

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places: 2023/24

Acting Returning Officer's representation for the Hertsmere Parliamentary Constituency that falls within the Borough of Hertsmere.

Background

Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places for UK parliamentary constituencies at least once every five years. The last compulsory review took place in 2018/19.

Elections and electoral events, both national and local, over the last five years have provided a robust test of the electoral arrangements within the Borough.

- 2019 Hertsmere Borough Council all out plus town and Parish Elections
- 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election
- 2021 Police and Crime Commissioner postponed from 2020 due to Covid, Hertfordshire County Council Elections, Radlett and Shenley neighbourhood planning Referendums
- 2023 Hertsmere Borough Council all out plus town and Parish Elections.
- There have also been by-elections for the Borough and Parish Councils

In the main, the electoral arrangements have worked well within the Borough, however since 2019 adjustments to the existing schedule of polling districts and polling places has been needed.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Changes to Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

It should be noted that the Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries will change with effect from the next General Election which must be called by 28 January 2025. Under these new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries, electors within the **Bushey North Ward** will vote for the Member of Parliament for the **Watford** Constituency. This will only effect the ballot paper issued. It does not change where electors will go to vote at a Parliamentary election. For local, Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, electors in this ward will continue to vote within Hertmere.

The Acting Returning for the Watford Constituency will submit their own response to these proposals.

Electors within the **Welwyn Hatfield Northaw and Cuffley Ward**, will vote for the Member of Parliament for the Hertsmere Constituency at future Parliamentary elections. I will submit a response to the representations laid out by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council as part of their polling district and polling place review.

Proposed changes

I support the proposal of the following changes laid out in the proposed 23/24 polling district and polling place scheme. Due to accessibility requirements set out by The Elections Bill 2022 we need to ensure that Hertsmere can continue to deliver a robust scheme that will meet these requirements for all elections, whilst ensuring that the scheme can deliver in the event of a General Election which can be called at short notice.

Bushey North

- There are currently three polling districts in the Bushey North Ward. The proposal seeks to retain three however the boundaries rearranged to suit the accessibility requirements for each polling district.
- Polling District **AA** to continue to vote at **North Bushey Baptist Church**. The room used for the elections held in 2023 was not big enough to accommodate the electorate. The Church have confirmed that the Church (not the smaller hall used in 2023) will be available for use for all future elections.
- Polling District **AB** to be split to make this a smaller polling district where electors will continue to vote at **St Pauls Church**. Due to accessibility issues this venue would be suited to a single polling station.
- Polling district **AC** increased. Taking on the electors from previous polling district AB and voting at **Bushey Grove Leisure Centre**. This venue better meets accessibility requirements for the larger electorate.

Bushey St James

- There are currently four polling districts in this ward. The current proposal seeks to reduce this to two in the following way:
- Merge current polling districts **BA** and **BC**, to create new polling district **BA**.

Due to the uncertain availability of Little Redding's school due to building works, merging these two polling districts can ensure that electors have suitable voting arrangements in the event of a Parliamentary election.

I also support moving away from designating the school as a polling place. Schools are under increasing pressures following past events and

safeguarding. Whilst schools are legally obliged to allow us use of the building for elections, we should explore alternatives.

- Electors within this new polling district will vote at **The Bushey Rangers Clubhouse** which has confirmed that it is available at short notice.
- Merge current polling districts **BB** and **BD** to create new polling district **BB**. Previous elections have confirmed that the move to Bushey Community Centre at the Bushey Golf and Country club caused confusion for electors.
- **The Church House Hall, St James** is a larger venue. It meets all accessibility needs, available at short notice and is large enough to be split into two or three polling stations if required.

Bushey Park

- Bushey Park ward currently has four polling districts. The review seeks to amend this to three.
- Electors in polling district **CA** continue to vote at **Bushey Bowling Club**
- Electors in Polling district **CC** continue to vote at **Bushey Scout Hut**
- Merge polling districts **CB** and **CD**, existing electors in the CD ward to vote at **Bushey Library**.
- Electors in the current polling district CD have in the last five years voted at Merry Hill Infant school and St. Margaret's Sports Hall.
- Merry Hill School does not meet the accessibility requirements to deliver the election and will struggle to meet the increased turnout for a Parliamentary Election.
- I also support moving away from designating the school as a polling place. Schools are under increasing pressures following past events and safeguarding. Whilst schools are legally obliged to allow us use of the building for elections, we should explore alternatives.
- The Library is available at short notice and due to adequate crossings and transport links this is the ideal alternative for electors in this area.

