

# PLYMPTON ST MARY WARD INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING STATIONS

Electoral Registration Team



## Background

Boringdon Primary School is the polling station location for electors in the Plympton St. Mary, RC polling district. The school closes to pupils on polling days and consideration has been given to designating a replacement polling station.

There had been suggestions from current ward members for the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Church on Vicarage Road to be considered as a permanent alternative to Boringdon school.

The Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Church on Vicarage Road is currently located in the adjoining polling district RB. The Electoral Commission recommendation is: where possible polling stations are located in the relevant polling district.

A recommendation has been made for a “mini” polling district review to be undertaken. This review will make recommendation to move the streets, located around the area where the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes Church is, from polling district RB to polling district RC.

The change for the affected electors would not result in any change to their elected representatives.

## Review of Polling Station

### BORINGDON PRIMARY SCHOOL

In previous elections, the polling station was set up in the Sports Hall located on the main school grounds. Though this was a suitable room to use in terms of space available and the setup, it proved difficult for the school to plan its normal day without the possibility of the polling station causing some level of disruption or distraction to the children’s education. Therefore to avoid such complications, the school closes on polling day.

The school suggested an alternative building on site could be used as a polling station which would enable the school to remain open. The alternative building is separated from the main school via fence and is accessed on a different road to the main school entrance.

The main entrance to the school is on Courtland Crescent (which has been the main access point in previous elections), but electors would need to access the alternative building via Lucas Lane. Officers visited the site to assess whether this would be a suitable option to consider.

The distance from the Courtland Crescent entrance to the Lucas Lane entrance path (see map given on Appendix 3) was timed at an 8-10 minute walk. If the change in polling station were to happen, we would be required to place regular signage along this route leading electors to the alternative entrance. This could prove to be problematic as we would need to place signage on private property due to minimal public facilities (i.e. fencing, walls, lampposts etc.) available to display the signage.

In addition, with the roads being residential there is a lot of on street parking which necessitate any directional signs being erected at approximately 6 feet off the ground to guide car users to the entrance to the alternative building.

Upon arrival, it was noted that the entrance on Lucas Lane is via a pathway situated in-between two houses with no signs to indicate an entrance is even there. There are school markings on the road at the start of the path but from a distance this could be quite difficult for electors to see.

It was considered that appropriate signage readable from some distance would be required at the entrance to the lane.

As for the pathway itself, it is tarmacked and is suitable for all voters however it presents a rather uninviting route (see photos in Appendix 3). Whilst voters would not have a long distance to walk from the start of the path to the new alternative building, there is no illumination on the path to guide electors, therefore lighting would have to be provided. In addition, there was overgrown vegetation overhanging some parts of the path, which although easy to remove would have to be addressed ahead of each election.

As a result of the issues discussed, Officers sought to locate a different polling station in this polling district but were unable to do so. However, following a suggestion by a ward Councillor, we visited Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish Church, which is situated on Vicarage Road, in the adjoining RB polling district to investigate using their Meeting Room.

### **MEETING ROOM at OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC PARISH CHURCH**

The Meeting Room proved to be a highly suitable alternative with adequate on-street parking and disabled access located at the front of the building with a zig zag descending concrete ramp providing appropriate access from the road to the building (Appendix 2).

Walking through the main entrance, the Nave is located just to the left. On polling day, access will be restricted from public view to avoid confusion and give electors a clear sense of direction to the hall where the polling station will be based e.g. curtain placed across the entrance with pews behind the curtains.

There is a wooden bridge linking the main entrance to the rear part of the building where the Meeting Room is located. The bridge is wide and secure enough for wheelchair users, as are the doorways at the entrances/exits.

There is a small “lip” between the ramp and the door to the hall which would require a ramp to facilitate access by all electors.

The Meeting Room has adequate open space-available to set up a polling station. Kitchen facilities and toilets are available for polling staff to use. Appropriate adult sized tables and chairs will also be made available for polling station staff and electors to use on polling day.

To exit the Meeting Room, all electors would go back along the wooden bridge. Exterior lighting is onsite to illuminate a clear pathway for electors.

There is free on-street parking available for election staff and electorates along Vicarage Road where the church is located.

