



Review of Primary Education for Children
Living in the
Welton Area

A CONSULTATION PAPER

Enquires to:
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Welton School

Consultation Document Summary

What are we proposing to do?

This consultation document is about the arrangements for primary education in the village of Welton. The suggested change is that Welton School closes and the catchment boundaries for schools adjacent to Welton School are redrawn accordingly. Pupils would be transferred to other schools in the locality.

The county council wants to hear your views on this proposal before deciding whether to make a change.

This suggestion is in no way intended to reflect badly on the high standards of education provided at Welton School. The proposal is in response to overall declining pupil numbers in the area. Small and declining numbers of pupils and small class sizes affect the viability of a school and its future sustainability in delivering first class education to its pupils. The school's governors have worked very hard to sustain the school but numbers on roll have now fallen to a level at which the governors no longer feel the school is viable.

I hope you will take the time to let us know what you think. If you would like any further information in the meantime, please contact Tony Whittaker; 6-19 Planning and Commissioning Team on 01228 226012 or by e-mail: tony.whittaker@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Duncan Fairbairn
Cabinet Member
Children's Services



Julia Morrison
Corporate Director
Children's Services



Background

The numbers of primary school age pupils in the catchment area of Welton School have declined over a number of years. Despite best endeavours from governors, staff and parents it has not been possible to maintain pupil numbers at a level that would make the school educationally or economically sustainable.

The governing body have approached the county council in relation to the school's sustainability and the county council feels that the situation should be reviewed and the proposal for closure be considered.

On this basis, the decision has been taken to consult widely and also with mandatory consultees about provision for the future. The aim of the consultation exercise is to gather the views of local people on whether the closure proposal and catchment area review:

- Is the most viable alternative.
- Is sound in terms of the proposed new catchment areas.
- Represents the best use of available resources.
- Provides the best fit with the wishes of parents.

This paper is aimed at parents, staff, governors and everyone else with an interest or stake in primary education in the area. It is intended as a basis for discussion during the consultation.

In terms of content, the paper:

- Describes briefly the current school provision.
- Sets out the wider context.
- Indicates some of the factors which it is important to consider.
- Indicates a preferred alternative to the status quo.
- Outlines the consultation and decision-making processes.

The main purpose of this consultative document is to encourage a reasoned debate and to gather your views. It is important that local opinions are expressed so that they can inform decisions when they are eventually taken.

Current Provision

Welton School catchment has five adjacent school catchment areas that border it. The location of Welton School, its catchment area and the bordering catchment areas and school locations are shown on the map (map 1) in the centre pages.

Welton School

Welton School caters for pupils aged between 4 and 11 and has a net capacity of 56 pupils. The school had 18 pupils on roll in January 2011 but numbers have fallen since then and expectations are that there will only be 9 pupils on roll at Welton School at the start of the autumn term in September 2011. The school is housed in a building which was constructed in 1968. The school has ample outdoor areas to provide for the number and age range of an all-through primary school.

Year	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12
Number of Pupils on roll	41	33	36	32	27	26	23	18	18	9

The declining number of pupils and age ranges would mean that there is likely to be only one child at Foundation / Keystage 1 level at the start of the school year in September 2011.

The Context

The question of the sustainability of Welton School first arose in 2007/08 and it is only testament to the governors, staff and parents of pupils at the school that it has managed to remain viable up to this point.

Rural areas can always be expected to have schools with small pupil numbers due to low concentrations of population. Demographics in areas change over time and declining populations can put further pressure on what are already small schools with their associated sustainability issues.

The authority protects small schools through its funding mechanism at a significant and well above average level. In addition, the Government wishes

to protect rural schools and has a presumption against their closure. However, all schools have to be educationally strong and viable.

The governors of Welton School have made it clear that they would like consideration to be given to closing the primary school as they no longer feel able to ensure the provision of a high quality education for local children.

Neighbouring Schools

There are five schools with catchment areas which abut the Welton catchment area. They are all 4-11 primary schools. Fellview and Skelton are community schools, Raughton Head and St Michael's, Dalston are voluntary controlled Church of England and Rosley is voluntary aided Church of England. Brief details of these schools can be found on the county council website www.cumbria.gov.uk/childrenservices/school-organisation.

