citizen panels, interfaith forums, festivals and community events, and business improvement districts.

Building on these, our proposal for two new unitary councils will enable better co-ordination of community engagement and partnership working, and will simplify and join-up what has become a confusing and disjointed landscape of local public service provision. Part of this we propose would be done through Area Committees, with the new councils determining their precise number, geography, role, and remit.

Our proposal for neighbourhood empowerment, combined with bringing currently disparate services together aligns closely with the neighbourhood structures of key partners, particularly health. It will enable the two new councils to better engage with communities and provides the basis for improved alignment of public services at a neighbourhood level, acting as a catalyst for wider, locality-based public service reform, for example, in line with the NHS 10 Year Plan. This in turn, with co-design by local people, will facilitate the delivery of early help, and preventative activities, impacting demand and downstream costs, reducing escalation and demand pressure on the NHS.

Our proposals for council size take account of the different roles of elected members and the diverse needs and geography of our place. Our thinking on council size and future electoral arrangements further evidences our understanding of, and commitment to, localism and neighbourhood governance. Our proposed electoral arrangements combine current county divisions and electoral wards to provide small units of geography that lend themselves better to an Area Committee structure and neighbourhood-based working.

Transition, transformation and reform

By aligning to existing district/borough boundaries and sustaining established collaborations and partnerships, our proposal enables straightforward and efficient implementation and service continuity, reducing the risk of disruption during transition. While this phase will be facilitated by the shadow authorities to ensure the **safe and legal** transfer of functions on vesting day (1 April 2028), our proposal and work to date will support them with this.

Local authorities face spiralling demand and increased costs across all services if they continue to deliver based on their current approaches. The system needs transformation, not simply structural reform for its own sake, but a fundamental shift in how services are designed, commissioned, and delivered, supporting the future financial sustainability of the new unitary authorities while improving outcomes.

This proposal is not just a response to structural complexity, but a strategic commitment to public service excellence, equity of access, and stronger place-based leadership.

While it will be for the new unitary authorities to determine, our proposal envisages reorganisation as the foundation for extensive transformation in the longer-term. We suggest this is likely to include:

- Wider public service reform, engaging health, police, business, and the voluntary sector.
- Enhanced resident engagement and empowerment and stronger local democracy.
- Enhanced preventative, early help and demand management activities.
- More efficient use of public funds and assets.
- Renewed neighbourhood and locality partnership working.
- Radically different new ways of working, exploiting digital advantages.
- Capitalising fully on devolved powers, aligned with EMCCA strategies.

Our north-south model is not only deliverable, but also desirable. It reflects local identity, builds on existing partnerships, and offers a pragmatic, future-focused pathway to local government reform. With strong leadership, collaborative governance, and a clear vision, the new councils will be well-positioned to lead a new era of local government, one that is more connected, more accountable, and more capable of meeting the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Our model will provide a brighter future for driving growth and improving lives. Rooted in community. Connected by place.

Rooted in community. Connected by place.
Pleasley Pit, Mansfield

ABOUT US

BENTINCK BUSY MARKET AND TOWN HALL, MANSFIELD

ABOUT NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are situated centrally in England and, alongside Derby and Derbyshire, constitute the area covered by EMCCA. The county, including the city, covers 832 square miles (2,156 sq. km) and has three distinct areas:

- The urban conurbation of Nottingham, one of the UK's core cities and an economic, service, and cultural hub for the East Midlands, including relatively affluent suburbs surrounding the City of Nottingham.
- The towns and villages in the north-west which grew out of the textiles and coal industries.
- The rural areas to the east and south with their market towns and villages in the Trent Valley.

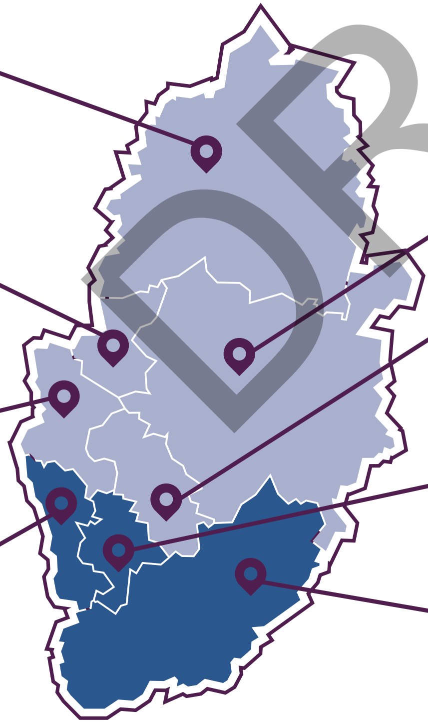
The county is represented by 11 parliamentary constituencies, many of which closely align with district and borough boundaries.

Bassetlaw
Population: 122,286
Total annual net spend: £21.2m

Mansfield
Population: 112,091
Total annual net spend: £15.2m

Ashfield
Population: 128,360
Total annual net spend: £22.0m

Broxtowe
Population: 113,172
Total annual net spend: £14.7m



Newark and Sherwood
Population: 126,168
Total annual net spend: £22.6m

Gedling
Population: 118,563
Total annual net spend: £15.6m

Nottingham City
Population: 329,276
Total annual net spend: £632.9m

Rushcliffe
Population: 123,854
Total annual net spend £16.8m

Nottinghamshire County
Population: 844,494
Total annual net spend: £1.2bn

Figure 4: *Map showing Nottingham and Nottinghamshire boundaries with population size and council spend.*

Nottinghamshire has a diverse socio-economic profile, with place and demographic trends indicating contrasts between urban and rural areas, as well as across those places which are historically industrial compared to those which are experiencing growth in new sectors.

OUR PLACE

Our place as a visitor destination

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are rich in heritage, culture, and innovation. From historic landmarks such as Nottingham Castle, Newstead Abbey, Southwell Minster, Clumber Park, and Sherwood Forest to leading cultural institutions like Nottingham Playhouse, Nottingham Contemporary, and the Royal Concert Hall, the area offers residents and visitors a wealth of attractions and experiences. The area is renowned for its sporting venues including the home of Premier League Nottingham Forest, Mansfield Town and Notts County football clubs; the internationally renowned Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, Holme Pierrepoint National Watersports Centre; the National Ice Centre (home to the Nottingham Panthers), Nottingham Rugby Stadium, Nottingham and Southwell Racecourses and Nottingham Tennis Centre.

Our place as an economic region of excellence

Once defined by coal, textiles, and manufacturing, the local economy has transformed over recent decades. Traditional industries have been replaced by a diverse mix of small businesses, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and digital enterprises. Former industrial areas in the north and west now host a growing automotive, servicing, and manufacturing base, while the M1 and A1 corridors have become national hubs for logistics and distribution.

The Trent Valley 'Super Cluster', centred on former power station sites at West Burton, Cottam, and High Marnham, is now home to the UK Atomic Energy Authority's STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) Fusion Programme[1] –a £400 million government investment pioneering clean nuclear fusion technology. The project is expected to create over 15,000 high-skilled jobs and attract billions of pounds of inward investment. In 2025, Holtec International, EDF, and Tritex announced a £11 billion redevelopment of the Cottam site for advanced nuclear and data technologies.

Economic growth is also accelerating along the M1 corridor and mid-Nottinghamshire, with major investment in advanced manufacturing, automation, digital technologies, and agri-tech. To the south, the East Midlands Freeport at Ratcliffe-on-Soar is being developed as a hub for clean energy and green manufacturing, extending the region's strengths in innovation and sustainable industry.

As the economic hub of the East Midlands, Nottingham generated £11.5 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2022, rising to £19.2 billion across the wider urban area, equivalent to nearly 15 percent of regional GVA and over one-third of the EMCCA economy. This underlines

1 www.ukaea.org/work/step

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's pivotal role in driving inclusive, sustainable regional growth.

Our place for education

Nottingham itself is a creative and knowledge-led city, home to two world-class universities driving innovation and skills. The University of Nottingham ranks among the world's top 100 universities and second in the UK for graduate employability, while Nottingham Trent University leads in creative technologies, sustainable design, and health sciences.

OUR PEOPLE

Demographic overview

There are an estimated 1.1 million[2] people living across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. There is a notably higher proportion of those aged 65+ with 21.5 percent compared to 18.7 percent nationally, and there is a lower rate of working age adults with 58.4 percent compared to 60.5 percent nationally.

Enjoying a forest walk with friends.

The index of multiple deprivation (IMD) 2025[3] deprivation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Levels of deprivation are higher in Nottingham with 31 percent of local super output areas (LSOAs) within the 10 percent of most deprived areas nationally, the 20th highest upper tier authority in the UK. There are notable pockets across the urban centres of Newark, Mansfield, Worksop, and Sutton in Ashfield. The areas with high average deprivation scores are Mansfield (61) and Ashfield (74). The least deprived areas are Gedling (206), Broxtowe (223) and Rushcliffe (294).

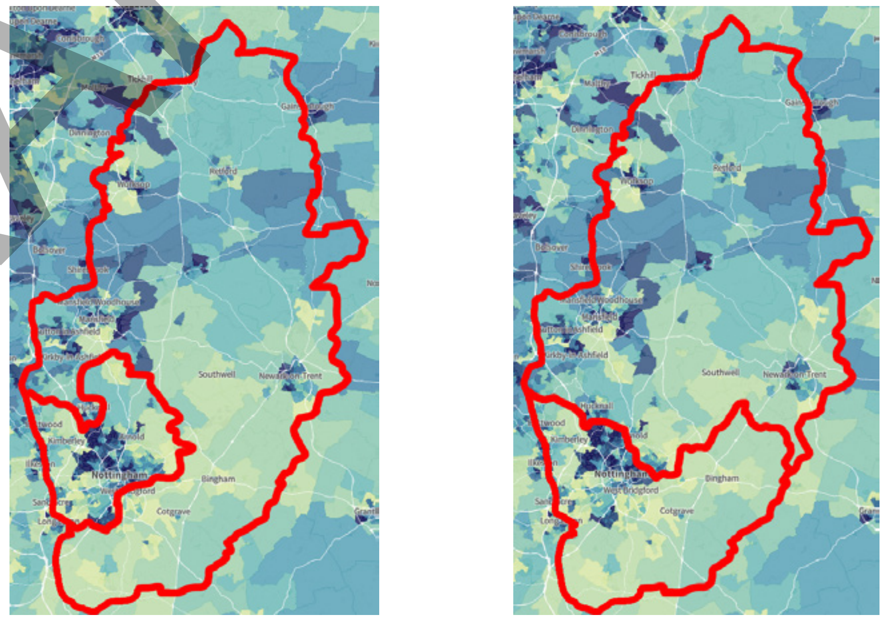


Figure 5: *Maps showing the 2025 Indices of Deprivation data by Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire for the two viable options – 1b (left) and 1e (right)*

2 www.ons.gov.uk

3 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025

Balanced levels of deprivation with our north-south proposal

In the alternative option described as 1b, there is a higher concentration of LSOAs that rank as more deprived than the national median (59.9 percent) compared to the south in our proposed north-south option (1e) (55.2 percent). Conversely, in the north under option 1b, the majority of LSOAs are in the 50 percent less deprived LSOAs nationally (52.4 percent), whereas in option 1e, the north is slightly more deprived than the UK average with 52.1 percent of LSOAs in the 50 percent more deprived LSOAs nationally.

Overall, the imbalance in deprivation between urban and rural is 12.3 percent under option 1b, compared with just 3.1 percent under the north-south model in option 1e, demonstrating that option 1e provides a more balanced distribution of deprivation across the two areas.

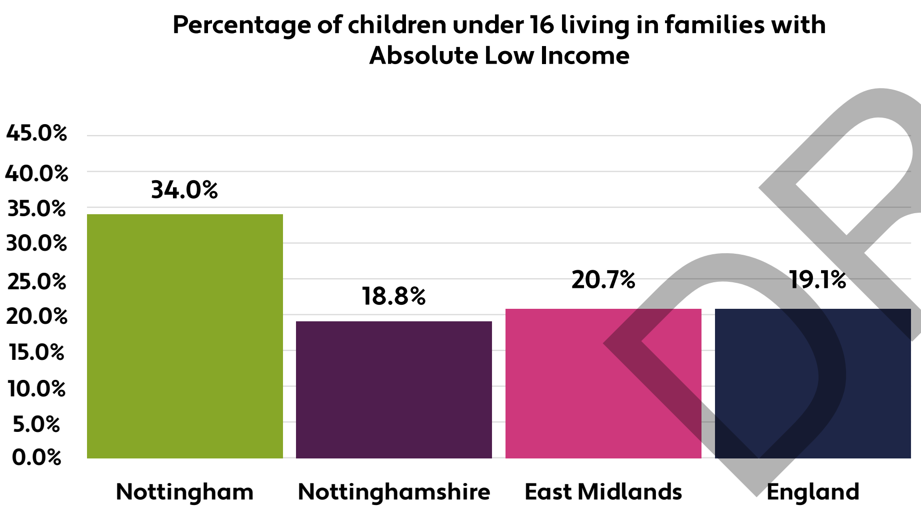
Further details of the viable options for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire can be found in the Options Appraisal.

Children living in low-income families

One of our ambitions is to improve the lives of our children and young people and improve the education outcomes for disadvantaged young people. Through our model we will ensure that prevention and early intervention is targeted and accessible, giving the best opportunity for a brighter future for the next generations.

In 2023/24, 34 percent of children in Nottingham City were in households experiencing absolute low incomes (60 percent below the inflation-adjusted 2010/11 baseline median UK income) compared to 18.8 percent across the Nottinghamshire County Council footprint. Across Nottingham City the rate of children raised in households at absolute lower income levels was below the average of the regional neighbours (20.7 percent) and just under the England average rate of 19.1 percent. A similar pattern is experienced with the relative measure of low income (income below 60 percent of the median in that year), with Nottingham City experiencing the highest rate at 38.8 percent with the Nottinghamshire County rate of 22.2 percent below the regional average (24.17 percent and in line with the national average (22.1 percent).

Indicator	Nottingham City Council	Nottinghamshire City Council	East Midlands
Number of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	20,439	28,183	186,816
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Absolute Low Income	34.0	18.8	20.7
Number of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	23,350	33,276	217,155
Percentage of children under 16 living in families with Relative Low Income	38.8	22.2	24.1



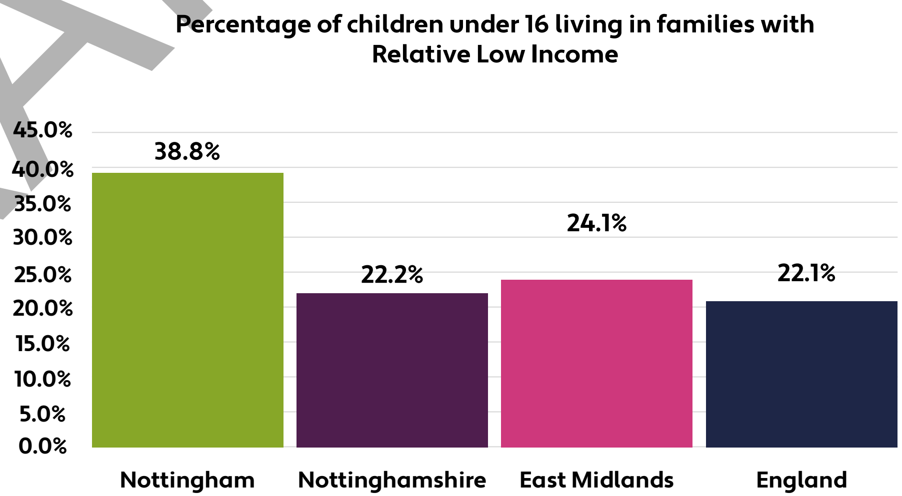


Figure 6: *Illustration of indicators of children living in low-income families across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and compared to the East Midlands average.*

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Our north-south model reflects the structure of existing partnerships across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire such as those with health, education, the police, and the voluntary sector. The new councils will be better positioned to coordinate care, reduce demand pressures, and promote wellbeing. They will be able to prioritise dignity, personal choice, and access to support within communities, strengthening local resilience and reducing inequalities. This will be discussed further in criteria four.

Strategic links to existing partnerships and opportunities for further reform

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire already have a strong foundation of mature partnerships across health, community safety, housing, and public service delivery. LGR offers the opportunity to simplify and strengthen these arrangements to achieve better outcomes and value for money.

Building on health Place-Based Partnerships

The local focus of our north-south model aligns well with the NHS's ongoing reforms, particularly the shift to a neighbourhood-based model of health. Nottinghamshire has a number of existing Place-Based Partnerships[4] (Bassetlaw, Mid, South Nottinghamshire, and Nottingham City). These could be more easily streamlined into north-south structures, improving consistency and coordination across health, social care, and public health services.

The NHS's ongoing reforms, including larger Integrated Care Boards (ICB) and neighbourhood-based Primary Care Networks, align more closely with our proposed north-south model and provides the best opportunity for betterment. Existing Place-Based Partnerships (Bassetlaw, Mid, South Nottinghamshire, and Nottingham City) could be streamlined into north-south structures, improving consistency and coordination across health, social care, and public health services.

We see this as an opportunity to rationalise and reset our health partnerships, to ensure that they reflect our 'sensible geography' and are rooted in the communities they serve.

Other proposed options create fragmentation, are more complex and have a resource intensive geography that will create duplication across health care, with staff being required to service local area committees across multiple administrative boundaries.

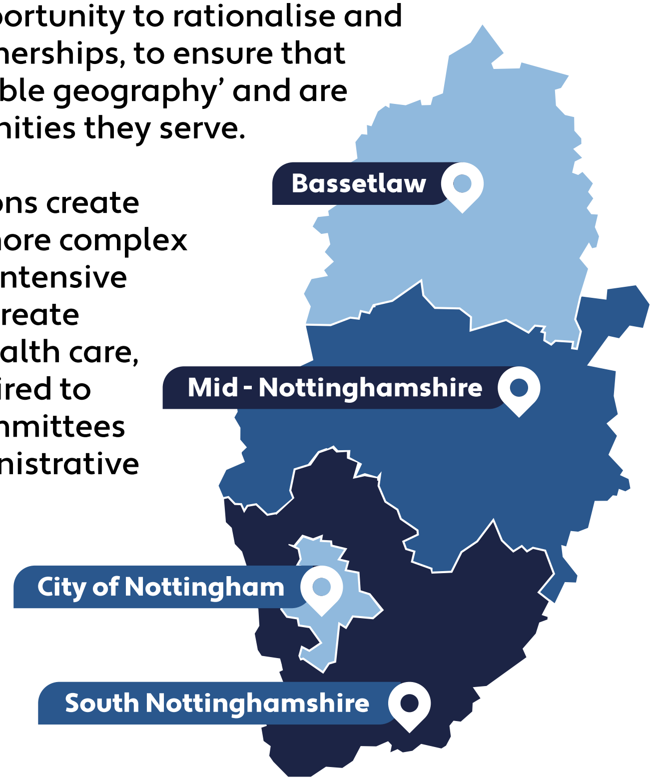


Figure 7: *Map showing the health Place-Based Partnerships across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS).*

4 www.healthandcarenotts.co.uk

Joint delivery and co-commissioning

Current collaborations on areas such as homelessness, building control, and transformation demonstrate the benefits of shared working. The new north-south authorities would build on these successes, creating coherent geographies for joint service delivery and co-commissioning with health, police, and fire partners. This would enable more responsive, locally connected, and cost-effective services.

Some examples include the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's Economic Prosperity Committee[5], Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP)[6], Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP)[7] and Local Resilience Forum (LRF)[8].

Incident control room, Newark during an episode of flooding, utilising our LRF partnership.

5 www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings-and-committees/economic-prosperity-committee

6 www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/news/major-boost-for-a-joined-up-visitor-economy-strategy-for-the-east-midlands/

7 https://nscp.nottinghamshire.gov.uk

8 www.nottinghamshire.police.uk/police-forces/nottinghamshire-police/areas/about-us/about-us/additional-services/nottinghamshire-local-resilience-forum-lrf/

Community safety

Similarly, the Safer Nottinghamshire Board[9] brings together councils and blue-light services to deliver community safety. Our two-unitary structure would enhance coordination across both, reducing duplication and aligning strategic priorities.

Nottinghamshire Police, under the Police and Crime Commissioner[10], leads on law enforcement and community safety, while Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS)[11], governed jointly by the county and city councils, delivers prevention, response, and resilience.

NFRS's 'Futures 25' programme[12] has delivered £1.1 million in savings and modernised governance and workforce structures but continues to face cultural and resource challenges. Nottinghamshire Police is implementing national reforms that emphasise intelligence-led, community-based policing, showing early success in reducing antisocial behaviour but requiring sustained leadership and partnership working.

We know that community safety is a major concern to local communities. Pooling our resources with the Police and other partners can provide additional support. 64 percent of respondents to the joint LGR Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Engagement[13] said crime and anti-social

9 www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk/Document-Library/Our-Work/Our-Partners/Safer-Nottinghamshire-Board.pdf

10 www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk

11 www.notts-fire.gov.uk

12 www.notts-fire.gov.uk/about-us/service-plans/2023-24-annual-delivery-plan/

13 See Appendices

behaviour are priorities for improvement, it was the third top cited factor in making somewhere a good place to live .

> "All I want my council to do is get the basics right - keep the streets clean, pick up my bins, get rid of potholes and keep me and my family safe."
> *- Urban participant, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LGR engagement exercise.*

The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector

We will continue to build on the great foundations that already exist in the north and south.

The VCSE comprises over 230 active organisations, plays a vital role in early intervention, advocacy, and place-based support. The VCSE sector is adapting to tighter funding and increased demand for support to vulnerable residents.

In summary, existing partnerships are strong and continuing close collaboration between unitary councils and partners will be essential. Many current partnerships are organised on a north-south basis; none are organised on the geography of the alternative proposals. Our proposal builds on the strengths and shared purpose of current collaboration enabling more coherent local leadership, streamlined decision-making, and more effective delivery for residents across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

THE CURRENT MODEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire operate under a two-tier local government system, comprising Nottinghamshire County Council and eight district, city and borough councils:

- Ashfield District Council
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Mansfield District Council
- Newark and Sherwood District Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council

THE OPPORTUNITY

The current two-tier system has served Nottingham and Nottinghamshire well but needs reform if we're to deliver stronger outcomes for communities, rebuild public confidence and withstand financial shocks.

We are ambitious for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and for the residents and businesses who are proud to call it home. We are keen to embrace this opportunity to establish a new system of local government that delivers financial efficiencies and resilience, empowers communities, and best positions Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to deliver sustainable economic growth.

Within the East Midlands, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire face a unique set of regional challenges and opportunities that highlight the need for a more streamlined and effective model of local governance. The overlapping responsibilities between tiers often lead to inefficiencies, fragmented service delivery, and confusion amongst residents and stakeholders about where accountability lies. Reorganisation presents an opportunity to build on the strengths of the existing system while addressing these structural challenges.

To fully unlock these opportunities, effective regional collaboration and strategic planning are essential. Fragmentation of inconsistent policies, duplication and slower decision making make it harder for place-based economic development and long-term investment. Our streamlined north-south model would enable Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to speak with a stronger, unified voice in regional partnerships and negotiations – particularly in critical areas such as transport, housing, homelessness, and skills.

In addition to nine local authorities, the delivery of public services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is shaped by a wide network of statutory and voluntary organisations that deliver coordinated services across health, public safety, and community support.

It is important to ensure that through the creation of larger unitary authorities, we do not lose the local community focus that current local councils provide and our north-south option reflects this.

Rising financial pressures on local councils also highlight the need for change, with unitary authorities bringing together services with opportunities for future transformation, a pathway to improved stability, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Real life case example – Chris from Newark

Chris receives an Environment Agency flood alert warning that flooding is possible in his area. Thanks to the multi-agency flood partnership, he contacts local volunteer flood wardens who have been trained by the unitary council's single point of contact flood team and the EA and equipped through grant funding. The flood warden, aware of Chris's previous flooding, provides aqua-sacs and guidance to protect his home. While the wider community faces rising water, Chris feels prepared with resilience measures and access to emergency support.

As conditions worsen, a rest centre opens, staffed by housing and social care teams to provide food, personal care, medication, and welfare checks for displaced residents. After the flood, the council visits affected areas to assess damage, connect residents to recovery grants, and gather insights on local flood causes. These findings feed into the partnership's joint action planning to reduce future risk. For Chris, the Unitary Council will be efficient and effective, bringing all services together in one place.

NORTH - SOUTH

OPTIONS

JUBILEE CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM, NOTTINGHAM

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Developing the options appraisal

From the outset, leaders and mayors across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire collaborated to develop and agree upon a set of local criteria to guide the consideration of any future unitary arrangements. These criteria provided a clear framework for shaping the interim plan and evaluating potential options. Importantly, they were closely aligned with the government's criteria for LGR, which were formally announced by MHCLG in February 2025.

Locally agreed criteria:

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire leadership agreed that any future governance model should:

- Reflect how people live their lives, ensuring services are designed around real communities.
- Demonstrate financial and fiscal sustainability, with robust long-term planning.
- Enable public service reform that improves outcomes and experiences for residents.
- Support strong accountability and maintain meaningful connections to communities and neighbourhoods.

Government's LGR criteria:

- **Government criterion 1:** a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single-tier of local government.
- **Government criterion 2:** unitary government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- **Government criterion 3:** unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative, and sustainable public services to citizens.
- **Government criterion 4:** proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- **Government criterion 5:** new unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- **Government criterion 6:** new unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The strong alignment between the local and national criteria has been a positive foundation for the development of this proposal. Following the MHCLG's announcement, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire leaders have focused on embedding the government's criteria into the options appraisal process, ensuring that all engagement with residents, partners, and stakeholders is framed around these principles. This approach has helped build a shared understanding and fostered support for the emerging proposals.

INITIAL APPRAISAL

All Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities agreed to jointly commission PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to conduct an independent appraisal of eight initial options for LGR. To support this evaluation, a comprehensive dataset was compiled and analysed across all councils, covering geographic, economic, demographic, political, organisational, financial, technological, and asset-related factors.

The process was highly collaborative, ensuring that the appraisal reflected a shared understanding of the opportunities and risks associated with each option against the government's criteria. This assessment, combined with detailed financial modelling of viability, resulted in three options known as 1b, 1e, and 2, being selected for progression and inclusion in the joint interim plan, submitted on 21 March 2025.

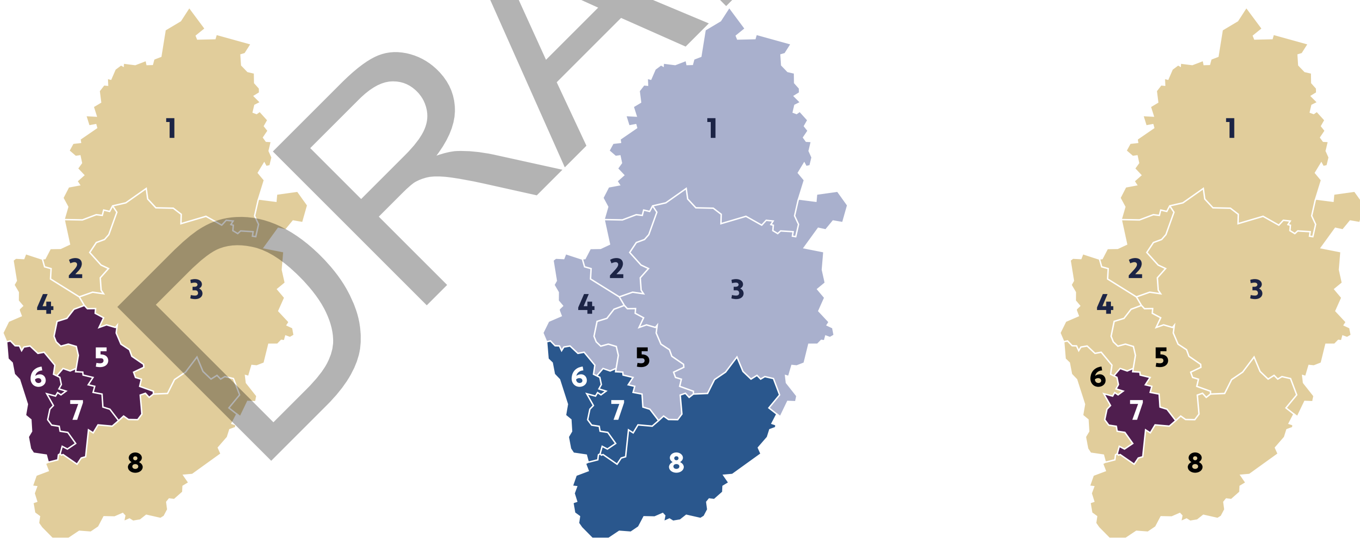
Key

1. Bassetlaw
2. Mansfield
3. Newark and Sherwood
4. Ashfield
5. Gedling
6. Broxtowe
7. Nottingham
8. Rushcliffe

1b **Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling**

1e **Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe**

2 **Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City**



1b

1. Nottingham City conurbation to include **Broxtowe** and **Gedling**
2. The rest of Nottinghamshire becomes a new unitary authority

1e

1. Nottingham City conurbation to include **Broxtowe** and **Rushcliffe**
2. The rest of Nottinghamshire becomes a new unitary authority

2

1. Nottingham City remains the same
2. The rest of Nottinghamshire becomes a new unitary authority

Figure 8: *Maps of the three options, 1b, 1e and 2.*

For the purposes of transparency and to demonstrate the collaborative nature under which these options were selected and appraised, while very high level, we have included the outputs from this work undertaken by PwC below.

