Appendix 3 – Draft Interim Plan for Submission

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council strives to work for the best interests of all of those who live in, work in and visit the borough. In demonstrating its effective working together with other authorities, the Borough Council has worked extensively with Staffordshire County Council and fellow district and borough councils in identifying working arrangements that provide good value for money where these partnerships make sense. These arrangements are locally agreed, dictated by need, not by blanket application. They are not limited by immediate proximity, and in some cases extend beyond local authority partnerships.

Locally-determined arrangements have included co-location of office premises with Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Police at Castle House, bringing financial and other benefits including a reduction in carbon emissions, a significant annual revenue saving through a reduction in running costs.

Joint working arrangements include those with the County Council – internal audit, communications and legal support, and with other Councils including Stoke-on-Trent City Council in areas such as out of hours response, community safety and building control. The Borough Council has had a strong collaboration with the County Council on regeneration and economic development, bringing in over £55 million into the Borough of UK Government Levelling Up funding.

This interim plan starts from a position which **affirms that the existing two-tier local authority system works, and works well, in Newcastle-under-Lyme**. Local government reorganisation has asked that all Principal authorities respond to the call from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, via the Minister for Local Government's statutory invitation to submit a proposal for local government reorganisation in Staffordshire. This plan represents an assessment of all options, confirms those which the Borough Council supports the investigation of, and which it does not.

1. The lessons of the past inform the context of our future

The Loyal and Ancient Borough of Newcastle-Under-Lyme's long history, over 850 years, was recognised by the late Queen Elizabeth who granted its most recent borough charter in 1974, following the Local Government Act of 1972. This was the latest charter in an unbroken line dating back to 1173, when records show that Henry II had granted a charter to the town and gave strong support to the early borough over the next decade. Further royal charters were been granted to the borough by Kings Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, and Richard II, Queen Elizabeth I, Kings Charles II, James II and Queen Victoria.

This history of mercantile trade has spanned from Newcastle-under-Lyme's position – on trading and economic routes to and from all points on the compass, the link point between the great cities of the industrial age (particularly London to Liverpool, Manchester to Birmingham) with important county borders and strong economic links to Cheshire and Shropshire, connectivity to the Greater Manchester and wider East and West Midlands regions, and local synergies with Staffordshire. One of the first great industrial places, Newcastle today represents the positive transition from industrial economy to a knowledge based, higher skilled economic geography, seen as a model of innovative regeneration and adept investment by the Industrial Communities Alliance and wider local authority peer networks.

2. A well-connected, outward-looking place centred on its people

The two junctions of the M6 within the borough, and east-west links via the A50/500 and more widely routes to the M54, show that Newcastle remains today, as in the past, a geographically and economically important strategic location for investment and trade.

Newcastle's identity is built on an outward-looking and self-confident sense of place, one in which it is proud of its history and traditions, but embracing of innovation and thinking differently, from being the home of one of the UK's foremost universities to being a place which leads with pride on sustainability and biodiversity.

Central to this delivery is a local authority close to the needs and wishes of residents, businesses and visitors – outward-looking and locally focused. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council has shown that it can respond to these needs, from safer places to live, work and visit to ensuring that this is a place fit for the future:

- Civic Pride – from its award-winning Britain and Newcastle in Bloom achievements, to the introduction of the Civic Pride campaign to work with partners, residents, voluntary organisations and businesses, local people have demonstrated their desire to get behind borough-focused activities which support making our places cleaner, safer and friendlier.

- Net Zero and Sustainability – the Council has been able to adapt its working practices, investment and service delivery to ensure it meets its ambitious targets set out when it declared a climate emergency, including tree planting, planning, fleet and assets, and has worked with the private and academic sectors in developing borough-level initiatives. The ability to control these changes at a local level have been a near 70% reduction in our controlled carbon emissions.

- The Local Government Peer Challenge reported in 2023 that Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council was delivering quality services for its residents, and that particularly it had strengths in the following areas:

    - Strong pride of place and Newcastle-under-Lyme has a distinct identity
    - Partnership working is particularly strong and the role it has in bringing others together to collaborate is highly valued
    - Clear leadership from the Cabinet and senior officers
    - Finances are healthy, and actively managed, which places it in a stable position
    - Officers are recognised as important assets for us and they are committed and keen to deliver for the communities.