The treasurer for the proposed site has confirmed that they would be happy for the Meeting Room to be designated as a polling station.

## **FURTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

The suggested designation of the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish Church as the new polling station for polling district RC has led to the suggestion that the properties in the roads near the church are transferred from Poling District RB to RC.

This proposal would avoid electors travelling past the Church in order to continue to vote at St Peter's Lutheran Church, the designated polling station for the RB polling district.

The roads affected would be:

Meadow View Road – 20 properties  
Morley View Road – 14 properties  
Oakfield Road – 25 properties  
Plymbridge Road – 2 properties  
Plymouth Road (nos 40 – 50 even) – 11 properties  
St Marys Close – 15 properties  
St Marys Court – 48 properties  
Vicarage Road – 31 properties  
Woodland Road – 9 properties

As at 1 September 2021 the total number of properties was 180 with 348 electors, of whom 80 have a postal vote.

As of 1 September 2021, there were 2,279 electors in the RC polling district of whom 474 had postal votes, resulting in a maximum number of 1,805 polling station voters at that point.

If the proposals were accepted the revised electorate, as at 1 September 2021, that would vote in person at the proposed polling station, namely The Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes church would be 2,073.

### **The Electoral Commission guidance:**

- A polling station should not have more than 2,500 electors allocated to it.
- In addition to a Presiding Officer, there should be one Poll Clerk for polling stations with up to 1000 electors.
- One additional Poll Clerk should be appointed for polling stations with up to 1,750 electors.
- One further Poll Clerk should be appointed to a polling station with up to the maximum of 2,500 electors.

## **CONSULTATION WITH WARD MEMBERS**

Ward members have previously suggested that the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes church be considered as an alternative to Boringdon School. There is also support to the proposal of moving the roads identified from polling district RC to RB.

Councillor Nicholson raised with his fellow ward members the proposal to designate the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes church as the polling station and moving the polling district boundary and confirmed that they had no objection.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

It has been agreed to make necessary (temporary) changes to the “look” of the entrance and route to the bridge/meeting room. Two of the changes discussed and confirmed are: the provision of curtain to cover the Nave entrance area to the church and cover/remove any religious artefacts in corridors. This is so that all electors are at ease in going into the proposed polling station.

## **PROCESS REQUIRED TO BE FOLLOWED TO ENABLE TRANSFER OF STREETS FROM POLLING DISTRICT RB TO RC**

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 require compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next one must be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025 (inclusive).

Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being desirable, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review.

The Council can carry out an interim review and change some of their polling districts and polling places before the end of the 5-year cycle, but the same processes should be undertaken for the affected areas as for the compulsory review. Without going through these processes, the Council will have difficulty evidencing their decision making and explaining how they took into consideration the views of disabled persons and the reasonable requirements of electors.

Appendix 7 sets out the Electoral Commission’s review process.

The timetable for the proposed review is as follows:

Consultation Period Commence Letters sent to all stakeholders (Electors, Cllrs, PH & SPH, Political Parties, MP) Letters Website Live	29 October 2021
Feedback period (responses to be published)	29 October – 10 December 2021
Consultation Period End	10 December 2021
Report to Full Council	24 January 2022
Changes made to the Register	25 January – 14 February 2022
Publication of Notice of Publication of Revised Register	15 February 2022
Publication of Revised Register across the entire city	1 March 2022

**Appendices:**

2A– Present polling district boundary map showing location of present polling station in polling district RC

2B– Proposed polling district boundary map showing location of proposed polling station for revised polling district RC

2C – Map showing car journey time from Boringdon School to Our Lady of Lourdes Church

