

STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR CHANGES TO THE SCHEME OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES IN THE UTTLESFORD DISTRICT (PART IN THE SAFFRON WALDEN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY) TO BE APPLIED FROM 1 DECEMBER 2014

All wards are as defined in The Uttlesford (Electoral Changes) Order 2014.

The scheme to be applied is as set out in full in the Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places approved on 11 November 2014 and published on 17 November. The following statement contains a full explanation of the reasons for changes made to the scheme as published on 17 November 2011. The new scheme will be reflected in the Register of Electors published on 1 December 2014 and applied at all elections held in the Uttlesford District (all contained in the Saffron Walden Parliamentary Constituency) from 7 May 2015.

Please note that all polling districts are as changed to reflect the new district wards from 1 December 2014.

Polling District AAC Little Walden

Decision: The polling district boundary will be realigned to follow the ward boundary dividing Ashdon ward from Saffron Walden Castle ward. The polling district will consist of that part of Saffron Walden parish included in Ashdon ward. No transfer of electors is involved in this minor change.

Reason: The change is required to harmonise Little Walden polling district with the part of Saffron Walden parish included in the new district ward of Ashdon as defined in the 2014 electoral changes order.

Polling District AEB Henham

Decision: The parish of Chickney will be transferred to the Broxted and Chickney polling district. This change reflects the alteration of ward boundaries transferring Chickney from Elsenham and Henham ward to Takeley ward.

Reason: The parish of Chickney is too small to form its own polling district so must be attached to another parish for polling purposes. Chickney parish was formerly attached to Broxted for polling purposes under a previous warding arrangement. The proposal will have the effect of restoring that link which is considered to be convenient for electors in Chickney.

Polling District AGB Little Dunmow

Decision: No change will be made to the existing polling place of the Community Meeting Room, Recreation Ground off Brook Street, Little Dunmow.

Reason: The Community Meeting Room was designated in place of the Flitch of Bacon Public House in 2011 and has been used for all subsequent elections. Concerns were raised about the use of the Flitch of Bacon (although it is more central to the village) because the polling station is located in part of the licensed bar area which jeopardises the protection of electors' statutory right to vote in secret. The community hall is located part of the way along an unlit lane outside the village perimeter but there seems no reasonable alternative at present. The Flitch of Bacon is in the process of being sold and the future of the building is unclear.

The community meeting room is considered to be generally of a high enough standard to be designated for polling use. There is adequate parking provision, access to the building is provided to an acceptable standard and the facilities internally are reasonable. Although the internal space is quite small at 5.25m x 3.2m, this is sufficient to accommodate one polling station for the 250 electors on the register.

Polling Districts AHA Great Dunmow North-East and AHB Great Dunmow North-West

Decision: The polling district boundary between Great Dunmow North-East and North-West will be adjusted to follow the edge of the Woodlands Park development from Stortford Road northwards to the ward boundary south of Newton Hall. The effect of the realigned boundary will be to transfer more than 400 electors at Newton Green, Jubilee Court and Waldgroves from the North-West polling district to the North-East polling district.

Reason: The amended boundary will take account of planned development at Woodlands Park and make space to accommodate the accompanying electorate growth in the North-West area. It will also provide for a stronger and clearer boundary. At present, the polling district boundary runs through the middle of an area of planned residential development for 351 housing units. There are already a further 250 unoccupied new houses at Woodlands Park.

Permission has been granted for 790 dwellings west of the bypass and there is an appeal pending for 600-700 new houses located to the north of that site mainly in Little Easton parish. In addition, the sector 4 development will add 125 more housing units, also presently in Little Easton parish. A community governance review of parish boundaries will be scheduled in due course. The agreed change should provide sufficient leeway to accommodate the expected electorate growth in this part of Great Dunmow during the next five year period.

Polling District AJB Great Dunmow South-East

Decision: No change to the polling place location is proposed but a change has been agreed to the access arrangements at the United Reformed Church in New Street, Great Dunmow to enable use of a more suitable external entrance meeting acceptable accessibility requirements. In future the entrance at the north end of the building will be used instead of the narrow entrance at the southern end of the building adjoining the car park.

