

Alison Hodgson

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 October 2021 15:30
To: Registration
Subject: Polling station review: Netteswell

To whom it may concern,

First of all, I apologise if this is an inappropriate address to send this email to - I was directed here via [Your Harlow](#).

As a resident of Netteswell, I would like to express my view that Our Lady Of Fatima Church Hall is not an ideal venue for a polling station, being on the eastern edge of the ward. In fact, it is as close to my mother's home in Mark Hall ward as it is to mine. Please consider a more central location, so that it might be easier for all residents of the ward to walk to the polling station.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholas Thorpe

Hi Brian

I write to you as returning officer in regards to the change of polling station.

It is just not right for the polling station in Netteswell to be moved from the middle of the ward to such a remote location as Lady Fatima church.

It would be very inconvenient for many residents. It has no easy pedestrian access, crossing First Avenue is a monumental task at the best of times.

It is an imposing and for some intimidation building to be a polling station.

Generally speaking the David Livingston location while small should be retained as the polling station everyone has grown used to over the years. If the Council is serious in trying to improve turn out at elections such a radical departure of the traditional siting of a polling station would be very confusing.

I hope you will revise this decision.

Best wishes

Mike

Alison Hodgson

From: Colleen Morrison
Sent: 29 October 2021 17:16
To: Registration
Subject: The proposal to designate Our Lady of Fatima church hall as the sole polling station for Netteswell

Electoral Services

Latton Bush Centre

Southern Way,

Harlow

CM18 7BL

29 OCTOBER 2021

Dear colleague

I am writing to you regarding:

the proposal to designate Our Lady of Fatima church hall as the sole polling station for Netteswell

I am objecting to this proposal for the following reasons.

1. Distance.

Our lady of Fatima's church hall is a return walk of over three miles for Green Hills residents and over 2 miles for residents of other wards. This is an unreasonable distance to require citizens to walk in order to vote.

2. Detrimental impact on voter turnout.

Research indicates that such distances have a detrimental impact on voter turnout during elections.

Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers.

Scott Orford, Colin Rallings, Michael Thrasher and Galina Borisyuk set out their research into the effect of polling station placement on turnout in Brent, West London.

They found "that by several measures, polling stations on average further away from the voter had

lower turnout, in particular, in respect of European and local elections, which in UK have

substantially lower turnout than parliamentary elections."

Also:

"Minor changes in distance from voters' homes to polling place can change the turnout of voters, which may change the outcome of a close election. Distance to the polling place is an issue if not every voter has access to vehicle transportation."

{Tom Jacobs; Miller-McCune (August 19, 2010). ["How Polling Places Can Affect Your Vote"](#). Archived from [the original](#) on July 5, 2013. Retrieved February 20, 2013}

3. Detrimental impact on voter turnout of cost of travel on buses.

A return journey by bus for two persons would cost a low income couple £8. This is an unreasonable sum to have to pay in order to exercise the democratic right to vote. Low income couples who struggle to pay for gas, electricity and food will be forced to choose between eating, heating and voting.

4. Detrimental impact of cost of travel.

Research has shown this to be a further factor which impacts detrimentally on voter turnout.

According to the research on distance to the polling location by Haspel and Knotts, "To illustrate the range of the effect of distance, we plot our predicted probabilities at the lower and upper bounds of our continuous vehicle available variable. When no one owns a car (vehicle available = 0), the likelihood of voting drops from .664 at a distance of .01 miles to .418 at the median distance of .69 miles. When automobiles are universally available (vehicle available = 1), voters are much less sensitive to changes in distance: the likelihood of voting drops from .444 to .392 over the same distance range". Voters ultimately value the convenience of polling locations. If a poll is accessible to the citizen they will make an effort, if the citizen has to travel a long distance then voter turnout decreases dramatically".