2D – Photos of pathway from Lucas Lane to alternative option at Boringdon School

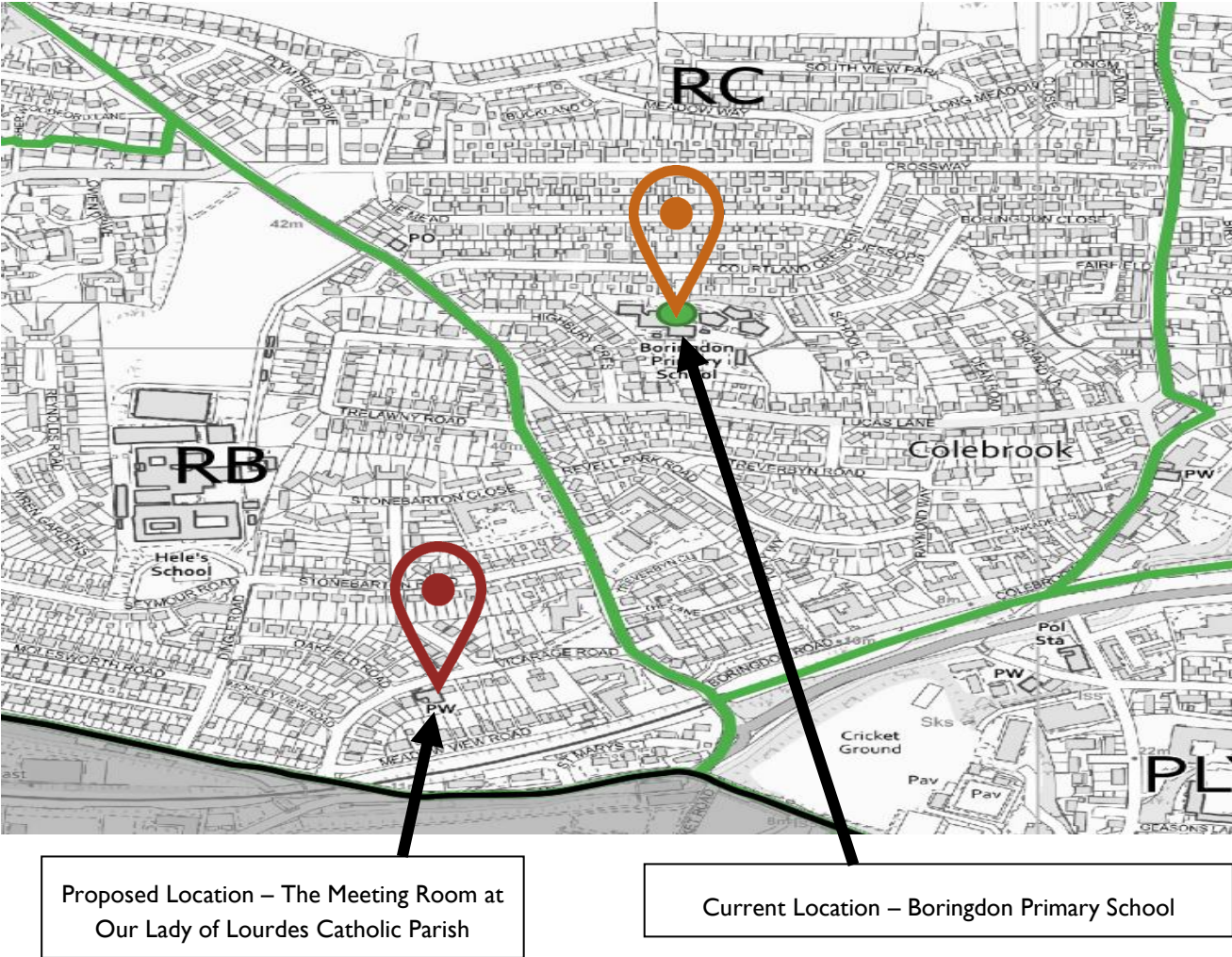
2E – Distance the Meeting Room at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish Church is from Boringdon School

2F– Pictures of Our Lady of Lourdes Church to the Meeting Room

3 - The process to be followed when undertaking a review of polling districts and polling places