- The Borough Council has demonstrated that it can focus and influence actions and decisions at a local level, close to residents, across areas which matter to them. This has recently included a number of key interventions.

- Regeneration & Planning – developing working partnerships with developers and investors, our local social landlord and community interest groups, delivering a town centre regeneration programme in both Newcastle and Kidsgrove supported by Levelling Up funds which is responsive to both local need and investor opportunity. Forging and maintaining partnerships with national and local bodies has been both possible, and through nimble decision making has seized investment opportunities where a greater level of bureaucracy, a greater number of priority areas and more remote decision making may have stalled progress.

- The Borough Council's dedicated focus on supporting the community with the extensive and ongoing issues at Walleys Quarry would likely not have been a priority for a larger, more remote authority with multiple demands. This included the Council being bold in using its powers and pressing for permission to pursue legal action against the operators when other agencies were not doing so.

- The increased attraction to visitors of the Brampton Museum, attracting investment and greater footfall, expanded facilities and usage by local groups. As the Borough Council's primary cultural facility, efforts have been focused on supporting growth and a heritage-led cultural offer for the borough. These advantages may be lost if the Borough is submerged into a larger Council.

- A strong leisure offer, built on local partnerships. Recognising that differing models of delivery work better in local places, the Council has both invested in the Jubilee 2 centre, working with the healthcare sector, local users and groups, but has also supported and secured investment for the community-run Kidsgrove Sports Centre, both facilities providing a complimentary offer across our two towns and the wider borough.

3. A suitable economic area, with room to grow

The people of Newcastle, Kidsgrove and our villages and rural settlements identify with their place in a number of ways, within the context of the places that they are proud to call home, earn a living, gain a meaningful education at school, college and university in the borough and spend their leisure time. At a local level, the first identification is with their local community – from Talke and Kidsgrove in the north of the borough to the Town ward as one of our key urban centres, to Keele and onwards to Westbury Park and Northwood, each with its own unique identity and sense of place.

Secondly, as the recent celebrations of the borough's 850th anniversary demonstrated, the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme identify with the borough itself, its rich history and strong sense of place.

Thirdly, we absolutely recognise our place within a wider geography – the positive effect of a strong containment in Staffordshire means that residents can choose to live, seek learning and leisure and work in the same county, retaining spend within our county geography. This is a positive, community wealth feature of Newcastle and Staffordshire more widely.

We also reflect that with its expansive geography, some of our communities naturally look to other places – from Mow Cop with its spilt conurbation between Newcastle and Cheshire East, to Madeley at the border with rural Shropshire and the Westlands bordering Stafford, with Wolstanton and May Bank bordering our neighbours in Stoke-on-Trent, our well-connected place can and should look to have a cohesion with not one geography but exploit and maximise each and every one of its economic links. The Borough Council continues to use funding to invest in connectivity, including its strong partnership in bringing forward the *K* bus route, linking Keele, Newcastle town centre and key transport infrastructure.

For this reason, we believe that both the Strategic Authority area and any new council arrangements should reflect a population size and geography that makes sense first and foremost to our residents, businesses and anchor organisations.

The Borough's emerging Local Plan, currently due for examination, seeks to reflect the desire to have a sustainable level of housing growth to meet local needs, whilst retaining green space, biodiversity and above all quality of development, fitting with what residents and businesses expect in a twenty-first century place. In this, the Borough Council has been careful to allow time for comprehensive consultation, beyond the statutory minimum. This development of what we hope is a cohesive, joined up and thought through place for housing and economic growth has been enhanced by its local focus, not by regional imperatives.

We know that Newcastle has housing stock which does not fit with local demand – and the Local Plan sets out a path to creating the right homes, in the right places, with the right amenities and connections to local infrastructure.

Above all, our locality is defined by what it is – a proud, ancient borough, but also by what it is not – an extension of another place, a dormitory, a suburb. In this regard, we have considered the options available which can be additive, not reductive, of Newcastle's identity.

This assessment is not to talk down any part of our region – economically, we will strive for and all gain from economic investment in our region at all scales – from local businesses starting up and growing across Staffordshire and Stoke and beyond, to established global advanced manufacturing and world class service industries, with innovative regenerators of our town and city centres together with cutting edge spin-outs from our great academic institutions – all have a part to play at attracting and retaining investment, and the higher-skilled, higher-paid jobs we all aspire to be available to those who live and work here.