There is overall capacity within some of the schools in the abutting catchment areas to take in the pupils that would be displaced from Welton were it to close.

Distances of schools with abutting catchment areas from Welton.

School	Raughton Head	Rosley	Fellview	St Michael's, Dalston	Skelton
Distance in miles/minutes by car from Welton	3.6/12	5.4/13	5.3/14	4.7/13	9.4/20

Some Important Factors to Consider

Educational Issues

Small Schools Generally

There is a body of opinion which supports the view that young children thrive in the intimate atmosphere of a small primary school. Once numbers fall to a very low level, it is extremely difficult for such schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum.

Welton School

Welton School has been facing these issues for some time. The school has dealt with that situation very successfully though pupil rolls of single figures would represent a much greater challenge. The governors did consider the possibility of federation but concluded that it would not be a feasible option in the circumstances in which the school found itself.

School Performance

Summaries of the inspection reports for Welton School can be found online at www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Inspection-reports/Schools.

Welton School last had a full inspection in January 2010 and was rated as satisfactory.

Financial Resources

Budgets for running costs – staff salaries, heating, lighting, etc – are devolved to schools, largely on the basis of the numbers of pupils on roll. It follows from this that pupil rolls and finance are inextricably linked.

Approximately 80%-85% of a school's budget is spent on staff, and this can be larger in smaller schools. Consequently, fluctuations of any significance in pupil numbers are likely to affect staffing levels. There is a point at which the ability to provide adequate staff to maintain a rich learning environment and remain financially viable is no longer possible. The governors of Welton School have concluded that it would not be possible to avoid compromising the education provided and stay within budget.

Community Issues

When considering a school closure, LAs are expected to take account of the overall effect that it would have on the local community. The consultation process provides the opportunity for local people to express their views on this issue.

Welton School is a rural school and village life is clearly not enhanced by the loss of a school. Of course, there are many thriving villages of Welton's size (and much bigger) in the county which do not have schools.

A good quality education is one of the factors which are fundamental to ensuring that children reach their full potential.

This needs to be taken into account when the non-educational benefits of the school to the village and wider community are considered.

Alternative Provision

As mentioned earlier, there are five primary school catchment areas abutting the catchment area of Welton School. Whilst parents are able to express preferences for a place at any school, catchment areas remain important. This is because they affect priorities concerning admissions to schools and entitlement to school transport. If Welton School were to close, there would be a need to incorporate its catchment area into the catchment area of another school(s).

Where schools close there is a need to reassess catchment boundaries. It would be possible to split Welton's catchment area with a part being incorporated into the catchment area of some, or all, of each abutting catchment area school. It would not be possible to incorporate the catchment area into another school that does not have an existing adjoining catchment boundary. A proposal for revised catchment boundaries for the schools with catchment areas that abut Welton School is included as map 2 at the end of this proposal. It is usual for catchment boundaries to follow either administration boundaries (parishes etc) or other prominent / easily identifiable markers. In this case the red line showing the proposed split is to the Rosley side of the B5299. The proposal is that the catchment area is split between Raughton Head and Rosley catchment areas using this line as the dividing marker.