Criteria	Key Factors	Option 1b	Option 1e	Option 2
1 Sensible single tier of local government	Establishes a single tier of Local Government for the whole of the area concerned Sensible economic breakdown: with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities Sensible geographic breakdown: which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs	Medium	High	Low
2 'Right-sized' local government	A population of 500,00 or more (unless specific scenarios make this unreasonable) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks Manageable transition costs	High	High	Low
3 High quality, sustainable services	Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk to negative impacts on crucial services	High	Medium	Medium
4 Meets local needs	Meets local needs and is informed by local views Improves/mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural and historic importance Addresses local concerns	High	Medium	Medium
5 Supports devolution arrangements	Helps to support devolution arrangements/unlock devolution Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	High	High	Low
6 Local engagement and empowerment	Enables stronger community engagement Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	Medium	Medium	Medium

Figure 9 : *Table showing the detailed analysis of the three shortlisted options - 1b, 1e, 2.*

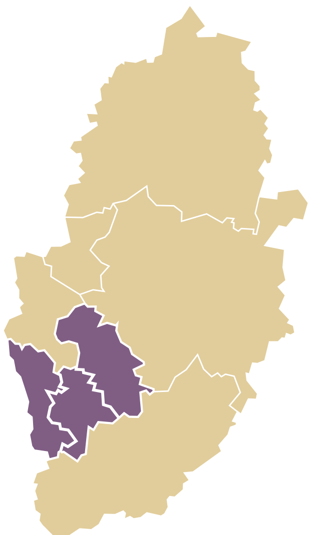
In the late summer of 2025, once further detailed options appraisal work had been undertaken jointly by all councils, it was concluded that option 2 failed to meet a number of the government criteria and was thus discounted.

Therefore, options 1b and 1e were taken forward as the two final options for LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Shortlisted Options

1b **Two Unitary Authorities:** Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling

1e **Two Unitary Authorities:** Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe



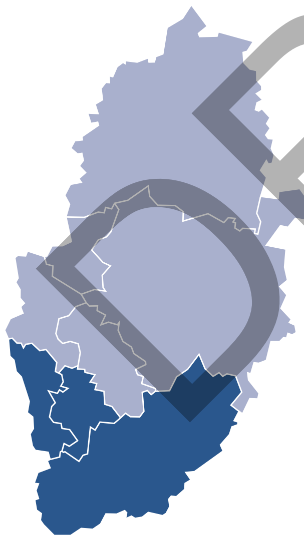


Figure 10 : *Maps showing the geographies and local authority boundaries of the two shortlisted options arising from the interim plan.*

Nottingham City – Option Bii

It should be noted that at a late stage in the process, Nottingham City Council expressed an interest in exploring a third option, known as option Bii, which involves extending Nottingham City's boundaries into three conurbation authorities. This proposal moves away from using districts as building blocks and would necessitate complex boundary changes.

bii **Two Unitary Authorities:** Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Conurbation

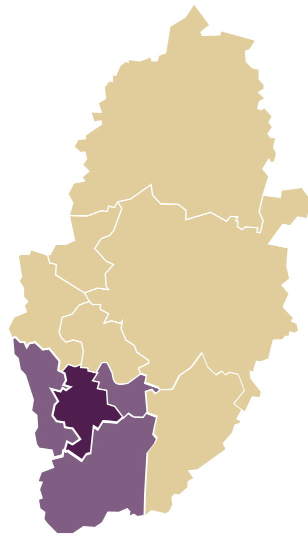


Figure 11 : *Map of option Bii.*

Nottingham City Council have only recently shared the appraisal for this option. It was received on 9 October 2025, and there has been insufficient time for partner councils to consider it. Also, the Directors of Finance/ Section 151 Officers have not had the opportunity to review the financial analysis undertaken by Nottingham City Council. This analysis has not been independently validated by PwC as part of the scope of the collaborative financial exercise undertaken across all Nottinghamshire authorities. We have therefore been unable to include this proposal within this options appraisal.

PROGRESSING THE OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Once the two options were shortlisted, recognising the need for a more in-depth evaluation than the high-level appraisal provided by PwC, the four councils supporting this proposal commissioned Peopletoo[14], a consultancy with extensive experience in supporting LGR, to undertake a more rigorous analysis.

This additional work placed particular emphasis on critical services, notably ASC and children's services. While all council services are essential to residents, these areas were prioritised due to their complexity, scale, financial implications, and the potential risks associated with disaggregation under new governance arrangements.

CRITERIA 1 Single-tier of local government.	
Option 1b	**Option 1e**
Meets the criteria for the establishment of a single-tier of local government.	Meets the criteria for the establishment of a single-tier of local government and is in line with the guidelines for the proposed population size. Our north-south model aligns with sensible economic geographies but also enables more effective collaboration on large-scale priorities such as housing, infrastructure, and transport. Our proposed new councils are evidence-based and respond to lived experience, and incorporate shared

Figure 12: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option - 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page..*

14 https://peopletoo.co.uk

CRITERIA 1

Single-tier of local government.

Option 1b	Option 1e
	infrastructure, places of employment, and existing partner service areas within their boundaries. They also support representative constituent membership of the EMCCA, enhancing strategic coordination across the region. Our model creates a fair, effective governance arrangement, enabling community representation and empowerment, while ensuring that our councils are close to communities and align to lived geographies.
Deprivation Option 1b clusters high-deprivation areas (Nottingham City, Broxtowe, Gedling) into one 'expanded city' unitary authority. This results in: • 60 percent of LSOAs in the south being in the most deprived half nationally. • A deep deprivation profile with fewer affluent areas to balance demand. • The other unitary is significantly less deprived, creating inequity in service need and funding pressure.	**Deprivation** In accordance with recent IMD published figures, option 1e achieves a far more balanced deprivation split, with only a 3.1 percent imbalance compared to 12.3 percent under option 1b.

2024 IMD figures	LSOAs in the 50% more deprived areas
1b - Rest of Nottinghamshire	47.6%
1b - Expanded City	59.9%
1e – North Nottinghamshire	52.1%
1e – South Nottinghamshire	55.2%

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 1

Single-tier of local government.

Option 1b	Option 1e
	Option 1e is not just a better structural fit, but given its 'sensible geography' it provides the best platform for community cohesion, growth and sustainable transformation.

CRITERIA 2

Achieves efficiencies and withstands financial shocks.

Option 1b	Option 1e
It was agreed at an early stage by all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Section 151 Officers, that PwC would be engaged to create a common set of assumptions that all Councils would use as a baseline for each bid development. The analysis undertaken by PwC identified that both options, including aggregation and related further transformation were financially viable, with a sustainable net five-year benefit and recurring net benefit from year five onwards.	It was agreed at an early stage by all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Section 151 Officers, that PwC would be engaged to create a common set of assumptions that all councils would use as a baseline for each bid development. The analysis undertaken by PwC identified that both options, including aggregation and related further transformation, were financially viable with a sustainable net five-year benefit and recurring net benefit from year five onwards.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option - 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 2

Achieves efficiencies and withstands financial shocks.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) financial resilience, including the risk assessment, has identified no major issues with either bid. Council tax harmonisation has been undertaken and there is no significant difference between the two options.	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) financial resilience, including the risk assessment, has identified no major issues with either bid. Council tax harmonisation has been undertaken and there is no significant difference between the two options. Under option 1e we have taken a cautious approach to the phasing of transformation costs as set out in scenario C, within appendix 1, which we feel better presents the timing of when costs will be incurred.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Critical Services **Adults social care and health** Proposed authorities under option 1b create demographic and demand imbalance.	**Critical Services** **Adults social care and health** Option 1e creates two unitary councils with more evenly distributed ageing populations and closer alignment to national growth rates. Option 1e enables: • **£2.8 million annual savings** in ASC by reducing admissions into residential care for older people, embedding a 'home first' approach and developing alternatives to bed-based care in the local community, working closely with partners and providers. • **£20.8 million savings** for working-age adults through reducing bed-based care and developing community-based models working with partners, housing, and providers. • More targeted market development aligned to local needs.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
The geography of option 1b will make collaboration with partners, efficiency, and productivity for both internal and external workforce much harder, given the 60 miles from the north to the south of the proposed 'rest of Nottinghamshire' unitary. The geographic challenges will also: • Reduce opportunities for targeted community-based prevention models. • Impact accessibility, particularly for vulnerable individuals who rely on vital services.	The '**more sensible**' geography of 1e: • Supports greater integration with partners. • Fosters closer connections with community assets. • Ensures improved accessibility for vulnerable people accessing services. • Creates greater opportunity for the sharing of best practice across providers and partners. • Supports stronger community identity encouraging neighbouring communities to work more closely together. • From an efficiency and cost perspective, it reduces travel time for the workforce and for providers.
Children's services Option 1b creates a significant disparity in Children Looked After (CLA) demand between the two proposed unitaries. This could lead to: • Uneven financial pressure. • Increased reliance on high-cost placements in the southern authority.	**Children's services** Based on the detailed analysis of the Nottinghamshire LGR options appraisal, option 1e is demonstrably stronger than option 1b for the delivery of children's services. Option 1e achieves a more equitable split of CLA demand. Reducing pressure on one authority. Option 1e provides better alignment between population and placement capacity:

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
• Reduced capacity and available investment for early help. Option 1b places Nottingham City (20th most deprived nationally) with Gedling and Broxtowe in a southern footprint authority. This results in: • 60 percent of LSOAs in the south being in the most deprived half nationally. • A deep deprivation profile with fewer affluent areas to balance demand. Under option 1b, 59 percent of placements are in a northern footprint, but high demand is concentrated in the southern footprint.	• 61 percent of placements and 57 percent of children's homes are in the north, matching 51.6 percent of the under 18 population. This reduces the need for out-of-area placements and supports reunification. **Option 1e** enables **£26–28 million annual savings** in CLA expenditure, through: • More targeted and local market development and commissioning. • Fostering greater collaboration with partners. • Targeted early help and edge-of-care to meet the needs of the individual communities. Driving this efficiency will enable greater investment in early help and prevention, which is critical to reducing future demand. Option 1e proposes a **single practice model** across both unitaries: • Trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches. • Shared training and standards. • Regional workforce academy.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
The proposed geography of option 1b will make collaboration with partners, as well as effiency and productivity for both internal and external workforce, much harder.	This improves recruitment, retention, and practice consistency, especially critical given Nottingham City's historic reliance on agency staff. The **'sensible geography'** of option 1e also enables greater collaboration with partners and fosters further integration.
Education Option 1b clusters the strongest and weakest performing districts together, Rushcliffe (high attainment) with Ashfield and Mansfield (low attainment). • This polarisation reduces opportunities for peer learning and shared improvement. • Makes it harder to close attainment gaps and raise standards system-wide.	**Education** It distributes the schools with the highest-rated performance more evenly. • By combining Rushcliffe's higher performing schools alongside Nottingham City and Broxtowe, it strengthens the south. • By including Gedling in the north, it balances Ashfield and Mansfield and shares borders, enabling easier collaboration and sharing of best practice.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Other key services and activities **Housing and homelessness** • Option 1b does not align well with existing joint working arrangements. This reduces: · Economies of scale. · Shared access to accommodation and outreach teams. · Continuity of care across district boundaries.	**Other key services and activities** **Improved housing and homelessness coordination** • Homelessness is a cross-cutting issue requiring joined-up working. Option 1e: · Aligns with existing countywide homelessness partnerships. · More effectively supports regional strategies with neighbouring counties (e.g. Leicestershire, North Yorkshire). · Enables shared access to accommodation and outreach teams.
Public safety delivery • Crime and harm patterns vary significantly across districts. • Option 1b's fragmented geography: · Makes it harder to tailor public safety strategies. · Reduces effectiveness of community safety partnerships. · Limits coordination with police, fire, and health services.	**Enhanced public safety and community cohesion** • Option 1e allows: · Tailored strategies for urban violence and rural isolation. · Localised community safety partnerships. · Better coordination with police, fire, and health services.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 3

Prioritise the delivery of high-quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Place-based services • The geography of 1b leads to: · Duplication of assets and services across the proposed northern geography, which spans a significant north-south area. · Less flexibility in deploying staff and resources. · Smaller, less efficient contracts. · Makes it harder to align strategies across areas, which can impact both internal operations and external service delivery.	**Place-based services** • Option 1e supports: · Greater and more efficient rationalisation of depots and assets (for example highways and waste). · Cohesive deployment of resources for rural and market towns. · The opportunity for greater efficiency across key contracts such as waste and recycling, given the '**sensible geography**'.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 4

How councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

Option 1b	Option 1e
There was a shared ambition to create a more effective, accountable, and locally connected governance model.	There was a shared ambition to create a more effective, accountable, and locally connected governance model.
Working collaboratively All Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities have continued to work collaboratively and to share data while developing our options. All nine councils participated in joint workstreams on finance, governance, and engagement. Option 1b has the support of two councils.	**Working collaboratively** All Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities have continued to work collaboratively and to share data whilst developing our options. All nine councils participated in joint workstreams on finance, governance, and engagement. Option 1e has the greatest support from the majority of existing councils across Nottinghamshire.
Informed by local views The engagement exercise attracted over 11,000 responses, making it one of the largest of its kind in the county. Strong local engagement undertaken collaboratively, recognised by the Local Government Association (LGA), as a model of best practice for whole-area collaboration.	**Informed by local views** The engagement exercise attracted over 11,000 responses, making it one of the largest of its kind in the county. Strong local engagement undertaken collaboratively, recognised by the Local Government Association (LGA), as a model of best practice for whole-area collaboration. Option 1e received more public support than option 1b during the extensive engagement process. Around one-third of respondents viewed option 1e

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 4

How councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Approximately half of respondents raised concerns about the way the boundaries are drawn and the associated geography in the proposed new councils under option 1b.	positively or as the better of the two, citing its clearer geographic logic and alignment with local identities. Focus groups reinforced this preference, describing it as a 'more natural split' between the north and south of the county.
Urban vs rural communities	**Urban vs rural communities** Option 1e proposes a north-south model, which better reflects the geographic and socio-economic diversity of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
The average rural/urban population split between the two authorities proposed under option 1b is 34.4 percent, indicating a noticeable difference in their geographic and demographic profiles. Under option 1b, the southern unitary would be heavily urban, dominated by Nottingham City and its surrounding conurbations. This could lead to: • Resource prioritisation skewed towards urban needs. • Reduced visibility and influence for rural communities. • Challenges in tailoring services to rural contexts (for example transport and health access).	The average rural/urban population split between the two authorities proposed under option 1e is 18.3 percent. This model avoids concentrating urban areas into a single authority (as in option 1b), which could risk marginalising rural voices. Focus groups, including urban participants, described 1e as 'more logical and fair', suggesting broader appeal across both urban and rural populations. Option 1e includes place-based service teams and devolved powers to maintain local accountability. This helps ensure that rural areas are not overshadowed by urban centres in decision-making or service delivery.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 5

New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Strategic alignment with EMCCA Option 1b risks creating fragmented unitary boundaries that do not align well with the seven spatial development clusters identified by EMCCA. This fragmentation would: • Complicate the delivery of EMCCA's Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). • Require multiple local planning authorities to coordinate on single growth zones (e.g. the 'Trent Arc'), reducing efficiency and slowing delivery.	**Strategic alignment with EMCCA** Option 1e aligns closely with EMCCA strategic priorities. The geographic boundaries of the proposed north and south unitaries mirror EMCCA's spatial zones and development clusters, enabling seamless integration and delivery of regional strategies. The proposed population split (approx. 611,000 in the south and 653,000 in the north by 2035) supports balanced representation and operational capacity within EMCCA. This avoids the urban-heavy imbalance seen in option 1b, where the southern authority would be disproportionately urban, potentially marginalising rural needs.
Economic interventions Under option 1b, economic opportunity zones like the 'Trent Arc' and 'Heartlands' would be split across different authorities, making it harder to: • Deliver cohesive economic strategies. • Coordinate infrastructure investment.	**Targeted economic interventions** Option 1e enables bespoke responses to local economic challenges: • The north can focus on revitalising areas like Bassetlaw and Mansfield, which face low productivity and earnings. • The south can drive growth in the 'Trent Arc' and 'Heartlands', aligning with EMCCA's investment priorities.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.* *Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 5

New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Transport and connectivity Option 1b's geography does not reflect commuting patterns or economic travel corridors, which are essential for effective transport planning. This could lead to: • Disjointed transport strategies. • Missed opportunities for EMCCA investment in place-based mobility solutions. • Slower progress on decarbonisation and inclusive access.	**Transport and connectivity** The model reflects real commuting patterns and economic geography, allowing for place-based transport planning. It supports EMCCA's goals for inclusive mobility, decarbonisation, and access to jobs and services. Option 1b's fragmented geography would hinder strategic transport planning and investment alignment.
Skills and employment The model risks duplicating efforts across multiple authorities and weakening partnerships with colleges, training providers, and employment boards.	**Skills and employment** Option 1e supports coherent delivery of skills and employment initiatives, leveraging existing partnerships and aligning with EMCCA's devolved adult skills budget. It enables hyper-local responses to issues such as youth unemployment, skills gaps, and rural access to education–challenges that are harder to address under option 1b's geographic structure.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option - 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 5

New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Housing and environment Option 1b would disrupt existing joint planning arrangements, such as the 'Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan', by splitting collaborating districts across different authorities. The fragmented structure under option 1b would make it harder to coordinate green infrastructure, a waste management system, and to deliver on net zero ambitions.	**Housing and environment** The south unitary 1e builds on the 'Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan', enabling continuity in housing delivery and planning. The model supports shared Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) and coordinated waste management, advancing net-zero goals and attracting green investment. It builds on mature partnerships and existing delivery infrastructure, making it future-ready and cost-effective.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 6

Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Town and Parish councils 1b would create an 'expanded city' in which the Town and Parish council representation is significantly weakened. The new authority would represent only 9 percent of Nottinghamshire's 233 parishes, considerably weakening the 'rural voice'.	**Stronger role for Town and Parish councils** 1e presents a fair and equitable representation of Town and Parish councils. Under option 1e, the southern authority (Broxtowe, City, Rushcliffe) would include 30 percent of Nottinghamshire's 233 parishes, compared to just 9 percent under option 1b. This gives greater voice and representation to rural and parish communities, preserving local identity and influence.
Neighbourhood empowerment Option 1b risks fragmentation, underrepresentation, and slower progress in delivering the government's and EMCCA's ambitions for community engagement and local empowerment.	**Supports neighbourhood empowerment** Option 1e will create Area Committees that will bring together elected councillors, residents, the police, NHS, and other local partners to create a more joined-up and responsive model of local governance. Area committees provide enhanced opportunities for local communities to influence the decisions that affect their lives and better co-ordinate local services. These committees will: • Embed local priorities into council decision-making. • Enable devolved decision-making and funding at the neighbourhood level.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 6

Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Option 1b	Option 1e
Local identity 1b would create an authority of over 60 miles in length, stretching from South Yorkshire to Leicester. These communities have little or no connections and it makes '**no sense**' to the public. It would put significant City landmarks, such as the Trent Bridge cricket ground and the home of Nottingham Forest football club, outside of a Nottingham-based council which would '**make no sense**' to our communities. It combines district/borough councils that have weaker connections and relationships, which means there is a lack of shared identity. This could make it harder to focus efforts in local areas where all communities are engaged equally.	**Reflects local identity, natural communities and 'sensible geographies'** Option 1e is built around existing interrelationships and organisational boundaries, which residents already identify with. It brings together the northern districts/boroughs of Gedling, Ashfield, Newark and Sherwood, Bassetlaw and Mansfield steeped in shared history in coal mining, rural market towns and manufacturing. It will put communities together that resonate with significant landmarks/famous figures, such as Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood, as was demonstrated as being important by residents throughout the engagement process. This alignment enables faster implementation of neighbourhood engagement structures and avoids the disconnect that could arise under option 1b, which does not reflect natural communities and would require time to build trust and new relationships.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option - 1b and 1e. Continued on the following page.*

CRITERIA 6

Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Option 1b	Option 1e
	Alignment with national and regional policy Option 1e aligns with: • The government's 'Pride in Place' strategy. • The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. • EMCCA's corporate plan to reduce inequality and empower communities. Option 1e provides a more community-rooted, inclusive, and operationally ready model for neighbourhood empowerment. It aligns with national policy, builds on existing structures, and ensures that local voices - especially in rural and parish areas - are heard and represented.

Figure 12 continued: *Table of analysis of government criteria against each viable option – 1b and 1e.*

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive options appraisal clearly demonstrates that option 1e – a two unitary model split north-south – is the most robust, balanced, and future-ready solution for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

When assessed holistically against the government's six criteria, option 1e consistently outperforms option 1b across all the key areas, including service delivery, community engagement and the strategic alignment with regional devolution.

Our model strikes the optimal balance between strategic scale and local responsiveness. It enables:

- **The most financially sustainable and resilient solution**, through driving transformation through its geography and target operating model for social care.
- **Efficient and integrated public services**, particularly in complex areas like adult social care and children's services.
- **Stronger alignment with EMCCA's spatial and economic priorities**, unlocking investment and accelerating delivery of regional growth strategies.
- **Fairer representation and community empowerment**, with a structure rooted in natural geographies and existing partnerships.
- **Resilience and equity**, with a more balanced distribution of deprivation and demand across both authorities.

The remainder of this proposal sets out how our approach meets each criterion in detail, presenting a clear, credible, and community-focused path forward for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, while ensuring safe delivery of statutory duties.

Option 1e is not just a technically sound proposal - it is a community-driven, evidence-based, and strategically aligned model that reflects how people live, work, and access services. It builds on existing relationships, respects local identity, and provides a platform for transformation that is both ambitious and achievable.

In contrast, option 1b does not offer 'sensible geography' or a 'sensible economic area' but introduces fragmentation, risks service inefficiencies, and weakens rural representation–making it harder to deliver the outcomes that matter most to residents. Nottingham City's 'boundary change option' (option Bii) includes some but not all of Nottingham's conurbation and involves a level of complexity that pose significant risks to the disaggregation of services and finances, and to meeting the Government's timetable.

Our north-south model is the only option that truly 'makes sense' to partners, to professionals, and most importantly, to the people of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It is the right model for today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.

OUR VISION

SHERWOOD FOREST, NEWARK AND SHERWOOD

OUR VISION FOR UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Our vision is for a brighter future for driving growth and improving lives. Rooted in community. Connected by place.

We will build two modern and accessible councils for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, at the cutting edge of public service reform and with a deep commitment to transforming the quality of peoples' lives. Our aim is to exploit the efficiency opportunities presented by LGR to put local government services on a firmer financial footing, and build places where everyone feels empowered, and can achieve their full potential.

Working closely with our East Midlands Mayor and being aligned with EMCCA's Spatial Development Zones, our proposed two new north-south councils will enhance the delivery of economic growth, housing and infrastructure.

They will be better positioned to provide co-ordinated, easy to access and high-quality services that meet the everyday needs and expectations of residents. This means focusing on what matters most: keeping communities clean and safe, and supporting people to live healthy, happy, and independent lives.

What our residents want

> "All I really want my council to do is get the basics right – keep the streets clean, pick up my bins without leaving a mess, fix potholes, and keep me and my family safe. Anything else on top of this is a bonus."
>
> *- Urban participant, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LGR engagement exercise.*

Through the public engagement, around 80 percent of respondents emphasised the importance of delivering good value and reliable core services. These include maintaining roads and pavements, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, keeping streets clean, and ensuring effective travel and transport. Value for money and meeting local needs were also key priorities.

The two councils will help to simplify and unify public services across our whole area and enable greater service integration and innovation, while building on the strengths of the current nine councils and other public and voluntary and community sector partners.

The new councils will value our local identity, recognise what makes our different communities unique, and celebrate the qualities that connect them. Engagement will be at the heart of what we do, so that everybody has a voice.

Stronger together, both new councils have an opportunity to shape a brighter future for all.

OUR CORE VALUES

These values underpin our aspirations for how our new unitary councils will operate - they will shape culture, behaviours and ethos of our new unitaries:

ACCOUNTABILITY	Replacing the current two-tier system with a single point of democratic and service accountability in each area. This will make it easier for residents and partners to know who is responsible for what, with simpler decision-making and clearer leadership.
TRANSPARENCY	We operate openly, with accessible information, clear performance data and meaningful community engagement.
INCLUSION	We are committed to serving all citizens, promoting equal opportunities, and ensuring no one is left behind.
RESPECT FOR LOCAL IDENTITY	We value the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods, towns and villages, and ensure that local voices are heard and matter.
SUSTAINABILITY	We deliver services in a financially and environmentally sustainable way, planning for the long term.
SERVICE-FOCUS	Our priority is delivering high-quality services to residents and businesses, continuously improving and being responsive to change.
RESPECTFUL AND CARING	We treat everyone with compassion, dignity, and kindness. We listen with empathy, value diverse perspectives, and act with compassion, especially when supporting those who need us most.
PROFESSIONAL AND TRUSTWORTHY	We deliver on our promises and take pride in our work. We act with integrity, follow through on commitments, and provide reliable, high-quality services that people can trust and depend on.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Our principles will guide our behaviour and decision-making; they are aspirational and ambitious. These principles are also reflected in our proposed target operating model, outlined later in this proposal.

CUSTOMER-FIRST	We put people at the heart of everything we do. We listen actively, respond promptly, and design services around the needs of our residents, ensuring every interaction is helpful and respectful.
COLLABORATIVE: WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE MORE	We build strong relationships across teams, communities, and partners, sharing knowledge, supporting one another, and co-creating solutions that make a difference. Adopt a 'Team Nottinghamshire' approach to issues that cross boundaries, such as economic strategy, transport, and climate action. Our model provides closer alignment with the EMMCA to support the delivery of devolution ambitions.
DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH	By working with businesses, creating conditions for inclusive growth, aligning services with local strengths and opportunities that support employment, skills and investment.
DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY, EFFICIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICES	Our model will be underpinned by financial resilience and innovation.

OUR PRINCIPLES CONT.

ROOTED IN COMMUNITIES	To improve outcomes for residents, through more responsive, place-based, and preventative service delivery.
PREVENTION, EARLY INTERVENTION, AND JOINED-UP SERVICES	By bringing services under one roof councils can, through a holistic view, intervene earlier (for example, connecting housing, social care and health) and reduce duplication or gaps. Through working with partners, VCSE and community assets to deliver targeted prevention tailored to priority needs and ambitions. This approach will deliver a long-term reduction in the reliance on public services - developing community capacity to self-serve. Early prevention prevents cost escalation.
LOCAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT	To protect and celebrate the distinctive identities of our city, towns, and rural communities. Local communities are engaged, empowered and supported; decisions are taken closer to people, services are responsive to local needs, and residents feel a strong sense of ownership and identity.

One of our most important priorities for reorganisation is that the services from the new councils are 'safe and legal' from day one. As we transition to the new councils, we will ensure that everyone currently receiving support from services continues to do so and will not fall through any gaps during this period of change.

Whilst service continuity will be the primary focus for vesting day, our vision goes beyond this; we are also looking ahead to the transformation opportunities. We believe that reorganisation is the foundation for extensive transformation in the longer-term including, driving closer regional collaboration, more efficient use of funds and assets, enhanced community empowerment and engagement, and new ways of working, exploiting digital advantages.

We believe we have set out a strong vision for the two new councils to progress. This includes the principles and values which we recommend the new authorities work to, aligned with our proposed target operating model.

NORTH - SOUTH

CRITERIA

BESTWOOD COLLIERY, GEDLING

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 1:

A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single-tier of local government.

This section outlines that we are seeking to replace the existing two-tier system across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with two single unitary authorities, one for the north and one for the south. We propose each unitary assumes full responsibility for services currently delivered by both district, city, and county councils.

We acknowledge that the current two-tier structure creates duplication, confusion over responsibilities, and inefficiencies in service provision. We firmly believe, in line with the government's ambition, that a single-tier model will enable clear leadership, streamlined decision-making, and coherent strategic planning across the entire area.

Being based on sensible economic geographies, that incorporate shared infrastructure and places of employment, our proposal will enable more effective collaboration on, and delivery of, large-scale priorities such as housing and transport.

LGR provides an unparalleled opportunity to design a system of local government that is aligned to our functional economic geographies and connects people and places in a way that meets their everyday lives. In utilising their new powers over these wider geographies, the new unitary authorities will deliver on government's national ambitions to improve housing development, accelerate infrastructure delivery, and drive economic growth.

OUR PROPOSED MODEL

Our north-south model leverages the unique economic identities and connectivity of the north and south, driving sustainable development, maximising local growth - and critically - best serving our local communities.

Our north-south model offers a clear and coherent structure:

- **Local representation and identity** - maintaining strong urban and rural representation, ensuring governance is responsive to diverse communities and supports inclusive growth.

- **Clear and accountable governance** - establishes a single-tier structure with the scale and capacity to deliver improved services and devolved powers efficiently.
- **Aligned with economic geographies** - reflects functional economic areas but also supports inclusive growth in the East Midlands.
- **Accelerates housing delivery** - better aligns with housing market areas, enabling more responsive planning, unlocking stalled development, addresses localised housing need and supports the national ambition to build 1.5 million homes.
- **Improved public service integration** - facilitates joined up working across health, social care, public protection, housing and neighbourhood services, enhancing coordination and accountability, and enabling a more targeted local response.
- **Connectivity** - aligns travel geographies with unitary boundaries to enable integrated transport planning which improves connectivity and mobility.
- **Evidence-based and engaged** - built on robust analysis and stakeholder engagement, with clear outcomes and demonstrable benefits.

LOCAL REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY

Our north-south model provides a balanced single tier solution offering a sensible economic area and a sensible geographic area.

Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, Rushcliffe

Testing for Gas Monument, Silverhill Wood, Ashfield

The South

The vibrant City of Nottingham and suburb of Broxtowe is home to our two esteemed universities; the bustling suburb of West Bridgford, which forms part of Rushcliffe is home to Premier League Nottingham Forest and the internationally renowned Trent Bridge cricket ground; the tranquil Vale of Belvoir nestling in the far south of Nottinghamshire also forms part of Rushcliffe and borders Leicestershire.

The North

The northern boroughs of Gedling, Ashfield, Newark and Sherwood, Bassetlaw, and Mansfield are steeped in a shared history of coal mining, rural market towns and manufacturing, and borders Derbyshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, which share rural characteristics and shared historical and economic ties.

CONNECTIVITY

Our north-south model aligns more effectively with Nottinghamshire's geography and transport connectivity, supporting smarter planning and more impactful delivery. The map below illustrates areas of the county that can be reached within a 30-minute drive from West Bridgford (Rushcliffe).[15] It clearly demonstrates that the southern part of the county enjoys significantly better access to the city, with higher volumes of residents commuting for work, education, shopping, and leisure. This reflects a well-established pattern of movement and economic integration that supports the case for a South Nottinghamshire authority.

