

APPENDIX B - SITE VISITS REPORT

Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Little Dunmow	Community Meeting Room, off Brook Street, Little Dunmow	
	General Commentary	<p>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.</p>
	Site Visit Report	<p>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.</p>
	Score awarded	41
	Recommendation	Retain the Community Meeting Room as the designated polling place for Little Dunmow.

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Great Dunmow South East	<p>United Reformed Church Hall, New Street, Great Dunmow</p>	
	<p>General Commentary</p>	<p>Critical comments have been made by at least one elector about the access arrangements at the URC. This was a wheelchair bound elector who experienced some problems in gaining access from the car park side of the building, via a permanent concrete ramp, and two quite narrow doorways. In all other respects, the use of the URC seems acceptable.</p>
	<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>The URC is located down a narrow one way street at New Street. It is a central location within Great Dunmow but is not central in terms of the polling district itself. In particular, the location is quite remote from the residential developments at and around Ongar Road. The main hall is well proportioned at 14m x 7.3m and general facilities are good. Agreement has now been reached with the church authorities to use an alternative entrance at the northern end of the URC site situated close to the internal room used for polling. This arrangement is entirely acceptable.</p>
	<p>Score awarded Recommendation</p>	<p>48 (40 if the original entrance is used). Continue to designate the URC but only on the basis that the northern entrance to the building is used.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Margaret Roding	<p>The Reid Rooms, Marks Hall Lane, Margaret Roding</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>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 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.</p>
	<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>The visit made on 24 September assessed the venue as being entirely satisfactory for use as a polling venue with a score of 45 awarded. The owner Mr Ritchie has confirmed to me that he will make the function room available for the 2015 elections regardless of any other bookings. The difficulty is in securing certainty of continued use beyond May 2015. However, in the absence of any suitable alternative building it is proposed that the Reid Rooms are designated as part of the adopted scheme.</p>
	<p>Score awarded</p>	<p>45</p>
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>To designate The Reid Rooms, Marks Hall Lane, Margaret Roding as the polling place for Margaret Roding.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Audley South	<p>Friends' School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>The Friends' School has been designated and used as a polling venue for many years. There are two difficulties 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. What do the rules say? They 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 second problem is that the Assembly Hall has been unavailable on at least three recent occasions. 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. The Business Manager has told me that the Assembly Hall is available for hire on 7 May 2015 and that any booking made would be honoured. 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.</p>

Site visit report	<p>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.</p> <p>The Sports Hall has been assessed as a possible alternative. This location could be used in practice only by utilising the side entrance as the main entrance is accessed by a number of steep steps. The side entrance is an emergency exit door and can be used only by propping open the door which opens directly into the main hall area. On a wet or windy day, the sports hall would not be a practical option.</p> <p>The conclusion is that the Sports Hall could be used only as a last option, even though the internal space available is more than sufficient.</p>
Score awarded	43 for the Assembly Hall; 41 for the Sports Hall
Recommendation	If the Friends' School site is designated, then use of the Assembly Hall must be specified in the scheme. However, this would not secure use of the designated location beyond 2015. Conclusion: consider use of the County High School instead.

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Audley South	<p>Gymnasium at the County High School, Audley End Road (accessed via Copperfields), Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>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. At the outset, it is only fair to draw members' attention to the school's position which is broadly unsympathetic to the location of polling anywhere on the CHS site (see separate pack of representations). This is based on the school's understandable reluctance to close on polling day and the comment that, for reasons of safeguarding, all visitors to the site must sign in and out at school reception. I have made it clear to the Head that signing in and out is not an option in respect of voters attending a polling station.</p> <p>Having visited the site, it must be conceded that use of any part of the main school site would be difficult, 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 (see comments below).</p>

Site visit report	<p>It was decided to investigate the CHS site 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 conclusion of the site inspection is 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.</p> <p>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 quite easy 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. Good signage would be required. The internal dimensions of the gym are 18 x 10m which is more than sufficient.</p> <p>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. Having said that, the travel distance from most parts of the polling district area is not much greater than the travel distance to the Friends' School site.</p>
Score awarded	44
Recommendation	Consider seriously the option of designating the Gymnasium at the County High School as the polling place for Audley South instead of the Friends' School

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Audley South	Staff Room at the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden	
	General commentary	The Staff Room was used as a polling location for Audley South a number of years ago. It proved difficult to accommodate two polling stations as the available space is very cramped. It is not possible to identify an alternative location for polling on the London Road site. The use of the civic suite area would not be satisfactory as it is located on the first floor accessed by a flight of stairs (even though a lift is available).
	Site visit report	There is ample parking on a normal polling day as many staff members are engaged on polling duty. The access to the staff room is generally good. However, the internal space dimensions of the room (two separate but linked restricted spaces of approximately 6 x 4.5m), and the presence of internal pillars, make it unsuitable for use as a double polling station for nearly 2,500 electors.
	Score awarded	41 but see comments above
	Recommendation	That the Council Offices site is not considered for designation as a polling place