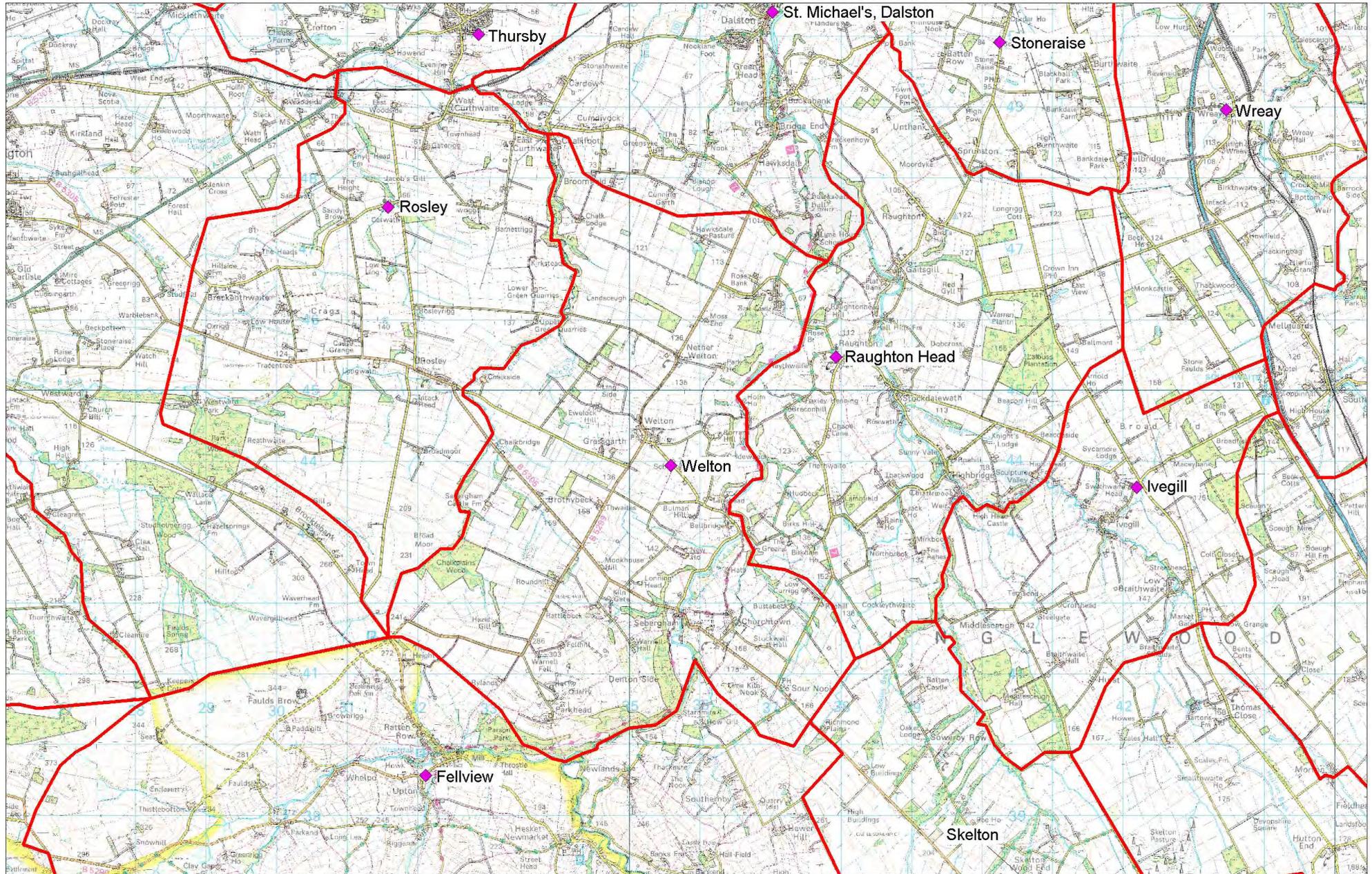
Parents of pre-school age children, and other concerned stakeholders are encouraged to express their views on the proposed revised catchment boundaries were Welton School to close.

Please note a separate consultation on catchment boundaries will have to be held to fulfil legal requirements placed on the council. Catchment consultations have a defined duration and timing and will be carried out in November of 2011 for implementation in 2013. The information and feedback from this consultation will aid and inform this process. In the meantime the transition arrangements covered later in this document will apply if the closure of Welton School proceeds.

School Transport

Under the normal transport policy, free transport is provided to a child's nearest or catchment school if the distance between their home and the school exceeds the statutory walking distance. The statutory walking distance is two miles for children under eight and three miles for older children. The distance is measured by the nearest available walking route. For a route to be available, it must be one which a child, accompanied by an adult, could be expected to walk with reasonable safety. Where the distance is below the statutory walking distance and parents consider their route to school to be an unsafe walking route, they may ask for it to be assessed.

Welton and Surrounding Schools



The Future

This paper highlights the fact that the number of pupils attending Welton School has fallen significantly over recent years and that it is very unlikely that there will be a viable number of children at the school in September 2011. The prospect of attracting sufficient new pupils to ensure the viability of the school within the foreseeable future appears to be extremely remote.