Appendix 2A

Present Polling District Boundary Map

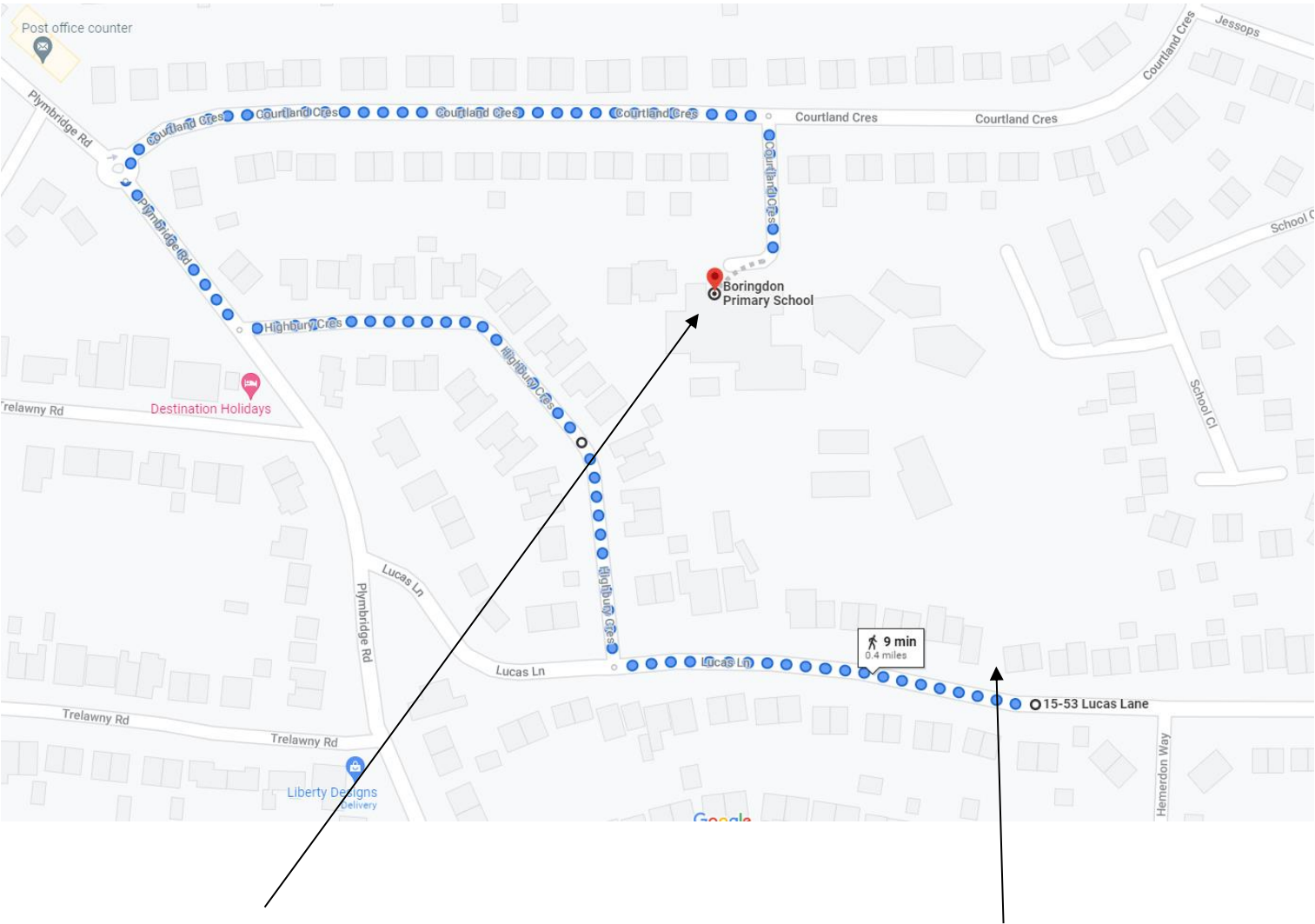




**Proposed reviewed polling district boundary**



BORINGDON PRIMARY SCHOOL – LUCAS LANE ENTRANCE



Main Entrance (Courtland Crescent)

Alternative Entrance (Lucas Lane)