Reason: Two complaints have been made by a wheelchair bound elector about the access arrangements at the URC. The elector experienced difficulties in gaining access from the car park side of the building because of the very tight turning space at the top of the permanent concrete ramp, giving access to a narrow external doorway access. There is a further narrow doorway inside the building giving access to a corridor leading to the main hall. In all other respects, the URC building seems entirely suitable for polling.

Agreement has now been reached with the church authorities to use an alternative external entrance at the opposite end of the building giving suitable access to the building. The external doorway entrance to the URC is both suitably wide and level. On this condition it is intended to continue using the URC as a polling place.

Polling District ALE Margaret Roding

Decision: Designate the Reid Rooms at Marks Hall Lane as the polling place for Margaret Roding. This replaces the present unsatisfactory position where the whole of the parish is designated.

Reason: The Reid Rooms at Marks Hall Lane, Margaret Roding were first designated for polling use several years ago and have proved generally satisfactory. Problems have occasionally arisen because the venue is used for weddings, often booked well in advance of the date, and is consequently sometimes unavailable for election use. The parish church was used on one occasion but is not considered a satisfactory venue. As a result of the difficulties experienced in securing exclusive use of the venue, the existing scheme adopted in 2011 designated the entire polling district as the polling place. This is an unsatisfactory outcome and a specified venue must now be designated.

The Reid Rooms is the only identifiably suitable polling location in Margaret Roding. As the location is used for wedding functions it cannot be guaranteed to be available for the full five year period. However, an understanding has been reached with the owner providing for the building to be made available for the next scheduled election on 7 May 2015. On future occasions, the owner has given an undertaking that a polling location will be provided somewhere on the Reid Rooms site, even if a function is taking place on polling day. The undertaking given is considered the best

that can be achieved in terms of securing a polling place in Margaret Roding over a five year period.

Polling Districts AOA Saffron Walden Audley North and AOB Audley South

Decision 1: A realignment has been agreed to provide for stronger and more clearly defined polling district boundary. The boundary will follow the centre of Station Road to the junction with Debden Road and will then follow the centre of Debden Road northwards to the junction with High Street and London Road. This will involve the transfer of approximately 120 electors from Audley South to Audley North.

Reasons: Ward boundary changes have resulted in the transfer of electors from Audley ward to Castle and Shire wards at either end of the ward. This has provided an opportunity to review the suitability of the internal polling district boundary. An adjustment has been agreed to provide a for a clearer and stronger boundary line having the effect of transferring 120 electors north of Station Road from Audley South to Audley North.

Decision 2: The Gymnasium at the County High School, Audley End Road will replace the Assembly Hall at the Friends' School, Mount Pleasant Road as the polling place for Audley South.

Reasons: The Friends' School has been designated and used as a polling venue for many years. There are difficulties associated with the use of this venue for polling in Audley South. First, the school site is located entirely outside the polling district area. It is located within the adjoining Shire South polling district. This problem is aggravated by the ward boundary changes as a block of streets opposite the school site has been moved into Shire ward. The rules state that the polling place must be an area in the polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district. The most important consideration is to ensure that any polling stations provided are within easy reach of electors from across the polling district. The Friends' School meets this condition and so there is no breach of the rules concerning location.

The second problem is that the Assembly Hall has been unavailable on at least three recent occasions. This is because the Assembly Hall is used for exams taking place at the school. On two occasions a mobile unit located within the school car park has been used instead and on one occasion, at very short notice, the music room was allocated. Although initially the school offered use of the car park area for the location of a mobile unit, the Business Manager has now undertaken to honour any booking to use the Assembly Hall. He has confirmed it is available for hire for the elections scheduled on 7 May 2015. The difficulty is in securing the availability of the Assembly Hall over a full five year period. Although state funded schools are available as of right for use by the returning officer, this stipulation does not apply to

private schools so there is no guarantee beyond 2015 that the Assembly Hall would be available.

The Assembly Hall is considered to be fully suitable for election use, in terms of all of the assessment criteria used. Crucially, in planning to accommodate nearly 2,500 electors at the combined Parliamentary/local elections in May 2015, internal space dimensions of at least 10 x 10m is considered to be the minimum requirement. This is to be able to accommodate two polling stations with enough space to organise the effective throughput of electors. This condition is met in respect of the Assembly Hall. Access and parking provision is also satisfactory.