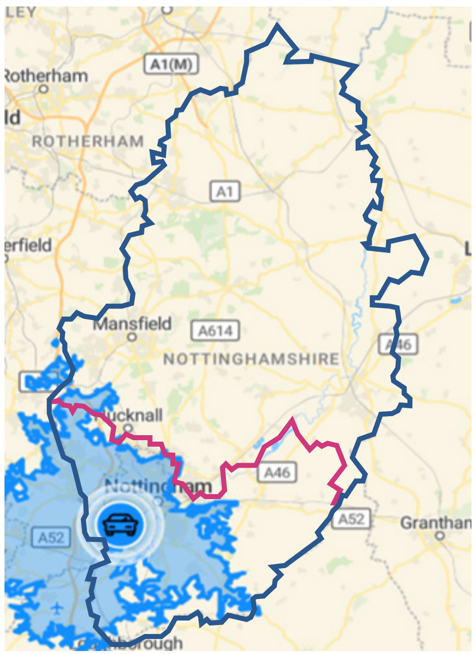


Figure 13 : *Map showing the 30-minutes driving time from West Bridgford, emphasising the link with this area, the city, and wider south region.*

In the northern part of the county, areas such as Mansfield and Newark and Sherwood serve as major employment centres, with 55 percent of Mansfield's workforce and 59 percent of Newark and Sherwood's workforce employed locally. These figures highlight the presence of self-contained, localised economies, with more modest cross-district commuting flows. This reinforces the rationale for a North Nottinghamshire authority that can focus on enhancing connectivity between dispersed communities and supporting inclusive growth in more rural and post-industrial areas.

By aligning travel geographies within their respective unitary authorities, our north-south model, enables targeted investment in transport infrastructure, supports efforts to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and fosters greater mobility, particularly in areas at risk of rural isolation. It also allows for more coherent planning around public transport, active travel, and strategic road networks, ensuring that connectivity improvements are tailored to the distinct needs of each part of the county.

Other options attempt to plan transport and connectivity across a proposed urban vs rural geography that spans the extremes of Nottinghamshire, from the northernmost villages in Bassetlaw to the southern edge of Rushcliffe. It would be inefficient, fragmented, and misaligned with existing travel patterns.

Our north-south model offers a more logical and effective framework for delivering integrated, place-based connected transport solutions that support economic growth and community wellbeing.

15 App.traveltime.com

ALIGNED WITH ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHIES AND SUPPORTS EAST MIDLANDS GROWTH

Economic geographies

Our north-south model would better support local growth within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's communities by aligning governance with distinct economic geographies and settlement patterns. The northern districts such as Mansfield, Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, and mid/north Gedling share a common industrial heritage, infrastructure, labour market characteristics, and easier workforce mobility, while the southern area including Nottingham City, Broxtowe and key parts of Rushcliffe, are more urbanised and service-orientated.

By creating two unitary authorities, each can focus on the specific growth drivers, challenges, and opportunities within their area, enabling more targeted investment, responsive planning, and effective critical infrastructure and employment initiatives. This structure also reduces fragmentation, simplifies decision-making, and importantly strengthens strategic alignment with the EMCCA.

Real life case study - Ellie from Newark

Community engagement on regeneration scheme, Newark

Ellie is a Senior Regeneration Officer who works with communities and partners to identify systemic challenges. Ellie will be able to work with Council colleagues to ensure priorities and approaches are aligned, including engagement with partners and community leaders. The two unitary councils in the north and south will leverage common shared challenges across similar geographies and market towns to drive regeneration outcomes, ultimately removing barriers and improving lives for residents and businesses.

East Midlands growth

The Inclusive Growth Commission[16] has developed a spatial framework to guide inclusive growth across the East Midlands, shaping decisions on industrial policy, skills development, spatial planning, and social policy. Our model offers a closer alignment between the boundaries of the proposed unitary authorities and these strategic growth areas, ensuring that governance structures are fit for purpose and capable of delivering on regional priorities.

Our proposed north-south model also mirrors the geographical logic of LGR proposals in Derbyshire, creating a coherent north-south structure across the wider region. Our model ensures that the 'Trent Arc' growth corridor is fully contained within the South Nottinghamshire unitary, allowing a single Local Planning Authority (LPA) to lead on the mayor's growth agenda for this area. In contrast, other options would fragment the 'Trent Arc' across multiple LPAs, requiring complex joint-working arrangements that risk slowing down delivery and diluting accountability. By consolidating strategic growth zones such as the 'Canal Corridor' and 'Super Cluster' within clearly defined unitary boundaries, our proposal provides the governance clarity and operational capacity needed to unlock investment and drive inclusive growth across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and the wider East Midlands.

Priority	New Council	Growth Opportunities
Trent Arc	South Nottinghamshire	• Nottingham City Centre • Toton and Chetwynd • Ratcliffe Power Station (Freeport)
	South Derbyshire	• Infinity Park Investment Zone and South Derbyshire Growth Zone • Willington Power Station • East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP) • Derby City Centre
Canal Corridor	North Nottinghamshire	• Explore Park Investment Zone
	North Derbyshire	• Explore Park Investment Zone • Markham Vale Enterprise Zone • Chesterfield Town Centre • Hartington and Staveley Investment Zone
Super Cluster	North Nottinghamshire	• West Burton Power Station • Cottam Power Station • High Marnham Power Station

Figure 14 : *Table showing the alignment of strategic growth priorities in north-south proposals for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.*

16 https://www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/what-we-do/the-economy/the-igc/

ACCELERATES HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Our north-south model offers a more effective framework for planning and delivering housing growth across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Under our proposal, Nottingham City will have a longer-term housing land supply to grow, supported by a high volume of planning permissions and a strong track record of brownfield redevelopment. This capacity provides a solid foundation for meeting local housing needs and reducing pressure on greenbelt land surrounding the city.

As shown in figure 15, the unitaries created within option 1b and 1e that include Nottingham City have a positive supply of housing. This reflects the plentiful supply of permissions and the estimated level of windfall development which reflects the high-level of brownfield land redevelopment in the city. The removal of the uplift from Nottingham City's housing target has also provided headroom in the city's housing land supply. Under our proposal, South Nottinghamshire has a greater supply because of the inclusion of the allocations within Rushcliffe around the south of Nottingham built-up area. This, combined with the joint 'Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan'[17] already being developed by Broxtowe, Nottingham, and Rushcliffe, provides a coordinated approach to managing growth across the wider urban area.

1b 'Expanded City' and 1e South Nottinghamshire have undersupply against local housing need over the 15-year period. However, this reflects the increase in requirements which has occurred following the review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a new standard methodology for housing, and the current progress various authorities have made in their plan making.

In terms of the long-term potential to increase housing supply, our north-south model provides the best opportunity to plan appropriately for new housing. While it is anticipated that Nottingham City will continue to deliver growth, reflected in the windfall allowances in both 1e and 1b options, significant growth will need to be accommodated beyond this. This will be harder to achieve in 1b as it is smaller and constrained by tighter boundaries and significant physical constraints such as the flood plain and ridge lines.

Aerial shot of Broxtowe.

17 www.gnplan.org.uk/

Authority	Local housing need (dw/pa)	15-year need	Known housing supply over next 15-year (dw)				Difference
			Permitted	Windfall	LP Allocations	Total	
1b Expanded City	2,562	38,430	20,400	15,300	8,000	8,000	+7,395
1b Rest of Nottinghamshire	3,186	47,790	17,400	7,100	20,290	20,290	-3,000
1e South Nottinghamshire	2,787	41,805	21,800	16,400	12,400	12,400	+8,795
1e North Nottinghamshire	2,961	44,415	16,000	6,000	15,890	15,890	-6,525

Figure 15 : *Table showing housing need and supply in the proposed new councils – Option 1b and 1e.*[18]

Looking ahead, our north-south model offers the best opportunity to plan for long-term housing delivery. The scale and geographical coherence of these new authorities allow for strategic planning across a polycentric region, with growth potential in key settlements such as Mansfield, Worksop, and Newark, as well as in former mining communities. These areas are well-positioned to accommodate future development, supported by infrastructure investment and aligned with the EMCCA's 'Inclusive Growth Strategy.'

18 *It should be noted that figure 15 is a snapshot in time, based on a range of data which changes on a yearly basis including commitments, completions and windfall assessments. The undersupply shown against local housing need over the 15-year period reflects the increase in requirements which has occurred following the introduction of a new standard methodology for the calculation of local housing need, and the current point in plan making that the various authorities are at.*

Importantly, the EMCCA's emerging 'Heartlands Strategy' recognises the diversity of the region and advocates for a community-led, place-based approach to planning. This aligns with our proposal, which enables tailored housing strategies that reflect local character, capacity, and ambition, rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

In summary, our north-south model provides the scale, flexibility, and strategic alignment needed to accelerate housing delivery, unlock stalled sites, and support inclusive, sustainable growth across Nottinghamshire. Looking ahead, our north-south model offers the best opportunity to plan for long-term housing delivery, and in turn, addressing housing need. The scale and geographical coherence of these new authorities allow for strategic planning across a polycentric region, with growth potential in key settlements such as Mansfield,

EVIDENCE-BASED AND ENGAGED

Our north-south proposal is underpinned by an evidence-led approach that draws on extensive data analysis, strategic modelling, best practice, and local insights. It reflects a deep understanding of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's functional economic geographies, service delivery patterns, and community needs.

The development of our north-south model has been informed by quantitative assessments including housing supply, transport flows, employment patterns, and public service integration, as well as qualitative engagement with stakeholders across the region. Councils, community groups, service providers, and residents have contributed to shaping a model that is not only technically sound but also locally supported.

The outcomes of this engagement are reflected in our proposal's alignment with lived geographies, its responsiveness to local identity, and its capacity to deliver demonstrable benefits in terms of efficiency, accountability, and inclusive growth. This is a proposal that has been co-designed with communities and stakeholders, ensuring it is both credible and deliverable.

CONCLUSION

This proposal presents a compelling and deliverable solution to LGR across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. By replacing the current two-tier system with two new unitary authorities, one for the north and one for the south, we meet the government's requirement to establish a single tier of local government for the whole area.

Developed through extensive engagement and grounded in local insight, our proposal reflects the voices and priorities of local communities and is built on functional economic and 'sensible geographies' that support the future growth of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Unlike alternative options, which risk fragmentation and delay, our proposal is ready to implement, using existing boundaries and relationships to ensure a smooth transition. It avoids artificial restructuring and instead builds on established connections, maximising impact, minimising disruption, and delivering value from day one.

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 2:

Unitary government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

This section outlines our financial business case development, which has been through a rigorous process with the engagement of all councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including Section 151 Officers, representing each option.

It was agreed at an early stage by all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire section 151 Officers that PwC would be engaged to create a common set of assumptions that all councils would use as a baseline for options 1b and 1e. We have engaged CIPFA to develop detailed financial schedules, review our assumptions and assess risk and financial sustainability by applying CIPFA's financial resilience index.

As part of CIPFA's support, they used their experience from supporting previous reorganisations, their template, and supporting guidance to assess the reasonableness of the draft financial considerations in proposals. This included applying modelling principles, tolerances and an assessment of materiality in determining what was proportionate and should be included. It also included determining the reasonableness of the base information needed to consider costs and savings from transition to new councils and the incremental costs and differences between options. The MHCLG approved template produced by CIPFA has been completed for the proposals to provide a further sense check.

Independent consultant

In addition, we engaged Peopletoo who have substantial sector experience and are working with many other LGR footprints, to undertake a detailed analysis of the critical demand services in ASC and Children's services (including Special Educational Needs) to assess future cost and risk but critically how a local offer can mitigate those costs and risks and be truly transformational.

There is minimal difference between the baseline financial position of the options being proposed for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. However, the 'sensible geography', together with the delivery model for future services, in this north-south proposal will drive through realisable efficiencies along with real service transformation, ensuring that both unitary authorities deliver improved services and outcomes to our residents that are financially sustainable over the long term.

OUR APPROACH

We have created a shared financial baseline across both proposals (options 1b and 1e) as developed by PwC that assesses:

1 Baseline LGR year 1 position:

- Utilised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) projections for each council for income, expenditure, reserves, grants and Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
- Added in funding pressures known for 2025/26 in ASC for Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council totalling £25 million.
- Additional costs for staff pay alignment included as an approximation.

2 Impact of LGR:

- Recurring benefits through aggregation of staff including senior leadership, third party spend, property running costs, councillors and elections.
- Transition costs including organisational change, redundancy costs and capacity and expertise required.
- Staff on-costs and terms and conditions changes are not included.
- No benefits from Nottingham City Council aggregation are included.

3 LGR transformation:

- Post re-organisation transformation including harmonisation of ICT technology and systems and new operating models impacting staff and third party spend.

4 Assessment of financial balance for new unitary authorities:

- Assessment of assets (general fund and housing revenue account (HRA)) and liabilities being long term and borrowing costs.

5 Council tax harmonisation:

- Analysis to project impact of different scenarios for council tax harmonisation.

The same set of financial assumptions has been applied consistently to both proposals. As both options involve the creation of two unitary authorities comprising the same set of councils differing only in their geographic configuration, the overall baseline financial benefits and costs are broadly comparable. Any variation between the two is minimal and not considered material in the context of the wider proposal. As a result, we have not compared 1e to 1b in this financial section for the core financial baseline outcomes. The detailed analysis carried out by PwC of both proposals is set out at appendix 1 alongside the CIPFA financial analysis – the key points from these documents are referred to in this section.

We are seizing the opportunity of LGR, to explore transformation opportunities beyond the standard organisational and corporate metrics used by PwC. We believe that LGR is an enabler for greater change to positively impact resident outcomes as well as deliver significant financial benefits.

We have added further financial opportunities from detailed analysis of ASC and children's services across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire as outlined in criteria three and appendix 2. However, we have not quantified the range of further transformation opportunities referenced throughout this proposal. The opportunities already proposed and referred to in criteria three of this proposal, will support the financial sustainability and mitigating financial risk for our north-south model whilst improving services and outcomes for our residents, enabling future investment in our communities.

KEY FINANCIAL CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Collectively, the lower-tier district and borough councils, alongside the upper-tier Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City councils, account for a significant share of public sector spending across the region with MTFS 2025/26 forecasts showing gross income of £1.13 billion and expenditure of £1.16 billion across all councils, leaving a forecasted shortfall of £25 million.

1e Proposal North-South-Outturn 2024/2025

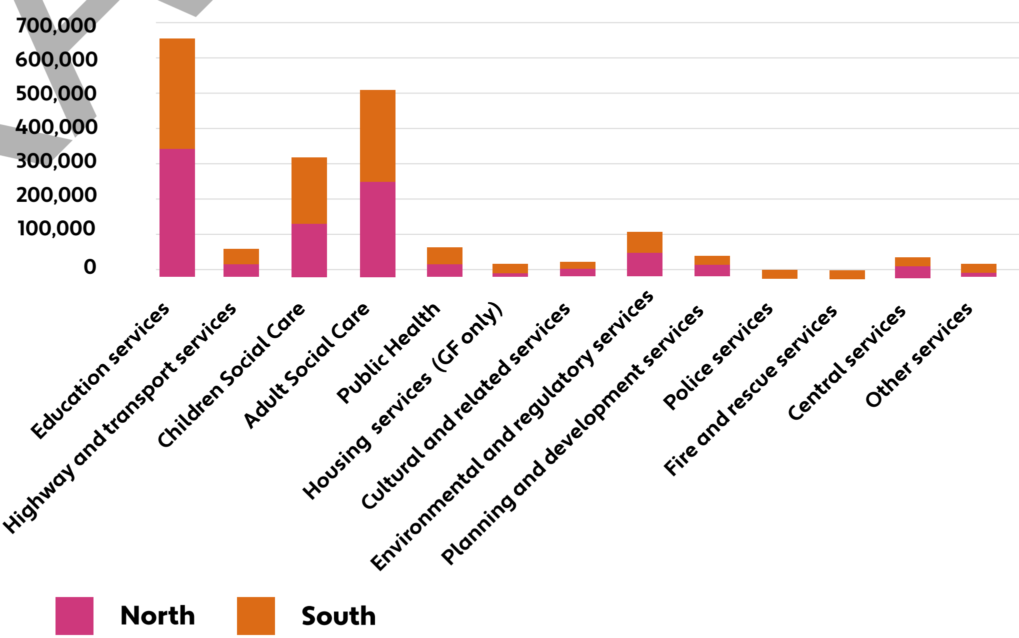


Figure 16: *Graph showing the revenue outturn summary 2024/25.*

Councils have financial challenges over the four-year MTFS period to 2028/29 amounting to a potential cumulative deficit of £234 million and an annual deficit run rate of £83 million. Of this, Nottingham City Council has a cumulative deficit of £147 million and an annual deficit by 2028/29 of £55 million.

Furthermore, the analysis shows an increasing reduction in reserves, inheriting the EFS position of Nottingham City Council of £100 million potentially over the base MTFS period. The financial model prepared by PwC includes levels of reserves and debt as per the approved 2025/26 MTFS period. The most recent 2026/27 MTFS position for Nottingham City Council shows a significant improvement in reserves and debt. Nottingham City Council have confirmed that their EFS position will have used only £25.5 million over three years, all comfortably met from capital receipts with no further requirement. This has allowed reserves to increase and debt to reduce.

The approach and aims of our financial business case:

- Deal with financial challenges and become more efficient and move to financial sustainability including across people-based services over a five-year period.
- Address the current challenges in ASC and children's services through a more localised and integrated offer, achieving real transformation working with partners and focusing on the needs of those that depend upon these services.
- Be evidenced-based on what has worked in the sector and instil best practice, balance ambition with pragmatism of what can be achieved but foster an environment of innovation and continuous improvement.
- Recognise that the new unitary authorities and democratic process will inform the financial strategy and make key decisions that will impact on the financial business case but believe that this represents a strong baseline from which new unitary authorities can plan.
- Assumes 'safe and legal' authority from day one.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

Whilst this proposal focuses on General Fund Services, six of the nine authorities within Nottinghamshire have Housing Revenue Accounts, each currently with a sustainable 30-year business plan. These documents describe how they will maintain, improve and provide services to the circa 54,000 Council houses across the County, over the short, medium and longer terms. This includes forecasting future demand and ensuring that current and future tenants' needs can be met through the maintenance of the existing stock and delivery of new build Council House programmes.

Rushcliffe and Gedling are the only authorities in Nottinghamshire without Housing Revenue Accounts. Under our option, Gedling is included in the northern authority and Rushcliffe in the southern authority; under Option 1b, this arrangement is reversed. Consequently, the initial impact of the creation of the two new authorities would remain constant in either option.

As with the General Fund, it is expected that proportionate similar efficiencies will be generated within the Housing Revenue Account, which would be ringfenced solely to delivering better quality services for tenants, ensuring future government legislation is implemented to safeguard tenants and ensuring the provision of decent homes for those that require them.

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL BUSINESS CASE

Our north-south model will deliver a cumulative positive net benefit of £485 million over the first five years post-vesting day and annual net positive recurring benefits of £148 million from year five onwards. This excludes the real and substantial transformation opportunities that we have identified in our business case and set out below in our financial business case. Critically, both new unitary authorities under our north-south proposal have a very positive net benefit position.

North (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood)					
Financial Year	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**
Year after vesting	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**
Aggregation Benefit	**£7,028,146**	**£11,713,577**	**£23,427,154**	**£23,427,154**	**£23,427,154**
Transition Costs	**£6,470,685**	**£6,470,685**	**£6,470,685**	**£2,156,895**	**£0**
Net Aggregation Benefit	**£557,461**	**£5,242,892**	**£16,956,469**	**£21,270,259**	**£23,427,154**
Transformation Benefit (Base and Scenario c)	**£8,466,544**	**£16,933,088**	**£33,866,175**	**£33,866,175**	**£33,866,175**
Transformation Cost (Base and Scenario c)	**£6,499,186**	**£6,499,186**	**£1,624,796**	**£1,624,796**	**£0**
Net Transformation Benefit	**£1,967,358**	**£10,433,902**	**£32,241,379**	**£32,241,379**	**£33,866,175**
Adult Social Care/Children's Social Care Savings Benefit	**£4,586,400**	**£11,466,000**	**£22,932,000**	**£22,932,000**	**£22,932,000**
Net Benefit	**£7,111,219**	**£27,142,794**	**£72,129,848**	**£76,443,638**	**£80,225,329**
Total Cumulative Net Benefit	**£7,111,219**	**£34,254,031**	**£106,383,861**	**£182,827,498**	**£263,052,827**

Figure 17: *Table showing the financial summary for north-south model.*

South (Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe)					
Financial Year	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
Year after vesting	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Aggregation Benefit	£2,143,676	£3,572,794	£7,145,588	£7,145,588	£7,145,588
Transition Costs	£4,136,932	£4,136,932	£4,136,932	£1,378,977	£0
Net Aggregation Benefit	-£1,933,256	-£564,138	£3,008,656	£5,766,611	£7,145,588
Transformation Benefit (Base and Scenario c)	£8,440,250	£16,880,501	£33,761,001	£33,761,001	£33,761,001
Transformation Cost (Base and Scenario c)	£6,509,521	£6,509,521	£1,627,380	£1,627,380	£0
Net Transformation Benefit	£1,930,729	£10,370,980	£32,133,621	£32,133,621	£33,761,001
Adult Social Care/Children's Social Care Savings Benefit	£5,333,600	£13,334,000	£26,668,000	£26,668,000	£26,668,000
Net Benefit	£5,271,073	£23,140,842	£61,810,277	£64,568,232	£67, 574,589
Total Cumulative Net Benefit	£5,271,073	£28,411,915	£90,222,192	£154,790,424	£222,365,013

Total North - South					
Financial Year	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
Year after vesting	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Net Benefit	£12,382,293	£50,283,635	£133,940,124	£141,011,870	£147,799,918
Total Cumulative Net Benefit	£12,382,293	£62,665,928	£196,606,052	£337,617,922	£485,417,840

Figure 17 continued: *Table showing the financial summary for north-south model.*

The summary agreed financial business case assumptions from PwC has been built on three key elements:

1. Year one new unitary authorities' model which is in effect 2028/29 and year four of the current MTFS for each council.
2. Benefits and costs of aggregation.
3. Benefits and costs of further transformation through operating models and technology.

We have considered the opportunities and benefits of a more targeted and local offer for ASC and children's services and have included the quantifiable elements within our financial analysis.

We have also identified a range of true transformation opportunities that will add significant financial benefits and enhance our financial business case, ensuring long term financial sustainability and improved outcomes for our residents. This includes factoring in the benefits of aggregating Nottingham City Council into the north-south proposal. No benefits have been attributed to Nottingham City Council in the aggregation and further transformation analysis by PwC.

We have not included the potential to rationalise our property estate other than some reduction in revenue running costs. The balance sheet value of our combined assets is £6.4 billion and based on sector evidence post LGR, we would be targeting a capital rationalisation and repurposing of between 15-30 percent with a similar reduction in property operational costs.

Council tax harmonisation impact has also been assessed as has debt and reserves.

Nursery school children on a trip out in Nottingham.

YEAR 1 NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES' BASELINE 2028/29

Some adjustments have been made for in-year cost pressures in 2025/26 in ASC of £25 million across Nottingham City, which are due to issues with the ICB and could be avoided in future years.

Council	Income -2025/26	Expenditure -2025/2026	Net Difference	Income -2028/2029	Expenditure -2028/2029	Net Difference
Nottinghamshire County	£668,400,000	£668,408,000	-£8,000	£771,500,000	£776,900,000	-£5,400,000
Bassetlaw	£24,757,900	£24,757,900	£0	£19,027,600	£22,014,900	-£2,987,300
Ashfield	£17,764,000	£22,017,000	-£4,253,000	£14,899,000	£24,837,000	-£9,938,000
Broxtowe	£14,182,000	£15,429,000	-£1,247,000	£15,147,000	£17,395,000	-£2,248,000
Gedling	£15,527,921	£15,584,200	-£56,279	£14,913,015	£15,043,858	-£130,843
Mansfield	£17,334,000	£17,572,000	-£238,000	£17,703,000	£20,948,000	-£3,245,000
Newark and Sherwood	£20,647,000	£20,647,000	£0	£19,950,000	£22,629,000	-£2,679,000
Rushcliffe	£19,888,700	£16,338,900	£3,549,800	£15,445,800	£16,263,200	-£817,400
Nottingham City	£331,800,000	£355,068,000	-£23,268,000	£354,307,000	£409,835,000	-£55,528,000
Total	**£1,130,301,521**	**£1,155,822,000**	**-£25,520,479**	**£1,242,892,415**	**£1,325,865,958**	**-£82,973,543**

Figure 18: *Table showing the current baseline MTFS financial year 2025/26 before LGR impact and the projected year one financial baseline for 2028/29.*

AGGREGATION BENEFITS AND COSTS ANALYSIS

The detailed calculations and assumptions can be found in appendix 1.

The aggregation benefits include savings from senior leadership and staff reductions, economies of scale across third party spend, property operational running cost savings and democratic savings.

Transition costs are well established categories covering closedown of existing councils and setting up of new unitary authorities, IT and systems costs, external and internal transition, design and implementation support, staff redundancy costs and salary alignment and a contingency buffer.

North Nottinghamshire (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood)					
Financial Year	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**
Year after vesting	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**
Annual Benefit	**£7,028,146**	**£11,713,577**	**£23,427,154**	**£23,427,154**	**£23,427,154**
Yearly Cost	**£6,470,685**	**£6,470,685**	**£6,470,685**	**£2,156,895**	**£0**
Cumulative Benefit	**£7,028,146**	**£18,741,723**	**£42,168,877**	**£65,596,032**	**£89,023,186**
Cumulative Cost	**£6,470,685**	**£12,941,371**	**£19,412,056**	**£21,568,951**	**£21,568,951**
Total Cumulative Net Benefit	**£557,461**	**£5,800,353**	**£22,756,821**	**£44,027,080**	**£67,454,234**
Payback period	**0.92 years**				

Figure 19: *Table showing the summary of the benefits, costs of aggregation and the phasing assumptions, based on the PwC analysis and numbers.*

South Nottinghamshire (Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe)					
Financial Year	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**
Year after vesting	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**
Annual Benefit	**£2,143,676**	**£3,572,794**	**£7,145,588**	**£7,145,588**	**£7,145,588**
Yearly Cost	**£4,136,932**	**£4,136,932**	**£4,136,932**	**£1,378,977**	**£0**
Cumulative Benefit	**£2,143,676**	**£ 5,716,470**	**£12,862,058**	**£20,007,645**	**£27,153,233**
Cumulative Cost	**£4,136,932**	**£8,273,864**	**£12,410,797**	**£13,789,774**	**£13,789,774**
Total Cumulative Net Benefit	**-£1,993,256**	**-£2,557,394**	**£451,261**	**£6,217,871**	**£13,363,459**
Payback period	**2.85 years**				
Total: North and South Cumulative Net Benefit	**-£1,435,795**	**£3,242,959**	**£23,208,082**	**£50,244,951**	**£80,817,693**
Aggregation benefits profile	**30%**	**50%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Aggregation cost profile	**30%**	**30%**	**30%**	**10%**	**0%**

Figure 19 continued: *Table showing the summary of the benefits, costs of aggregation and the phasing assumptions, based on the PwC analysis and numbers.*

The table above shows a positive net benefit of £81 million over five years across both unitary authorities and an annual benefit of £31 million from year five onwards. The payback period in the north unitary being 0.92 years and in the south unitary 2.85 years. This represents a marginal improvement for the south compared to option 1b where the pay back is 0.91 years for the north unitary and 3.03 years for the south unitary.

FURTHER TRANSFORMATION THROUGH OPERATING MODELS AND TECHNOLOGY: BENEFITS COST ANALYSIS

There are additional benefits which the new unitary authorities could achieve post-vesting day through transformation for example, by implementing digital technology, AI, automation, and redesigned operating models. These potential savings are over and above aggregation benefits identified above.

The scope of transformation savings would need to be refined by the new unitary authorities including identifying individual opportunities and establishing programmes of work.

Benefits are drawn from three areas:

- **Staffing** - aggregation of roles including senior leadership, realisable through operating model transformation and digital investment.
- **Third party spend** - reduced reliance on third party spend through transformation of commissioning, procurement and digital estate.
- **Income** - transformation of commercial capabilities to derive more income (for example from assets).

The costs are calculated based on transformation programme costs from other local authorities and public sector organisations.

In terms of the phasing of financial benefits and costs from these transformation activities, PwC developed the modelling under three scenarios of phasing costs. Our model has selected the scenario C option, as outlined in appendix 1, which defers transformation costs more in line with benefits. We feel this better reflects the timing that benefits will be derived from digital technology and related costs. This would be aligned with realising aggregation benefits and our plans for more radical and innovative transformation. Other scenarios applied costs earlier including 100 percent in year one or between that and our option as shown below.

The modelling also considers a ‘base’ case and a ‘stretch’ target. For the same reasons of being cautious, we have used the ‘base’ not ‘stretch’ in our summary financial model.

