

Interim Review of Polling District and Polling Places 2023

(Acting) Returning Officers Representation

July 2023

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BACKGROUND

1. The Council is required by law to divide its area into polling districts for the purpose of Parliamentary Elections and to designate polling places for those districts.
2. A Polling district is the geographical area created by sub-dividing a constituency or ward.
3. A Polling place is the building or area in which a polling station is located.
4. A Polling station is the actual room or area where voting takes place.
5. Following the recent ward boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) new ward boundaries have been drawn up for Harlow. Full details about the changes to Harlow's wards can be found on the LGBCE website. <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/harlow>
6. As a result of the new ward arrangements, it is necessary for the authority to undertake a full review of all polling districts and polling places in Harlow.
7. The (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.
8. The election rules require the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place and they must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as they think most convenient.
9. Consideration must be given to the law and the [Electoral Commission's Guidance](#) to ensure that all electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as practicable in the circumstances This means that the Council must:
 - i. Ensure the polling place is within the polling district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district)
 - ii. Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors.
 - iii. The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations and places.
10. There are a number of factors that will need to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:
 - **Location:** Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
 - **Size:** Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters and the number of staff required to provide a good service to voters? Is the size sufficient to provide necessary private areas or privacy screens for photographic identification checks? Is the size big enough to ensure the flow of voters and reduce the risk of

congestion and queues going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?

- **Availability:** Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?
 - **Accessibility:** Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place? Can the building accommodate equipment provided to support disabled voters?
11. Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.
 12. Following UK Government advice received in 2021 we are trying not to use schools as a polling station so as not to disrupt the education of the children.
 13. Council Officers have visited areas where necessary to consider and evaluate polling places.
 14. Staffing levels - It should be noted that in general where a polling place has a polling station electorate of more than 2,250 (the maximum number considered appropriate by the Electoral Commission) the voting register will be split over 2 or 3 tables so the number of poll clerks will increase to aid the polling station voting process but just one presiding officer is needed to oversee the polling station. This has worked well for many years in Harlow and is more manageable and cost effective than having multiple polling stations in one polling place which can cause voter confusion and will increase staffing and equipment costs.

Proposed new arrangements - Overview

New Ward	New PD name	New PD ref.	Current Total Electorate	Polling Place
Bush Fair	Bush Fair East	BF1	2978	New Life Christian Fellowship
Bush Fair	Bush Fair West	BF2	3317	St Stephen's Church
Church Langley North & Newhall	Church Langley North	CLN1	2610	Church Langley Community Centre
Church Langley North & Newhall	Newhall	CLN2	2414	Newhall Primary Academy
Church Langley South & Potter Street	Church Langley South	CLS1	3599	Church Langley Community Centre
Church Langley South & Potter Street	Potter Street	CLS2	2986	Potter Street Baptist Church
Great Parndon	Great Parndon East	GP1	3398	Great Parndon Community Association
Great Parndon	Great Parndon West	GP2	2148	Katherines Common Room
Latton Bush & Stewards	Latton Bush East	LBS1	2133	Royal British Legion
Latton Bush & Stewards	Latton Bush West	LBS2	1062	Griffin Suite
Latton Bush & Stewards	Stewards	LBS3	3509	Longwood Primary Academy
Little Parndon & Town Centre	Little Parndon East	LPT1	2652	Pemberley Academy
Little Parndon & Town Centre	Little Parndon West	LPT2	1900	St Thomas More Church
Little Parndon & Town Centre	Town Centre	LPT3	652	Harlow Playhouse
Mark Hall	Mark Hall North	MH1	2307	Harlow Museum
Mark Hall	Mark Hall South	MH2	3333	Harefield Church
Netteswell	Netteswell North	N1	1074	Snow Farm Scout Hall
Netteswell	Netteswell Central	N2	2205	YCT House
Netteswell	Netteswell South	N3	2323	Green Hills Common Room
Old Harlow	Churchgate	OH1	909	St Mary's Church Centre
Old Harlow	Gilden Park & Mulberry Green	OH2	1966	Mulberry Green Hall
Old Harlow	Old Harlow	OH3	3324	Harlow Womens Institute
Passmores	Passmores North	P1	1967	Harlow Youth Centre
Passmores	Passmores South	P2	3260	Salvation Army Centre
Sumners & Kingsmoor	Sumners & Kingsmoor East	SK1	4463	Kingsmoor Christian Centre
Sumners & Kingsmoor	Sumners & Kingsmoor West	SK2	1563	Xperience Centre

Detail and Explanation for each Ward

Bush Fair

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Bush Fair East	BF1	2978	New Life Christian Fellowship
Bush Fair West	BF2	3317	St Stephen's Church

- There has been a small increase in the electorate with the addition of Toddbrook East (810 electors) and Latton Street (21 electors, previously in Mark Hall South).
- No changes are proposed to the polling places which meet the requirements for voting.
- St Stephens Church would be able to accommodate the new electors in the West of the ward and so St Marks School would no longer be needed as a polling station.
- Furthermore, St Marks school polling station is a difficult one to get to as it is located some way from the car park and there is no disabled access so a purpose built ramp has to be installed. The polling station used at the school is also not ideal for the lighting and other facilities.