Effective arrangements cannot be made to accommodate this number of electors by using either a mobile unit or an alternative room at the school. As there is no guarantee of the continuing availability of the Assembly Hall over a full five year period it is considered too much of a risk to continue with this arrangement.

The County High School site is considered to offer the only realistic alternative to the Friends' School site for polling in the Audley South area. As stated elsewhere, the returning officer has the right to use any school maintained out of monies allocated by Parliament, including academies and free schools. The school's position is broadly unsympathetic to the location of polling anywhere on the CHS site. This is based on the school's understandable reluctance to close on polling day.

Having visited the site, it must be conceded that use of any part of the main school site would not be straightforward, whether or not the school chose to close on the day. However, the use of the gymnasium as part of the sports hall complex would be entirely feasible.

The CHS site was investigated for possible polling use initially because of the lack of other suitable locations in Audley South and because of the problems encountered at the Friends' School. The site inspection concluded that the gymnasium is a realistic option for polling use. The gym is part of the sports hall complex located east of the main school site and accessed via the entrance to Copperfields, with its own dedicated parking area. The distance from the London Road office to the car park is less than ½ a mile.

Access to the building is very good and the entrance to the gym itself is a short distance from the main ground floor entrance along a wide corridor. In the event that the CHS remains open, it would be possible to isolate electors from the other activities taking place at the school by directing electors to the lower car park and the sports hall entrance. The internal dimensions of the gym are 18 x 10m which is more than sufficient to accommodate the required two polling stations.

The CHS site, even at the lower end, is not ideal in terms of voter accessibility as it is located some distance from the main centres of population in Audley South.

However, the travel distance from most parts of the polling district area is not much greater than the travel distance to the Friends' School site, and the site is within reasonable walking range for the majority of electors.

For all of these reasons it has been decided to designate the County High School as the polling place instead of the Friends' School.

Polling District APA Saffron Walden Castle South-East/APB Saffron Walden Castle South-West

Decision: The polling district boundary between Castle South-East and Castle South West is to be amended to start from a point on Ashdon Road immediately west of the rear boundary of no. 2 Highfields and will then follow the existing boundary line to the northern ward boundary.

Reasons: The minor redefinition of the boundary is needed to take account of ward boundary changes. It will not involve the transfer of any electors.

Polling District APB Saffron Walden South-West

Decision: Retain St Mary's Primary School, Castle Street, Saffron Walden as the polling place for the polling district, designating use of the school hall.

Reason: The school authorities at St Mary's Primary School suggested a transfer of polling location from the school to St Mary's Parish Church Room. Such a change would prevent the school from closing. The Parish Room was used as a polling venue for part of Castle ward prior to the warding changes made in 2003.

The Parish Room has been reinvestigated for possible polling use but is not considered to be a suitable location. The internal space dimensions in the Parish Room measures 12.5m x 6.5m. That is too small a space to accommodate nearly 2,000 electors in two polling stations. Allied to that is the total lack of parking provision, except for one disabled bay. Although the location is now once again included within the polling district, it is not central to the population it would serve.

The school hall at St Mary's is entirely suitable for polling use and the reality of that is to enforce closure when polling takes place. Using an alternative part of the building to keep the school open has been explored and is not considered to be a realistic option.

Polling District AQA Saffron Walden Shire North/AQB Saffron Walden Shire South

Decision: The polling district boundary will be amended so as to follow the centre of Thaxted Road southwards to the ward boundary from the junction of that road with Peaslands Road. The effect of the change will be to transfer approximately 36 electors from Shire South to Shire North.

Reason: The opportunity has been taken to provide a clearer boundary definition to take account of approved development on the Manor Oak site and, depending on the outcome of the planning appeal, potential development of the Kier Homes site.

The allocation of nearly 3,000 electors in the Shire North register is close to the upper limit for a single polling location. Ward boundary changes have resulted in a significant increase in the number of electors in Shire ward. This change will place pressure on existing polling facilities in the ward and steps have been taken to address these pressures (see decisions below).