In these circumstances, the LA feels that the proposal to close the school is valid.

It is important to know the preferences that parents of pre-school children have for alternative provision in the event that Welton School closes. Should the school officially close, it is envisaged that this would be at the end of the autumn term in December 2011.

Transition Arrangements

Should the proposals be brought forward then the Local Authority would look at the ways that it could best support pupils and parents over the transition period. Taking parental preference into account it would seek to place pupils into adjacent schools for the start of the autumn term 2011. This would avoid moving children part way through an academic year. The local authority will seek to meet as many preferences as possible taking into account numbers at those alternative schools, and will also provide free transport for current Welton pupils to schools in abutting catchment areas.

Next Steps

This consultative paper tries to explain the main issues involved simply and quite briefly. Its purpose is to stimulate discussion rather than cover all of the issues exhaustively.

Any request for additional information or clarification should be directed to the 6-19 Planning and Commissioning Team: contact details are given on the front cover.

Details of the consultation arrangements are given below. This is an important issue for everyone involved with the running of the school and for parents of both existing and younger children who are due to enter school in the next few years.

We hope that as many people as possible with an interest in primary education in the area will participate in the consultation process. The authority needs your views in order to inform its decisions. Our collective and overriding responsibility must be to ensure the most effective primary education for young people in the area.



Making Changes to Maintained Schools and the School Organisation to Governance Regulations 2009

The provisions of the School Organisation and Governance Regulations mean that, if an authority proposes to change the age range of any school, their proposal must be published in a statutory notice.

There are five stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

Consultation

The issue of this document marks the beginning of a period of consultation during which the views of any interested parties are sought. These views will be considered before any move to the more formal stages of the process.

Publication

Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, a decision to proceed to issue a statutory notice must be made by Cumbria County Council.

Representation

Statutory notices for school closure allow a six week period for anyone to submit their comments on the proposals. This is another opportunity for people to express their views either supporting or objecting to the proposals.

Decision

Within two months after the six week representation period ends, the county council must make a decision on the proposal.

Implementation

If the proposal is approved then it is likely that Welton School will legally close on the 31 December 2011.

The Consultation and Decision Making Process

Timetable

Consultation	06 June - 04 July 2011
Decision: Cumbria County Council considers the results of the consultation and decides whether to publish a Statutory Notice	28 July 2011
Publication of the Statutory Notice	09 September 2011
Closing date for responses to the Statutory Notice	21 October 2011
Final decision by Cumbria County Council	10 November 2011
Possible implementation of any changes	31 December 2011

Consultation Events

You are invited to attend a consultation event so that you can find out more about the proposals/offer views on the proposals.

Location	Date and time
Welton School	14 June 2011 at 6.00pm

There will be a separate meeting for the governors and staff at the school starting at 3.45pm.

Who We Will Consult

List of those people and organisations that may have an interest in this proposal and to whom the consultation document will be provided:

Headteacher, governors and staff of Welton School

Families and carers of pupils at Welton School

Headteachers and governing bodies of schools with adjacent catchment areas

Parish councils in the area

The MP for the area

Chief Executive of Allerdale and Carlisle District Council

Local Nursery providers

Other members of the public via Cumbrian libraries, Parish Councils and Cumbria County Council website

Church authorities and faith groups in the local area

Secondary Schools -catchment

Trade Unions and Associations

Your Response

As stated earlier in this document, we welcome your views on this proposal and all observations and objections will be considered very carefully before a decision is made to progress any further with this proposal.

The consultation runs until 4 July 2011 and you can respond by completing the questionnaire in this document or writing separately (No stamp needed) to:

FREEPOST RRBS-RLBG-GZGL
Cumbria County Council
School Organisation
18 Portland Square
Carlisle
CA1 1PE

By Email to:
school.organisation@cumbriacc.gov.uk

On-line at: (Use the link below to complete the questionnaire contained in this document on-line)
<http://www.opinionsuite.com/cumbria/cumbria-county-council>

It is not possible to enter into individual correspondence.

Thank you.