With this in mind, we need to be clear on a number of factors:

- A majority of support from our residents to move to a new structure of local government;
- A balanced economy where places which invest and manage finances with strong fiduciary responsibility are not placed at disadvantage in 'plugging gaps' in areas which are struggling;
- A level of governance which demonstrates the true objective of devolution – having decisions made at the most appropriate local level, closest to those the decisions will affect;
- A geography which has meaning for investors, businesses, residents and anchor organisations (including co-terminus delivery where this makes sense)
- A population size which broadly aligns to broader objectives but has a local rationale – not so distant as to be remote governance, not an arbitrary level which confuses geography and population.
- A solution which will ensure that we continue to deliver quality services at the **highest possible standard**, not to the lowest common denominator or on a reduced basis to address historic financial troubles.

4. Defining a Strategic Authority

The Government has set out that, in addition to the creation of new local authority structures to unlock devolution, it wishes to establish new Strategic Authorities (SAs) at a wider geography to provide the basis of greater levels of regional representation and investment. The primary models set out by the Government are:

- Foundation SAs (these include non-mayoral combined authorities and combined county authorities automatically, and any local authority designated as a Strategic Authority without a Mayor).

- Mayoral SAs and Established Mayoral SAs (such as the Greater London Authority, all Mayoral Combined Authorities and all Mayoral Combined County Authorities will automatically begin as Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Those who meet specified eligibility criteria may be designated as Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities. This unlocks further devolution, most notably an Integrated Settlement).

We are supportive of the creation of a new Strategic Authority to serve the collective needs of Staffordshire and Stoke. Given its connection along council boundaries and the M6 as our point of economic linkage, we believe it makes sense to also consider a Strategic Authority area which includes Shropshire (and if appropriate Telford & Wrekin) which would have the additional advantage of ensuring no area is 'orphaned' within the SA process. We anticipate that these areas will work collectively in the shaping of an SA which meets the needs of our collective geography and builds on our collective devolution ambitions, as set out to the Government in Autumn 2024, where we noted that our devolved region should have the following key features:

- Devolution must work for all: plans must reflect and respond to a deep understanding of local needs and opportunities. That is what our authorities have been working hard at over the summer.

- Form must follow function: if we are to accept another layer of governance in the county, at additional cost to the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, then the prize in terms of devolved functions, powers and resources has to be significant.

- Governance has to be inclusive: our Leader's Board works because all local authorities get to participate and contribute, and we want to ensure that this is also the case in any devolved arrangements.

- Commitment to subsidiarity: devolution should be to the most appropriate level of governance for the function in any question, and that should mean a combination of county-wide, local authority level and, perhaps most importantly, community level. We seek a devolution deal that gives us flexibility to make those judgements together.

Devolution at a Strategic Authority level is not about local service delivery, but rather setting the conditions at a strategic level, making the case for and directing funding towards, for example, areas to develop infrastructure at a local level

With this in mind, we remain of the view that an Elected Mayor model does not fit neatly with the collective aims and ambitions of Staffordshire and Stoke, our approach to date or our collective track record, where initiatives such as We Are Staffordshire are seen by investors as a model of joined up, grown up and equitable partnership delivery. Newcastle would therefore support a model aligned to that of a full, established Strategic Authority, but not the introduction, unless mandated by Government, of a Mayoral model.

5. The financial case for thinking locally

The Government anticipates that the process of reorganisation will create the conditions for addressing the cumulative financial pressures on local authorities. It is useful to note that, as with other local authorities, Newcastle has faced a continued real-terms reduction in spending power, resulting in the need to make significant year-on-year savings. In this, it has

demonstrated an efficiency of approach over as long period of time whilst maintaining quality service delivery for both statutory service provision and investment in local priorities.

The Government further notes in its guidance for councils that for areas covering authorities that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.

As noted by the Chair of the Local Government Association, Government also needs to commit to funding councils to deliver on the reforms set out in the White Paper.

Whilst we firmly support the principle that areas with the greatest need and significant challenges need a funding formula which works in their interests, and that this must be reflected in settlements in the future, this should not in our firm opinion be viewed through the lens of 'one area pays for another'. Residents rightly expect that their funding of local government through council tax, non-domestic rates for the companies they run and work for and through general taxation can clearly be linked to quality service provision at a local level.