Future residential development in the ward will almost certainly require further measures to be taken to provide reasonable and convenient facilities for electors. At present, it is not possible to divide the ward into three polling districts as a third suitable polling place does not exist. Future community provision associated with approved development is likely to provide a solution. For the present, adequate facilities have been provided for all electors in Shire ward.

Polling District AQA Saffron Walden Shire North

Decision: Retain the R A Butler School, South Road, Saffron Walden as the polling place but designate the main school specifically as the polling place.

Reason: The RA Butler Junior School has been designated for use as the polling place for the Shire North polling district since 2011 in replacement for the Common Room at Four Acres. The reason for the change made in 2011 was that electorate growth in Shire North made it likely that two polling stations would become necessary at future elections. The common room was not considered suitable to site two polling stations.

The Junior School is located on the western boundary of the polling district. It is reasonably central to the population it serves and seems to be the only building within the polling district that could be designated for polling use.

The electorate has continued to grow and this trend has been accelerated by changes to the ward boundary coming into effect in May 2015. The electorate of close to 3,000 is at the absolute upper range of electors that can be accommodated in a single polling location.

Future residential development at the Manor Oak site and potentially elsewhere in the polling district area means that the Shire ward will need to be further sub-divided in the near future. At the present time, no suitable polling location is available to enable such a change so it seems possible an interim review may be required within a five year time frame.

While the school is considered a suitable location, the use of the PPA room which has restricted internal space is inadequate to locate two busy polling stations. The

use of this room is advantageous as it enables the school to remain open during polling. The only possible option to provide a suitable and adequate facility in May 2015 is to designate the school hall as the polling place. This will require closure of the school.

The internal space dimensions of the PPA room measure 7m x 7m. The equivalent measurement of the main school hall is 16m x 10.5m. Retaining use of the school without designating the school hall as the polling place will not work in terms of dealing with almost 3,000 electors. Accordingly, the school hall will in future be designated as the polling place.

Polling District AQB Saffron Walden Shire South

Decision: Designate the main school hall at Katherine Semar Junior School, Ross Close, Saffron Walden as the polling place for Saffron Walden Shire South polling district in place of Golden Acre Community Centre, Long Horse Croft, Saffron Walden.

Reason: Golden Acre Community Centre has been used as the designated polling place for Shire South for many years. At one time, Shire ward was divided into separate east/west polling districts rather than the existing north/south arrangement. At that time, the Community Centre and the junior school over the road were both used for polling. When the whole of the Fairview estate was combined into a single polling district, the Community Centre was selected as the preferred polling venue.

Shire South area includes in the region of 2,500 electors. This number of electors is in the upper range of voters that can be reasonably accommodated at a single polling location. Enough space must be provided for the location of two polling stations.

The Community Centre is owned by the Town Council. It is located in Long Horse Croft just off Ross Close to the south of the Fairview housing estate but is quite central and convenient for the majority of electors in the polling district area.

The building is well appointed with its own dedicated car parking area of some 20 bays. It is accessed via a set of outer doors sufficiently wide for wheelchair access and there is an inner lobby area giving access to a main hall measuring 14.6m x 7.1m. Facilities are generally very good but setting up the required two polling stations is difficult given the layout of the available internal working space.

Ideally, a wider depth of internal space would be preferred to enable the smooth operation of two polling stations allowing for the more efficient throughput of electors. Depth of working space inside the entrance doorway is a further consideration in the event of queues forming (entirely possible during busy periods with three ballot papers being issued).

The Katherine Semar School is located in Ross Close, opposite Golden Acre Community Hall. It is located towards the southern end of the housing estate and is considered entirely convenient and accessible for the majority of electors.

Given the requirement to provide two polling stations to accommodate 2,500 electors, the layout of the main school hall is considered the better option in terms of the available internal space dimensions (12m x 9.4m).

The head teacher has confirmed that she will be able to work around election activities and the governors are not opposed to the use of the school as a polling location. It is understood that the main hall is not used for meals or regular classroom based activities so it is entirely feasible the school can remain open on polling days.