Benefit Area	Base Savings Assumption	Stretch Savings Assumption	North - Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood		South - Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe	
			100% of Base benefits	100% of Stretch Benefits	100% of Base benefits	100% of Stretch Benefits
Front of office FTE reduction	6.00%	10.00%	£14,943,213	£22,038,343	£15,029,340	£22,165,364
Service Delivery FTE reduction	3.00%	5.00%				
Back office FTE reduction	7.00%	8.00%				
Third Party Spend (TPS) reduction	2.50%	3.00%	£10,627,682	£12,753,218	£10,869,340	£13,043,208
Income uplift (SFC,commercial) uplift	1.30%	1.70%	£8,295,280	£10,847,674	£7, 862,321	£10,281,497
Cost Area						
IT investment costs			£4,550,000	£9,100,000	£4,550,000	£9,100,000
Operating Model Construct and Change			£4,550,000	£5,850,000	£4,550,000	£5,850,000
Programme Support Costs			£1,300,000	£1,950,000	£1,300,000	£1,950,000
Contingency			£1,365,000	£2,242,500	£1,365,000	£2,242,500
Redundancy costs			£4,482,964	£6,611,503	£4,508,802	£6,649,609

Figure 20: *Table showing the core benefits and cost assumptions of the assumed transformation of the north-south model.*

Net Summary base					
Financial Year	**2028/29**	**2029/30**	**2030/31**	**2031/32**	**2032/33**
Year after vesting	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**
Total Benefits	**£16,906,794**	**£33,813,588**	**£67,627,176**	**£67,627,176**	**£67,627,176**
North (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood)	**£8,466,544**	**£16,933,088**	**£33,866,175**	**£33,866,175**	**£33,866,175**
South (Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe)	**£8,440,250**	**£16,880,501**	**£33,761,001**	**£33,761,001**	**£33,761,001**
North Total Costs	**£6,499,186**	**£6,499,186**	**£1,624,796**	**£1,624,796**	**£0**
South Total Costs	**£6,509,521**	**£6,509,521**	**£1,627,380**	**£1,627,380**	**£0**
Transformation benefits profile	**25%**	**50%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Transformation costs profile	**40%**	**40%**	**10%**	**10%**	**0%**
Payback period North	**Less than 1 year**				
Payback period South	**Less than 1 year**				

Figure 21: *Table to show the impact of applying the lowest phasing of benefits and costs.*

Net Summary stretch					
Financial Year	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33
Year after vesting	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
Total Benefits	£22,782,326	£45,564,652	£91,129,304	£91,129,304	£91,129,304
North (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood)	£11,409,809	£22,819,618	£45,639,235	£45,639,235	£45,639,235
South (Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe)	£11,372,517	£22,745,035	£45,490,069	£45,490,069	£45,490,069
North Total Costs	£10,301,601	£10,301,601	£2,575,400	£2,575,400	£0
South Total Costs	£10,316,844	£10,316,844	£2,579,211	£2,579,211	£0
Transformation benefits profile	25%	50%	100%	100%	100%
Transformation costs profile	40%	40%	10%	10%	0%
Payback period North	Less than 1 year				
Payback period South	Less than 1 year				

Figure 21 continued: *Table to show the impact of applying the lowest phasing of benefits and costs.*

TRANSFORMATION OF ADULTS' AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES THROUGH THE LOCAL OFFER

Peopletoo have undertaken detailed analysis of current ASC and children's services demand and care costs across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Further information is outlined in criteria three with further detail at appendix 2.

Peopletoo have an extensive knowledge of ASC and children's services, and have worked with many counties, unitary authorities and recently formed unitary authorities such as Cumbria and North Northamptonshire post LGR. We know that the creation of the north-south model presents a significant opportunity to reduce both the demand and cost of care in these new authorities.

In ASC by addressing longstanding gaps in service provision across Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, which undoubtedly contributed to the high reliance on residential care, we can prevent or delay admissions to residential care, enabling vulnerable adults to remain within their communities:

- Bringing residential admissions for older age adults back in line (allowing for growth) with 'NHS nearest neighbours' will provide a gross annual saving of £2.8 million.
- Bringing residential admissions for working age adults back in line (allowing for growth) with 'NHS nearest neighbours' will provide a gross annual saving of £20.8 million.

In children's social care we would target our early help and edge of care services to the demographics and challenges that each unitary authority face. We will work on a regional basis across services such as adoption, complex placements and cross border strategies working with some of our most vulnerable families. It will improve outcomes, maximise efficiency and deliver value for money.

By adopting this approach, we firmly believe that we can reduce the current expenditure on CLA in line with other unitary authorities of the same size. Using national benchmarking undertaken by Peopletoo which identifies that the average unit cost for a unitary authority with a population of 500-650k is £1,949 in comparison to the current unit costs in Nottingham City Council of £2,125 and Nottinghamshire County Council £2,475.

If the north-south model achieves what we firmly believe it will, then the weekly CLA costs across the two unitary authorities will reduce by £26 million per annum.

Within the summary financial analysis, we have profiled both the ASC and children's social care savings as 20 percent in year one post-vesting, then 50 percent in year two, and 100 percent in year three allowing time for the new target operating model and commissioning approaches to be embedded.

To mitigate the current in year Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire of £32 million and rising, we believe that by addressing the issues identified in recent inspections, particularly around inclusion, early identification, and access to local services, we can improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) while ensuring long-term financial sustainability. The north-south model will enable tailored, localised strategies based on assessed needs and gap analysis, ensuring that young people receive the right support and, wherever possible, are educated within their own communities.

ALIGNMENT TO RESIDENT VIEWS

We have undertaken extensive resident, wider stakeholder and staff engagement to ensure that we focus on what matters in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

We have taken account of specific views expressed through the engagement, in particular:

Residents:

- Calls for efficiency, fairness and a local voice.
- "Getting the basics right" – this has shaped our key principles including ensuring services remain responsive and locally grounded while benefiting from strategic co-ordination and economies of scale.
- Mitigating financial risk of neighbouring councils.
- Minimising service disruption during transition.
- Job losses and staff uncertainty.
- Keeping residents informed.

Wider stakeholders' comments:

- The value of local connection.
- Simplify arrangements for example coordinating funding resources and information sharing.
- Partnership working with the VCSE.

People value their local place and connections. Photograph shows residents playing pentanque outside Titchfield Tea House, Mansfield.

FAIR FUNDING, DEBT, RESERVES AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Council	Included Fair Funding impact to Income?	Receiving Exceptional Financial Support	Anticipated use of reserves through life of MTFS?	Description
Nottinghamshire County Council	No	No	Yes	The impact of business rates reform, the Fair Funding Review and reforms to social care funding are all acknowledged as risks within the MTFS, but assumed impacts of these changes have not been built into the base budget or MTFS. The 2025/26 budget proposes to directly utilise £46.5 million of reserves over the MTFS period.
Ashfield	Yes	No	Yes (only 2025/26)	Ashfield's MTFS acknowledges the uncertainty from the proposed Fair Funding Review and wider changes to local government finance from 2026/27. As a result, the MTFS models a 'worst case' scenario which projects an annual reduction in income from 2026/27-2027/28 based on the LG Futures financial model. No use of reserves is forecast beyond 2025/26 where £4.253 million reserves is projected to be used to meet an identified funding gap.
Bassetlaw	Yes (in supplementary data return)	No	Yes	Bassetlaw's position reported to its cabinet and budget council in February identified a decline in income over the course of the MTFS which has been confirmed as reflecting anticipated impacts of the Fair Funding Review which will require further identification of savings and/or additional use of reserves. The MTFS sets out an intention to reduce revenue reserves up to March 2029 whilst maintaining a minimum general fund balance of £3 million and a minimum general fund working balance of £1 million over the life of the MTFS.
Broxtowe	No	No	Yes	Broxtowe's MTFS does not model a decrease in revenue support grants from government and presupposes a continuation of current business rate retention mechanisms. While the MTFS assumes a reduction in reserve balance from £4.347 million to -£2.856 million in 2028/29. However, this does not factor in savings and efficiencies set out in the authority's business strategy which sets an expectation of an anticipated budget underspend.

Figure 22: *Table showing the MTFS impact of Fair Funding Settlement, EFS and use of reserves for each council.*

Council	Included Fair Funding impact to Income?	Receiving Exceptional Financial Support	Anticipated use of reserves through life of MTFS?	Description
Gedling	Yes	No	Yes	Gedling's MTFS does reflect assumed impacts of the Fair Funding Review but this has minimal impact on income, but it does acknowledge outcomes of Fair Funding Review and business rates retention as risks to the MTFS projections. The MTFS assumes transfers from reserves budgets totaling £3.74 million to balance the shortfall between income and expenditure and identifies a need to identify £4.467 million of efficiencies to maintain a balanced MTFS.
Mansfield	Yes (in supplementary data return)	No	No	While Mansfield's published MTFS does not model the impact of fair funding reforms, subsequent data provided by finance leads estimates an increase in income for 2028/29 arising from this. The MTFS does not use reserves to achieve a budget balance (but acknowledges the need to increase reserve balances as a result of depletions over recent years).
Newark and Sherwood	Yes	No	Yes	The MTFS assumes a reduction in government grants from 26/27 as a result of the outcomes from the Fair Funding Review. The MTFS shows a gap in funding from 2025/26 to 2028/29 of £8.882 million. The council has mitigation plans that will deliver savings and generate additional income of £3.186 million. The balance of the shortfall of £5.696 million will be funded by use of the MTFS reserve. This reserve was specifically set up for the purpose of bridging the gap in funding resulting from the Fair Funding Review and the business rates baseline re-set. By the end of 2028/29 it is forecast that this reserve will have a balance remaining of £2.566 million.
Rushcliffe	Yes	No	Yes	The business rates reset has been built into the budget from 2026/27 and assumes no loss due to fairer funding. From 2027/28 the budget includes the effect of a reset and some growth (two percent).
Nottingham City Council	No	Yes	No	A request for EFS was made on 31 December 2024 in accordance with MHCLG deadline for up to a further circa £35 million, being £25 million for 2025/26 and a further £10 million for 2026/27 bringing the total EFS to £100 million. The MTFS does not assume additional use of general fund reserves to balance budgets over and above earmarked reserves over the life of the MTFS.

Figure 22 continued: *Table showing the MTFS impact of Fair Funding Settlement, EFS and use of reserves for each council.*

As can be seen from the above table, there is an inconsistency in the treatment of the potential impact of the Fair Funding Review with some authorities building it into their MTFS assumptions, whilst other authorities have taken the view that there is too much uncertainty about the impact and the timing of the implementation of the finance reform.

No substantial risks have been identified as regards levels of reserves, although the majority of councils intend to use a level of reserves as part of their current MTFS. **The current aggregated general fund usable reserves position for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire totals £130.5 million.**

Debt analysis shows that there no significant levels of debt that pose a financial risk. LG Improve analysis of 2024/25 debt gearing for the north-south model identified 38 percent and lower than the unitary authority average of 42 percent.

This financial business case evidences that the north-south model will deliver a cumulative positive net benefit of £485 million over the first five years post-vesting day and annual net positive recurring benefits of £148 million from year five onwards. This excludes the real and substantial transformation opportunities that we have identified elsewhere in our propsal.

The CIPFA analysis shows that there is little difference in the financial resilience and risk assessment between the 1b proposal and our north-south unitary authority bid, this is while including the Nottingham City Council's approved 2025/26 MTFS and use of reserves position which has subsequently improved in the 2026/27 revision. The CIPFA resilience index is shown in the table below.

Scenario	New authority	Comprised of	Risk score	Top 3 risk metrics
1b	Expanded City	Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham City and 27% of Nottinghamshire County Council	8.18	Reserves/Income, Growth Above Baseline, Overspend (£000)
1b	Rest of Nottinghamshire	Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Rushcliffe and 73% of Nottinghamshire County Council	7.07	Reserves Sustainability Measure, Unallocated Reserves, Change in Reserves
1e	South Nottinghamshire	Broxtowe, Nottingham, Rushcliffe and 28% of Nottinghamshire County Council	8.35	Change in Unallocated Reserves, Growth Above Baseline, Reserves/Income
1e	North Nottinghamshire	Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and 72% of Nottinghamshire County Council	5.89	Change in Earmarked Reserves, MRP/CFR, Change in HRA Reserves

Figure 23a: *Table showing the resilience and risk assessment undertaken by CIPFA.*

All proposed unitary authorities face the most strain from adults' and children's social care. The 'top three risk metrics' column captures unitary authorities' relative risk, compared to the group average on each metric. The difference between the two proposals in respect of financial resilience is marginal, as seen in the table above. The southern authority in both options shows a higher risk score than the northern authority due to the impact of Nottingham City Council. To demonstrate this, the table below, taken from CIPFAs resilience index, shows Nottingham City Council's current financial risk score based on their 25/26 MTFS.

		Comprised of	Risk score	Top 3 risk metrics
Present day	Nottingham City	Nottingham City	14.28	Council Tax to expenditure ratio. Level of external debt. Interest payable to expenditure ratio.
	Seven District and Borough Councils	Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe	7.09	Earmarked reserves. Change in HRA reserves. Level of reserves.

Figure 23b: *Table showing the resilience and risk assessment undertaken by CIPFA (current local government arrangements)*

Nottingham City Centre

CRITERIA 2

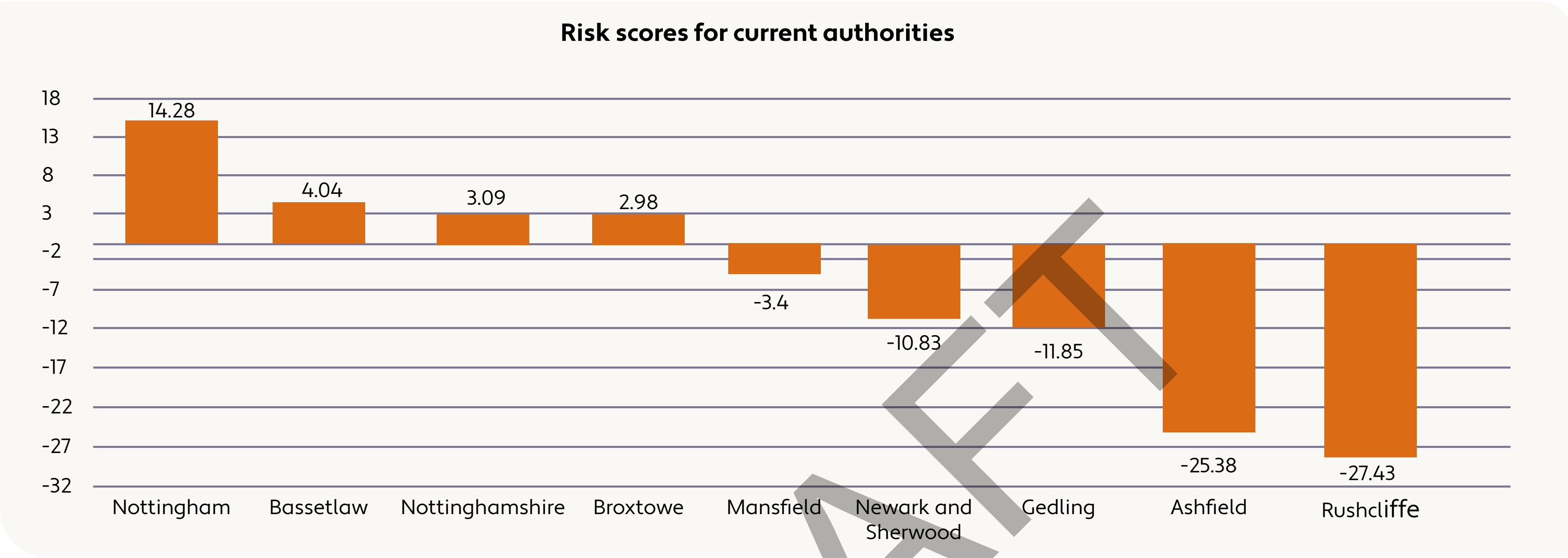


Figure 24: *Graph showing the 2023/24 risk scores for the current authorities.*

Key points to note:

- **Variation in financial risk** - there is a notable spread in financial risk scores across the current authorities, with Nottingham City Council showing the highest level of financial strain. This is partly influenced by its status as a unitary authority, which means it bears full responsibility for both adult and children's social care - services that typically carry higher expenditure.
- **Contextual benchmarking** - while Nottingham City Council's financial pressures are evident; it is important to note that the average risk score for unitary authorities across England is 21. In this context, Nottingham is performing relatively well, though it remains under financial pressure.
- **Data timeliness** - the analysis is based primarily on the 2023/24 revenue outturn summary (general fund revenue account outturn) publication, which may now be slightly outdated. However, risk scores tend to remain relatively stable year-on-year, so the insights are still considered relevant and indicative of current conditions.

In addition, we would point out that the PwC financial model and CIPFA resilience index have been based on reserve and debt levels set out in the approved 2025/26 MTFS and the latest published set of accounts for each of the authorities.

Nottingham City Council have made representations that they have subsequently updated their 2025/26 MTFS which shows a significantly improved reserves and debt position compared to that document which has been used as a baseline for our submission.

Nottingham City Council has indicated that its EFS requirement over the three-year period has been modest and fully funded through capital receipts, with no additional borrowing. This approach has supported this increase in reserves and a reduction in overall debt exposure, strengthening the Council's financial position.

It is essential to acknowledge that the Nottingham City Council option (Bii), which now incorporates these revised figures and underlying assumptions, has not been independently validated by PwC as part of the scope of the collaborative financial exercise undertaken across all Nottinghamshire authorities. While the updated position suggests significant improvements in reserves and debt, until external validation is completed, these assumptions remain provisional and unconfirmed. This improved position would have a consistent impact on the Southern authority and hence improve the CIPFA Risk and Resilience index score, in both of the proposals set out in this financial business case.

COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION

Following LGR there is a requirement to harmonise council tax rates, to ensure that all parts of a new unitary authority area are paying the same rate within a maximum of seven years. An alternative approach used in some areas follows a 'weighted average' method to harmonise rates from day one.

The weighted-average option is modelled on the projected 2028/29 band D rate for each local authority. The weighted B and D charge is calculated by dividing total council tax by the total tax base.

This sets the single rate equal to the weighted average of existing rates, so there is no material change to aggregate council tax income (unlike phasing over several years, which changes timing and distributional impacts).

Option 1e	Area	2028/29 Rate	Weighted Average Rate	Impact on the Resident
North Nottinghamshire	Bassetlaw	£2,418	£2,414	-£4
	Ashfield	£2,419	£2,414	-£5
	Gedling	£2,406	£2,414	£8
	Mansfield	£2,419	£2,414	-£5
	Newark and Sherwood	£2,410	£2,414	£4
South Nottinghamshire	Nottingham City	£2,619	£2,501	-£118
	Broxtowe	£2,405	£2,501	£96
	Rushcliffe	£2,393	£2,501	£108

Figure 25: *Table showing the weighted average analysis, which also identifies the significant potential impact on residents in Rushcliffe given its particularly low level of current council tax.*

Three scenarios have been modelled – these have been included at appendix 1:

- Harmonisation after one year (i.e. 2029/30)
- Harmonisation after three years (i.e. 2031/32)
- Harmonisation after seven years (i.e. 2035/36).

These scenarios show the impact on harmonisation on the final average Band D level, the income foregone or received within the system, and the average change in council tax rate.

Average change rates above 4.99 percent would exceed the trigger for a referendum on council tax. This is especially pertinent for "mid" and "high" scenarios. While some flexibility is available in setting rates using an 'alternative notional amount' this would require the approval of MHCLG.

The decision on the method and period of harmonisation will be made by the new unitary authorities, however, given the comparative impact on our residents in the north and the south, the intention would be to harmonise council tax in the northern unitary authority within one year and in the southern authority within three years.

OUR TRANSFORMATION IS WHAT SETS US APART

While each new unitary authority will develop its own Target Operating Model (TOM) in collaboration with key stakeholders, including residents, the councils supporting this proposal are united around a set of core design principles as outlined in the TOM section of this business case. These principles, **shaped by community and partner engagement**, will underpin the development of each council's TOM and serve as the foundation for building stronger communities and driving inclusive economic growth.

Our transformation strategy goes well beyond the normal organisational change and aggregation/disaggregation assessment. Further transformation will also provide a contingency against financial risk of demand led services and provide opportunities for investment in services.

Areas we have incorporated within this business case which as well as having a positive service impact on our residents also have a financial benefit include:

Adult social care transformation

- **Localised commissioning** - shift to place-based models to reduce long-term care costs and improve outcomes.
- **Market development** - support micro-providers and community-based care to reduce reliance on residential care.
- **Financial opportunity** - estimated savings of £20.8 million (working-age adults) and £2.8 million (older adults) by aligning residential admissions with NHS benchmarks.
- **Integrated care** - merge social care with housing, public health, and community services for better coordination and prevention.

Children's services transformation

- **Targeted early help -** tailored strategies for north and south unitaries to address local demographics and deprivation.
- **Cost reduction** - potential £26 million annual savings by reducing CLA costs through better commissioning and regional collaboration.
- **Performance improvement -** address Ofsted concerns and fragmented systems through unified service delivery.

SEND

- **Strategic oversight -** improve identification, assessment, and provision for children and young people (CYP) with SEND.
- **Financial sustainability -** address rising DSG deficits (Nottinghamshire: £30.3 million; Nottingham City: £1.5 million)
- **Localised inclusion:** enable education within communities and reduce reliance on external placements.

Housing and homelessness

- **Integrated housing strategies** - align housing with health and social priorities.
- **Homelessness coordination** - regional strategy to pool resources, share data, and ensure continuity of care.
- **Operational efficiencies** - economies of scale and joint commissioning across north-south unitaries.

Other key services

- **Highways and transport** - rationalisation of assets and investment in strategic infrastructure (for example, Toton Link Road)
- **Neighbourhood services** - cohesive deployment for waste, street cleansing, and grounds maintenance.
- **Planning and tourism** - align planning authorities with economic zones; develop tourism hubs.
- **Waste and recycling** - aggregating collection and disposal to not only become more efficient but to support recycling and national policy including net zero.
- **Home to school transport** - meeting the needs of those that depend upon the service but ensuring that the policy is rigorous and applied. The service is efficient and offers multiple channels including independent travel and parent/relative supporting travel. Consider how these fits with wider transport needs including non-profitable routes.

Key enablers

Digital transformation - expand digital platforms, automation, and AI-enabled tools to improve resident experience and workforce productivity and turn data into business intelligent data to inform decision making and organisational and service improvement.

Deliver value for money - thinking differently, while some level of savings has been included in the financial model, there is greater opportunities to review third party expenditure, contract and commissioning functions, developing and shaping the local market and prioritise the local economy whether buying goods or services including agency staff. We note that in 2024/25, the combined spend on recruitment and agency staff across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire was £60.4 million. Reorganisation provides an opportunity to off-set redundancies and target employment locally. This includes creating permanent positions and offering opportunities for trainees and apprenticeships, with any remaining agency requirements targeted within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Asset and estate rationalisation - review and optimise the public estate across not just councils but the wider public sector estate and VCSE. Co-locate services and release surplus assets to realise capital receipts or repurpose assets, deliver further revenue savings and mitigate backlog maintenance risks. This can be done as placed-based and aligned with service delivery and resident access. Capital value is not included in the financial assumptions and modelling but based on balance sheet property asset values of £6.4 billion across all councils. The evidence from Peopletoo based on previous LGR would suggest a range of between 15-30 percent could be achievable. This would enable debt and EFS challenges to be met, allow for improvement in reserves and facilitate investment in strategic priorities.

We recognise that there will be a number of quick wins particularly in areas such as third-party expenditure through consolidation and procuring of new contracts. We also know that some areas which require policy change, harmonisation, asset rationalisation and digital transformation will take longer. In line with the financial modelling the councils need to be able to deliver some financial benefits in year one with full effect by year three. Thus, ensuring they deliver on the benefits of LGR and secure financial sustainability moving forward.

Further financial considerations

The financial business case has been through a rigorous process, however there are further considerations that will need to be developed in detail. We have set out below some of the key points arising from our financial business case.

The assumptions agreed by both proposals are neutral, but as outlined in the Transition and Transformation section of our proposal we would:

- Accelerate transformation and start as soon as the decision on the LGR footprint was made and run in parallel with transition. Lessons from previous LGR programmes suggest that transformation is not started until year one post-vesting day.
- Similarly, we believe that transition costs may be incurred earlier to accelerate transition and lay the foundations for transformation. This would mean costs incurred earlier than the plan, but benefits would be accelerated to compensate.
- The further transformation identified by PwC report requires validation given the high technology

investment costs to deliver staff reductions and understand timing and service impact.

- The PwC analysis of benefits has not included aggregation opportunities with Nottingham City Council which we believe will be significant in terms of property optimisation, third party spend and environmental services.
- Pay harmonisation will be critical and whilst some consideration has been given in the staff reduction savings, on-cost and terms and conditions have not been considered and the full HR legal pay harmonisation impact which could be both an opportunity and a risk.
- We have outlined our transformation focus alongside the financial baseline. We would immediately develop these opportunities into detailed financial and return on investment business cases.

CONCLUSION

The biggest financial risk facing the sector is the demand and cost of care in a fragile supplier market across ASC and children's services, with rising demand in SEND and home to school transport adding strain to an already DSG deficit position. Our detailed analysis, conducted in partnership with Peopletoo clearly evidences that the current system is under severe strain. The risk of maintaining the status quo is simply too great, as demonstrated by the ongoing financial pressures and a £25 million in-year 2025/26 overspend to date.

In contrast, our north-south model offers a more coherent, practical, and cost-effective framework for service delivery along with real transformational change. It eliminates inefficiencies associated with fragmented geographies, reduces duplicated infrastructure and maximises operational efficiency. Our model enables smarter commissioning, stronger local partnerships, and more responsive services rooted to community needs. Critically, it provides the best opportunity to manage future demand and cost pressures across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, supporting both financial sustainability and improving the lives and outcomes for our residents.

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 3:

Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality, innovative and sustainable public services to citizens.

This section outlines how our proposal for reorganisation will deliver high-quality, innovative, and sustainable public services tailored to local needs.

Our north-south model aligns more closely than other proposals with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's geographies and places. The new councils will be best placed to provide high-quality services and deliver economic growth. We demonstrate how our model addresses local needs through a more targeted and responsive approach to critical people services, effectively managing demand and cost to ensure financial sustainability, and driving transformational opportunities through public sector reform.

Local authorities face spiralling demand and increased costs across all services if they continue to deliver based on their current approaches. The system needs transformation, not simply structural reform for its own sake, and a fundamental shift in how services are designed, commissioned, and delivered, supporting the future financial sustainability of the new unitary councils while improving outcomes.

Our model provides benefits for people services.

The new unitary authorities will:

- Build on local identity and reflect local demographics, ensuring services are developed and commissioned effectively and meet the needs of their local community.
- Achieve financial stability through transformation – reducing the demand and cost for services in parallel to improving outcomes.
- Develop the local market and build micro providers, ensuring the right capacity at the right price and the right quality, keeping vulnerable people in their communities.
- Ensure a strong emphasis on reducing demand through localised targeting of prevention and early intervention, working closely with the voluntary and community sector.
- Bring together key services such as housing, public health, leisure, green spaces and social care to ensure maximisation of community assets and a place-based approach to prevention and early intervention.

- Benefit from building closer relationships with schools and developing the local offer to ensure inclusion in mainstream schools, reducing the expenditure on independent schools and the costs of transitions, ensuring young people remain in their communities through to adulthood.

Our north-south model consolidates critical services such as social care, education, housing, and community safety under each unitary authority, reducing fragmentation whilst offering much wider cross cutting support in areas such as ASC and housing. It simplifies oversight for county-wide services and critically supports place-based delivery tailored to local needs, integrated health and care models, and improved local partnerships.

Our proposal is not just a response to structural complexity, but a strategic commitment to public service excellence, equity of access, and stronger place-based leadership.

Engagement shows that residents want local government to focus on the basics – reliable services, value for money, and clear accountability.

We have reflected this in our proposed target operating model and ambitions for the two new councils. This is not only a transformation of structure; it is a transformation of ethos. By centring services around people and place in areas that communities care about and recognise, and by empowering our new councils to lead with clarity and purpose, we can create a system that delivers on what matters most to our residents: excellent outcomes, greater confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging.

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

To ensure that our case for people services is rooted in the current local context, we commissioned Peopletoo to undertake extensive analysis of these services, how they currently operate, and opportunities available under our model.

ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Appreciating that ASC and children's services equate to 60 to 70 percent of a unitary council's budget, we need to ensure that both north and south councils are ready to maximise the opportunity that a single tier of local government provides.

National benchmarking undertaken by Peopletoo shows that on average unitary/ metropolitan councils are achieving lower long term care costs than county councils.

Assisted living care home resident, Fiona, receives her Careline personal alarm from Council officer, Newark.

Average unit cost comparison	S251 LAC unit cost	S251 Residential unit cost	S251 SEN unit cost	2028/29 Rate	Weighted Average Rate	Impact on the Resident
County average	£2,076	£6,466	£128	£1,104	£1,186	£1,163
Unitary and Metropolitan average	£1,786	£7,252	£105	£1,049	£1,079	£1,064

Figure 26 : *Table showing comparison of county against unitary and metropolitan councils for achieving long term care costs.*[19]

19 Peopletoo analysis of 23/24 ASCFR (Adult Social Care Data and 23/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) data

Our north-south model creates a more localised approach to commissioning and market development based on a local assessment of needs, along with closer working with key partners and of course communities.

Our new unitary authorities will have larger footprints than existing unitaries and metropolitan councils. With this scale our proposed authorities will have the strategic capacity to ensure we are well-equipped to drive more ambitious outcomes, deliver broader services, and meet complex demands/achieve lower long-term care costs more effectively.

The greatest opportunity lies in shaping and developing local care markets that respond directly to community needs. A locality-based delivery and commissioning model – one that operates close to people and partners – enables more responsive services, stronger prevention, and more effective use of resources. This approach can reduce long-term care expenditure, support financial sustainability, and improve outcomes.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Peopletoo's full analysis can be found in appendix 2.

We are very much aware of the challenges Nottingham and Nottinghamshire currently face in relation to children's social care:

- High and rising CLA costs.
- Real variations in demographics with pockets of high deprivation requiring tailored and targeted approaches.
- Variable sufficiency of placements across the county and city.
- Current performance issues recognised by Ofsted within the City Council.
- Current fragmented system limits targeted localised prevention, early intervention, and local responsiveness.

Nottingham City:

- The rate per 10,000 for children looked after (CLA) in Nottingham City has remained consistently high at 100 across the three years, and well above the national (70) and East Midlands (65) averages.
- Nottingham City's weekly CLA costs have risen steadily across the three years, reaching approximately £2,100-£2,200 per week in 2023–24.
- This is 30 percent higher than the statistical neighbour (SN) average and 14 percent higher than the England average.

Nottinghamshire County Council:

- Nottinghamshire's CLA rate is significantly lower at 57 than Nottingham City and is broadly aligned with the England average and below the East Midlands average.
- Nottinghamshire County Council's CLA weekly cost has risen steadily over the past three years, reaching approximately £2,300-£2,500 per week in 2023-24.
- This is 22 percent higher than the statistical neighbour average and 33 percent higher than the England average, showing a sharp escalation in cost intensity.