Church Langley North & Newhall

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Church Langley North	CLN1	2610	Church Langley Community Centre
Newhall	CLN2	2410	Newhall Primary Academy

- Following the LGBCE ward review the previous Church Langley ward has been divided but as Church Langley Community Centre has been successfully used as a double polling station for 2 years now and no other alternative venue can be found in church Langley it is recommended to continue to use this polling place.
- Furthermore the Church Langley Community Centre is a well-recognised building and all voters in the area are used to going to this location.
- There is no proposed change to the Newhall polling district and polling place.

Church Langley South & Potter Street

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Church Langley South	CLS1	3599	Church Langley Community Centre
Potter Street	CLS2	2986	Potter Street Baptist Church

- As above, Church Langley South has been created and due to no other venues available in the polling district the polling place will be Church Langley Community Centre.
- The only change to the boundary for the polling district is to move Oaktree Gardens into the Church Langley south polling district.
- There is no proposed change to the polling place in Potter Street which meet the requirements for voting.

Great Parndon

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Great Parndon East	GP1	3398	Great Parndon Community Association
Great Parndon West	GP2	2148	Katherines Common Room

- This ward has increased to include electors from the Hare Street area. However, the current polling station used by these voters (Harlow Youth Centre) is now located in another ward and unfortunately it is too small to make it a double polling station.
- Other options for a new polling station have been looked at but unfortunately no suitable buildings can be found and so no changes are proposed to the polling places in this district and the Hare Street electors will vote at Great Parndon Community Association. The polling place is a good size and meets all the accessibility requirements.

Latton Bush & Stewards

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Latton Bush East	LBS1	2133	Royal British Legion
Latton Bush West	LBS2	1062	Griffin Suite
Stewards	LBS3	3509	Longwood Primary Academy

- This new ward includes the old Harlow Common West and most of Staple Tye Ward.
- All current polling stations are still considered adequate and so no changes to the polling places are proposed.
- The only change proposed is to move the boundary line of the polling district between Latton Bush East and West to increase the electorate voting at the Griffin Suite.

Little Parndon & Town Centre

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Little Parndon East	LPT1	2624	Pemberley Academy
Little Parndon West	LPT2	1900	St Thomas More Church
Town Centre	LPT3	696	Harlow Playhouse

- This ward has the addition of the Town Centre and the removal of the Hare Street area to the Great Parndon Ward.
- The development at the old rugby club site that was built in the north of the ward should be part of Little Parndon East as they are in fact slightly closer to the polling place in this polling district and are considered to be in the East not west of the ward.
- The town centre polling district will cross Fourth Avenue to include the properties at Wych Elm as this is a new town centre development.
- No changes are proposed to the polling places which meet the requirements for voting.

Mark Hall

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Mark Hall North	MH1	2307	Harlow Museum
Mark Hall South	MH2	3333	Harefield Church

- The only boundary change in this ward is the addition of Altham Grove which will be part of Mark Hall North polling district.
- No changes are proposed to the polling places which meet the requirements for voting.

Netteswell

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Netteswell North	N1	1074	Snow Farm Scout Hall
Netteswell Central	N2	2205	YCT House
Netteswell South	N3	2323	Green Hills Common Room

- The only boundary change in this ward is the removal of Altham Grove.
- It is proposed that First Avenue is used as clear polling district boundary for Netteswell North.
- The current polling place for this area, The Our Lady of Fatima church hall is on the edge of the polling district and is considered to be too far therefore it is proposed to move the polling place to Snow Farm Scout Hall, which is a more central location, a big size and fully accessible for all.
- The YCT building has been used for the last few elections and is thought to be adequate although has a large electorate allocated to it, especially if the boundary line of First Avenue is used. Therefore, other options for a polling station in Netteswell have been looked at to alleviate the pressure on the YCT House and it is proposed that a third polling district is created with the polling place at the Green Hills Common Room.

Old Harlow

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Old Harlow - Churchgate	OH1	909	St Mary's Church Centre
Old Harlow - Gilden Park and Mulberry Green	OH2	1966	Mulberry Green Hall
Old Harlow	OH3	3324	Harlow Women's Institute

- No changes are proposed for the Churchgate polling district and polling place.
- A new polling district is needed for Gilden Park however with no community building yet to be built in this new development area it is proposed to extend the polling district into Mulberry Green and use the Mulberry Green Hall as the polling place.
- Other options have been looked at for the Old Harlow polling district as this needs a large polling place to accommodate the large electorate and the current polling place is a difficult building to use. It is proposed to move the polling place to Harlow Women's Institute, which is located alongside the current polling station meets all the requirements of a polling place.

Passmores

- This new ward comprises of the old Toddbrook West polling district, as small area of Toddbrook North and some of Hare Street.
- There should be no change to the clear boundary line of Third Avenue and no changes are proposed to the polling places which meet the requirements for voting.

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Passmores North	P1	1967	Harlow Youth Centre
Passmores South	P2	3260	Salvation Army Centre

Sumners & Kingsmoor

- There will be an increase in the electorate in the East polling district due to the addition of the Staple Tye areas – Joyners Field and Moorfield to this ward.
- Due to there not being any road access from Phelips Road to Broadley Road the polling district boundary line cannot change and although this does not make the electorate equal no changes are proposed to the polling places as they both meet the requirements for voting. Furthermore, the Kingsmoor Christian Centre is particularly well apt to cope with the larger electorate.

Polling District	PD Ref	Electorate	Polling Place
Sumners & Kingsmoor East	SK1	4463	Kingsmoor Christian Centre
Sumners & Kingsmoor West	SK2	1563	Xperience Centre