**Appendix 2D**

PATHWAY FROM LUCAS LANE TO SUGGESTED POLLING STATION BUILDING AT BORINGDON SCHOOL



PATHWAY FROM LUCAS LANE TO SUGGESTED POLLING STATION BUILDING AT BORINGDON SCHOOL







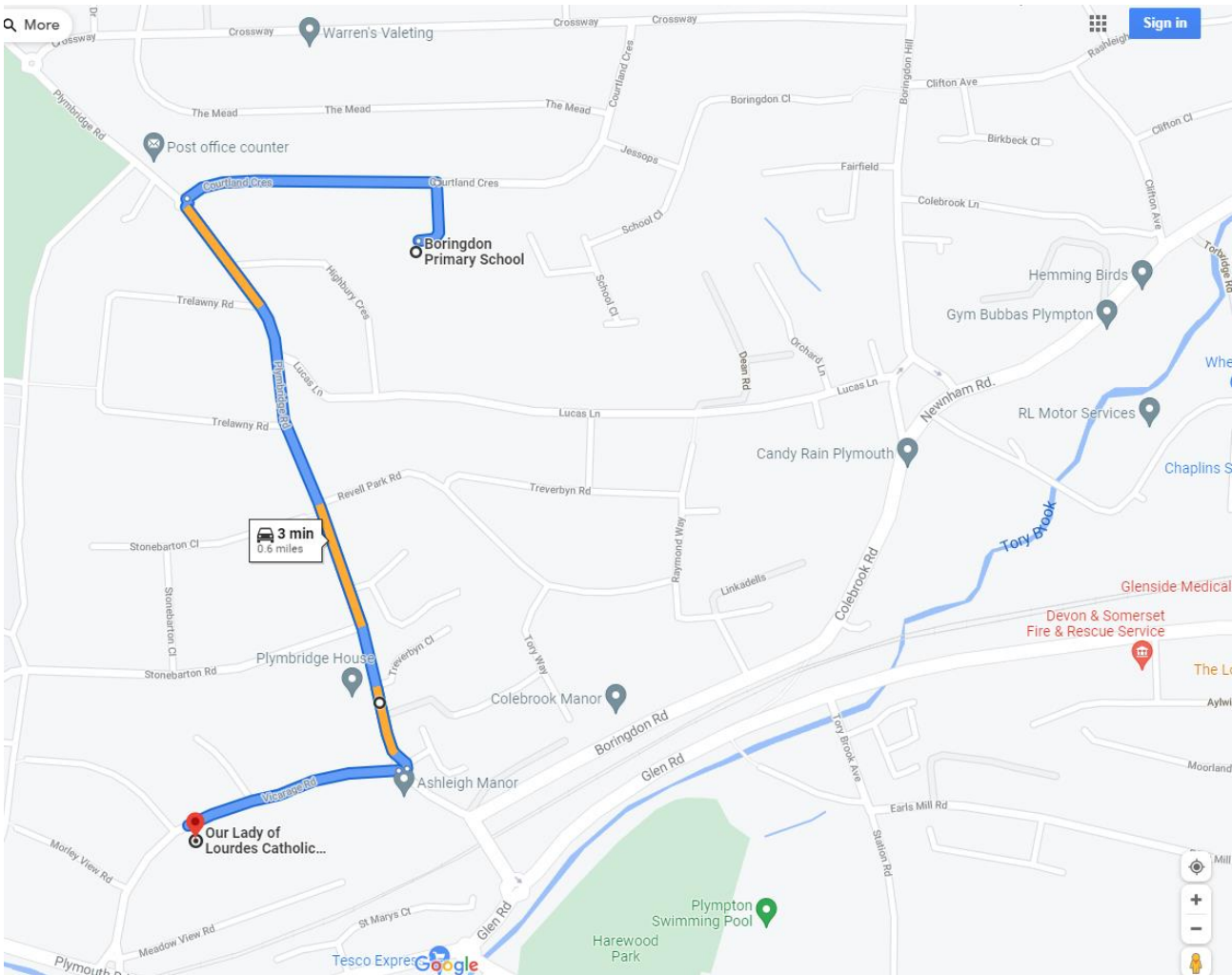
RETURN PATHWAY FROM SUGGESTED POLLING STATION BUILDING AT BORINGDON  
SCHOOL TO LUCAS LANE



**Appendix 2E**

**DISTANCE OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC PARISH**

FROM BORINGDON SCHOOL





Appendix 2F – Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Vicarage Road







Entrance to Nave – Church have been requested to restrict this area from public view.

Exit to the bridge which leads into the main hall where the polling station will be based.