Working as a north-south model, we would target our early help and edge of care services to the demographics and challenges that each unitary face. We will work on a regional basis where this makes absolute sense to do so, in areas such as adoption, complex placements and cross border strategies working with some of our most vulnerable families.
By adopting this approach, our model gives the best opportunity to reduce the current expenditure on CLA. If we consider national benchmarking undertaken by Peopletoo, which identifies that the average unit cost for a unitary council with a population of 500-650k is £1,949, compared with the current unit costs in Nottingham City Council of £2,125 and Nottinghamshire County Council £2,475[20].

Projected growth in demand was calculated by first working out the annual percentage change in the numbers of CLA for each year from 2021 to 2025 and then taking the average of these annual changes. If the north-south model achieves what we firmly believe it will, then the weekly CLA costs, across the two unitaries, will reduce by £500,000 per week equating to £26 million per annum.

20 CLA costs are from 2023/24 LAIT (Local Authority Interactive Tool) nationally published data

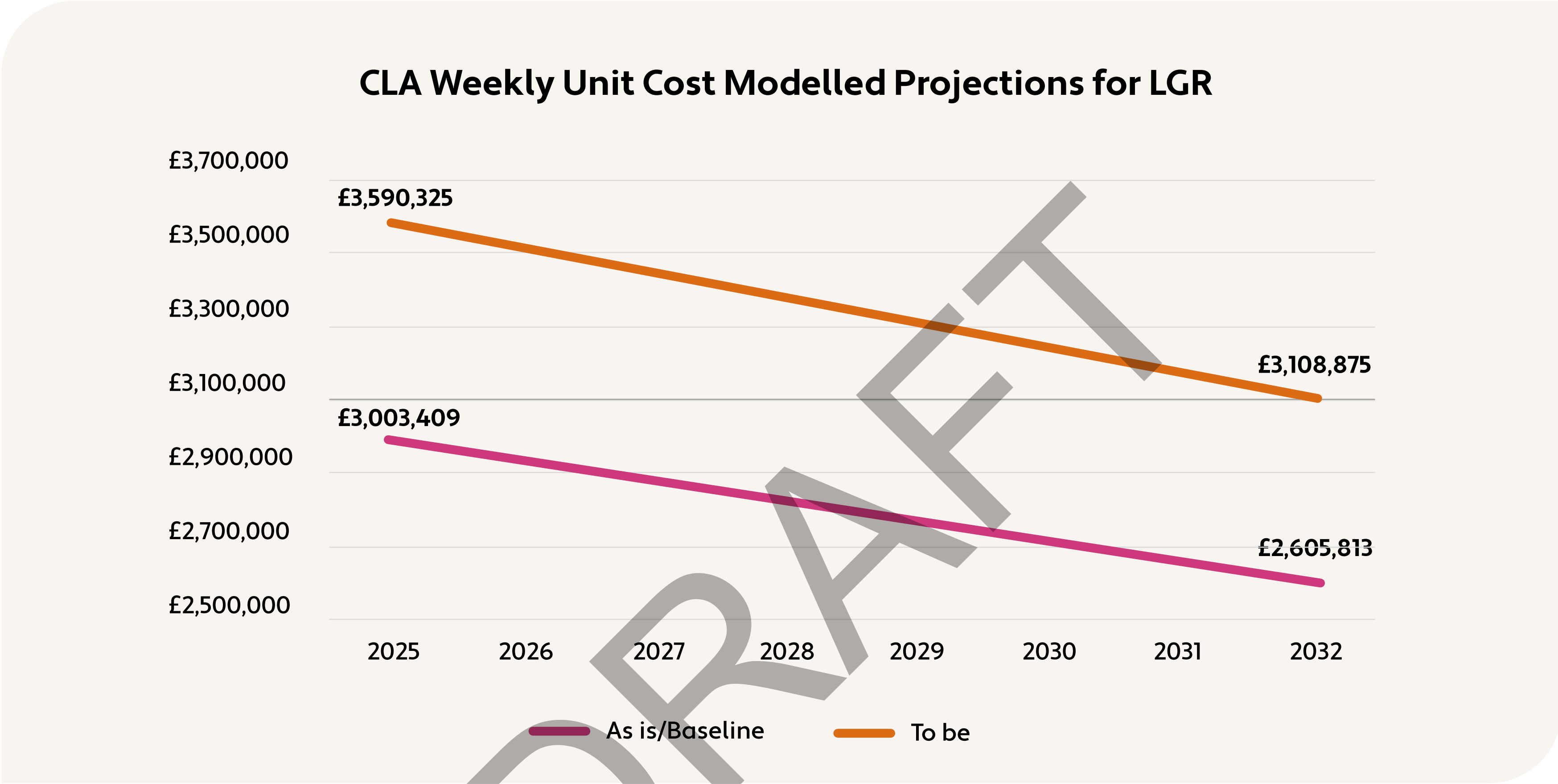


Figure 27 : *Graph showing the projected reduction in cost for CLA under our north-south model.*

Any reorganisation should account for divergent baseline pressures and a joint approach to establishing the new social care functions must equalise capacity, ensuring workforce, placement sufficiency, and early help systems are rebalanced and aligned to the demographics of the new unitary. We must also build on good practice maximising the opportunity to share learning such as Nottinghamshire County Council's family support model and Nottingham City Council's experience with complex care coordination.

SEND

The last full SEND inspection for Nottingham City Council, published in January 2022[21], identified strengths in collaborative working and early years provision. However, inspectors also found areas requiring improvement in how the local area partnership identifies, assesses, and meets the needs of children and young people (CYP) with SEND. Key recommendations included strengthening strategic oversight, improving communication with parents, and ensuring better coordination of services.

The SEND inspection for Nottinghamshire County Council, published on May 2023[22], raised significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of CYP with SEND across the local area partnership (including Nottinghamshire County Council and NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire). As a result, the partnership was required to develop a priority action plan focused on two critical areas:

- Improving identification, assessment, and provision for CYP with SEND.
- Addressing delays and gaps in access to health services.

In addition to these systemic challenges, both councils face growing financial pressures. Nottingham City Council projects an in-year DSG deficit of £1.5 million by 2026–27. Nottinghamshire County Council faces a more severe DSG deficit of £30.3 million by the end of 2025–26[23].

Nationally published SEND data[24] further highlights the challenges. Nottingham City's EHCP rate was significantly below national and regional averages in 2023, at around 2 to 3 percent, raising concerns about late or crisis-stage identification. In contrast, the city's SEND support rate is relatively high at 14 to 16 percent, aligning with or slightly exceeding the England average and comparable to other urban authorities such as Manchester, Bradford, and Salford.

Nottinghamshire's EHCP rate stood at approximately 3 percent in 2023, with projections suggesting a rise to just under 5 percent by 2025, still below the national average of around 5.5 percent. Its SEND support rate stands at 10 to 12 percent, slightly below the England average, but has shown a gradual increase, indicating growing identification of additional needs in mainstream settings.

Any significant increase in demand will further strain the high needs block of the DSG. In this context, LGR presents a vital opportunity to address both performance and financial challenges. Maintaining the status quo is not an option. The creation of a north-south model offers a chance to work more closely with schools, parent/carer forums, and key partners.

21 https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50175127

22 https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50216722

23 www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait

24 www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait

We firmly believe that by addressing the issues identified in recent inspections - particularly around inclusion, early identification, and access to local services–we can improve outcomes for CYP with SEND while ensuring long-term financial sustainability. The establishment of north-south unitaries will enable tailored, localised strategies based on assessed needs and gap analysis, ensuring that young people receive the right support and, wherever possible, are educated within their own communities.

EDUCATION

Peopletoo's full analysis can be found in appendix 3.

Good education is fundamental to Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's future, underpinning economic growth, social equity, and long-term sustainability. Its impact is felt across multiple dimensions:

Economic growth and workforce development

- A well-educated population attracts investment, supports local businesses, and reduces unemployment.
- Higher educational attainment increases earning potential and boosts the local economy.

Social mobility and equity

- Education is a key driver in breaking cycles of poverty and disadvantage.
- This is especially critical in areas with high deprivation, such as the north and parts of Nottingham City.

Health and wellbeing

- Higher levels of education are strongly linked to better health outcomes.
- Educated populations tend to rely less on public services, reducing long-term demand on health and social care systems

The proposed creation of north-south unitary authorities would reshape the distribution of schools and educational outcomes.

James, age 4, just starting his primary education. Newark.

Ofsted Ratings by District – Primary Schools	Option 1b		Option 1e	
	Rest of Nottinghamshire	Expanded City	North Nottinghamshire	South Nottinghamshire
Proportion of primary schools found to be Good/Outstanding	68%	71%	66%	75%
Proportion of primary schools that Require Improvement to be Good	3%	2%	4%	1%
Proportion of primary schools with no inspection outcome record	29%	27%	31%	24%

Figure 28 : *Table showing Ofsted rating comparison for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire primary schools – Options 1b and 1e.*

Ofsted Ratings by District – Secondary Schools	Option 1b		Option 1e	
	Rest of Nottinghamshire	Expanded City	North Nottinghamshire	South Nottinghamshire
Proportion of secondary schools found to be Good/Outstanding	75%	67%	75%	67%
Proportion of secondary schools that Require Improvement to be Good	4%	10%	4%	10%
Proportion of secondary schools with no inspection outcome record	21%	23%	21%	23%

Figure 29 : *Table showing Ofsted rating comparison for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire secondary schools – Options 1b and 1e.*

Option 1e	Estimated Total Population	Estimated 'School Age' Population	Free School Meals in the last 6 years FSM6
North Nottinghamshire	615,712	86,474 (51.6%)	Primaries – 26.9% Secondaries – 32.5%
South Nottinghamshire	572,378	81,006 (48.8%)	Primaries – 30.6% Secondaries – 37.2%

Figure 30 : *Table showing the estimated population, school aged population and percentage breakdown of pupils who are eligible for free school meals under option 1e.*

Option 1b	Estimated Total Population	Estimated 'School Age' Population	Free School Meals in the last 6 years FSM6
Rest of Nottinghamshire	622,269	88,409 (52.8%)	Primaries – 24.9% Secondaries – 32.5%
Expanded City	565,821	79,071 (47.2%)	Primaries – 33.2% Secondaries – 37.2%

Figure 31: *Table showing the estimated population, school aged population and percentage breakdown of pupils who have eligible for free school meals under option 1b.*

Key performance insights by district

- **Lowest performing areas:** Ashfield, Mansfield, and Nottingham City - high levels of disadvantage, SEND needs, and weak attainment.
- **Strongest performing areas:** Rushcliffe (highest attainment, but widest disadvantage gap), Gedling (strong primaries, weaker secondaries) and Broxtowe (solid secondary performance).
- **Mid-tier areas:** Newark and Sherwood and Bassetlaw - good inspection outcomes, but performance affected by SEND/disadvantage.

Strategic implications of options 1b vs 1e

- Option 1b clusters the strongest (Rushcliffe) and weakest (Ashfield, Mansfield) districts, creating a polarised profile that is geographically fragmented, limiting opportunities for shared practice.
- Option 1e distributes strengths more evenly and shows a clear north-south divide:
    - Gedling balances Ashfield/Mansfield in the north and shares borders, enabling easier collaboration and sharing of best practice.
    - Rushcliffe strengthens the south alongside Nottingham City and Broxtowe.

The new unitaries must balance raising standards in the weakest areas while closing gaps in attainment in the strongest schools. To mitigate these risks and ensure the best outcomes for young people in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, the new unitaries will commit to developing targeted strategies for their own areas, but will ensure cross unitary working with the establishment of a school improvement partnership, which will:

- Share best practice through peer mentoring, leadership secondments, and federation models.
- Ensure consistent accountability and shared improvement standards across both unitarity authorities.
- Provide additional SEND and alternative provision support to schools at risk of underperformance.
- Share strategies on preventing exclusions and address attendance/behaviour challenges.

The education system across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire footprint reflects a clear north-south divide. Our model presents a unique opportunity to:

- Raise standards in underperforming areas.
- Close attainment gaps in high-performing schools.
- Build a more equitable and sustainable education system for all young people.

Peopletoo's full analysis can be found in appendix 2.

Working-age adults: Demand, cost, and strategic opportunities

Nottingham City: high demand, cost-efficient delivery

Analysis of demand and cost dat[25]a reveals that Nottingham City experiences significantly higher service demand for working-age adults compared to comparator areas, with support requests 46 percent above the England average. Despite this elevated demand, the city demonstrates strong cost efficiency, with an average long-term care cost of £30,305 per person, 30 percent below the national average and 20 percent lower than nearest neighbours.

A notable 73 percent of support requests are resolved through universal or preventative services. However, the city records a high rate of residential placements (168 per 100,000), which is 85 percent above the England average, indicating continued reliance on institutional care. Conversely, lower nursing care usage may suggest limited availability of complex community-based alternatives.

Nottinghamshire County Council: stable demand, strong prevention focus

In contrast, Nottinghamshire County Council operates within a lower demand environment, with support requests among adults aged 18 to 64, 11 percent below the NHS nearest neighbour average and 15 percent below the England average.

The average long-term care cost is £37,056, which is 18 percent lower than nearest neighbours and 6 percent below the national average. Outcomes data shows that 76 percent of requests are resolved through universal or preventative services, and only 3 percent result in long-term care, highlighting a well-functioning prevention and reablement model.

Nottinghamshire County Council also records homecare usage 11 percent above nearest neighbours, reflecting investment in community-based support. However, residential care usage stands at 120 per 100,000, which is 38 percent higher than nearest neighbours and slightly above the England average. Nursing care usage is 27 percent above nearest neighbour levels, suggesting a higher reliance on bed-based care.

25 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report-england-2023-24/

Comparative insights and strategic implications

The analysis highlights distinct but complementary profiles between Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council in meeting the needs of working-age adults:

- Nottingham City Council faces greater demand pressures, driven by higher levels of deprivation and complexity within an urban population. Despite this, it delivers cost-efficient care and maintains a strong focus on early intervention. However, the high residential care rate signals a need to expand community-based alternatives for complex needs, if we are to keep people within their communities.
- Nottinghamshire County Council benefits from lower demand, tight cost control, and a strong emphasis on reablement and prevention. Yet, its higher-than-average use of residential and nursing care suggests opportunities to further shift towards community-based models.

Opportunity through LGR

LGR presents a strategic opportunity to:

- Align high-performing prevention models across both authorities.
- Balance demand pressures and share commissioning efficiencies.
- Expand community-based provision to reduce reliance on residential care.
- Linked to the above working with local providers to ensure the right type of community-based support is accessible.
- Establish a coherent, sustainable ASC system across the new unitary authorities.

By leveraging the strengths of each system and addressing areas of over-reliance on institutional care, the new authorities can deliver improved outcomes for working-age adults while ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

Older adults: demand, cost efficiency, and strategic opportunities

Nottingham City: high demand, strong cost control

ASCFR 23/24 data identifies social care demand among older adults (OA)[26] in the Nottingham City Council area is significantly higher than both regional and national averages, with support requests 54 percent above the England average. This elevated demand reflects the city's urban deprivation, complex health conditions, and high levels of frailty, all contributing to increased care needs.

26 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report-england-2023-24

Despite these pressures, Nottingham City Council demonstrates strong cost control, with the average long-term care cost, per person, at £24,625 – 14 percent below the England average.

- 59 percent of support requests are resolved through universal or preventative services, with 13 percent of older adult's progress to long-term care, reflecting the depth and complexity of need within the population.
- Service user data shows strong investment in community-based care, yet residential care usage is 37 percent higher than NHS nearest neighbours, suggesting continued reliance on institutional bed-based care.

Nottinghamshire County Council: stable demand, prevention-led model

In contrast, Nottinghamshire County Council experiences a stable demand profile, with support requests just 1 percent above NHS nearest neighbours[27].

- The average long-term care cost per person is £26,741, which is 18 percent lower than comparator areas and 6 percent below the England average.
- 60 percent of requests are resolved through universal or preventative support, slightly above comparator benchmarks, with only 6 percent of cases progressing to long-term care, significantly lower than peers, highlighting the success of early help and reablement.

27 www.gov.uk/government/statistics/adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report-england-2023-24

- Homecare usage is six percent above comparators, while residential and nursing care usage aligns with NHS nearest neighbour averages.

Comparative insights and strategic implications

The analysis highlights distinct but complementary strengths across the two systems:

- Nottingham City Council faces higher demand pressures, driven by urban deprivation and complex health needs. Despite this, it delivers cost-efficient care, with a strong emphasis on prevention and homecare. However, its residential care usage remains high, suggesting opportunities to expand community alternatives.
- Nottinghamshire County Council operates within a controlled demand environment, with lower progression to long-term care and strong performance in prevention and reablement. Its balanced use of residential and nursing care supports a sustainable model.

Opportunity through LGR

Across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire in line with national trend, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is forecasting an increase in the over 65 population[28] . With rising demand, it is essential that the north-south unitaries are established to better manage demand and cost.

28 www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections

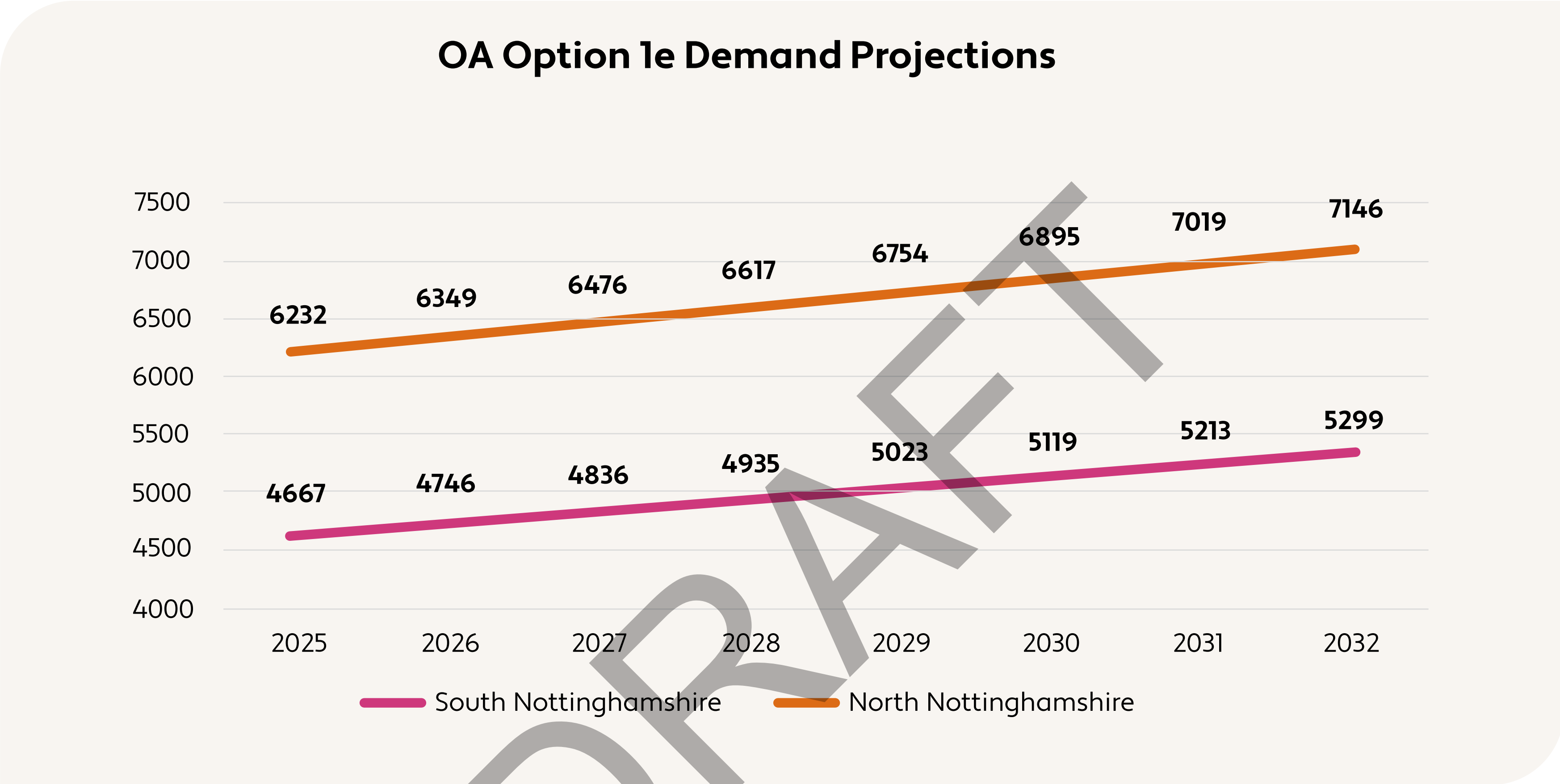


Figure 32 : *Graph showing the demand projections for older adults in our north-south model.*

Our proposed model offers a unique opportunity to create a single-tier ASC system, drawing on the combined strengths and resources of district, county, and city councils. This integration will not only streamline service delivery but also enable targeted prevention activity at a much more localised level, working closely with communities and local providers.

LGR presents a strategic opportunity to:

- Integrate Nottingham City Council's expertise in managing high-complexity urban demand.
- Leverage Nottinghamshire County Council's strengths in prevention and reablement.
- Critically reduce reliance on residential care by expanding community-based provision, this will not only reduce expenditure but will also ensure a better outcome for vulnerable older age adults, enabling them to remain within their own homes / communities.
- Linked to the above, develop the local market, working with local providers to ensure sufficient access to high quality community-based support.
- Establish a sustainable, equitable care model across both new unitary authorities.

By embedding needs assessment and gap analysis within local geographies, the system can ensure that when statutory services are required, they are commissioned appropriately to support vulnerable individuals to remain in their own homes, or at the very least, within their own communities.

The north-south geography supports the effective delivery of health and social care services by:

- Reducing travel times for providers.
- Improving accessibility for vulnerable people needing to access vital services.
- Aligning service footprints with existing community and health networks.

Gedling's existing connections with the north of Nottinghamshire further strengthen the case for their inclusion in a northern unitary. This configuration enables the development of voluntary and community-based services that span the natural geography.

Placing Rushcliffe in the south of Nottinghamshire within a northern alignment ('rest of Nottinghamshire') as proposed by 1b, will create logistical and strategic challenges.

THE FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY – A LOCAL RESPONSE

Our north-south model presents a significant opportunity to address longstanding gaps in service provision across Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. These gaps have undoubtedly contributed to the high reliance on residential care.

By assessing needs at a more local level and developing robust commissioning strategies, the new unitary authorities can engage effectively with the market and collaborate with local providers. This will help ensure that alternatives to residential care, such as supported living and extra care housing, are available to prevent or delay admissions, enabling vulnerable adults to remain within their communities.

We are also committed to ensuring high-quality domiciliary care is accessible, even in our more rural areas. This includes working closely with communities to foster the growth of the micro-provider market, supporting the recruitment of personal assistants through training and development initiatives.

By addressing longstanding gaps in ASC across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire, we can reduce reliance on residential care and help vulnerable adults remain in their communities:

- Aligning residential admissions for older adults with NHS nearest neighbours (allowing for growth) could save £2.8 million annually.
- Aligning residential admissions for working-age adults with NHS nearest neighbours (allowing for growth) could save £20.8 million annually.

HOUSING

As single-tier authorities, we can integrate housing support with related services such as ASC, public health, and homelessness prevention. This reduces duplication and improves coordination, making it easier for residents to access support.

As discussed in our proposal, a north-south model will enable each local authority to work with local partners to better plan affordable housing to meet local needs, developing housing strategies that align with each area's economic, health, and social priorities.

HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is not simply a housing issue, but instead, a multi-faceted challenge spanning various public and local government services and other key stakeholders across the system- including the county council's and city council's public health, NHS services, district housing and public protection teams, third sector providers, specialist support services, probation and Department for Work and Pensions.

It is important to recognise the good work that is already taking place in this area, and we will commit that the north-south unitaries will work together and build on the progress to date. There are similar operational advantages to be gained from consolidating services in terms of economies of scale, sharing best practice, service resilience, alignment and consistency.

There are a number of countywide specialist groups in place, and there are already strong links geographically between the northern authorities. Recognised socio-economic similarities around the local authority areas within our final proposal (including deprivation and health) will provide greater resilience and efficiencies for the service and structuring it around a 'sensible geography' is paramount.

Opportunities from a north-south unitary model

The factors detailed below highlight some of the benefits and opportunities to come through LGR and the north-south model.

Strategic coordination

- Joined-up thinking – currently each district, borough and city have their own homelessness strategy, the benefits of bringing this together under a northern and southern authority are significant. The north-south model allows for closer regional working with neighbouring counties such as Leicestershire in south and North Yorkshire in the north.
- Greater understanding and awareness across the wider system, for example between housing and social care, enabling improved pathways across homelessness and social care.
- Easier to align with county-wide services like health, social care, and policing.

Resource pooling

- Combining budgets and staff expertise can lead to better value for money.
- Shared access to accommodation, outreach teams, and support services.
- Economies of scale in commissioning services (for example, night shelters and mental health support).

Mobility of homeless individuals

- Homelessness doesn't respect district boundaries; people often move between areas.
- A regional strategy ensures continuity of care and avoids gaps in support.
- Prevents 'postcode lotteries' where support varies depending on where someone is located.

Data and intelligence sharing

- A unified strategy enables better data collection and analysis across the region.
- Helps identify trends, hotspots, and emerging needs more effectively.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making and targeted interventions.

Innovation and best practice

- Encourages sharing of successful models such as the 'Housing First model in Mansfield[29]' and pilot projects across districts.
- Reduces siloed working and fosters collaboration among frontline teams.

It is vital that we take the once in a lifetime opportunity of LGR to ensure that we have strong joint preparation and planning to ensure the most effective, efficient homelessness prevention and support offers.

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29 www.mansfield.gov.uk/news/article/12986/new-scheme-to-offer-vital-stepping-stone-to-former-rough-sleepers

PUBLIC SAFETY

We know from local engagement that public safety is a top priority for residents across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, underpinning their ability to live safe, fulfilling lives. Public safety in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is delivered through a framework of statutory functions and duties placed upon local authorities and partner agencies.

We are committed to continuing the good work of the Nottingham Community Safety Partnership (NCSP) and the agreed Strategic Priorities (2025–2028)[30]:

- Prevention and early intervention.
- Tackling serious violence and domestic abuse.
- Supporting victims and vulnerable groups.
- Strengthening community cohesion.
- Enhancing neighbourhood safety through collaborative enforcement and support.

We firmly believe that by bringing much local insight into the partnership to shape more targeted place-based strategies in collaboration with key stakeholders, it can only enhance the work of the partnerships.

Crime, harm and risks vary significantly across the different districts/boroughs in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, reflecting diverse socio-economic conditions, population densities, and local challenges.

In urban areas like Nottingham City and West Bridgford (part of Rushcliffe), higher population density and greater economic disparity contribute to elevate levels of violent crime, drug-related offences, and anti-social behaviour. These areas often face complex issues such as gang activity and higher rates of domestic violence, necessitating robust law enforcement presence and community safety initiatives. The concentration of nightlife venues and commercial areas also increases the likelihood of public order offences and alcohol-related crimes.

In contrast, more rural districts experience different crime patterns. These areas may see lower overall crime rates but can be more vulnerable to specific issues like rural crime and other public safety issues such as flooding. Additionally, rural areas may face challenges related to domestic abuse and substance misuse, often exacerbated by reduced access to support services and increased social isolation.

Understanding these varying crime harms and risks is crucial for tailoring public safety strategies to the specific needs of the north and south unitaries. Effective crime prevention and intervention require a nuanced approach that considers local socio-economic conditions, community dynamics, and the unique challenges faced by urban, suburban, and rural areas alike.

30 https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/documents/s173758/Appendix%201.%20Nottingham%20Community%20Safety%20Partnership%20Strategy%202025%20-%202028.pdf

OTHER KEY SERVICES

Whilst we will ensure continuity of critical services from day one, it is also essential that other key local government services deliver for the people of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

We know from extensive engagement that neighbourhood services such as highways maintenance, refuse collection, caring for parks and play areas, cleaning the streets and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, clean streets, and travel and transport are key priorities for our residents.

We will integrate currently separate functions to generate efficiencies and a better customer experience. Waste disposal and waste collection; trading standards and public protection; highway maintenance and grounds maintenance; youth services and leisure services; flood mitigation and flood response. There are numerous opportunities to bring together currently fragmented services in way that saves money and delivers better outcomes.

Early opportunities include:

Rationalisation/improvement of operational depots - modernisation plan based on the rationalisation of assets already underway through a full depot review/construction of new sites in mid and north Nottinghamshire offering opportunities for enhanced collaboration under our proposal. It should be noted that Rushcliffe Borough Council already share depot facilities with Nottingham City Council, allowing existing operations to be maintained under our proposal and an indication of the close connection between Nottingham City and Rushcliffe.

Route optimisation - bringing together currently separate waste collection, housing repairs and other key frontline services based on 'sensible geography' carries the opportunity to deliver financial savings through reduced vehicle usage and fleet maintenance

Planning and highways - single tier arrangements carry the potential to speed up the planning applications process, creating multi-disciplinary teams working to shared goals of delivering housing and economic growth

Heritage, culture, leisure and tourism - the geographical distribution of heritage and cultural assets allow for the development of strategic tourism hubs, aligning with EMCCA's vision to connect Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire through initiatives like the 'Canal Corridor' and 'Trent Arc'. By operating as a single tier, we have the opportunity to better integrate the leisure and well-being offer currently being delivered by district and borough councils, to provide positive and structured outcomes for our young people and encourage them to turn to sport, which supports an early intervention and preventative approach to public health, youth justice, and social care.

PLACE BASED SERVICE DELIVERY

'Sensible geography' is not a pre-requisite for service improvement and public service reform, but it certainly helps. Consider the significant cost of emergency and temporary accommodation for homelessness. Joint working across a meaningful geographic area, where common housing demands have already been identified, and where stock and nomination rights can be shared, will aid more people to access accommodation more quickly.