{Haspel, Moshe; Knotts, Gibbs (May 2005). "Location, Location, Location: Precinct Placement and the Costs of Voting". 67 (2). United States of America: Southern Political Science Association: 560–573

5. Detrimental impact on Harlow's need to improve low voter turnout.

Our council should be trying to improve our existing low voter turnout, we should not be exacerbating this with detrimental proposals like this one.

The cost of voting influences whether or not a person will vote. Research shows that the more expensive voting gets, the less likely a person is to vote.

Distance to the polling location is one of the main reasons cost can become an issue for voters.

{Haspel, Moshe; Knotts, Gibbs (May 2005). "Location, Location, Location: Precinct Placement and the Costs of Voting". 67 (2). United States of America: Southern Political Science Association: 560–573

6. Inaccessibility and non-compliance with 2010 Equality Act.

Residents with disabilities have the right to vote in person.

Service providers like Harlow Council have the statutory duty – and the moral imperative - to make reasonable adjustments to our decision making and policies to ensure that such persons are not placed at a disadvantage in relation to those who do not have disabilities in respect of exercising this right.

Persons with disabilities will struggle to walk the return journeys of two to three miles set out above and this will have a further detrimental impact on Harlow's voter turnout.

7. The postal voting system does not overcome the above objections.

For a number of reasons, a large proportion of voters still wish to vote in person. I am one of them.

This proposal must not deny this right to those with disabilities, to those with low incomes, to those who cannot afford the cost of the return bus journey to Our Lady of Fatima, or to those who do not have a car, by selecting a polling place which will deter many voters from bothering to vote.

8. Our Lady of Fatima's lack of centrality in Netteswell.

Sole polling stations should be central to wards to encourage voters to turn out and vote. Our Lady of Fatima is not central to Netteswell, it is on the outskirts of the ward and too far away from too many Netteswell neighbourhoods to be an acceptable voting place.

9. Polling place is on a dangerous junction.

It is one which will become more dangerous once Junction 7a of the M11 motorway is open.

8. Polling place is accessed via crossing the busy road of First/Mandella Avenue.

Only four neighbourhoods in Netteswell are on the same side of the road as the polling place.

9. Our Lady of Fatima is too obscure and unknown.

Polling places should be well known to ward residents to enable them to find them and to avoid deterring residents from voting because they don't know the polling place.

Too many Netteswell residents have never heard of Our Lady of Fatima and have no idea where it is.

This will have a further detrimental impact on Netteswell's and Harlow's already low voter turnout.

"If a voter changes precincts due to redistricting then the chances of their continuing to vote in future elections decreases.

The confusion that redistricting causes will deter the voter from looking into the new precinct where he or she should now vote.

In addition, the informational costs associated with alerting voters of their new polling location will also affect the voter turnout because it is highly unlikely that funds will be available to allocate to ensure that every voter knows where to vote. Redistricting can be beneficial in order to provide a convenient location, but careful consideration should be taken before such a decision is made."

(Haspel, Moshe; Knotts, Gibbs (May 2005). "Location, Location, Location: Precinct Placement and the Costs of Voting". 67 (2). United States of America: Southern Political Science Association: 560–573)

10. The above risk skewing the ward's political balance.

All of the above factors and their detrimental impact on voter turnout could have the combined effect of skewing Netteswell's political balance.

11. Two polling places are required for Netteswell.

The size of Netteswell's population is such that the ward needs two polling places in order to make just provision for all residents, to ensure compliance with The Equality Act 2010, and to avoid the detrimental impacts on voter Harlow's already low turnout referred to above.

Polling places should not be in locations that require most voters to have cars to access them.

12. This polling place represents a poor level of service provision to Netteswell.

Netteswell's residents pay their rent, or council tax, or both, they deserve the same service quality as the rest of Harlow.

13. This proposal is not about democracy or service, this is solely about cost cutting.

14. This proposal treats Netteswell's community as second class citizens

It will be a shameful day in Harlow's history if this proposal proceeds and is ratified.

I ask you to please reject this proposal and to replace it with a more central polling place.

Kind regards,

Cllr Colleen Morrison

Councillor for Netteswell ward.

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