Polling District ARA Stansted East/ARB Stansted West

Decision: Change the names of the polling districts respectively from Stansted North-East to Stansted East and from Stansted North-West to Stansted West and amend the boundary to follow the centre of Silver Street from the junction with Cambridge Road southwards to the ward boundary.

Reason: The renaming of the polling districts will provide for a simpler and more easily understood polling scheme and the redefined boundary will harmonise the two polling districts with the revised ward boundaries in Stansted.

Polling District ARA Stansted East

Decision: Designate the Peter Kirk Centre, St John's Road, Stansted as the polling place for the renamed Stansted East polling district in place of the Youth Centre, Lower Street, Stansted.

Reason: Ward boundary changes have resulted in the transfer of a block of electors located to the south of Chapel Hill from the South ward in Stansted to the North ward. The revised polling district now includes two polling places, of which the Youth Centre served the former North East polling district upon which much of the Stansted East polling district is based. The Peter Kirk Centre formerly served as the polling place for all of those electors transferred from Stansted South ward even though both buildings are located to the north of Chapel Hill.

The Peter Kirk Centre is considered to be the more suitable of the two buildings and has accordingly been designated as the new polling place. It is located in a central position in relation to the population being served. There are nearly 1,700 electors and so there must be suitable access provision and sufficient space to provide for two separate polling stations.

The building is located off the unmade road at St John's Road and is a part of the complex of buildings forming the adult learning centre. It can be accessed on foot from either St John's Road or Chapel Hill. There are at least 12 parking spaces available for use and the entrance used is a short distance from the car park.

The doorway width of the main entrance is 1.74m leading to a small lobby area and a further door 1.38m wide. The access and entrance arrangements are entirely suitable for polling use.

There is an internal space of 10.7m x 11m and this is sufficient to enable two polling stations to be situated allowing for the efficient throughput of voters. Other facilities at the Centre are generally good.

The Youth Centre is located at the end of Lower Street close to where Gall End Lane begins. It is located at the eastern edge of the densely populated area of the Stansted East polling district, but is reasonably central and is a convenient location for the majority of electors.

The main difficulties with the Youth Centre lie in the lack of a suitable entrance at the front of the building and the relatively small internal space available to accommodate the required two polling stations. There are three separate entrances to the room where the polling stations are located. Two of these are assessed as being poor as they are narrow entrances, accessed via a set of external steps in each case. As such they are unsuitable for wheelchair access. The third entrance is the one located furthest away from the car park and the entrance gate used by pedestrians. This is the one used by voters as it provides for nearly level access to the building. It is wide enough to allow for wheelchair access but there is a small internal step to negotiate.

The internal space is 12.5m x 6m and as such is really too constricted to allow for the effective setting up of two freestanding stations.

Polling District ASB Stansted South

Decision 1: Merge together those parts of Foresthall Park, Stansted South-East and Stansted South-West polling districts remaining in the new Stansted South & Birchanger ward into a new renamed Stansted South polling district. The effect will be that the whole of that part of the new ward contained in Stansted parish will be included in the Stansted South polling district.

Reason: The existing polling districts of Foresthall Park and Stansted South-East are to be merged with the remnants of the Stansted South-West polling district to form a new enlarged Stansted South polling district, containing in the region of 2,600 electors. Only 97 electors remain in Stansted South-West as the majority of electors in that area have been transferred to Stansted North ward.

It is no longer necessary to separate the Foresthall Park estate into different polling areas as, from May 2015, they will be included in the same ward. That part of Foresthall Park formerly included in Birchanger parish was transferred to Stansted parish in 2012.

The part of Stansted included in the redefined South ward (mainly south of the railway line) fits quite neatly into a single geographical unit as most of the population is resident at one of the adjoining Foresthall Park and Mountfitchet estates, and the linking Stoney Common area. It would not make sense to partition the two estates into different polling districts as the two potential polling places are both located south of Stoney Common.

Although the total of 2,600 electors is close to the suggested limit for a single polling area, the bulk of new development at Foresthall Park is already built and occupied, so further significant expansion is unlikely. The agreed polling arrangement is expected to endure for the whole of the five year period of the revised scheme.