These place-based benefits can only be delivered most effectively where the new unitary authority aligns with a coherent and functional geography. While there will continue to be individual local needs and considerations, place-based working across a cohesive unitary area has the potential to provide significant real benefits for organisational efficiency, local opportunities, and residents and communities.

We will use this opportunity to ensure the new councils are well placed to build relationships and mobilise resources within their area, convening local partners and stakeholders from across the system to deliver systemwide collaboration and reform. Central to this will be the opportunity provided to the new councils to align strategy, services and resource allocation to public sector partners: the police, fire service, integrated care partnerships and ICBs, and the wider health sector.

The evidence shows us that the co-commissioning of services with key partners, such as health, is more effective when all partners have a close connection with, and understanding of, local and recognised communities.

These partnership arrangements provide a platform from which to work with communities and system partners, to develop voluntary and community sector led services to support local resilience and the delivery of statutory services.

Working across sensible geography can better support our homeless residents. Photograph showing Nottingham City.

Real life case example – Claire from Gedling

A neighbour reports persistent anti-social behaviour and noise, raising concerns for the children next door, including poor school attendance and frequent police callouts. A local multidisciplinary team involving community safety, environmental health, police, safeguarding, and education, works together from the beginning. Noise is investigated, safeguarding referrals are made, and police share relevant information to build a full picture of the family's situation. The school and Schools Officer address attendance and a range of unmet needs. The team identifies the mother needs practical and emotional support, not enforcement. Claire, the mother, needs the Family Hub for parenting help, cooking sessions, and wider family assistance. The children are assessed and get the support they need and become re-engaged with school. The family receives support from food banks with food and uniforms are also provided, and the risks reduced.

Coordinated, place-based working improves the home environment and neighbourhood impact.

CONCLUSION

Our north-south model for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is built on a bold yet pragmatic operating framework that balances scale, flexibility, and local responsiveness. By combining shared capabilities with tailored local delivery, this model empowers each new authority to meet the distinct needs of its communities while unlocking system-wide efficiencies. Through the innovative use of digital tools, data, neighbourhood governance, and modern service design, it creates a platform for transformation aligned with both regional ambitions and national priorities. Above all, it ensures that public service delivery remains collaborative, resident-focused, and resilient to future challenges.

Aligning the new authorities with functional economic areas, strengthening existing partnerships, and prioritising prevention, integration, and community empowerment will enable the region to deliver high-quality, sustainable services for all residents. Our north-south model offers not only geographical coherence but also a strategic advantage, balancing disadvantage, distributing strengths, and creating clear pathways for improvement. Key benefits include improved service quality, financial resilience, stronger accountability, enhanced early intervention, and better alignment with wider policy agendas.

While we recognise the challenges of disaggregation and transition, we are firmly committed to collaborating with existing councils, services, and partners.

Together, we will develop robust plans and clear mitigation strategies to ensure the new authorities are fully operational, safe, and legally compliant on vesting day, with the platforms in place to design and deliver real transformational change.

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 4:

Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

This section outlines how we have engaged and worked collaboratively with our residents, partners and stakeholders to inform and develop our north-south model.

Our north-south model has been co-designed by the majority of councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and directly reflects the feedback gathered through public engagement.

To support the development of this proposal, we undertook extensive engagement with partners, including residents and local service providers, to understand how LGR could affect their priorities and service needs across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

A county-wide community engagement exercise jointly led by all nine authorities revealed that our preferred model, proposing a north and a south unitary, received more support than the alternative. Approximately one-third of respondents viewed it positively or "as the better of the two", particularly due to its clearer geographic logic and alignment with local identities.

Our methods included a cross-county resident engagement programme, which was recognised by the LGA as a model of best practice for whole-area collaboration. The engagement exercise attracted over 11,000 responses, placing it among the highest response rates nationally. This level of participation demonstrates strong public interest and validates our proposal's responsiveness to local views.

> "I believe Rushcliffe should at least partly be within Nottingham, especially West Bridgford which has close links to the city."
>
> *- Urban participant, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LGR engagement exercise.*

Our proposal reflects a cross-authority consensus and a shared ambition to establish a more effective, accountable, and locally connected system of governance.

Full details of the independent engagement findings can be found in appendix 4.

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

Since submitting our interim proposal, all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire authorities have continued to work collaboratively and to share data whilst developing our options. For the authorities behind this proposal, there have been focused workstreams that have been meeting since July 2025. These have comprised of officers from the authorities involved in this proposal, along with colleagues who are looking at the other options being submitted. This approach has been part of our ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability throughout the process. It has also ensured that our proposal is based on a comprehensive analysis and robust peer assessment of the evidence available.

Despite differing views on which model best serves Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, we all agree that creating financially sustainable unitary authorities is of fundamental importance. It is only through creating sustainable, resilient, and efficient authorities that we will be able to address the challenges we collectively face.

In addition to financial robustness, local authorities must also reflect the distinct local identity of our place and the people, businesses, and communities within it. We believe local leaders should be empowered to act not only as leaders of their councils, but of their communities, and of the wider system, bringing together stakeholders and partners to create conditions for growth, and improve outcomes for residents.

Key collaborative activities included:

- **Leadership engagement** - leaders and chief executives worked together to guide the process and test ideas.
- **Appraisal process** - three unitary options were assessed, including one developed by Nottingham City with PwC support.
- **Joint workstreams** - coordinated efforts across councils on engagement, finance, governance, and service design.
- **Democratic review** - councillor ratios and neighbourhood governance were evaluated to ensure effective representation.
- **Financial analysis** - all nine councils jointly assessed costs, savings, and resilience, confirming long-term savings and transformation potential.
- **Section 151 Officers** - coordinated financial data and developed a robust financial case with PwC and CIPFA.
- **Monitoring officers and electoral teams** - explored future governance and democratic arrangements.
- **Directors and service leads** - shaped transformation opportunities with specialist advisers.

This structured collaboration across leadership and service tiers has ensured a technically robust and democratically grounded proposal.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We believe that our local communities and stakeholders have deep insights into what works and what doesn't, and their input can help shape reforms that are more responsive to local needs and realities.

Our investment in partner engagement early on in this process will also help foster cross-sector collaboration, enabling shared resources, innovative solutions, and coordinated service delivery.

Critically, we want to ensure a sense of shared ownership in the future of the new unitaries - essential if we are going to achieve our ambitions for LGR.

We have engaged extensively with residents, staff, public sector providers including health, police, education and fire services, the voluntary sector, local businesses, Town and Parish councils, environmental organisations, community groups, and other councils.

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

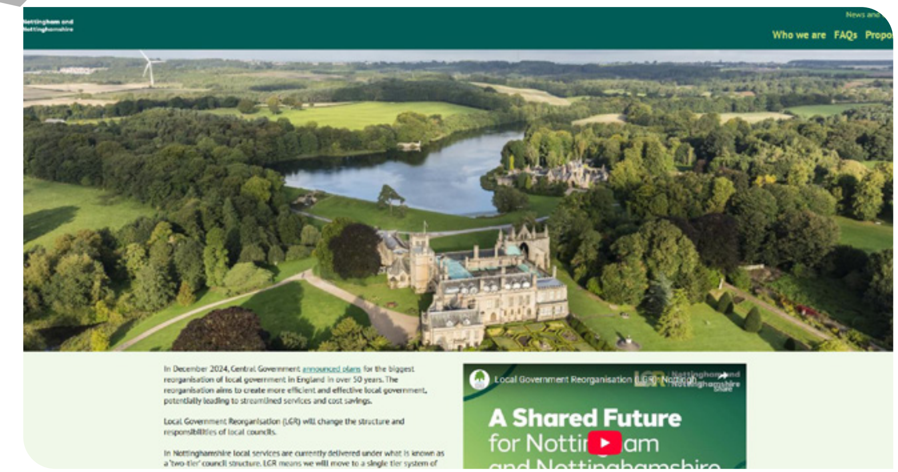
To shape this proposal, we carried out a comprehensive engagement programme[31] to ensure that the voices of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's residents and stakeholders informed the development of this preferred model.

This included a six-week online survey, focus groups, and a communications campaign supported by councils' websites, social media, and local networks. The survey was open to all interested parties and available in accessible formats, with additional routes via email, telephone, and community sessions.

The survey was targeted and promoted directly to different groups of stakeholders, including residents, staff, community groups, community leaders, partners, and, underrepresented groups. This means that the engagement results, and therefore our proposal, could be informed by an inclusive set of views.

The online survey was commissioned by all nine councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and conducted independently by Public Perspectives using documented quantitative and qualitative methods.

A more detailed analysis of the findings from this survey is included in appendix 4.



A single approach to engagement in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Image shows our dedicated website.

31 See Appendices

Our joint social media and digital campaign gained thousands of impressions across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

- In total, 11,483 survey responses were received – representing one of the largest engagement exercises of its kind across our area.
- Our proposal, a north-south unitary council, received more support than others, with around a third of respondents viewing it positively or as the better of the two, particularly for its clearer north-south model and perceived geographic logic. Focus groups and comments made during the engagement reinforced this:

> "On the face of it this seems like a more logical and fair option, a more natural split between the north and the south of the county."

> "Parts of Rushcliffe are a long way from some of the other areas – doesn't make sense geographically."

> "Better – South Notts and North Notts."

> "A much fairer split between North and South."

> "This makes more sense geographically, especially for the city area."

> "This option seems better – a cleaner cut geographically."

- From a range of participants, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LGR engagement

- Responses were well distributed across all districts and Nottingham City, with Rushcliffe (26 percent), Broxtowe (22 percent), and Gedling (16 percent) contributing to the highest volumes. This further highlights that the areas most affected by our north-south model were well represented.
- 80 percent of respondents cited providing good value, reliable services, followed by 72 percent noting meeting local needs and being fair to all parts of the area, as factors that should be most important when designing a new council.

The engagement exercise evidenced broad public support for a north-south model, underpinned by calls for improved efficiency, fairness, and local voice.

Respondents consistently emphasised the importance of "**getting the basics right**" - reliable services, fair representation, and local accountability. These are embedded in our proposed governance model and will form part of the key principles of the target operating models for the new unitary councils - ensuring services remain responsive and locally grounded while benefiting from strategic coordination and economies of scale.

In addition to an online questionnaire, promotional/marketing activity, a dedicated website[32], outreach events, and engagement with stakeholders were undertaken. Focus groups were conducted involving local residents, reflecting the diversity of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and organised by urban and rural areas. These focus groups allowed the emerging findings from the engagement process to be unpacked and views about the proposals to be discussed in depth, both adding further insight as well as validating the findings from the engagement survey.

32 www.lgrnotts.org

CONCERNS AND MITIGATIONS

It is important to note that some concerns about the prospect of change were raised through the engagement. A key principle for the new unitaries will be openness and transparency, with two-way communication critical not only at design and implementation stage, but ongoing, to keep residents fully informed and comfortable with the positive changes we know LGR can bring.

We have carefully considered and acknowledged their concerns, and we recommend that the new unitary authorities consider a robust communications approach to working with residents and all stakeholders over the implementation stage.

> "If reorganisation does go ahead, it must be done properly, with clear leadership and minimal disruption to residents."
>
> "Any restructure must not interrupt essential services. Residents shouldn't notice a negative difference."
>
> *- Urban participant, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's LGR engagement exercise.*

You said	We will
Urban-rural imbalance	• Create local area committees to ensure rural/local voices are heard and involved in decision-making. • Use service delivery ‘satellite hubs’ or ‘mobile outreach’ in rural areas to maintain local access.
Financial risk of neighbouring councils	• Publish a detailed financial impact/transition cost analysis and a risk mitigation plan (contingencies, phased implementation). • Ensure transparent reinvestment of savings into local services. • Use transitional funding or guarantee mechanisms to isolate any existing financial deficits. • Put monitoring and auditing mechanisms in place to track delivery of identified efficiencies, ensuring mitigating action is taken where required.

Figure 33: *Table showing how we will respond to the concerns raised in the engagement survey. Continued on the following page.*

You said	We will
Loss of local representation	• Create two councils of the 'right' size • Maintain community/local councillor roles with devolved powers. • Use place-based service teams that stay rooted in communities. • Continue to work closely with Parish and Town councils and explore opportunities for devolution of functions, retaining their powers and precepts.
Service disruption during transition	• Build a robust transition plan with service continuity guarantees. • Use phased implementation and agree priorities with stakeholders. • Have dedicated 'transition teams' whose sole remit is to ensure the safe transition of services and prevent any breaks in service delivery. • Communicate clearly which services will change, when, and widely communicate and provide support measures (for example hotlines and contingency support).

Figure 33 continued : *Table showing how we will respond to the concerns raised in the engagement survey. Continued on the following page.*

You said	We will
Staff uncertainty	• Provide redeployment, retraining, HR support and clear staff transition paths. • Maintain open communications with staff throughout, with Q&A sessions. • Stage changes gradually, so staff disruption is minimised. • Engagement with trade unions.
Distrust or perception of political motivation	• Be transparent about decision-making criteria, evidence base, and cost/benefit analysis. • Publish consultation findings, feedback, and how proposals were adapted in response. • Offer ongoing stakeholder engagement and oversight (for example using independent panels). • Provide clear accountability lines (who is responsible, where people can complain or appeal).

Figure 33 continued : *Table showing how we will respond to the concerns raised in the engagement survey.* *Continued on the following page.*

You said	We will
A gap in clarity and trust: residents feel underinformed.	• Run a continuing communications campaign including FAQs, infographics, public exhibitions/ talks, leaflets, and more. • Share baseline service-data and projections openly. • Hold community quality and assurance (Q&A) sessions in all localities. • Publish regular progress updates and feedback loops, so residents see responses to their queries.

Figure 33 continued : *Table showing how we will respond to the concerns raised in the engagement survey.*

PARTNER AND KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We have collectively held numerous engagement sessions to ensure that our proposal reflects the views and insights of those who deliver, use, and are affected by local government services.

We have held meetings and webinar sessions with Nottinghamshire MPs, Parish and Town councils, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, Nottingham City commissioners, NHS stakeholders including representatives of our Integrated Care Board, local BID groups, larger businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and representative groups within the local economy, environment, voluntary, and third-sector community. In addition, we have engaged in a series of constructive and collaborative discussions with EMCCA regarding our north-south model, focusing on shared priorities and exploring opportunities for alignment that will strengthen regional outcomes and support the ambitions of the devolution agenda.

The following feedback summarises the comments and common themes identified. These have been acknowledged and have been incorporated into the proposed target operating model for the new councils:

- **The value of local connection**, particularly keeping services close to communities and preserving local economic identity.
- **Striking a balance between financial and strategic concerns,** and the potential for coordinating funding resources, information sharing, and the opportunity to simplify and streamline arrangements.
- **Taking on learning from other areas** that have undertaken LGR.
- **Partnership working** - how voluntary and community organisations work would be supported by the new structure, noting the importance of third sector in preventative services and the opportunity for better integration in a new unitary model.

Preserving local identity and valuing local connections is delivered by our north-south model. Image shows the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Staff engagement session, Mansfield District Council

A series of dedicated webinars and in-person sessions have been delivered across the respective councils, giving staff the opportunity to deepen their understanding of LGR and engage directly with senior leaders. These sessions have enabled open dialogue, encouraged questions, and provided clarity on the implications of the proposed changes.

All staff have been invited to participate in these sessions, with further events planned to ensure staff remain informed and involved throughout the LGR process. In addition to live engagement, there has been a steady stream of internal communications, including frequently asked questions (FAQs), newsletters, and updates shared via email and council intranets - reinforcing our commitment to transparency and inclusion.

These efforts reflect our belief that successful reorganisation depends not only on structural reform but also on the active involvement and understanding of the people who deliver public services every day.

CONCLUSION

Our Nottingham and Nottinghamshire joint stakeholder engagement has been fundamental in shaping our proposal that is both grounded in local feedback and informed by operational experience. We have identified key themes, including the importance of preserving local identity, concerns around service continuity, and strong support for integrated and responsive service delivery.

Importantly, the engagement confirmed that our north-south model is the best for establishing two unitary authorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Respondents highlighted its clearer geographic logic and stronger alignment with local identities as key advantages.

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 5:

New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

This section outlines how our north-south model will significantly advance the devolution agenda for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It supports the ambitions of both the Mayor of the East Midlands and EMCCA for inclusive growth termed the 'East Midlands Way'[33], while aligning with the government's broader objectives for regional empowerment and reform.

Our proposed structure offers a coherent and strategic framework for planning and delivering growth across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's distinct economic geographies. It enables targeted interventions and streamlined governance that reflect the unique strengths and challenges of the north-south areas.

This section explores how our north-south model will better support EMCCA's emerging strategic programme, which is built around five interconnected priorities:

- Investment and economic growth
- Skills and employment
- Transport and connectivity
- Housing and environment
- Collaboration and infrastructure

In addition to these priorities, the progression of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will expand EMCCA's remit to include public safety, further reinforcing the need for effective delivery mechanisms and strong alignment between regional and local governance.

The timing of LGR presents a unique opportunity to build on EMCCA's momentum since its establishment in March 2024. Our north-south model facilitates a reorganisation that is not only responsive to regional priorities but also capable of delivering EMCCA's ambitions for growth and wider quality of life improvements.

Importantly, the creation of two new unitary authorities will represent just over half of EMCCA's total population, with projections by 2035[34] of:

- 611,518 residents in the south authority.
- 653,127 residents in the north authority.

This balanced population distribution supports a sensible and scalable governance structure, ensuring proportional representation and operational capacity within EMCCA.

33 https://democracy.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/documents/s1837/App%20A%20-%20Draft%20EMIZ%20Strategy%20and%20Investment%20Plan.pdf

34 www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections

Furthermore, EMCCA's new powers under the Planning and Infrastructure Bill will include responsibility for producing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), which will guide housing distribution and land use across the region. The proposed unitary boundaries align closely with EMCCA's seven development clusters, enabling more effective delivery of targeted growth and ensuring that local planning authorities are well-positioned to implement the SDS.

In summary, our north-south model offers a future-ready governance solution that strengthens regional collaboration, enhances delivery of devolved functions, and positions Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to lead the way in shaping the next phase of devolution in the East Midlands.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

LGR will play a pivotal role in the growth of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's economy by providing a platform for enhanced regional influence, securing greater levels of investment, promoting Nottingham and Nottinghamshire as desirable locations for business, and importantly streamlining and clarifying the distinct and complementary remits of EMCCA and the two new unitary councils.

EMCCA will lead regional relationships with government, lobby for further devolution of powers and funding to drive strategic growth priorities, and champion a systems approach to collective leadership. The north-south unitary authorities will build on existing strong delivery foundations, mature strategic relationships, and a deep understanding of local business communities and stakeholders. It is therefore critically important that the emerging EMCCA strategic framework is acknowledged as a bedrock of future system design.

The EMCCA strategy programme defines four interconnected projects:

- An Inclusive Growth Commission to support the development of a long-term 'Inclusive Growth Strategy'.
- A Local Growth Plan, within the 'Inclusive Growth Strategy', setting out both short- and long-term sectoral priorities for the region, and supporting the incoming National Industrial Strategy.
- A Spatial Development Plan, also within the 'Inclusive Growth Strategy', that sets out the overall strategic approach to land use in the region, including for meeting the government's stretch housing target for the East Midlands.
- Building on a systems approach to collective leadership to enable these key projects to be delivered through a similarly systemic approach to regional governance.

Our north-south model presents a significant opportunity to make a step-change in the realisation of these projects, building on existing successful sub-regional partnerships.

INVESTMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Inclusive Growth Commission was established to develop a 10-year strategy for improving economic, social, health, and environmental conditions across the region.

The commission launched its final report on 15 September 2025[35] . The final report brings together new ideas for skills, health, housing, and transport. It introduces an evidence-based 'opportunity escalator' which is designed to help residents within the EMCCA area to access good jobs, better opportunities and develop stronger communities. It looks beyond 'superstar' sectors to support job growth and improve access, pay, and conditions in a wider range of key industries, such as logistics, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy. It is the first regional model of its kind in the UK - practical, scalable, and designed to influence national debates on growth, levelling up, and the future economy.

The commission has developed a spatial framework[36] for approaching inclusive growth in the East Midlands which will guide the choices that the combined authority will seek to make across industrial policy, skills, spatial planning, and social policy. The diagram on the right shows the five spatial zones identified. Each of the five spatial zones the commission has identified different strengths and needs to achieve inclusive growth.

35 www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/what-we-do/the-economy/the-igc

36 www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/what-we-do/the-economy/vision-for-growth

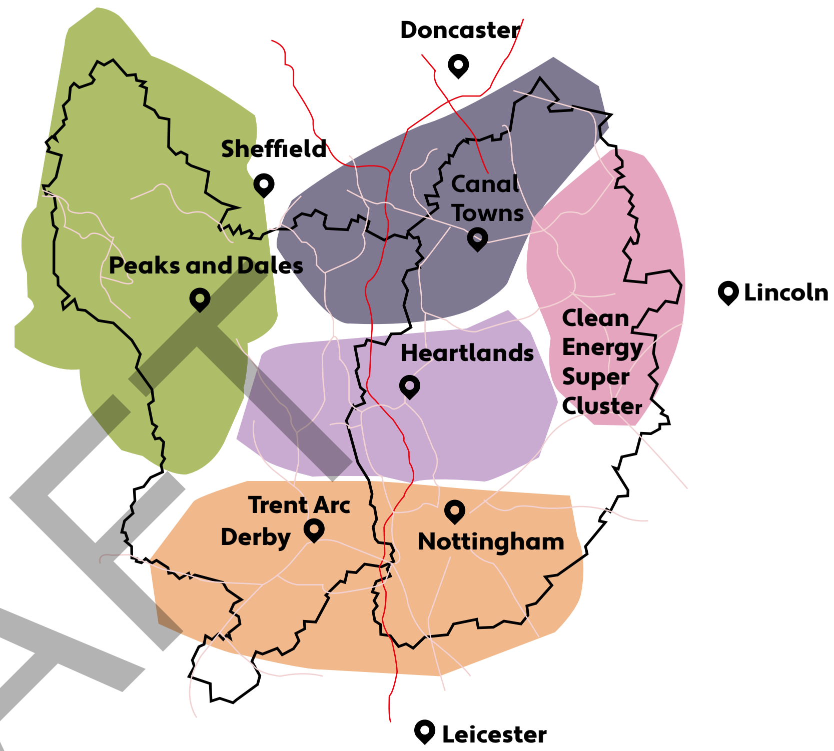


Figure 34 : *Map showing the EMCCA growth spatial zones, and how they align to the north-south model of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.*

LOCAL GROWTH PLAN

The Local Growth Plan aims to grow the regional economy by bringing together national policy and investment, local levers and capability, and the particular economic and social conditions that exist in the EMCCA region.

The regional profile presents opportunities for growth in sectors with high growth potential alongside interlinked challenges which must be addressed to enable growth.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND PROGRESSING THE OPPORTUNITIES

Cities as Engines of Growth	A focused investment approach could enhance Derby and Nottingham's role as a major economic hub, generating wider benefits for the region. However, it is crucial that people in more rural areas aren't excluded from accessing growth opportunities. **Challenge: Leveraging agglomeration to capitalise on our cities as the highest potential for productive growth versus a spatially distributed approach to growth across the whole region.**
Diversification	Our growth plan supports investing in the sectors with the greatest potential for growth to achieve both quick wins and long-term persistent growth. However, specialisation can create a more fragile economy. Investing in smaller 'challenge' sectors distributes opportunity and risk. **Challenge: Creating the right economic mix that builds resilience while driving growth.**
Large and small firms	We are home to global industrial giants providing a stable economic and employment base. We also have a uniquely high proportion of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which are key to diversification, adaptability, and innovation. **Challenge: Leveraging the growing of the SME business base while also ensuring the continued investment of large firms in the region.**
Goods and Services	The East Midlands is a heavily goods-based economy. This presents a risk of prioritising goods businesses over the service sector at a time of globally declining goods experts. Reprofiling the economy could also be a significant risk compared to investing in our strengths. **Challenge: Making a choice to grow a goods-based economy in the context of a shifting focus towards expanding service sectors.**
Nuclear Energy	Nuclear energy has been identified as a key growth opportunity for the East Midlands, however nuclear remains a politically sensitive issue, with concerns around nuclear energy generation. **Challenge: Focusing on the opportunity of nuclear energy generation in the East Midlands given the perception of the industry.**
Jobs and Productivity	Expanding key sectors has the potential to drive economic growth, attract investment, and create jobs. However, the challenge around ensuring that the jobs created are high quality and offer sustainable career pathways, rather than reinforcing low-wage, low-skill employment patterns. **Challenge: Balancing a focus on increasing accessible employment opportunities with pursuing highly productive, well-paying jobs in a tight labour market, where the supply of skilled workers is limited.**
Prosperity over our Borders	In the north of our geography the centres of the economy, and people's identities, are more aligned over the borders into other regions. Aligning skills in the north of the region with economic needs beyond our borders may lead to stronger resident prosperity, but it may displace GVA growth and create a further pipeline of residents leaving the region. **Challenge: Balancing where prosperity in some parts of our geography may stem from GVA growth beyond EMCCA's borders.**

Figure 35 : *Table showing EMCCA's opportunities versus the challenges for the region.*

Our north-south model presents the opportunity to work alongside EMCCA in addressing these challenges, and to support the targeted interventions through focused funding, programmes, and partnership collaboration to support the region.

We are aware of the existing skills gap and attainment levels and those required for the future. This will be a priority for the new unitary councils to generate career opportunities, retain our top graduates and foster career progression for all our young people in these exciting new industries.

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

This work identifies seven priority clusters covering the whole of the region. In line with the polycentric nature of the EMCCA region, each cluster has its own distinctive characteristics, derived from the geography, industry, culture, and natural history of the places within it. It builds on existing site-based programmes, including the East Midlands Growth Strategy, emerging proposals for the 'supercluster' of power station-related opportunities linked to the development of the STEP Fusion site in West Burton, East Midlands Investment Zone, and the East Midlands Freeport. The opportunity areas identified present a significant benefit of our north-south model, with clear geographic alignment with the growth opportunity clusters, as opposed to other options which would see fragmentation across the unitaries.

Our north-south model better reflects the spatial extent and growth opportunities of the 'Trent Arc', which would be contained in the south authority, and this would result in one Local Planning Authority delivering the mayor's 'Trent Arc' growth aspirations in Nottinghamshire. While the 'Heartlands' and 'The Loop' concepts have not yet been fully developed, the 'Heartlands' would sit predominantly in the north authority.

EMCCA's recently published Inclusive Growth Commission report calls for improved transport connections across the 'Trent Arc' as key to achieving inclusive growth. It is recognised that there are some existing fast public transport routes but there are gaps and some areas with a lack of affordable bus and rail services. Also identified as an opportunity at the north of the arc is to maximise a combined urban conurbation of Ashfield and Mansfield which would require improved transport connectivity, providing a real growth opportunity for the north unitary, supporting connectivity and mobility.

The mayor has given a mandate to partners in the proposed north unitary to develop a 'Heartlands Economic Strategy'. While this is still in the early stages of development the strategy will present a clear, investable vision for inclusive and innovation-led growth, fully aligned with the EMCCA Growth Plan and wider national objectives on levelling up, productivity, and net-zero.

The strategy will be underpinned by strong public-private collaboration and a growing skills infrastructure, including the Nottingham Trent University, West Notts College, and the Lincoln College Group/Newark College partnerships. Together, these institutions are addressing local skills gaps and creating clear pathways into technical and professional careers. The 'Heartlands' central location offers strong connectivity to regional economic centres, although further infrastructure investment is required to unlock its full potential.

By 2035, the area aims to contribute £1.5 billion to the local economy, create 6,000 new sustainable jobs, deliver over 100 higher- and degree-level apprenticeships annually, and reduce involuntary economic inactivity below national levels. This increased economic output is expected to generate around £500 million in returns to the Treasury[37].

To deliver this growth, however, systemic challenges must be addressed. Transport connectivity within the central 'Heartlands' remains poor, and persistent skills gaps, low post-16 attainment, limited land supply, and electricity capacity constraints all act as barriers. Health-related economic inactivity also remains a key concern, requiring a coordinated response across government, local authorities, the education sector, and health services.

To support delivery, there is a need for targeted investment in strategic transport improvements, electricity infrastructure, and increased local planning capacity.

In summary, this emerging strategy offers a compelling opportunity to advance national priorities while delivering local transformation. With targeted support through the establishment of the north-south unitary, opportunities such as 'Trent Arc' and 'Heartlands' can become flagships, not only for regional growth but for the respective unitaries where they reside, promoting and demonstrating both innovation and opportunity in the East Midlands and beyond.

37 www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk

Real life case study - Sanjiv's investment in Nottinghamshire

Sanjiv, an international investor plans to build a new factory in the area, creating hundreds of jobs. The Council will be able to welcome and support this opportunity by involving a multi-disciplinary internal team. This team will include planning, business rates, business support and intelligence, labour market pipeline, property, and highways to secure the investment. Aligned with the EMMCA's spatial zones, and liaising with one Unitary Authority, makes Sanjiv's investment in the local economy simple.

SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT – STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT AND TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Our north-south model ensures strategic alignment with EMCCA's skills and employment priorities by:

- Embedding EMCCA priorities within local service design and delivery – for example building on and developing apprenticeship hubs, employer skills banks, and improved careers outreach linked to local labour market needs.
- Fostering more effective partnerships with educational institutions, to provide relevant training and development opportunities.
- Using EMCCA frameworks as guiding principles for local investment and interventions.
- Contributing to the implementation of region-wide strategies through integrated delivery mechanisms – utilising existing skills and employment boards that operate across the area.
- Effective engagement and working relationship with local colleges, higher education institutes, and private training providers.
- Effectively utilising EMCCA's devolved adult skills funding, currently allocated to providers, including unitary and upper tier authorities, and create bespoke contracts with localities based on need.

Implementation of our north-south model will allow a more joined-up approach to tackling cross-cutting local issues such as:

- Skills mismatches and low adult qualification levels in specific wards.
- Youth unemployment and 'not in education employment or training' (NEET) levels.
- Under-utilisation of local training providers.
- Fragmented support for those furthest from the labour market.
- Geographic inequalities in access to skills provision and economic opportunity, with particular consideration for rural communities and access to higher education.
- Low productivity and GVA.
- Transport barriers.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

It is critically important that hyper-local needs are carefully considered. In relation to skills and employability, it is important that services can be adapted to meet local needs to encourage engagement with those that are hardest to reach and offer continuity and effective multi-agency working to address socio-economic challenges.