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Castle South West	<p>St Mary's Parish Room, Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>The Parish Room was formerly used as the polling location for the entire Castle ward. It was changed when the ward boundary was altered in 2003. This was because the location was no longer in the ward but there were also problems caused by the small available space and the lack of parking provision.</p> <p>The use of the Parish Room has been re-investigated at the request of the governors at the existing location of St Mary's Primary School in Church Street because the school is unwilling to continue to close on polling days.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The building is suitable in most other respects including access and in terms of the facilities provided. However, although the location is now included within the polling district, it is not central to the population it would serve.</p>
	<p>Score awarded</p>	<p>36</p>
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Retain polling at St Mary's School (main school hall) and designate accordingly.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Shire North	<p>Main School Hall at the R A Butler Junior School, South Road, Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 likely an interim review will be required within a five year time frame.</p> <p>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. Unfortunately this will require closure of the school.</p>

Site Visit Report	<p>The RA Butler Junior School is located on the extreme western boundary of the polling district at South Road. Ward boundary changes have meant that the electorate has grown significantly with the addition to the polling district area of two separate blocks of streets south of Ashdon Road and west of South Road. It must be said that the school is not ideally located in terms of much of the population it is serving.</p> <p>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 would not work in terms of dealing with almost 3,000 electors. This solution seems the only realistic option for the revised polling scheme.</p> <p>Access to the hall is satisfactory. The path from South Road is on a slope but is well surfaced with no obstructions. If the school remains open provision will be made to set aside an agreed number of parking bays for use by electors.</p> <p>There are security issues on the school site whether or not the school remains open. The school's governing body will discuss closure at a future meeting but will do so only unwillingly. However, the reality of designating use of the school hall for polling is that the school would be unable to remain open.</p>
Score awarded	48 (37 for the PPA room)
Recommendation	Continue to designate the RA Butler Junior School but specify the use of the school hall as the polling place

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Shire South	<p>The School Hall at the Katherine Semar Junior School, Ross Close, Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>The school is located in Ross Close, opposite Golden Acre Community Hall which is the existing polling location for Shire South (see separate report). It is located towards the southern end of the housing estate but would be entirely convenient and accessible for the majority of electors.</p> <p>It was considered appropriate to investigate the possible use of the school instead of the community centre for the reasons explained in the separate report. In simple terms, the layout of the main school hall is considered to be better for election use in terms of the available internal space dimensions.</p> <p>The head teacher has confirmed that she will be able to work around election activities if the school is selected 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.</p>

Site visit report	<p>The junior school is located next to the infant school in Ross Close to the south of the Fairview estate in which the majority of electors in the polling district live.</p> <p>The school hall is located close to the car parking area of the school which provides direct access to the hall itself, so there is no need to access the main school building. By arrangement with the school, at least six parking bays can be reserved for use by electors.</p> <p>The hall is accessed by an external entrance with sufficient width to accommodate a standard wheelchair. If needed, double doors are available via the school reception area. Foot access to the hall area is good via a gate from Ross Close.</p> <p>The internal dimension of 12m x 9.4m makes the hall ideal to set up the two polling stations that would be needed to accommodate 2,500 electors. The layout of the hall makes it a better option than the community hall opposite.</p>
Score awarded	50
Recommendation	Consider designating the main hall at the school instead of Golden Acre.

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Saffron Walden Shire South	<p>Golden Acre Community Centre, Long Horse Croft, Saffron Walden</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>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 (see separate report) 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.</p> <p>Both venues are now under consideration as the polling venue for the slightly revised Shire South area consisting of 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.</p>
	<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>
	<p>Score awarded</p>	<p>48</p>
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Consider designating the Katherine Semar Junior School instead for this polling district (refer to separate report).</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Stansted East	<p>Youth Centre, Lower Street, Stansted</p> <p>General commentary</p>	<p>The size of electorate in the revised Stansted East polling district (formerly Stansted North-East) has expanded considerably as a result of ward boundary changes. Part of the area transferred to the North ward includes a large block of electors previously allocated to the Stansted South-West polling area, for which the polling place was the Peter Kirk Centre, although this building is located in the former North ward area.</p> <p>The designation of the polling place for the East polling district area (everything in the North ward lying to the east of Cambridge Road and Silver Street will come down to a straight choice between the Peter Kirk Centre and the Youth Centre. The latter building has been used for very many years as a polling venue for electors located variously in all parts of Stansted. An assessment of the building is included in the section below.</p>
	<p>Site visit report and score; officers' comments</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Car parking and other facilities are generally good.</p>
	<p>Score awarded:</p>	<p>36</p>
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Designate the Peter Kirk Centre as the polling place for Stansted East.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Stansted East	Peter Kirk Centre, St John's Road, Stansted	
	General commentary	Please refer to the comments listed under the general commentary section of the building assessment for the Youth Centre. In effect there is a straight choice between the Peter Kirk Centre and that building to be designated as the polling place for Stansted East. The Peter Kirk Centre is presently the designated building for Stansted South-West.
	Site visit report	<p>The Peter Kirk Centre 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Although the location of the building is not ideal it merits a satisfactory rating on most measures and is considered a better option for voters than the alternative of using the Youth Centre</p>
	Score awarded	47
	Recommendation	Designate the Peter Kirk Centre as the polling place for Stansted East.