In our consideration of options, we are mindful that residents should not be asked to unreasonably contribute to distant and disjointed from their localities. If a unitary model is to be imposed, it must be on the basis of a geography which balances advantaged and disadvantaged areas and continues to deliver the very highest possible level of services, locally. This is separate to the equally important goal of using the levers of power, individually and collectively as authorities, to increase wealth creation and retention across our region.

In order to achieve a balanced and less financially burdensome approach to reorganisation, one option may be for Government, instead of the creation of new unitary councils, to invite the de-unitarisation of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, re-establishing it within Staffordshire as a city district as per the arrangements pre-1997.

Further collective working

As noted above, Newcastle has a strong ethos of, and is recognised for, effective partnership working with the public, private, third and academic sectors. In this, we have collectively fostered an agile and 'can do' approach from community safety to regeneration. In the establishment of new council structures, we must therefore ensure that we are not reductive – that is, taking existing structures delivered at appropriate scales and fitting them into new structures which may be less effective in obtaining outcomes for our residents, or creating in-built inefficiency. We support the goal set out in the White Paper to identify opportunities to deliver public service reform, including where they will lead to better value for money.

With this goal, we believe that – as we currently work – shared services where they make sense above individual unitary councils should be explored for joining up areas including data, waste treatment, net zero ambitions, energy supply, smart systems and processes to maximise efficiency. This is **separate** to the manageable geography of a council area, but must be built into future service design.

6. Local delivery below existing Borough Council level

Existing parish and town councils play an important part in local democracy and accountability, and can deliver focused services which meet needs at the most local level.

However, the creation of a network of parished areas and town councils should not be seen as a direct substitute for existing delivery arrangements, and the following would need to be carefully considered for future arrangements:

- Avoiding artificial structures to fill gaps where these are not responsive to locally identified geographies;
- Ensuring that parish and town councils have the powers and capacity they need to be self-sustaining and not be dependent upon higher tier authorities for funding for service delivery;
- Not to place undue burdens on residents through precepts which have to fill gaps in provision left by the abolition of district and borough councils.

7. An appropriate population size

The options considered below range in population size – some below and some above the Government's indicated figure of c. 500,000 population. This reflects the fact that the options are not of an arbitrary size, but need to consider a broad range of factors, as the Government itself notes may be the case. Across England, existing unitary authorities such as Peterborough, Telford & Wrekin, Torbay and most recently (in respect of creating a combined authority) York fall well below this threshold, as do most London Boroughs and Greater Manchester authority areas. This is not a negative, rather a reflection that there is no one-size-fits-all model for good governance and delivery.

8. Good governance at an appropriate size

The planned forced reorganisation of local government continues a path of reducing numbers of elected members representing local areas. From over 75,000 in the 1960s, the figures have been reduced to some 19,000 nationally today. We do not take a firm view on the appropriate number of councillors in each model, as this remains to be further considered and explored to balance ward/division size and genuine local accountability. As such, our consideration rather assesses the potential to have good governance at a local level. The Government should consider, given the large-scale reorganisation of councils, whether a national formula or guidance for councillor numbers should be developed to prevent inequity and a lack of local representation. This should be through a full boundary review by the Boundary Commission before the creation of any new unitary authorities.

9. Options to be investigated or not taken further

We have considered the below options against a range of factors for consideration firstly by our own Council and then by Government.

In making this assessment, at this stage we consider models which could – with willing partners – be considered ahead of submissions of final proposals in November, should Government not accept our central premise of retaining a two-tier authority model, with an overarching SA acting for us all regionally.

<u>10 A. A New Unitary Council for Newcastle-under-Lyme</u>

In this model, a new unitary council delivering all services currently falling to both county and borough council levels would be created, operating on the footprint of the existing Newcastle-under-Lyme borough council. This new authority would require the transfer in of the staff and assets of both authorities for the Newcastle area. Estimated one-off costs would need to be identified .

This model would ensure the closest delivery to residents of Newcastle-under-Lyme, with few changes to existing governance arrangements (akin to those of the Borough Council). The population size is the smallest of all options listed (summarised in Table A, below). This

is broadly equivalent to existing smaller, well-managed unitary authorities including Torbay and Windsor & Maidenhead.