Our north-south model is rooted in and builds on strong existing partnerships. It provides a framework for seamless evolution to ensure effective engagement and alignment with the governance arrangements of the EMCCA.

This approach will strengthen collaboration, avoid duplication, and enable targeted delivery of skills and employment priorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Key partnership mechanisms include:

- **EMCCA skills and employment committee**[38] - this committee will continue to operate with revised member representation from the two new unitary authorities, ensuring that Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's voice is fully integrated into regional decision-making on skills and employment.
- **N2 employment and skills group** - officer representation from the two unitary authorities will remain critical, given the way EMCCA commissions skills, employability provision, and allocates funding across a wider geography. In addition, a dedicated group focused on the north-south unitaries will be established to manage and monitor local skills and employment priorities, ensuring alignment with community needs.
- **Technical officer groups for skills and employment** - these specialist officer groups will continue to provide expert advice and technical input to EMCCA's Skills and Employment Committee. Their role will be to ensure that decisions are informed, accurate, and consistent with best practice, regulations, and technical standards. Representation from both unitary authorities will guarantee that Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's priorities are embedded in regional strategies.

By maintaining and strengthening these partnerships, our north-south model will create a coherent, collaborative structure that supports inclusive growth, maximises funding opportunities, and delivers a workforce equipped for the future economy.

TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

Our north-south model provides a governance structure that is better aligned with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's travel patterns and economic geography, enabling more effective delivery of the mayor's Transport Plan and EMCCA's Inclusive Growth Framework. By creating two authorities that better reflect commuting flows and connectivity hubs, our model ensures that transport planning is place-based, responsive to local needs, and strategically integrated with regional priorities.

In the south, proximity to Nottingham City and the 'Trent Arc' growth corridor means transport investment can focus on urban mobility, public transport enhancements, and reducing congestion in high-demand areas. In

38 https://democracy.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=141

the north, where Mansfield and Newark act as major employment centres, the emphasis can be on improving inter-town connectivity, tackling rural isolation, and supporting sustainable travel options. This targeted approach allows each authority to prioritise infrastructure that reflects its unique economic drivers and settlement patterns.

Aligning transport planning within these two coherent geographies will:

- Enable access to EMCCA investment streams by demonstrating clear strategic alignment.
- Support decarbonisation goals through tailored solutions for urban and rural contexts.
- Improve integration with health and economic agendas, reducing inequalities in access to jobs and services.
- Accelerate delivery by reducing fragmentation and avoiding the inefficiencies of planning across an overly broad, disconnected geography.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT

Our north-south model builds on a network of close engagement already in place between existing councils. It provides opportunities for significant sources of future housing supply in the combination of Nottingham, Rushcliffe, and Broxtowe which will help offset historic under delivery, and the ability to deliver housing growth in line with strategic targets already in motion through the 'Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan.'

The proposed north unitary would have a sizeable housing need, and while each new authority would be at different stages of plan-making, they share common evidence bases currently constrained by existing administrative boundaries. The combination of these unitary authorities provides a wide geographic area to accommodate housing need. Further detail showing how the north-south model represents a 'sensible geography', which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs is presented earlier in this proposal against the criteria one.

In terms of engagement with EMCCA, a new institutional framework for developing the SDS will need to be created between EMCCA and the LPAs. This will to some extent be driven by legislation and regulation on how SDS's should be produced, however the mayor will need to engage with the constituent principal authorities to encourage them to use their planning, housing, and regeneration powers to deliver growth.

Currently LPAs work together in a range of formal and informal partnerships to deliver housing growth. Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership and the districts which will form the south unitary are currently preparing a joint plan, and our proposal will enable continuity in plan making.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES

Collaborative working through our north-south model and EMCCA presents a powerful opportunity to advance the region's environmental ambitions. By jointly developing a shared Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)[39], partners can strengthen energy security, improve sustainability, and align efforts across boundaries.

A coordinated approach will enable the delivery of low-carbon transport solutions in strategic locations such as the STEP project and major investment zones. This includes expanding public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, electrifying bus fleets, and ensuring sustainable access to employment and training hubs.

These initiatives will not only support the transition to a net-zero economy but also attract green investment, helping to deliver on the ambitions set out in Nottinghamshire's net-zero framework.

Additionally, our north-south model facilitates more efficient and integrated sub-regional waste management systems, enhancing recycling rates, and reducing landfill dependency. Through shared planning and delivery, councils can create a more resilient and environmentally responsible infrastructure that benefits communities across the region.

39 www.eastmidlands-cca.gov.uk/news/east-midlands-mayor-gives-green-light-to-countrys-largest-local-area-energy-plan/

CONCLUSION

Our proposal for reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire offers a transformative opportunity to redefine relationships between local and regional government, unlocking significant benefits for residents, the economy, and wider society. Our north-south model stands out as the most strategically aligned and operationally effective structure to support EMCCA's devolution arrangements and deliver on its ambitious regional agenda.

Why our north-south model is the strongest option:

- **Strategic alignment with EMCCA** - the geographical boundaries of the proposed north-south authorities mirror the spatial zones and development clusters identified in EMCCA's Inclusive Growth Commission and emerging SDS. This alignment ensures seamless integration of local planning with regional priorities, accelerating delivery, reducing duplication, and enabling efficient resource deployment.
- **Built-in delivery infrastructure** - the model builds on existing mature partnerships across education, skills, environment, and public health. It provides a ready-made framework for the joint commissioning and delivery of EMCCA priorities, particularly in high-growth sectors such as clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and health innovation.

CONCLUSION CONT.

- **Targeted economic intervention** - our north-south configuration allows for bespoke responses to local economic challenges. For example, the north unitary can focus on revitalising areas like Bassetlaw and Mansfield, where productivity and earnings lag, while the southern authority can drive growth in the 'Trent Arc'.
- **Environmental leadership** - the model supports coordinated delivery of low-carbon transport, EV infrastructure, and waste management systems. It enables the creation of a shared LAEP, advancing the region's net-zero ambitions, and attracting green investment.
- **Transport and connectivity** - by reflecting actual commuting patterns and economic geographies, the model allows for place-based transport planning. It supports EMCCA's goals for inclusive mobility, decarbonisation, and improved access to jobs and services.
- **Skills and employment transformation** - the model enables coherent, cross-boundary delivery of skills and employment initiatives, leveraging existing networks such as the North Notts Skills and Employment Board (NNSEB), Skills and Employment Partnership (NNSEP), and the North Notts Careers Hub. It ensures that EMCCA's devolved funding and strategic frameworks are embedded in local service design.
- **Governance and efficiency** - reducing tiers of government will streamline decision-making and enhance strategic coordination. Our north-south model balances regional leadership with strong local engagement, ensuring decisions are both informed and inclusive.

Our north-south model is not only the most practical and future-proof option, with its geographic and cultural alignment, it is the one most capable of delivering successful devolution. It aligns with EMCCA's vision, supports inclusive and sustainable growth, and provides the institutional strength needed to realise the full potential of devolution in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. '**It makes sense**'.

GOVERNMENT CRITERION 6:

New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

This section sets out how our proposal will strengthen community engagement and deliver neighbourhood empowerment by:

- **Delivering a neighbourhood-based approach to the planning and delivery of services, based on 'sensible geographies' that our residents relate to and feel connected with.**
- **Creating a new structure of Area Committees to provide enhanced opportunities for local communities to influence the decisions that affect their lives and better co-ordinate local services.**

OUR APPROACH TO LOCALISM AND DELIVERING NEIGHBOURHOOD GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT

The opportunity to work with and invest in communities; to strengthen, build, and empower them, is a fundamental part of our approach to managing the demand on public services. Building social cohesion and social capital enables individuals to live their best lives and creates more resilient communities.

Many arrangements already exist across our area to encourage and support local communities to have an active involvement in society, including tenant engagement boards, youth and seniors' councils, town centre partnerships, friends of parks groups, citizen panels, interfaith forums, festivals, and community events.

Empowering local communities is fundamental to this proposal. Image showing Edwinstowe.

Across our area, some of the ingredients are already in place to revitalise local neighbourhoods, including:

- Regenerating high streets and improving public spaces, such as parks and play areas.
- Supporting the birth and growth of local businesses and community organisations through use of local assets and community-led funding.
- Investing in social infrastructure and fostering community cohesion.

Our proposal envisages a further shift of power to local people, moving beyond engagement to co-design, collaboration, and input to decision-making. At the heart of our approach is a commitment to organise and deliver with as much knowledge, input, and connection with local communities as possible.

There are already some examples of excellent practice in terms of a local and community focused approach, with family hubs and joint service centres operating with integrated teams at a local level. However, for the most part, key services such as housing and health and social care are currently split across different organisations and geographies, meaning that, the opportunities for beneficial synergies, greater efficiencies, and joined-up service delivery are not fully realised. 'Sensible geography' is important for ensuring a genuine neighbourhood approach to planning and delivering services. Our north-south arrangement is recognised by the residents who live within our communities, and it reflects how many services are currently organised.

Real life case example – Betty from Rushcliffe

Betty, 80 and living alone, is admitted to hospital after a fall. From admission, discharge needs are assessed, and the occupational therapist completes an early integrated assessment linked with a multi-disciplinary team through the unitary authority's single 'hospital-to-home' pathway. A stairlift and level-access shower are recommended; the stairlift is considered critical and is installed by the Councils adaptations team before discharge, and the shower is scheduled. Betty can return home without the need for a care plan but is signposted to community hubs and age-appropriate exercise classes, to aid recovery and prevent social isolation. Integrated working between health, social care, and community services ensures rapid turnaround, reduces costs, and supports Betty's health and wellbeing.

Empowered neighbourhoods

Our unrelenting focus on residents recognises that local neighbourhoods are where the most impactful interventions can be made, either in collaboration with communities, or by catalysing their capacity. Working with residents, rather than 'doing to' them, is key to empowering local communities, giving them more autonomy, encouraging active community participation, and enhancing social infrastructure that results in multiple beneficial outcomes for individuals, communities, and places.

The '**Pride in Place Strategy**' [40] shows that strong and empowered neighbourhoods and communities are significant factors in driving growth. Strong social capital contributes to improved socio-economic outcomes in wellbeing, education, crime, and health, which in turn positively impact productivity.

Creating a strong sense of place. Breck Hill mural, Gedling.

40 www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-strategy/pride-in-place-strategy

Connected partnerships – improving outcomes

Aligned with this strategy, our proposal sees the establishment of programmes that empower and engage residents, supported by locality partnership working in neighbourhoods and effective neighbourhood governance through Area Committees.

For example, the North Nottinghamshire Place Partnership (NPP)[41], has developed plans for six Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) that will drive local engagement and transformation at a neighbourhood level for the Place Based Partnerships. These INTs capitalise on the combined expertise and resources of health, local government, and the VCSE to ensure proactive, strengths-based support with a strong emphasis on non-medical, community-led approaches that reduce health inequalities, improve wellbeing, and support economic growth.

These models far more closely align with our north-south model and provide a platform for our neighbourhood model.

Our vision is to create genuine empowered neighbourhoods, where local councillors, communities, and service providers work together across 'sensible geographies,' driving broader outcomes, greater efficiency, and resilient communities.

41 www.healthandcarenotts.co.uk

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Nottinghamshire has a proud history of Town and Parish Councils, which have their own legal status in the hierarchy of local government. Outside of the city most, but not all, of Nottinghamshire is covered by over 230 Town and Parish Councils. We recognise the unique role they play at the heart of their communities and the potentially important contribution that they can make to neighbourhood empowerment and engagement in the life of the two new unitary councils.

Unlike other options, our proposal presents **a more balanced and equitable representation of Town and Parish councils, ensuring that the voices of all communities are heard.**

At our engagement events with Town and Parish Councils, it was clear that there is an appetite for them to work closely and effectively with the new councils. The precise nature of that engagement will vary depending on the capacity and capability of different Town and Parish Councils, with some expressing an interest in being part of a new Area Committee set up, and others interested in exploring opportunities for taking on additional devolved functions.

For those Town and Parish councils that are able and do wish to engage more fully, we see a strengthened role. Facilitating parishes to work more closely together, and with the new unitary councils, will assist with the capacity challenges some of them face. Area Committees will provide an important setting for formal representation of parishes in local areas, as well as providing opportunities for Town and Parish Councils to play a fuller role in wider partnerships. This will help to ensure that resident voices of particularly dispersed, smaller, multiple rural communities, are not lost in larger council structures.

AREA COMMITTEES

Recognising the need to ensure that larger councils remain in touch with the local communities that they serve and in line with the government's clear desire to see local communities have more power and control over their areas, we propose the establishment of Area Committees to function alongside cabinet, overview and scrutiny, and regulatory arrangements.

New warding arrangements will form the building blocks for these Area Committees, which will bring together democratically elected representatives with residents, the police, NHS, and other local partners.

The creation of a new and modernised structure of Area Committees provides an opportunity to better co-ordinate current community engagement and partnership working, and to simplify and join-up what has become a confusing and disjointed landscape of local public service provision.

It is recognised that across the country, there are various models of Area Committees, some with advisory/

consultative roles only, others with extensive decision-making powers. Over time, and consistent with our ambition for genuine neighbourhood empowerment, we would expect to see devolution of some decision-making and funding to Area Committees.

Determining the precise number, geography, role, and remit of these Area Committees will be a matter for the new unitary councils, but set out below is our thinking at this stage.

Purpose of Area Committees

In line with 'Pride in Place', Area Committees will have three core objectives:

- To build stronger communities.
- To create thriving places.
- To empower people to take back control.

They will achieve these by:

- Enhancing the local leadership role and positive profile of councillors.
- Contributing to democratic renewal and ensuring confidence in public services.
- Providing a mechanism for embedding local needs and priorities in the life of the new unitary councils.
- Providing a structure for enabling local communities to engage with local councillors and public service providers, and for them to shape and influence decisions and services that affect their lives.
- Providing a forum to oversee and hold to account the performance of public services.
- Facilitating better planning and coordination of local services and the development of a neighbourhood focus to service delivery.

Number and geography of Area Committees

We recognise that there is a balance to be struck between creating a structure of Area Committees that best aligns with local communities and one that is also sustainable in terms of the capacity and resource required to support it.

The precise number and geography of Area Committees will be a matter for each of the proposed new unitary councils to determine. However, to demonstrate our thinking and commitment to neighbourhood engagement and empowerment, we have developed a map of an illustrative proposed structure of the Area Committees in the north-south model, which can be found in appendix 5.

We have also developed a detailed breakdown of the Area Committee numbers alongside our warding arrangements to demonstrate their linkages, emphasising our approach to keeping our communities connected. Details can be found in appendix 6.

One feature of our proposed structure of Area Committees reflects the strong adherence to 'sensible geographies' and results in the clustering of some wards that currently sit within separate councils. This will align Area Committees with local neighbourhoods and identified communities, and seek to achieve as close to coterminous boundaries as possible with neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood health arrangements.

Membership and composition of Area Committees

Elected ward councillors will play a critical role in Area Committees, acting both as the democratic representatives of the new unitary councils in localities and in making local decisions, but also as local conduits into the new unitary councils for local priorities, issues, and matters of concern to local areas. The next section (Governance) sets out further details of the proposed elected member composition for the new unitary authorities.

In addition to the core membership of elected ward councillors, we would anticipate a broad spectrum of representation, including Town and Parish councils, other community organisations, the local business community, and other public service providers (including the police and NHS) being involved in Area Committee work and meetings. Such arrangements will ensure that Area Committees are well-placed to act as a point of co-ordination between public services, other agencies, local businesses, and local communities.

Functions of the Area Committees

Function	Example
Informing and influencing strategic priorities	Providing input on local needs and priorities to inform the budget and Council-wide priorities. Allocation of small grants to community groups and local projects. Management of devolved budgets for neighbourhood improvements.
Allocating funding	Allocation of community grants; determining allocation of Section 106 funding. Informing the strategic priorities of the new unitary councils.
Agreeing local priorities	Informing the setting of work programmes such as highway maintenance, street cleaning, parks maintenance and playgrounds.
Oversight and scrutiny	Acting as a critical friend, providing local insight and constructive feedback on the performance of local services.
Local engagement and consultation	Acting as a forum for feedback from local communities and partners on a wide range of potential topics, such as major planning applications and proposed disposals of land.

Figure 36: *Table showing illustrative examples of the types of functions and responsibilities for our proposed Area Committees.*

Busy street in Stockwell Gate, Mansfield.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH EMCCA

EMCCA has set out ambitions through its corporate plan which include 'reducing inequality' and 'empowering local communities'. The mayor's placed-based strategy will see the development of a 'place framework'. This commits to local authority collaboration and targeting deprived communities, and advocates tailored interventions based on local characteristics and deprivation data.

As our north-south model more closely reflects existing interrelationships and organisational boundaries, it enables the acceleration of new and innovative participative methods that will improve local decision making and community engagement at a neighbourhood level across the new authorities, in support of the EMCCA mayoral ambitions.

The image on the next page illustrates our comprehensive approach to localism and delivering neighbourhood governance and empowerment.

There is transparency and clarity around functions and responsibilities at different community levels for all agencies, communities, individuals, and partners. Additionally, the interrelated and interdependent nature of the functions and responsibilities, require high levels of communication, collaboration, partnership, and trust.

Community Engagement Model

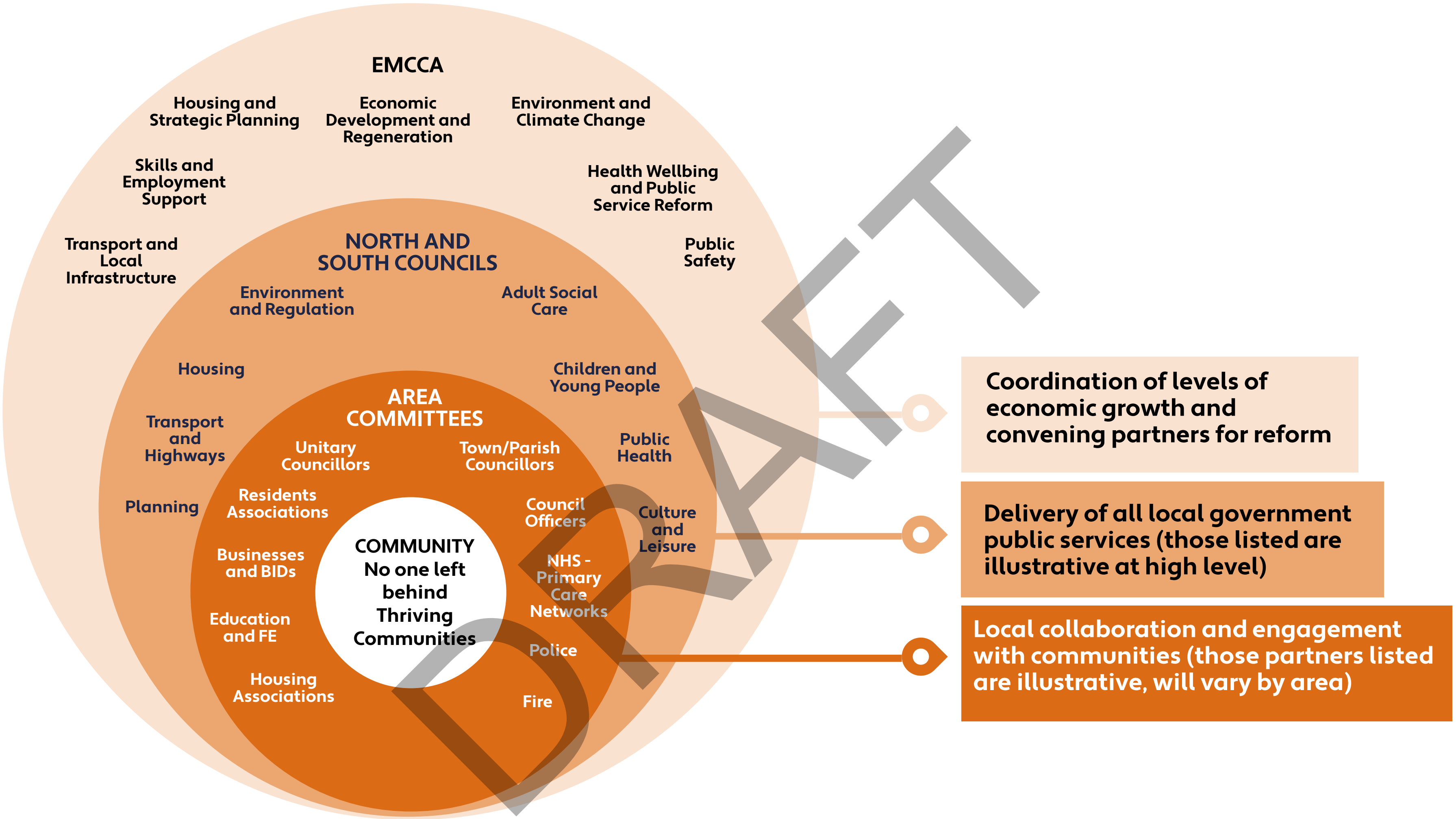


Figure 37: *Image of our proposed community engagement model*

Our model for community engagement and empowerment sets out a bold and transformational approach, which strongly aligns with the government's ambitions for community renewal and the EMCCA mayoral ambitions for our communities.

TOWN VIEW, MANSFIELD

NORTH - SOUTH

GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE

This section sets out how our proposal will revitalise local democracy by:

- **Providing the right number of councillors in the right places to deliver simpler, more effective representation.**
- **Supporting the development of future councillors as leaders and representatives in the new councils.**

PROPOSED DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS

Under the current two-tier system, local accountability is diluted, with county councillors responsible for some services and borough and district councillors responsible for other services. Being passed from one council to another, one councillor to another, is a frequently expressed frustration.

Our proposal seeks to rebuild confidence in public services and local government. Councillors elected to two new unitary councils will oversee all principal council functions within their areas, effectively becoming 'one stop shops' for the people they represent.

Residents told us that they have fears that decision-makers will feel distant, local voice lost, and accountability diluted.

> "We need local representation that understands our issues, specific to our area."
>
> "I'm worried a larger council will be more detached from local people and local areas. How will they make sure that they understand and respond to the specific local concerns."
>
> *- Two participants, LGR Nottingham and Nottinghamshire engagement exercise.*

Our proposal addresses the concerns raised by residents over feeling distant by:

Enhancing local democracy and empowering community involvement

The creation of north-south unitary councils provides an opportunity to redesign current governance arrangements to:

- Enhance the role and profile of democratically elected councillors.
- Increase the resilience, influence and engagement of local communities.
- Restore confidence in public services and institutions, bringing decision-making closer to the people served.
- Drive public service reform, through more effective co-ordination and holding to account of decision-makers and service providers and drawing on the local knowledge, creativity, and ingenuity of local communities.

In determining the appropriate size for each council, we have taken into account the following key considerations:

Strategic leadership:

- The number of councillors that will be needed to discharge the Executive functions of the unitary council and contribute to the leadership and oversight of EMCCA.

Accountability:

- The number of councillors that will be needed to scrutinise council decisions and hold local service providers to account for performance.
- The number of councillors that will be needed to support the regulatory functions of the new authorities, including planning and licencing.

Community leadership:

- The number of councillors that will be needed to represent and engage with local people and communities.
- The number of councillors that will be needed to respond to casework demands of the electorate.

Current council size

Current local authority area (district / borough)	Number of councillors	Electorate as of 1 June 2025	Average number of electors per councillor	Number of county council divisions	Number of county councillors	Average number of electors per councillor
Ashfield	35	94,770	2,692	10	10	9,423
Bassetlaw	48	92,350	1,924	9	9	10,261
Gedling	41	92,642	2,260	6	9	10,294
Mansfield	36	82,709	2,297	5	9	9,190
Newark and Sherwood	39	96,602	2,478	10	10	9,663
Nottingham City	55	205,611	3,738			
Broxtowe Borough	44	86,299	1,961	7	9	9,589
Rushcliffe Borough	44	95,969	2,181	9	10	9,594

Figure 38: *Tables showing the current electoral arrangements for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils.*

Having the right number of councillors, in the right places, is crucial to fulfilling the strategic and decision-making roles of the new unitary councils and for ensuring effective representation and engagement with local communities.

In developing our proposal, we have engaged with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and sought their guidance to help ensure that our approach to council size and electoral arrangements is as future proof as possible, notwithstanding the interest in some future boundary changes, for example, to align unitary boundaries within parliamentary constituencies. Our aim is to minimise the extent of change arising from the first electoral reviews following reorganisation. Our consideration of council size has factored in the different roles and responsibilities required of local councillors and the different levels at which they operate, from national and regional, to neighbourhood and street level. We've had regard to executive and scrutiny arrangements; to regulatory responsibilities; to the casework and other demands of different communities and to the extensive partnership arrangements that local councillors support, including EMCCA and Town and Parish councils.

At present, there are 66 county councillors, 287 district and borough councillors and 55 city councillors representing Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. A total of 408 councillors representing an electorate of 846,952 with the average councillor: elector ratio being 2,075 but varying significantly from council to council as indicated above.

Our proposed council sizes

The number of councillors proposed for our two new unitary councils are shown in the table below.

It is higher than the average number of councillors within existing unitary councils (58 as at February 2025)[42]. However, this reflects our larger than average population sizes and extensive and diverse geography.

	Proposed number of councillors	Current Electorate	Average councillor:elector ratio
North Nottinghamshire Council	96	459,073	1:4,782
South Nottinghamshire Council	88	387,879	1:4,407

Figure 39: *Tables showing the proposed ward and councillor numbers in our north-south model.*

This approach will result in an overall reduction of 224 councillors, striking an appropriate balance between having a sufficient number of councillors to fully discharge council functions and engage with local communities without being too unwieldy or diluting accountability.

Indicative electoral/warding arrangements

From discussions with the LGBCE, it is understood that the detail of warding arrangements will be a matter for further consideration. However, we are conscious of the limited amount of time between the Statutory Order being approved and elections to the shadow unitary councils in May 2027 and have therefore sought to make as much progress as possible at this stage. In addition, warding arrangements are fundamental to our thinking about neighbourhood empowerment and community engagement, forming the basis of a new system of area committees and emphasising why our proposal offers the most 'sensible geography', as evidenced in the public engagement exercise.

Our indicative warding/electoral arrangements, which are outlined in criteria six, use a combination of county divisions and city/borough/district wards. Where appropriate, existing wards have been combined to provide more equitable representation and stronger community identity.

We have developed a map to illustrate our thinking at this stage on warding arrangements in the north-south model, which can be found in appendix 7.

As mentioned previously, we have also developed a detailed breakdown of the Area Committee numbers alongside our warding arrangements to demonstrate their linkages, emphasizing our approach to keeping our communities connected. Details can be found in appendix 6.

42 www.lgbce.org.uk/electoral-data

Governance

To ensure strong and visible leadership, it is proposed that each new authority adopts the cabinet and leader model. This model provides clarity in decision-making, enables swift and accountable leadership, and supports the delivery of strategic priorities. Councillors will play a dual role – acting as influential community leaders and contributing to strategic decision-making that reflects the needs and aspirations of their local areas. This approach also provides a clear and accessible structure for partners and stakeholders to engage with, supporting collaborative delivery across the region.

Enhancing the role of elected members

The creation of our model, and the end of two-tier local government, will simplify local democratic structures. It will give residents more clarity on who their councillors are and enable members to champion all the needs of their communities, unfettered by the constraints that members operate under in the two-tier system.

If we are to avoid creating a democratic deficit, then it is vital that this smaller group of elected councillors are supported to perform their role effectively. We envisage a skilled group of members, more visible to their residents, both in-person and online, and better able to amplify their voice on key matters of local concern. Key to this will be:

- Ongoing investment in councillors' training and development.
- Investment in technology to support councillors.
- Investments in the development of localised information reporting systems.

Making this shift, it is important that the new authorities can:

- **Enhance member support structures** – giving them better access to council officers, policy briefings, casework management tools etc.
- **Enhance pathways for councillors** – new authorities will have the scale, capacity and reach to develop clearer pathways for councillors to progress into leadership roles, or to transition into non-executive roles in other areas of public service.

Positioning the role of councillor as a better supported role may attract a more diverse range of candidates, helping to ensure that future councillors reflect the increasing diversity of our communities.

Civic and ceremonial arrangements

We recognise the historic and civic importance of the roles of Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, and mayors in representing local identity, promoting civic pride, and supporting community engagement. As part of the transition to the new north-south unitary authorities we will ensure that such ceremonial roles are appropriately championed and supported.

The county's ceremonial roles Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff will continue unchanged, as they have in other areas. In Cheshire, for example, the Lieutenancies Act 1997 was amended to reflect new unitary authorities, while the ceremonial county remained intact. The same principle applies here. Nottinghamshire will remain a single ceremonial county, with continuity in historic offices and functions. Alongside this, each new unitary council will be able to establish or retain its own civic identity, through mayors, chairs, or other traditions, ensuring both county-wide heritage and local pride are safeguarded.

NORTH - SOUTH

OPERATING MODEL

NOTTINGHAM CITY FOOTBALL GROUND, RUSHCLIFFE

TARGET OPERATING MODEL

Our structure reflects local identities, enables tailored service delivery, supports housing and economic growth and will deliver operating efficiencies. ‘**It makes sense.**’

Key

1. Bassetlaw
2. Mansfield
3. Newark and Sherwood
4. Ashfield
5. Gedling
6. Broxtowe
7. Nottingham
8. Rushcliffe

Figure 40 : *Map showing the two new unitary councils under our north-south model.*

While each new unitary council will develop its own Target Operating Model (TOM) in collaboration with key stakeholders, including residents, the councils supporting this proposal are united around a set of core design principles. These principles, shaped by community and partner engagement, will underpin the development of each council’s TOM and serve as the foundation for building stronger communities and driving inclusive economic growth.