Proposed reassignment of Welton School catchment area

Welton School

Reply slip – please send by 4 July 2011 to FREEPOST RRBS-RLBG-GZGL, Cumbria County Council, School Organisation, 18 Portland Square, Carlisle CA1 1PE.

We need to know some core basic information so that we can accurately report back to the council's Cabinet. Please tick those boxes that apply. Are you a Welton School;

Parent/carer

Member of Staff

Governor

Other

Other (please specify) _____

Given the situation regarding pupil numbers, available resources and educational quality covered in this proposal, do you think there is any viable alternative to the closure of Welton School?

Yes

No

Do you agree that Welton School catchment area should be split amongst adjacent schools' catchment areas as shown on Map 2?

Yes

No

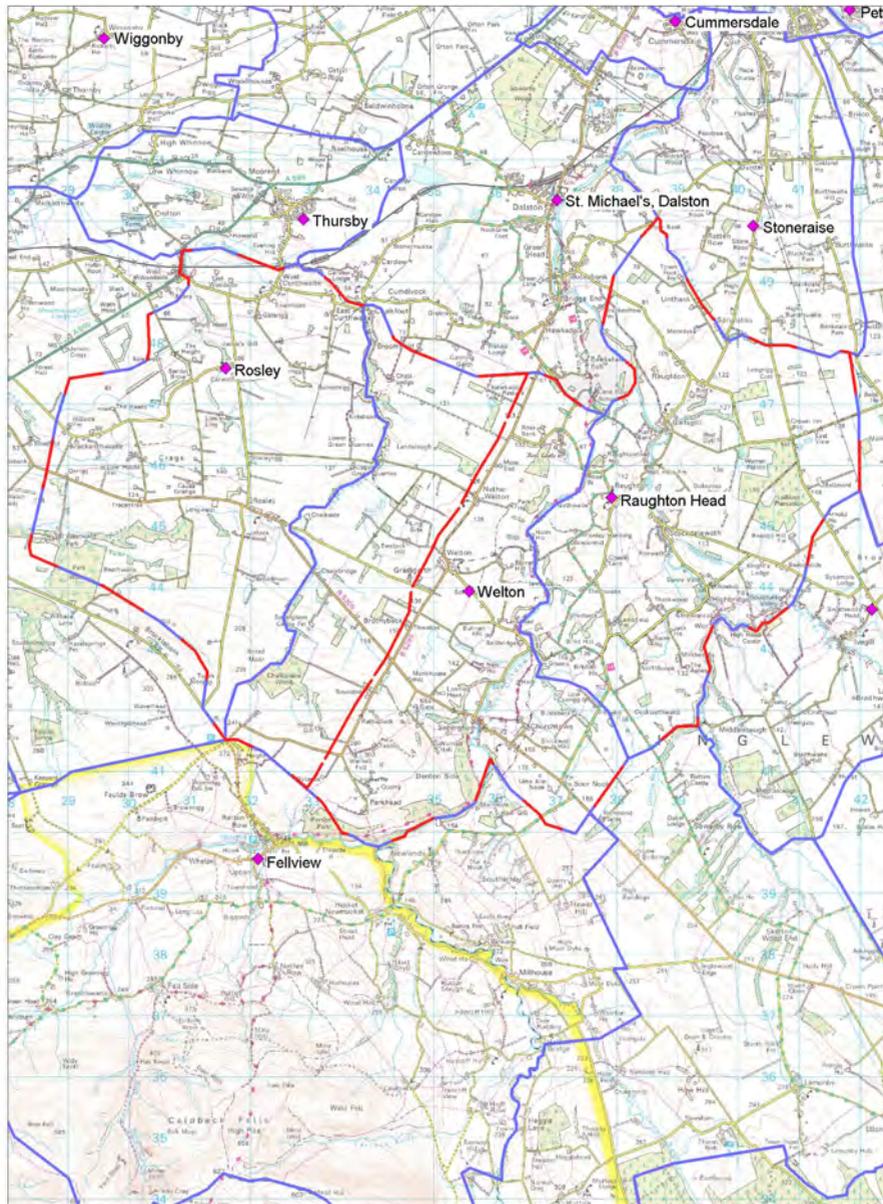
Supporting and additional comments can be entered overleaf if required.

