

Review of Polling Districts and Places

The Returning Officer published his proposals for future Polling Districts and Polling Places on 23 September 2011.

The consultation period on the proposals runs until **Friday 28 October 2011**.

Members of the public and interested parties are invited to comment on the current proposals or suggest suitable alternative venues or changes to districts for consideration where appropriate. Final recommendations will be put to Full Council on 23 November 2011 for approval.

The current proposals can be viewed at
<http://www.derby.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E22356CF-9D6C-4F10-8AF4-5394F342F7D5/0/ReturningOfficersRepresentations.pdf>

Since the Returning Officer's proposals have been published there have been a number of comments in respect of the proposals which are detailed below.

Allestree Ward

Polling Station AL2 Woodlands Evangelical Church, Blenheim Parade

Two objections have been received relating to the proposal to relocate the AL2 Polling Station from Portway Junior School annexe on Robincroft Road to Woodlands Evangelical Church.

Comment 1, received 24 September 2011

'I wish to object to Woodlands Evangelical Church being used as a polling station. It is highly inappropriate and we have been here before

It will be dangerous when the school is in use and is not as good a location as Portway School which should be reverted to please.'

Comment 2, received 5 October 2011

'Woodlands Evangelical Church on Woodlands Road, Allestree is totally unsuitable as a polling station as there is nowhere to park. It is opposite the infant and junior school where there are already parking problems. It will inconvenience residents in the vicinity and Woodlands Road itself is constantly used by buses and traffic as it is also an arterial road for drivers coming through Quarndon from the A6. I would therefore like to object to this proposal.'

Returning Officer Comments

I have visited this location and observed the following

Woodlands Evangelical Church has car parking spaces for approximately 4 vehicles on Blenheim Parade. At the time that I visited, 3.50pm on Tuesday 4 October 2011, none of these spaces were in use and there is also a large disabled car parking space available next to the entrance to the building on Woodlands Road.

Parking is available at the nearby shops on Blenheim Parade. Parking during school drop off and pick up times (between 8.30am and 9.00am and 3.15 – 3.45pm) is limited, however there appears to be on street parking available in the area outside these peak times.

During the previous review of Polling Districts and Polling Places in 2007 the Traffic Control and Road Safety Team were asked to respond to concerns about volumes of traffic and the safety of school children. The Council's Senior Engineer, Accidents and Projects, concluded that there were no serious parking issues should the polling place change to Woodlands Evangelical Church.

One of the main reasons for my recommendation to move from Portway Junior School to Woodlands Evangelical Church was concern over the structural issues with the annex currently used as a polling station. A structural survey was carried out by Abacus Consultants on behalf of the Council's Design and Property Maintenance Team on the building known as 'B' Block in February 2011. The report states floor joists are undersized when compared to modern day standards. It recommends that 'if used by adults for meetings, a maximum of fifteen adults per room is recommended. As it is likely that we would have up to four members of staff on polling day, there are likely to be several occasions during the day where this maximum occupancy would be exceeded.

Any restrictions on numbers of voters entering the building could have an adverse effect on the experience of the voting process and give poor customer service if people have to queue to enter the building. There would also be an additional cost in staffing as an extra person would be needed at busy times to regulate numbers entering the building.

A further consideration prior to the 2010 Parliamentary and Local Elections is a report by SCOPE, a national disability group, advising that the access ramp is not sufficient for either an adult wheelchair or mobility scooter to make a left turn at the top of the ramp.

It is of concern that both venues have issues relating to their apparent suitability, but taking the structural and accessibility issues into account at Portway School, I reaffirm my recommendation to move the polling station to the Woodlands Evangelical Church.

As the Returning Officer, I welcome any further proposals for alternative venues within the AL2 polling district that could be considered prior to the end of the consultation process.

Darley Ward

DL2 Markeaton Primary School, Newton's Walk

One comment has been received in respect of the proposal to create a new polling station at Markeaton Primary School, Newton's Walk.

Comment 1, received 30 September 2011

'I have a query as to why Markeaton Primary School is used as a polling station, disrupting the education of all the pupils, when there are other community venues in the near locality. Would it be possible to use Broadway Baptist Church hall or the Women's Institute on Sherwin Street instead?'

Returning Officer Comments

Following receipt of these comments, members of staff from my Electoral Services team have visited the Baptist Church, Broadway and The Women's Institute on Sherwin Street.

Markeaton Primary School – The school tend to have a teacher training day and close to pupils. I've spoken to the Presiding Officer at the station in May 2011 who says facilities are good and parking isn't a problem as poll staff and electors drive into the school play area to park. They also said that electors in the area tend to walk; but reckons access for disabled voters in this polling district is more of an issue than parking.

Broadway Baptist Church – the address is Broadway but there are parking meters on the road. Best parking is the church car park off West Park Road. Large car park but bit uneven. Electors coming from West Park Road side would have to access the hall via the ramp to the right of the car park. Ramp is a bit steep but you can drive a car up it to park near to the access doors. There's a step at the main entrance but they have their own ramps. This is a viable option – negatives, uneven car park but not bad, step into building but can be ramped, parking meters on Broadway but large car park at the rear and it's a well known building in the area for voters on foot.