Decision 2: Designate the school hall at St Mary's C of E Primary School, Hampton Road, Stansted as the polling place for Stansted South in place of the Romeera Leisure Centre, Forest Hall Road, Stansted.

Reason: As already stated, the proposed polling district of Stansted South merges together the whole of the Foresthall Park estate formerly divided between Stansted South and Birchanger wards, and a remnant of electors remaining in the now to be abolished Stansted South-West polling district. It therefore incorporates the whole of the Mountfitchet Road estate.

The Peter Kirk Centre has now been designated as the polling place for the new Stansted East polling district. This leaves two potential polling locations for the enlarged Stansted South area consisting of more than 2,500 electors. In order to accommodate this number of electors it is essential that enough internal space is provided for the location of two separate polling stations.

The Romeera Leisure Centre is the existing polling place for both Stansted South-East and Foresthall Park (the section of the estate located in Birchanger ward until May 2015). This has caused confusion as the two stations serve electors in different wards.

Suitable arrangements have been made at the Romeera Centre to ensure the main sports hall can accommodate polling facilities. To enable this to work properly, the entrance turnstile is disabled while polling is taking place. As might be expected, the sports hall has a large internal space measuring some 18m x 32m. Only one end of the hall is ever utilised for polling. Most of the space is left vacant while polling is in progress.

It is not ideal that the leisure centre remains open to the public during polling but other activities do not generally interfere with the administration of polling activities as separate internal entrances are used. Facilities are generally very good but the building is expensive to use and the space hired is vastly greater than the space needed to organise polling.

The Leisure Centre has been used for polling in this part of Stansted since 2012. It has always been the intention to assess the suitability of the new primary school for polling as soon as the building became available and this review provides the ideal opportunity to make a change.

The new Primary School is located in the heart of Foresthall Park and is therefore a central and convenient location for electors living on the estate. There is a footpath link at the end of Shaws Close nearly opposite the school which links directly to Stoney Common and then through to the Mountfitchet estate. The Romeera Leisure Centre is also a convenient location for the majority of electors but is less centrally situated than the school for electors in all parts of the new polling district.

The school is considered to be an ideal polling location in terms of convenience, access and the facilities that are available. The car park is situated close to the main entrance. If the school remains open an arrangement will be made to reserve an agreed number of spaces for use by voters. There is a wide doorway providing access directly to the hall from the pathway leading to the main school entrance.

There is an internal space in the hall measuring 19m x 10m. This is more than sufficient for the location of the required two polling stations. As to be expected in a modern school building the facilities provided throughout are excellent.

Use of the main hall at the school will almost certainly require the school to close for polling. There are no SATS exams due during the week beginning 4 May 2015 but there can be no indication of future exam commitments beyond next year and the impact that would have on school activities.

Polling District ATC Manuden

Decision: Designate the Manuden Village Community Centre, David Collins Drive, Manuden as the polling place for Manuden in substitution for the old village hall which is no use in use as a community facility.

Reason: The new Community Centre has already been used for one election as the use of the former village hall has been discontinued. The community centre is less central to the village than the former village hall but has been purpose built for community use and provided to modern standards. As such it is considered to be fully suitable for designation as a polling place.

Polling District AUA Broxted and Chickney

Decision: As already stated under AEB Henham, it has been decided to transfer the parish of Chickney from Henham polling district to Broxted and Chickney. The change reflects the ward boundary changes transferring Chickney from Elsenham and Henham ward to the new Takeley ward.

Reason: The parish of Chickney is too small to be allocated separate polling facilities and must be attached to another parish for that purpose. The decision restores the link between the parishes of Broxted and Chickney broken when ward boundaries changed in 2003.

Polling District AVE Thaxted

Decision: Retain Bolford Street Hall as the polling place for Thaxted.

Reason: During the public consultation period, Thaxted Parish Council proposed the use of the Church Hall in Margaret Street, apparently for the reason that the trustees of Bolford Street Hall find constant interruption for polling use inconvenient. The hall is booked regularly for pre-school session on Thursdays and these are cancelled on polling days.

Both of these buildings have been inspected and the conclusion drawn was to retain Bolford Street Hall on the grounds of suitability and elector convenience.