

Rainford and Windle

- 40 The existing Rainford ward is significantly over-represented with three councillors and would have 22% fewer electors than the average by 2026 if it were retained. Councillor Jones, leader of the Conservative Group, proposed expanding the ward to include all of Windle parish, in order to make it big enough to justify the retention of three councillors. The Labour Group proposed retaining the boundaries of the existing Rainford ward but reducing it to two councillors. This would result in it having 16% fewer electors than the average by 2026 – beyond what we consider to be good electoral equality.
- 41 The Conservative Association proposed moving the section of Windle parish currently in Rainford ward into an expanded Windle ward, together with a further section of the unparished area to the north of the A580 East Lancashire Road. This would have the benefit of uniting Windle parish within a single ward, although it would provide for poor electoral equality, with 13% more electors than the average by 2026.
- 42 We visited this area during our virtual tour of St Helens, in order to study the arguments and the competing proposals in as much depth as possible. We consider that the urban area of Windle parish is integrated with the neighbouring area of Denton's Green, and that it would not reflect community identity to place this area in a large rural-based ward. We consider that the parish boundary running south from the A580 to Kiln Lane does not offer a clear and recognisable boundary between wards.
- 43 We have carefully considered all the submissions in this area. Based on the evidence submitted, there is no ideal solution which offers good electoral equality while respecting community identity and providing clear and recognisable boundaries.
- 44 Accordingly, we are basing our draft recommendations on the submission of the Conservative Association, to expand Windle ward to include the rural as well as urban areas of Windle parish. In order to improve the electoral equality of Rainford ward, we are proposing to expand Windle ward further to the north, to take in the ribbon of housing to the west of the A570 Rainford by-pass.
- 45 We consider that this proposal offers acceptable electoral equality for all wards, while respecting the community identity between Windle, Denton's Green and other built-up areas. We would, however, be particularly interested in further evidence from the residents of the area along the Rainford by-pass, as to whether they feel that their community identity lies to the north towards Rainford village, or to the south.