10 B. The creation of a new unitary council across the existing geographies of neighbouring Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands

A new unitary council could operate across the contiguous existing footprint of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands. These areas both have borders with other neighbouring authorities, including Stoke and Cheshire, and particularly share the characteristics of towns and rural areas which the two current authorities are experienced and adept at delivering quality services within. This model would also mitigate risks of economic imbalance (i.e. the two existing district/borough areas funding but not necessarily benefiting from, a merger with the city of Stoke).

The population size of the authority would be equivalent to the existing North Somerset council and larger than Telford & Wrekin.

In its Council report of 5th March 2025, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council noted that whilst it was considering options put forward for North Staffordshire and a single Staffordshire unitary authority:

It needs to be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits
- *The new unitary councils both need to be financially sustainable and have appropriate tax bases which do not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area – this will be a particular challenge in North Staffordshire given the cost demand pressures in Stoke-on-Trent*
- *It improves local government and service delivery in Staffordshire as a whole*
- *It avoids unnecessary fragmentation of services and mitigates the potential impacts for the disaggregation of crucial upper tier services such as social care, children's services, SEND; public health etc.*

The report further notes that any new model needs to have been tested through robust local consultation.

10 C. The creation of a new 'West Staffordshire' unitary council based on a connected M6 corridor, comprising Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford, Cannock, South Staffordshire.

This model of new unitary would cluster a new unitary around Staffordshire's primary connection to the rest of the United Kingdom and beyond – the M6 corridor. Representing authorities bordering this corridor, the authority could support the devolved Strategic Authority in being a particular engine of economic growth and development, and holds a cohesive geography of similar authorities in Staffordshire in terms of economic characteristics, rural and urban mix and a population size close to that of the Government's indicated requirement at just under 500,000 on latest population figures. This would give a unitary of an equivalent population size to Wiltshire and County Durham.

At time of writing, not all of the above authorities have published their preferred models of unitary council, but are understood to favour a two-unitary model in Staffordshire.

10 D. The creation of a new unitary council comprising the existing unitary area of Shropshire and the existing borough geography of Newcastle-under-Lyme

Whilst not historically joined under a ceremonial county structure, Newcastle and the existing unitary council of Shropshire share a long border, extending to Shropshire addresses and

postcodes for many residents in the west of Newcastle. As with Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle and Shropshire share a cohesive sense of place – historic market towns with an established and characteristic rural hinterland. The council would also incorporate two sides of the M6 corridor (as noted above) with onward links to the M54 corridor.

Shropshire is an existing unitary council and has not been required to develop interim proposals for reorganisation. This option will be further investigated following County Council elections to test viability.

A Newcastle and Shropshire authority (similar in nature to that of Devon & Torbay and Kent & Medway) would be equivalent in size in population terms to Cheshire East and larger than many existing unitary authorities.

The new unitary would require a Strategic Authority area including both Staffordshire and Shropshire (and possibly including Telford & Wrekin).

10 E. The creation of a new unitary council on the footprint of the existing Staffordshire County Council.

At its Cabinet meeting of Staffordshire County Council of 5th March 2025, the County Council endorsed a submission to its full Council for a whole Staffordshire single unitary council on the footprint of the existing County Council (therefore not including Stoke-on-Trent). It noted that there were a number of perceived advantages to such a model, including a smoother transition from existing arrangements to a new shadow authority and standardisation of services and the removal of any 'postcode' lottery of local government service delivery or standards. As well as an opportunity to potentially reduce costs of local government and to divert duplicated costs into frontline services.

The report notes that unitarisation can play its part in solving the current funding crisis in local government. It cannot however in isolation fully solve the problem.

At this stage, concerns would remain as to the functional size of the proposed new unitary (with a population of over 800,000 it would be larger than most existing unitary authorities) and the attendant perceived or actual remoteness of service delivery and decision-making that this may result in. Further work on the model (which has the advantage of mitigating against particular financial risks arising from a merger with Stoke) would need to explored in significantly further detail for the model to be supported.

We require to be convinced of the local democratic and delivery arrangements if these would necessitate additional costs to residents through new lower-tier town and parish councils.

10 F. The creation of a new North Staffordshire unitary council for Newcastle, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands.

At its Cabinet meeting of 25th February 2025, Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Cabinet agreed its preferred position for a new unitary authority across the footprint of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands and Stoke-on-Trent. The paper also set out a wider potential footprint to include Stone and Uttoxter. This detailed analysis set out characteristics of a new authority boundary and economic geography based on a city-region. With this approach, the report sets out the financial advantages to addressing historic financial challenges the city has faced through a new distributive model of balancing lower council tax income from the city with higher band properties in neighbouring areas.