The design principles presented, in their practical application to the new unitaries, provide strong and numerous inter-relationships and dependencies. For instance, working with businesses in neighbourhoods to develop training programmes that meet skills gaps, which in turn drive growth in employment and GVA, or co-designing with residents or service users’ digital applications that enable them to make choices and decisions that have a preventative impact.

Real life case example – Sally from Ashfield

Sally is leaving school this year and is unsure about her next steps. To simplify what can be a complex landscape of career and learning options, schools, colleges, and businesses will work with the unitary councils to create a one-stop-shop. This will help Sally understand and access a range of opportunities, whether that's employment, further education, or an apprenticeship. The new Unitary Authority will work with businesses to develop the right training programmes that meets skills gaps and will support Sally in finding the right opportunity for her to establish a strong career in the area she grew up.

Realising the beneficial transformational opportunities and outcomes brought about by the design principles will be a key priority of the new unitary councils.

Air and Space Training Institute, Newark providing training opportunities in aerospace and aviation.

CORE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

ROOTED IN COMMUNITIES

Resident-centered services, joined-up neighbourhood working, escalating to critical services when needed.

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Working with business, create conditions for inclusive growth (e.g planning, housing, infrastructure, education) that support employment, skills and investment.

GENUINE CO-PRODUCTION AND COLLABORATION

Work with partners and communities to collaborate, co-design and deliver solutions that improve outcomes and value.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND LOCAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Ensuring value for money, quality services, whilst keeping it local wherever possible.

DIGITAL-FIRST SOLUTIONS

Digitally enabled data-informed decision making and service delivery, supported by integrated systems and shared insight.

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM AND TRANSFORMATION

Whole-system, place-based approach taken to meeting priority needs. Regularly reviewed to continually learn, adapt, and improve performance. A culture of continuous improvement.

PREVENTION

Working with partners, VCS, and community assets to deliver targeted prevention and early intervention tailored to priority needs and ambitions.

FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

Resources transparently aligned to priority outcomes. Clear accountabilities and controls. Due diligence on all financial decisions.

Figure 41 : *Our north-south proposed core design principles.*

Designing and adopting a future TOM will be an important step in enabling the new unitary councils to manage the mobilisation, transition and transformation stages in a coherent way.

The future TOM, built on our design principles, will enable unitary councils to act proactively, embrace innovation, and adopt predictive and transformative approaches. These principles ensure responsiveness to local needs and trends, driving better outcomes through targeted, community-informed interventions.

They will also support the delivery of national policy including devolution, addressing local priorities and driving strong collaborative partnerships, both within the unitary footprint and regionally to ensure long-term sustainability.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

We know that managing demand and reducing cost whilst ensuring quality outcomes is essential for ASC and children's services. The overarching TOM is essential for delivering on our ambitions and goals to achieve financial sustainability.

Delivering these services is a statutory duty of the new unitaries. They are essential to our most vulnerable residents, their families and carers. To achieve our transformational objectives in these areas, services need to be rooted in the communities they serve, which our model achieves.

Our proposed TOM for ASC is aligned to the overarching design principles of the councils' TOM, and we propose that we will operate as a locality plus model. Whilst many ASC services operate locality teams for delivery (as is the case currently with Nottinghamshire County Council), we will go further with locality plus in line with our ambitions for ASC and achieving our aim of 'home first.'

Under locality plus we will assess need, commission and deliver at a local level, supporting and empowering our communities to have healthy, happy and independent lives.

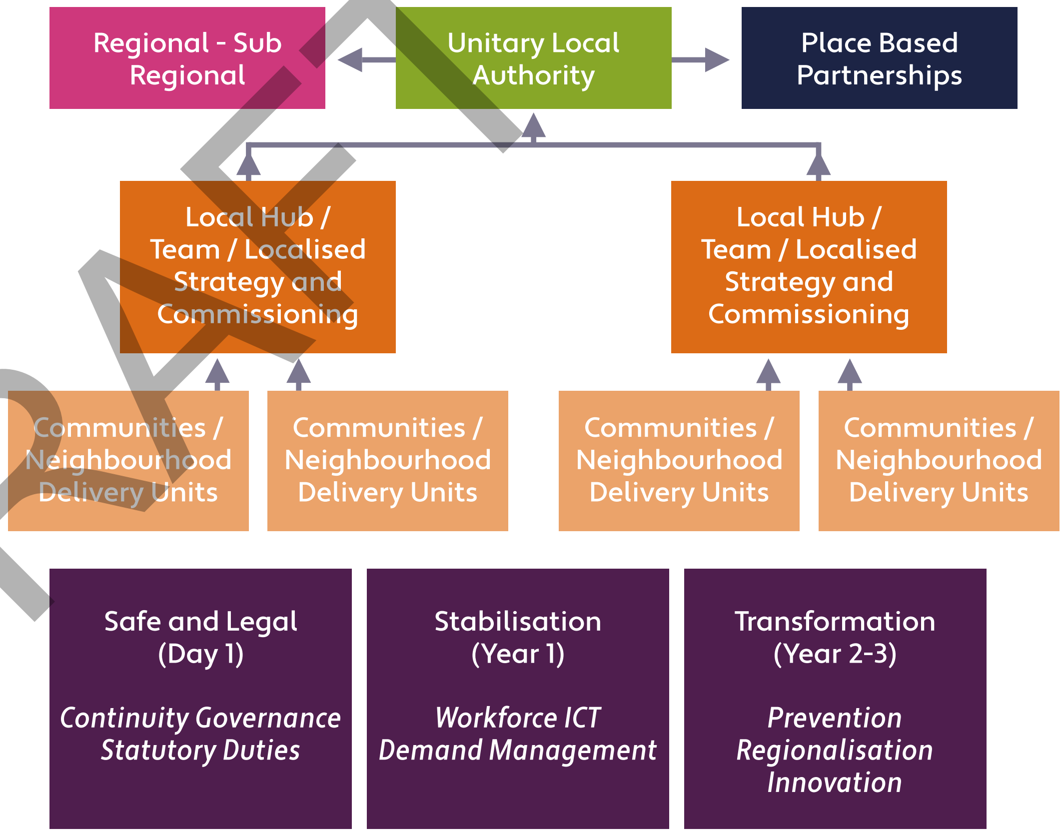


Figure 42 : *The proposed locality plus structure.*

NEIGHBOURHOOD / INTEGRATED TEAMS

Aligned to PCN/ICS footprints, co-locating social workers, OTs, NHS staff, and voluntary sector partners. Designed around the strengths and needs of each local population.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TRIAGE

At the front door, ensuring people are directed to universal or short-term solutions before long-term care is considered.

HOME FIRST

Embedded as the default pathway, supported by expanded reablement services, assistive technology, and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) now devolved to the new unitary.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND LOCAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

At a unitary or locality scale, with outcome-based contracts, micro-care ecosystems, strong joint commissioning with NHS/ public health and local resilient markets.

DIGITAL-FIRST SOLUTIONS

Including resident care accounts, online self-assessment, AI-enabled triage, and assistive technologies to support independence.

WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

Embedding strength-based practice, standardising ways of working, building local recruitment pipelines, and improving retention.

PREVENTION

Working with partners, VCS, and community assets to deliver targeted prevention and early intervention tailored to neighbourhood needs.

CARER SUPPORT AND CO-PRODUCTION

Structured engagement with unpaid carers and service users, with expanded access to respite, training, and peer networks.

Figure 43 : *The proposed core features of our north-south ASC target operating model.*

We propose that each unitary delivers children's services using a locality-plus model. Having services and providers centred around the local communities will be crucial if we are to tackle rising demand and costs across both the Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Council footprint. In addition, rebuilding the trust of parents and schools is essential if we are to successfully educate children and young people with SEND within the communities where they live.

Some services will be best provided at a regional level, and we are committed to doing so where it makes sense.

FAMILY HUBS AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Creation of Family Help hubs across localities, offering early support to families before escalation; kinship-first approach to reduce children entering care.

MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING

Local MACPTs ensuring swift, joined-up responses to safeguarding risks, aligned to statutory thresholds.

PLACEMENTS AND PERMANENCE

Kinship, fostering and adoption prioritised; expand in-house fostering; joint regional commissioning of high-cost residential placements; stability and permanence planning from the outset.

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION

Strong partnership with schools and health; embed inclusion in mainstream schools; align Family Hubs and SEND support to improve outcomes locally.

DIGITAL-FIRST AND DATA-DRIVEN

Including AI-enabled solutions for information, advice and certain assessment points e.g. SEND; and assistive technologies to support independence.

WORKFORCE AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT

Single practice model across localities (e.g. strengths-based, trauma-informed); improve recruitment/retention of social workers and foster carers; shared training and standards.

PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Place-based working with VCS, schools, housing, and health partners; locally commissioned early help and edge-of-care services; focus on reducing demand for statutory intervention.

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND CARER VOICE

Structured co-production with children, young people and families; clear Local Offer; transparent communication to rebuild trust, especially with SEND parents.

Figure 44 : *The proposed core features of our north-south children's services target operating model.*

The proposed TOMs for the north-south unitary councils are central to unlocking the full potential of public service reform across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. While each TOM will evolve to reflect the unique priorities of its communities, they will be built on a shared foundation of values, design principles, and a commitment to transformation.

These models are not just operational frameworks; they are enablers of change. They will provide the structure and clarity needed to:

- Drive inclusive economic growth, by aligning services with local strengths and opportunities.
- Improve outcomes for residents, through more responsive, place-based, and preventative service delivery.
- Deliver high-quality, efficient, and sustainable services, underpinned by financial resilience and innovation.

By embedding the locality plus model in critical areas such as ASC and children's services, the new councils will ensure that services remain rooted in communities, while benefiting from strategic coordination and economies of scale. This approach will help manage demand, reduce costs, and most importantly improve the lives of the residents we serve.

Our north-south model is not only deliverable, it is desirable. It reflects local identity, builds on existing partnerships, and offers a pragmatic, future-focused pathway to local government reorganisation. With strong leadership, collaborative governance, and a clear vision, the new councils will be well-positioned to lead a new era of local government, one that is more connected, more accountable, and more capable of meeting the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Our model reflects local identity. Photograph taken in Bingham, Rushcliffe.

ARBORETUM, NOTTINGHAM

NORTH - SOUTH

TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION

TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION

By aligning to existing district/borough boundaries and building on established partnerships, our proposal enables more straightforward and efficient implementation and service continuity, reducing the risk of disruption during transition.

While this phase will be facilitated by the shadow councils to ensure the safe and legal transfer of functions, services and duties on vesting day (1 April 2028), our proposal and work to date will very much support this.

It should be noted that the work to date by all our stakeholders may not feature in our proposal in its entirety, however it will help with the preparations, design and implementation of the new unitary authorities going forward.

LGR presents the opportunity for so much more than just reorganising boundaries. While it will be for the new unitary councils to determine, our proposal envisages reorganisation as the foundation for extensive transformation in the longer-term. We suggest this is likely to include:

- Wider public service reform, engaging health, police, business, and the voluntary sector.
- Enhanced resident engagement and empowerment, and stronger local democracy.
- Renewed neighbourhood and locality partnership working
- Greater collaboration across the region with closer working between the two proposed single tier councils.
- Enhanced preventative, early help and demand management activities.
- Development of local markets, through a 'commissioning local' approach, supporting local economic growth.
- More efficient use of public funds and assets.
- Radically different new ways of working, exploiting digital advantages.
- Capitalising fully on devolved powers, aligned with EMCCA strategies.

Our north-south model will avoid the need for complex boundary changes, by aligning to existing district boundaries. This approach also benefits from building on established partnerships within both the north and south, helping to maintain service continuity and avoid fragmentation.

LGR demands meticulous planning and adequate resourcing. Ambitious transformation programmes must be grounded in realism, acknowledging the constraints of available resources and time. Insufficient resourcing and a lack of necessary capabilities are frequent causes of organisational change failures. Implementing change effectively, including the iterative process of testing, refining, and reinforcing new processes, often proves more demanding and time-consuming than initially anticipated.

Leadership and management teams within each council will play a crucial role in facilitating the reorganisation, supporting staff and fostering the necessary cultural shift. The effort required to achieve wide scale cultural change should not be underestimated.

A PHASED APPROACH

There will be three phases through our journey in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to deliver LGR: mobilisation, transition, and transformation.

Mobilisation: LGR programme structure and supporting programme management office

Phase 1

- **January 2026:** workstreams and subgroups established
- **January - May 2026:** government consultation
- **July 2026:** government decision on proposal to be implemented

Transition: select future senior leaders and create organisational infrastructure and service continuity ready for vesting day

Phase 2

- **7 May 2027:** establish shadow authorities and hold shadow elections
- **May / June 2027:** appointment of the chief executives and other senior leadership roles
- **1 April 2028:** vesting day for new unitary councils

Transformation

Phase 3

- **2028 onwards:** long-term transformation strategy, consolidation of systems and plan for the new unitary councils.

Figure 45: *Proposed timetable.*

PHASE ONE: MOBILISATION

Following the final submission to government on 28 November 2025, a devolution and LGR programme structure and supporting programme management office (PMO) will be established to oversee and drive delivery whilst ensuring oversight of the entire programme's progress. There will be continued collaborative working by all councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with pooled resources from all districts, boroughs, the city, and the county council.

The programme group will be working on sub-areas and workstreams and build on foundational data activity undertaken through the interim and full proposal submissions, as well as the MHCLG list of preparatory activities.

No matter the decision from government on which proposal will be implemented, work will need to be carried out regardless.

We will continue our stakeholder engagement to increase awareness and build cooperation and relationships. We will continue to promote and engage with residents and businesses across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to ensure we are taking our stakeholders with us on the journey. Through facilitating regular drop-in sessions, in person events and partner briefings, we will baseline our current position as well as leading our stakeholders through the strategic vision and direction of the reorganisation.

Following a decision from government in summer 2026, the programme will commence more detailed planning work.

We propose that new governance arrangements are put in place under a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire leader's implementation group, ensuring representation from each council and an accurate reflection of the political make-up of the area. We will also continue to build on the strong collaboration established in the preparation stage and on the strong governance, methods and relationships that are being developed with EMCCA that are already in place.

The reorganisation is the largest and most complex reorganisation attempted anywhere in the UK since 1974. We share the view of the government that it's essential to minimise the risks of the safe transition to a successful implementation: the highest operational risk is around the disaggregation and transition of social care and education. It is essential that a form of governance is agreed through the Statutory Change Order that reflects the reality of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire system and minimises transition risks to ensure a successful implementation. This can only be done through proportionate representation of both tier authorities of government through the formal governance arrangements.

Workstreams and sub-groups within the programme will be fully established and supported with resource across the councils. The key workstreams and tasks that will be required are outlined below:

- Planning and delivery of the elections to the shadow authorities in May 2027.
- Cross-council working and coordination of delivery of formal governance and programme management arrangements that will be taken forward into new shadow authorities. This builds on work established as part of phase one pre-planning.
- Cross-council collaborated and agreed detailed programme implementation plan to help establish clear parameters, deadlines, decision points and critical path for delivery of a safe and legal day one.
- Design and agree the future planned target operating model including detailed plans for disaggregation and aggregation of service areas including the high-risk areas of SEND, ASC, children's social care, homelessness and public safety. But, as we know from our stakeholder engagement, services such as highways and waste collection services are also critical, and we are committed to ensure detailed plans are in place and resourced sufficiently to mitigate risk and minimise service delivery disruption.
- Collaborative design and plan for baseline of IT infrastructure to support and deliver a safe and legal day one.
- Design and agreement of a clear external and internal communications strategy to support the delivery of a safe and legal day one.
- Working sub-group to help deliver and design the baselining of the capital asset property portfolio.
- To identify current procurement and contract arrangements.
- To conduct a HR baseline review, including establishment list, policies and practices, job descriptions.

Working together sharing service data, structure and systems information we will develop a deeper understanding of the potential to protect key front line service delivery, consolidate duplication, explore shared services, maximise transformation opportunities and minimise risks as we move into the design phase.

Front line services affect all our residents. Photograph taken in Broxtowe.

PHASE TWO: TRANSITION

The transition phase is crucial to support a streamlined delivery of the new unitary structures of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The shadow authority will facilitate and ensure delivery of a safe and legal vesting day on 1 April 2028.

The shadow councils will lead and have ownership of the transition phase which will include:

- Detailed integration planning and transition of all services, including both disaggregation and aggregation of service areas.
- Appointment of the chief executives and other senior leadership roles including the early appointment of the Directors of ASC, children's services and public health.
- Planning for Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment (TUPE) of staff to new councils to support the retention of the workforce.
- Developing and agreeing a comprehensive workforce strategy for all tiers, with the necessary arrangements in place to support a smooth day one transition.
- Collaboratively define the culture, values, and identity of the new authorities, fostering a unified organisational ethos from inception.
- Delivering the implementation of agreed operating models (aligned to the overarching councils' TOM) and supporting infrastructure, enabling effective service delivery from day one.
- Completing system and user acceptance testing across all platforms and access channels for core systems, ensuring residents and partners can seamlessly access services and critical information from go live.
- Creating detailed budgets for 2028/29 and develop a medium-term financial plan, including transformation plans to support long-term financial sustainability.
- Budget setting for new authorities outlining funding arrangements including council tax harmonisation.
- Develop practical, actionable proposals for day one activities covering buildings, systems, data, and staffing, ensuring operational readiness
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement.

The joint programme team will build on the existing foundations in change and programme management. We will approach the implementation phase with a structured methodology that leverages and enhances existing capabilities using specialist support where required. The programme team will drive momentum, ensure partner alignment, and deliver sustainable outcomes.

Throughout this phase, robust programme governance will remain firmly in place to ensure delivery is consistently supported, with an implementation executive established to provide clear and timely formal decision-making on behalf of the new unitary councils. We will also work with current employees from across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to design the culture, values and identities of the new unitary authorities.

Following the elections to the shadow authorities in May 2027, the proposed arrangements and operating models developed for each of the new unitary authorities will need to be reviewed and formally adopted by the shadow councils. Our proposals outlined above will support the new authorities to start with clear plans for transformation and continued public service reform.

PHASE THREE: TRANSFORMATION

Following the delivery of **safe and legal** councils on vesting day in April 2028, the focus will turn to delivering a long-term transformation.

As we move toward becoming two unitary authorities, we are presented with a rare and exciting opportunity to fundamentally reshape how we serve our communities. By consolidating district and county functions, we can unlock the full potential of shared platforms, pooled resources, and integrated systems. This is our moment to create two data-driven organisations that use insight to anticipate need, allocate resources more effectively, and deliver services that are not only efficient but also deeply responsive to the residents who rely on them. Our ambition is to embed digital thinking across the councils, ensuring that transformation is not just about technology, but about people, equity, and outcomes.

These are not isolated ambitions; they are part of a broader shift toward services designed around real user needs, informed by real-time data, and delivered with empathy and precision. We are learning from peers who have pioneered AI-driven innovations in areas like infrastructure and environmental monitoring, and we are eager to build on these foundations to deliver smarter, safer, and more sustainable services. Our approach aligns with the principles of the 'Blueprint for Modern Digital Government'[43] , which calls for joined-up services that are proactive, transparent, and designed to meet people where they are - making public services easier to access and more effective in practice.

We recognise that not all residents engage with services in the same way, and we are determined to ensure that no customer is left behind. Bridging the digital divide, promoting digital literacy, and ensuring that our digital initiatives reflect the diversity of our communities.

There will be a separate working group for each new unitary during the mobilisation period which will be focused on looking ahead, identifying opportunities for transformation and greater efficiency.

We will ensure no customer is left behind with ICT and AI advancements.

43 www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-blueprint-for-modern-digital-government

Key opportunities include:

- **Service redesign –** redesign services that are user-centric, efficient and reflect new geographies, resident needs, and digital capabilities. Focus on prevention, early intervention, integration, and outcomes.
- **Asset and estate rationalisation -** review and optimise the public estate across the authorities. Co-locate services and release surplus assets.
- **Digital transformation -** expand digital platforms, automation, and AI-enabled tools to improve resident experience and workforce productivity.
- **Delivering value for money –** review third party expenditure, contract and commissioning functions, developing and shaping the local market.
- **Strategic partnerships -** strengthen collaboration with health, police, education, and voluntary sector partners to deliver integrated outcomes, and explore opportunities for shared services.

We recognise that there will be a number of quick wins particularly in areas such as third-party expenditure through consolidation and reprocuring of new contracts. We also know that some areas which require policy change, harmonisation, asset rationalisation and digital transformation will take longer. In line with the financial modelling within our proposal, the councils need to be able to deliver some financial benefits in year one with full effect by year three. Thus, ensuring they deliver on the benefits of LGR and secure financial sustainability moving forward.

RISKS AND MITIGATION DURING TRANSITION

Challenges

The continuity of service delivery will be critical, however from a transition and transformation perspective, the key challenges that must be addressed in moving to our recommended model are covered here.

Challenge 1 – Variable transition and transformation capacity and capability.

The new unitary authorities will need to address the variable levels of transformation capacity and capability across the nine councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and enhance where appropriate. Transformational one-off costs have been added to the financial modelling to ensure adequate resource and capability is assigned to the programme.

Challenge 2 – Managing the joint challenges of disaggregation and aggregation in relation to LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Due to the unique nature of local government configuration, including the existence of seven district/borough councils, one unitary authority, and one county council, transition and transformation will be complex and challenging. Critically, the design of our north-south model mitigates a number of these but will require careful and considered planning and delivery.

Challenge 3 – Supporting continued transformation and reform from pre-implementation through to the realisation of the future model.

With the above challenges in mind, LGR can quickly become an inhibitor for transformation and innovation in advance of implementation. Our transition and transformation approach delivers a clear and realisable plan for prioritising and maximising transformation as we move through the pre-implementation period.

Furthermore, we also see this as an opportunity to maximise the benefits of LGR as the single most exciting proposition for delivering system-wide transformation of local government in a generation. The opportunity to build new authorities from the ground up creates the perfect conditions to design services around residents and their needs. Through our model, we will aim to break down professional silos and barriers to change that have built up organically across organisations, accelerating the deployment of best practice, innovation, and transformation.

As such, our approach to transition and transformation will be a strategic and proactive one. Wherever possible, we have identified through our categorisation of services those areas of current delivery which can be transformed in advance of LGR. The services that will require initial transition and stabilisation will be designed from the bottom up to deliver better outcomes for the future.

Designing services around local needs. Photograph taken at a local business support event, Gedling.

Risks

We recognise the risks associated with LGR and are proactively addressing them through a structured programme approach. Transitioning to new structures in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire involves disaggregating and reorganising county, unitary, and district/borough council services, as well as redefining boundaries. To navigate this complexity, we will work closely with the LGBCE, drawing on lessons from previous reorganisation programmes, and commence day one planning to ensure readiness.

We appreciate the scale and speed of change are unprecedented, particularly given ongoing pressures on health and other public services, and that is why we will carefully manage this through a clear mobilisation, transition, and transformation plan.

ICT is central to every aspect of the programme and essential for the legal and operational integrity of the new councils. We will bring together ICT managers from across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to share data, licences, and infrastructure insights, streamlining preparations and reducing pressure on capacity. This builds on an existing data-sharing agreement across the nine councils.

Successful reorganisation requires strong collaboration across councils, government tiers, and political lines.

We are building on established partnerships, identifying initiatives that can be delivered now, and setting clear protocols for joint working. Our approach ensures current services remain strong while laying the foundations for successful new authorities. We have incorporated lessons from previous programmes, such as North Northamptonshire and Cumbria, including the importance of dedicated PMO teams, allocated programme managers, early shadow boards to support service development, and regular monitoring of delivery plans through a day-one board.

Importantly, our north-south model significantly reduces transition risks compared to alternative proposals, making it a safer, more resilient option for implementing reorganisation successfully. It achieves this because:

It reduces the degree of change

It keeps the number of authorities at two (reflecting our current two upper tiers) and therefore avoids layering on top the significant added risks that come from increasing the number of unitary authorities.

It reduces the timescale for transition

Less change means that new services will be able to transition to new operating models quicker. This will ensure less uncertainty for our service users, partners and wider communities, who will also be able to experience the benefits of LGR more quickly. It will also be good for staff, reducing the risk that prolonged uncertainty leads to issues with staff retention and exiting of experienced and valued members of staff.

It also creates new authorities with the scale and resources to better manage the risk

As we have established, the two new authorities in our proposal will be financially resilient and will have the financial and workforce capacity and capability to better absorb and manage risk and financial shocks.

Mitigations

We will work together and individually to ensure we have an up to date and live business continuity plan, which will form a key part of our governance.

Furthermore, we have identified key risks alongside mitigations for those challenges, arising from disaggregation and aggregation in our LGR proposal. These are set out in the tables below.

LGR risk	Transition mitigation actions
Disaggregation of service delivery models.	A critical role of the PMO, which will form part of the transition stage, will be to operate a comprehensive and live risk register. We do not underestimate the risk involved in the disaggregation and aggregation of services, especially high dependency services such as ASC and children's services. While both areas will have their own dedicated working groups and transition leads, we do not walk into this blindly. We have been working with Peopletoo as part of the development of our proposal and have already started to draft outline transition plans that we can build upon as a shadow authority.
Loss of economies of scale in central support functions (for example in HR, IT or procurement).	Maximise the potential use of shared services and sharing arrangements as set out in our TOM, ensuring that shared service establishment is a core deliverable of the LGR transformation programme.
Complex contractual unwinding for third-party contracts.	Establish a single contract register and procurement forward plan for LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It is acknowledged that there are a significant number of long-term contracts currently let by Nottinghamshire County Council which in some cases last to 2030 and beyond. This presents the challenge of delivery needing to unwind at pace, while also allowing ample time for the new unitary authorities to design future commissioned services, to deliver better-targeted local outcomes aimed at growth, prevention, and demand management. We will establish joint legal/commissioning governance structures, to negotiate exits or redesign contracts locally or, through multi-unitary authority partnerships.
Financial risks arising from different starting points (for example reserves, liabilities or debt exposure).	Thorough and full analysis has been undertaken on behalf of all the councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on financial viability and resilience by PwC and CIPFA, to establish the financial starting point for each of the new unitary authorities.
Disruption to key operational data systems and performance management.	Build upon the already established data-sharing infrastructure hosted by Bassetlaw and Ashfield to establish an LGR implementation data sharing hub and framework for implementation.
Workforce retention risks and challenges.	Build upon the learning already established through the devolution priority programme to establish common and consistent workforce transition principles and strategies, joint staffing protocols, and phased transfers aligned with organisational change support.

Figure 46: *Table showing key risks and corresponding mitigations from disaggregation and aggregation.*

LGR risk	Transition mitigation actions
Public confusion and trust erosion due to service disruption or perceived duplication.	Establish a coordinated change management and public-facing communications campaign supported by common deployment of communications assets at all resident-facing digital and physical front doors across the unitarity authorities.
Potential duplication or fragmentation if shared arrangements are not delivered.	Common commitment to sharing of capabilities, data, and services (as per our TOM) has been established as part of our journey to developing this proposal and will be delivered as a key priority of the LGR transition.
ICT and data interoperability between councils.	Where strong ICT capabilities exist across the north-south councils, these will be deployed proactively to establish clear future technology architectures for each unitary authority. Shared capabilities will be proactively explored as a priority in implementation.
Transition cost and complexity of setting up new shared arrangements.	Transition costs have been fully incorporated into our financial model for our north-south proposal and have been fully accounted for in the overarching financial business case that sits at the heart of this proposal.

Figure 46 contuined: *Table showing key risks and corresponding mitigations from disaggregation and aggregation.*

Our approach to the effective implementation of LGR is grounded in strong leadership, meaningful engagement, proactive risk management, and disciplined programme governance. These are underpinned by a shared set of values and principles that guide the transition and ensure alignment across all participating councils. This foundation is essential, particularly given the significant financial, operational, and workforce-related risks associated with the implementation phase.

Importantly, our proposed north-south model offers a realistic and deliverable pathway for service aggregation. It builds on established partnerships in the south and strengthens already robust relationships in the north, providing a solid platform for transformation.

We are fully committed to working collaboratively with all councils, partners, and key stakeholders across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, as well as our neighbouring authorities, to secure the best possible outcomes for our residents. This is a unique opportunity to deliver meaningful local government reorganisation, and we are determined and committed to maximise its potential for real long-term benefit.

NORTH - SOUTH

CONCLUSION

LANGOLD COUNTRY PARK, BASSETLAW

CONCLUSION

Our proposal for LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is bold, evidence-led, and rooted in the lived realities of our communities.

We are confident that the creation of two new councils - one for the north and one for the south - offers the most pragmatic and future-ready solution. This model reflects sensible, balanced geographies that combine strategic scale with strong local identity. It enables governance that is more efficient, more accountable, and more responsive to the diverse needs of our residents.

By aligning fully with the government's six criteria for reorganisation, our north-south model ensures continuity of the high-quality services that people rely on, while unlocking the potential for transformation. It empowers communities through stronger local leadership, avoids the risks of over-centralisation, and supports tailored, place-based solutions to complex challenges such as housing, social care, and economic growth.

Unlike alternative options, our model provides a coherent framework for growth. It enables the alignment of urban regeneration and strategic development within a single authority, particularly in the proposed south unitary area, where the built-up corridor south of the River Trent represents the region's most significant growth opportunity. Other proposals risk fragmenting these opportunities, undermining the ability to deliver at pace and scale.

Moreover, our north-south model offers a more practical and cost-effective approach to service delivery. It avoids the inefficiencies associated with sprawling geographies, reducing the need for duplicated infrastructure, excessive travel, and additional operational overheads.

In addition, our proposal creates the opportunity for the formation of new and effective arrangements for engaging with and empowering residents at a neighbourhood level.

Most importantly, our model has the trust and support of our residents. Public engagement has shown that people recognise the logic of our north-south model. They see it as a model that reflects how communities live, work, and connect - a model that "**makes sense**."

Through extensive collaboration, robust evidence, and a clear roadmap for transition and transformation, our proposal lays the foundation for a new era of local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver lasting change, creating two strong, sustainable councils that will **drive growth, improve lives, and be truly rooted in the communities they serve.**

Our north-south model, our bridge to a brighter future for driving growth and improving lives. Rooted in Community. Connected by place. Photograph taken at Clumber Park near Worksop in Nottinghamshire.