Name Date
(Please print)

Address

.....

.....Postcode

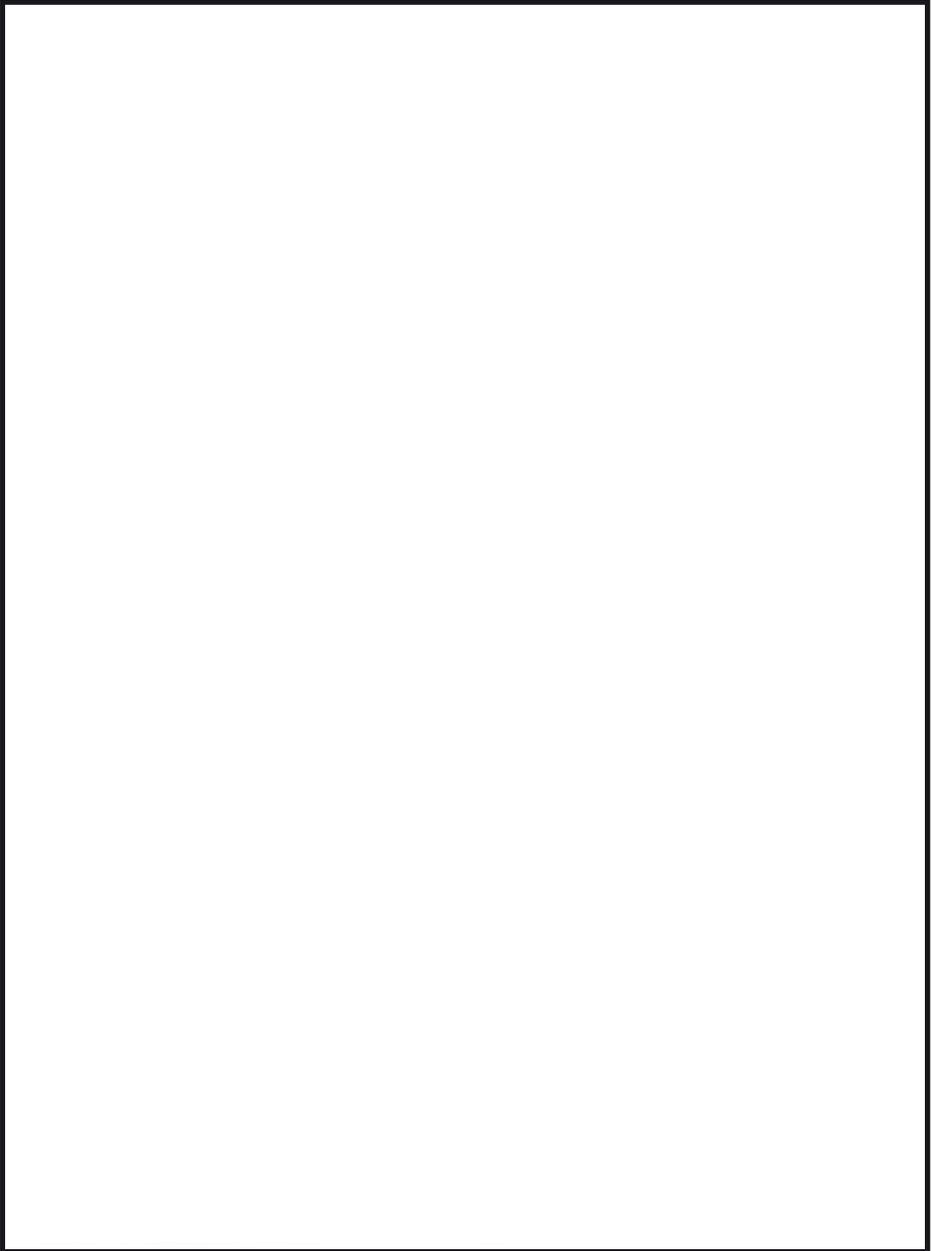


----- Proposed reassignment of Welton catchment area

----- Current catchment areas

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Please provide any supporting / additional comments below:

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