A new unitary of this scale would be equivalent to Bristol and would be based around a city-region model of the city as the centre of the authority, retaining a city identity within the new authority area.

In Newcastle's report of 22nd January 2025, key reasons for resisting a merger with Stoke were set out, primarily around risks of loss of local identity (where, as noted above, Newcastle residents do not consider themselves to be part of the city) and financial resilience (where Newcastle is carrying no debt, Staffordshire Moorlands has limited debt and the city is in receipt of extraordinary financial support).

These factors, taken together, imply that Newcastle would not benefit from a city-region North Staffordshire model.

11. Options Matrix

OPTION							
Councils/sub-Council areas (based on current Council footprint)	**Population size (Assumed 500k threshold for new unitary**	**Aligns to wider public sector boundaries (Police, NHS, Fire & Rescue etc).**	**Democratic arrangements**	**Discussed with relevant authority[2]**	**Strategic Authority arrangements**	**Economic balance (no advantage/ disadvantage)**	**Notes**
Newcastle-under-Lyme	125,404 – equivalent to other existing unitaries as noted	Yes (as part of Staffordshire)	Could retain existing councillor numbers and wards, no boundary changes	Yes	Staffordshire or wider SA	Same levels as currently	Model requires the creation of a new unitary council on the existing Newcastle geography
Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands	221,308 – equivalent to other existing unitaries as noted	Yes (as part of Staffordshire)	No boundary changes required	Yes	Staffordshire or wider SA	Similar levels of economic indices across the two authority areas.	Could work with either Staffordshire or broader SA
Newcastle-under-Lyme and Shropshire	452,582	Crosses two geographies for Police, Fire, ICB	Formed of an existing unitary and a borough council, would require review post-vesting.	Yes	Requires wider SA of minimum Staffordshire and Shropshire	Similar levels of economic indices across the two authority areas	Shropshire is not required to reorganize but may choose, post-elections, to consider relevant

[1] Population size Small Areas England and Wales, NOMIS, 27 February 2025

[2] Initial discussion held with Councillor/Officer within the relevant authority on a 'without prejudice' investigative basis.

Staffordshire Unitary (not including Stoke-on-Trent)	886,284	Yes (police, fire, ICB)	Boundary review required post-implementation. County council has provided initial opinion on councillor requirements. Potential for remote decision	Yes	Requires a minimum Staffordshire-level SA	Same levels as currently	Requires creation of broader SA of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent (and possibly Telford & Wrekin). Stoke-on-Trent remains as existing unitary on existing boundaries.
Staffordshire Unitary (including Stoke-on-Trent)	1,112,249	Yes	Boundary review required post-implementation. Very large and potential for remote decision	No	Requires wider SA of minimum Staffordshire and Shropshire	Large area crossing all economic indices	Requires creation of broader SA of Shropshire, Staffordshire (with or without Telford/Stoke) and possible de-
West Staffordshire – Newcastle, Stafford, Cannock, South Staffordshire	471,100	Yes (as part of Staffordshire)	Boundary review required post-implementation (assuming no existing geographies are split). Requires consideration of local democracy arrangements	Yes	Requires a minimum Staffordshire-level SA	Likely to be broadly positive	Untested model through Staffordshire Leader Board, to be considered against a North/South two unitary model for Staffordshire – provides a geography which connects places along the M6

North Staffordshire (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme)	481,316	Yes	Boundary review required (assuming no existing geographies are split or added to). Requires establishment of local democracy arrangements to ensure decisions are focused across all geographies (not city-centric). Stoke negotiation paper sets out a heavy weighting to the city in representation.	Yes	Requires a minimum Staffordshire-level SA	Current imbalance across tax take for the city and two district authorities	Preferred model of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, option under consideration for Staffordshire Moorlands. Not supported by Newcastle's full Council of January 2025.
Newcastle-under-Lyme remains a borough within a county system (Status Quo)	125,404 – the same size as some existing unitary authorities	Yes – as current	As current arrangements	Yes	Could work within a Staffordshire or broader SA	As current	Preferred model of Newcastle-under-Lyme proposed at full Council of March 2025

The above table provides a matrix assessing potential options for Local Government Re-organisation only