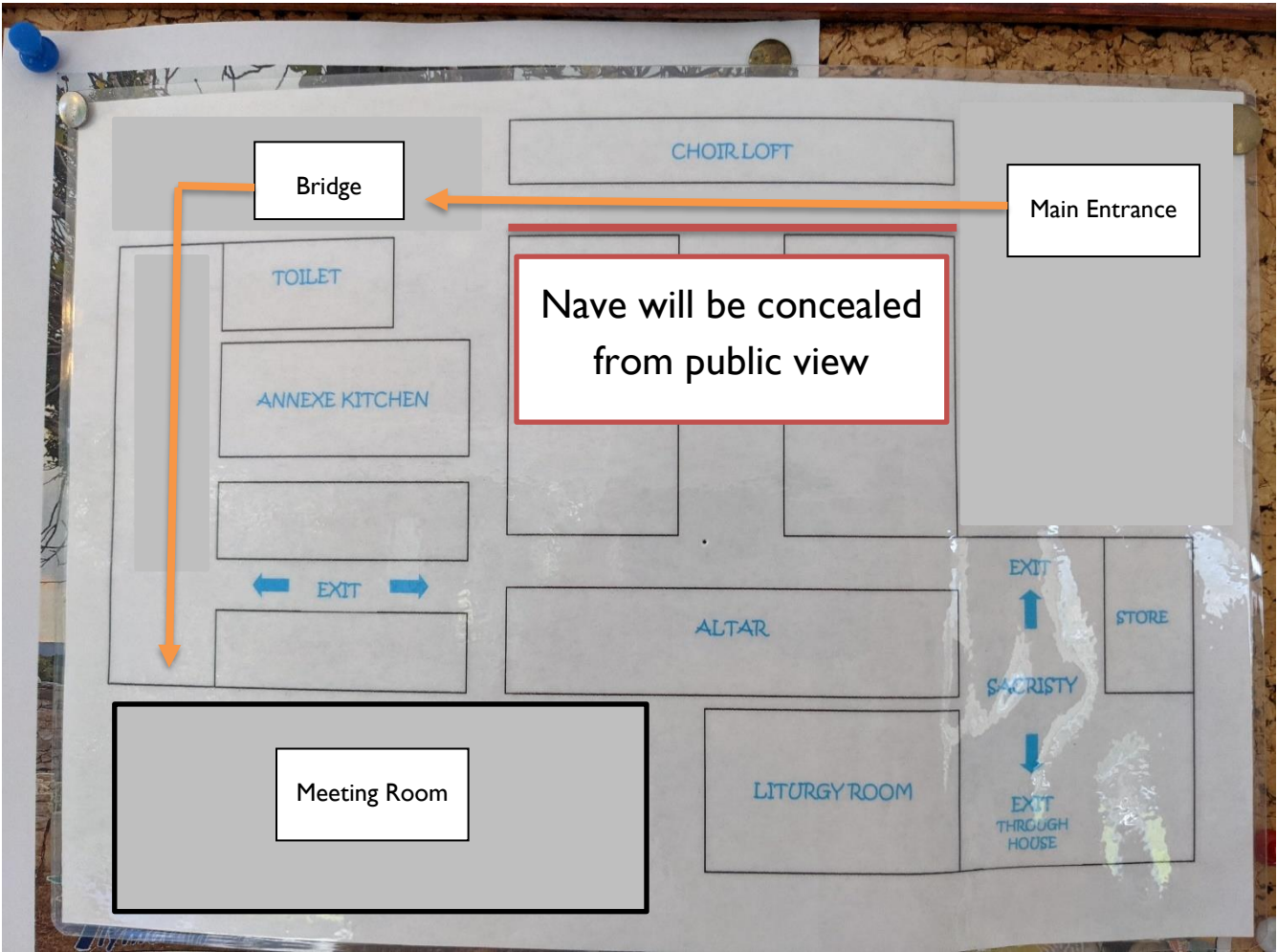


Main Hall

Entrance/ Exit (not in frame)









## Appendix 3

The process to be followed when undertaking a review of polling districts and polling places

### Stage 1 – Notification of the review

1. The formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review. The notice must:

- be displayed at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place within the authority
- be published on the local authority website

1. Additionally, the authority could display copies in other public buildings and, in particular, those buildings frequented by disabled residents. The authority's disability officer should be able to give guidance on the most suitable places for reaching disabled residents.