Derbyshire Federation of Women's Institute, Sherwin Street – great hall, car park for approx 8 – 10 cars, really good facilities, disabled access through double doors off the car park – 1 inch ridge at this entrance could be ramped if thought necessary. My only concern is the lack of on street parking. As you know the hall is on the bend and cars park on both sides, it could be mayhem if lots of voters come by car. If the car park were bigger I'd say recommend this, but its not. If, as Dawn says parking isn't really an issue then this would be a good venue.

Whilst Markeaton Primary School is, and has previously been, a suitable venue for polling purposes, securing an alternative suitable venue will result in less disruption to the operation of the school and acknowledge concerns raised during the review. I propose the use of Broadway Baptist Church, Broadway, for the DL2 polling area.

Polling Station DL4 West End Community Centre, Mackworth Road

One comment has been received in respect of the proposal to create a new polling station at West End Community Centre, Mackworth Road.

Comment 1, received 27 September 2011

‘West End Community Centre is poorly located with not much car parking’

Returning Officer Comments

As far as parking is concerned at West End Community Centre, members of staff from Electoral Services have visited the venue. Parking appears adequate, although this is accessed through a narrow gate. Up to 10 spaces are available including one larger disabled parking space. It is likely that three staff would be on duty there. There may be issues relating to on-street pay and display parking meters in the area. Once inside the venue it is extremely suitable as a venue for polling and is able to serve the Ashbourne Road side of the polling district.

At the 2010 elections we had a ‘double station’ at Whitecross House (DL3), there is little parking available next to that building, but there are no on-street pay parking meters in the vicinity.

In the review we have taken the opportunity to halve the number of voters polling at Whitecross House (DL3 polling district) by creating the additional West End Community Centre (DL4 polling district), essentially splitting the old DL3 polling district into two new smaller polling districts. The ward map is available at <http://www.derby.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/71580F05-AD62-49E7-8988-40DD19E60008/0/PollingdistrictreviewA3DarleySept2011.pdf>

In my opinion the use of both individual venues is a better alternative than continuing to accommodate two stations at Whitecross House as conditions are too cramped for two polling stations to operate in the same venue as we did last year.

The Rycote Centre, Parker Street, was also visited to see if this was a suitable venue in addition to Whitecross House. The venue is at street level on Kedleston Road entrance and first floor if approaching from Parker Street. The long sloping path at the side of the venue is uneven and unsuitable, however if we employed a greeter at the ground floor level on Parker Street we would be able to direct voters to use the lift to the first floor polling area. I have concerns that there is no other polling station within the City which is accessed by lift and so it is difficult to gauge whether or not this type of access would deter electors. I also have to consider the possible risk of lift failure on polling day, which would adversely affect access for disabled electors.

In view of the potential risks involved I have discounted the Rycote Centre but welcome any comments on its potential as a polling station and the access issues. I consider the best option is to re-draw the polling districts boundaries as per my original proposal and poll at Whitecross House and the West End Community Centre.

Alternative proposals on the provision of polling venues and splits of DL3 and DL4 polling districts are welcomed

Mickleover Ward

Polling Station MV4 Mickleover Primary School, Vicarage Road

Two comments have been received regarding the Returning Officer's proposal to create a new polling station venue at Mickleover Primary School. Both comments support a move from the school to the nearby Mickleover Pavilion on Vicarage Road. This would allow the school to function as normal on polling day.

Comment 1, received 27 September 2011

'The Pavilion Community Centre was a better venue than Mickleover Primary school'

Comment 2, received 3 October 2011

'I was looking at the proposals for the polling stations and saw that Mickleover Primary School is being proposed instead of Silver Hill School.'. 'My daughters attend MPS and wouldn't really want the school closed for the day. To the untrained eye the Pavilion looks like the perfect venue.'

Returning Officer Comments

Following a visit to the Mickleover Pavilion by members of my elections team, this does appear to be a highly suitable polling station venue. There is sufficient parking available and the venue itself has good facilities including those for disabled voters.

I would propose the use of this venue as an alternative to Mickleover Primary School as this would reduce disruption to the school on polling day.

Oakwood Ward

Polling Stations OK2, 3 and 4 together at Springwood instead of Oakwood Community Centre

Comment 1, received 28 September 2011

'Following consultation at the Oakwood Neighbourhood Board yesterday evening (27th Sept) on the proposed review of Oakwood Ward polling stations, reporting of the removal of the Oakwood Community Centre and placement of three electoral areas of Oakwood within the Springwood Leisure Centre met with no objection. Similarly all three Oakwood Ward Councillors are aware of the consultation and agree with this sensible proposal having all experienced in elections past the confusion of residents at these two locations which indeed formed part of your evidence as to reason for change. It however remains of concern that OK1 polling station is still situated within the Derwent Ward, but in raising that issue we remain unable to suggest a suitable replacement within this area of the Oakwood Ward'.

Returning Officer Comments

The positive comments relating to the consolidation of polling stations at Springwood Leisure Centre are welcomed.