Aldenham East

- This ward currently has two polling districts **FA** and **FB**.
- The review seeks to make this one large polling district and all electors vote at **The Radlett Centre**.
- The Radlett Centre is a larger venue and better meets the accessibility requirements of the Elections Act.
- I support moving away from designating Newberries Primary School as a polling place. Schools are under increasing pressures following past events and safeguarding. Whilst schools are legally obliged to allow us use of the building for elections, we should explore alternatives.
- Newberries currently uses one of their inset days for a scheduled election to ensure that they can maintain the safeguarding of their pupils. This option will not be available for a Parliamentary election if called at short notice.

Borehamwood Cowley Hill

- This ward currently has four polling districts. The review seeks to increase this to five.
- Voting arrangements have been increasingly difficult to secure in the past five years.
- This ward has seen electors vote at Parkside School and more recently Borehamwood Youth Football club (outside of polling district).
- By dividing the ward and creating new polling districts the review seeks to create a better voting experience for all electors.
- New polling district **JA**, introduction of a new polling place, **Borehamwood Scout Hut**. Electors in this polling district have previously voting at The Borehamwood Boxing Club (previously known as Brookside Boys Club).
- New polling district **JB**, this polling district has been reduced in size to ensure that voting at **The Borehamwood Boxing Club** (previously known as Brookside Boys Club) meets the accessibility needs of all electors.
- New polling district **JC**, new polling place, **Windsor hall**. Electors here would previously vote at The Borehamwood Boxing Club (previously Brookside Boys club) and St. Michaels Church Hall.
- New polling district **JD**, most electors in this polling district will be unaffected by the changes to the boundaries, however residents living on the opposite side of Gateshead Road to the Church will be relocated to Windsor Hall. All other electors will continue to vote at **St Michaels Church Hall**.
- New polling district **JE**, this polling district was previously known as JD. There are no changes to the polling place for electors in this area and they will continue to vote at **The Venue Leisure Centre**.
- These proposed changes will ensure that electors in this ward are able to vote within their allocated polling districts and meet the accessibility requirements for all electors. It is hoped that the introduction of two new polling places will create stability for electors in this ward.

Borehamwood Kenilworth

- This ward currently has three polling districts, the review seeks to reduce this to two.
- Accessibility issues are increasing within the current arrangements that sees current electors within polling district **LB** voting at the **International Christian Fellowship Church**.
- It is proposed that the International Christian Fellowship Church no longer be used as a polling place.
- By reducing this ward to two polling districts, electors in the current LB polling district will be shared between current polling district **LA** where

the designated polling place is **the Toby Carvery** and polling district **LC** where the designated polling place is **Holy Cross Church**.

Potters Bar Furzefield

- This ward currently has three polling districts. The review seeks to retain this number.
- Electors in polling district **NC** currently vote at **Elm Court Youth and Community Centre**.
- By introducing new polling place **Our Lady and St Vincent Church**, these electors will be voting within their own polling district and will reduce confusion at Hertfordshire County Council elections as polling districts NB and NC vote in different County divisions.
- There are no changes proposed to the polling districts **NA** and **NB**.

Special Circumstances

Current legislation states that a polling place must be within the area of the polling district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area either wholly or partly outside of the polling district.

In this respect, for the following wards I support the designation of the polling place outside of the polling district under 'special circumstances':

- **AB** within Bushey North Ward. This proposed polling place sits on the boundary line of polling districts AA and AB however electors that will vote here are familiar with this polling place and have voted here in the past.
- **AC** within Bushey North. Polling Place be designated as 'Bushey Grove Leisure Centre'. Previously electors within the polling district AC, voted at this polling place. Due to the changes in the polling district boundary the Leisure Centre remains the only suitable location for these electors.
- **EA** within Aldenham West. There is no location within this polling district that can accommodate a polling place. The current arrangement for electors in this particular area is that they need to vote at a polling station located in the housing estate which lies inside the Borough of Watford. This is unchanged from the previous compulsory review.
- **EE** and **EF** within Aldenham West. Previously the Polling place was designated as 'The Three Compasses'. Due to the County division boundaries these small polling districts cannot be merged with any other polling district. Due to the Three Compasses no longer being available

to Hertsmere it was necessary to relocate the polling Place to 'Aldenham War Memorial Hall'. This relocation has worked well and as there are no suitable venues within this polling district this will not change.

- **HE** Within Borehamwood Brookmeadow. Polling place continue to be designated to 'Aberford Hall' This has been the electoral arrangement for several years and works well for electors.
- **KB** Within Borehamwood Hillside Ward. Polling place continue to be designated to '96 Shenley Road'. This has been the electoral arrangement since 2019 and has worked well for electors in this polling district.
- **QC** within Bentley Heath and the Royds. Polling place continue be designated to 'Potters Bar Baptist Church'. Electors in this ward have always votes at this location and this arrangement has continued to work well.

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Hertsmere Constituency
October 2023