2. The content of the notice is not prescribed, but should state:

- that the local authority is conducting a review of polling districts and polling places
- that the (Acting) Returning Officer will make a comment on proposed polling stations, and an indication of when and where the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations will be made available
- that electors within the authority or within a UK Parliamentary constituency which has any part in the authority may make a representation
- that the authority would welcome the views of all residents, particularly disabled residents, on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that the authority would welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to comment on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places
- the postal address, e-mail address and website address at which documents can be inspected and representations made
- an indication of the timetable of the review and a deadline for representations

1. The authority should also send a copy of the notice to interested parties such as elected representatives (Councillors, MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.), political parties, disability groups and other stakeholders. Additionally, the authority could issue a press release and use social media feeds to draw attention to the review and the process.

### Stage 2 – Consultation

1. The consultation stage is for representations and comments to be made on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places. There are two aspects of this stage:

A compulsory submission from the (Acting) Returning Officer of the UK Parliamentary constituency or constituencies, which must then be published by the local authority.

Submissions from electors and other interested persons and bodies, including elected representatives and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.

### **The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission**

1. The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission must comment on both the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used based on any proposed polling places. The (Acting) Returning Officer's report must also contain information as to the location of polling stations within polling places. Completing the templates at [Appendix A](#) may help to form a basis for this report.

2. The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments within 30 calendar days of receipt. The comments should be published at the local authority offices and in at least one conspicuous place within each UK Parliamentary constituency contained wholly or partly in the local authority area. They should also be published on the local authority's website. Additionally, the (Acting) Returning Officer's response could be copied and made available in council offices, libraries, community centres or other places where residents may visit.

### **Consultees**

3. The authority should consult widely on the review and should seek out the views of interested groups or bodies, including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the council, as well as other elected representatives (MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.).

4. It will be particularly important to consult with those who have specific experience of assessing access for persons with different disabilities. These could include disability sections or occupational health departments within the council, as well as local and national disability groups. The authority should give consideration to the different types of disability which may make voting in person more difficult, and should also consider the council's own policy on disabled access. Consultees should be asked for comment both in general and, if appropriate, about particular buildings or areas within the authority.

5. Any persons involved in the consultation have the right to comment on the recommendations proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

6. Any elector for a UK Parliamentary constituency either wholly within or partly within the local authority area may comment on any of the recommendations within the whole local authority area.

7. Any person or body that makes a comment should be invited to suggest alternative polling districts/polling places and should be encouraged to give a reason for the alternative proposal so that it may be given appropriate consideration. As mentioned above, the notice published by the local authority should provide a deadline for the submission of comments.

### **Stage 3 – Concluding the review**

1. After considering all of the representations, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, which must be approved by the council.
2. If the review results in the alteration of one or more polling districts, the Electoral Registration Officer must make the necessary alterations to the electoral register. Depending on the timing of the review and the extent of the changes, the ERO has three options to ensure the register reflects the new polling districts:

- update the register on publication of the revised register following the conclusion of the annual canvass
- re-publish a revised register at another point in the year
- publish a notice of alteration

1. Where the Electoral Registration Officer has decided to revise their register by republishing it to incorporate the changes, the law requires that the ERO publish a notice 14 calendar days before the publication of the revised version of the register in a local newspaper, at their office and at some other conspicuous place or places in the area. The legislation does not allow for a part publication of the register – a revised register can only be published for the whole of the local authority area.
2. Any alteration is effective on the date on which the Electoral Registration Officer publishes a notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be published at the same time as the register is revised or a notice of alteration published, as appropriate.

#### Stage 4 – Publishing the conclusions of the review

1. Once the council has agreed the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. These should be made available at the local authority offices, in at least one conspicuous place in the constituency (or constituencies), and on the local authority's website. The reasons for choosing each particular polling district and polling place must be given.

2. Along with the reasons for the final decision of the review, the following must also be published:

- all correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority contacted because they had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

1. It is important that electors are made aware of any changes made to the place they must attend to vote. For example, the poll card for the next election they are entitled to vote at could indicate if their station has changed.