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Stansted South	<p>St Mary's C of E Primary School, Hampton Road, Stansted</p> <p>General commentary</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>It is now being recommended that the Peter Kirk Centre should be 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.</p> <p>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. Furthermore, 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.</p> <p>It must immediately be said that the use of the main hall at the school would 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.</p> <p>The use of the school to accommodate two polling stations would not be feasible unless the main hall was to be designated. Once the hall was hired for election use, the school authorities would have to decide the feasibility of remaining open while polling was in progress.</p>

<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>The school is considered to be an ideal polling location in terms of convenience, access and the facilities that are available. It is centrally located in relation to the population it will be serving. 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In all respects the school is judged ideal for polling use serving a large population area.</p>
<p>Score awarded</p>	<p>49</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That St Mary's C of E Primary School is designated as the polling place for Stansted South.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Stansted South	<p>The Mountfitchet Romeera Leisure Centre, Forest Hall Road, Stansted</p>	
	<p>General commentary</p>	<p>At present the Romeera Leisure Centre serves as the polling place for both Stansted South-East and Foresthall Park (the section of the estate still in Birchanger ward). This has been confusing as the two stations serve electors in different wards.</p> <p>The boundary changes provide an opportunity to unify the whole of this much expanded residential part of Stansted into a single polling district serving in excess of 2,500 electors.</p> <p>The Leisure Centre has been used for polling in this part of Stansted since 2012. It was always the intention to assess the suitability of the new primary school as soon as the building became available and now is a convenient time to make any change considered necessary.</p>
	<p>Site visit report</p>	<p>The leisure centre is located at the southern extremity of the residential areas known at the Foresthall park and Mountfitchet estates. It is reasonably convenient for most electors but is less central than the new primary school. The polling place also serves the Burton End and Bury Lodge Lane areas to the south but the bulk of the population lies north of Forest Hall Road.</p> <p>Suitable arrangements have been made 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. There are more than a sufficient number of parking spaces (although many of these are still in use for other activities at the leisure centre) leading to a wide entrance doorway. A second wide doorway then leads to the reception area which voters must access to gain entrance to the sports hall. The sports hall is then accessed by another set of doors across the reception area.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. On one occasion the hall was used as a count venue.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p>Score awarded</p>	<p>46</p>
	<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Designate St Mary's C of E Primary School as the polling place in substitution for the Leisure Centre.</p>

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
Thaxted	Bolford Street Hall	
	General commentary	<p>The parish of Thaxted comprises a single polling district comprising some 2,300 electors. At some point in the future development pressures may lead to a necessity to consider dividing Thaxted into two separate polling districts but that point has not yet been reached.</p> <p>Except on one specific occasion when it was unavailable, Bolford Street Hall has served as the polling venue in Thaxted for many years. At a late stage of the first consultation, the Parish Council proposed the use of the Church Hall in Margaret Street instead, apparently for the reason that the trustees of the 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.</p> <p>An assessment of the Church Hall has been made (see separate report).</p>
	Site visit report	<p>Bolford Street Hall is located west of the town centre along the road leading to Cutlers Green and Debden Green. It is well established as the polling venue for Thaxted and is considered convenient for the majority of electors.</p> <p>There are at least 22 parking spaces in a self-contained area just off Bolford Street. The entrance to the hall is well surfaced and easily accessible both from the street and from the car park. The hall is accessed via double outer doors with a total width of 1.4m. A large lobby area then leads to another set of wide double doors and this leads in turn to another utility area giving access to the main hall itself.</p> <p>The internal space dimensions of the hall measure 8m x 13m. Ideally the hall would be wider than 8m to accommodate two separate polling stations (but see report for the Church hall which compares unfavourably).</p> <p>All other facilities at the hall are considered adequate and suitable for use.</p> <p>There seems no dispute about the suitability of the building for polling use. The Parish Council's argument turns on the matter of inconvenience. If another building with similar good standard facilities were available proper consideration could be given to making a change. That is not the case. Convenience for other users of the hall is not a material consideration in determining the suitability of a polling place.</p>
	Score awarded	46
	Recommendation	Continue to designate Bolford Street Hall as the polling place for Thaxted.

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Polling District	Building(s) assessed	COMMENTS
THAXTED	Church Hall, Margaret Street, Thaxted	
	General commentary	See commentary under Bolford Street Hall for background information to the suggestion made by Thaxted Parish Council.
	Site visit report	<p>The Church Hall is located along the narrow road at Margaret Street adjoining the public car park. The distance to the car park entrance from the bottom of the steps leading to the hall at street level is approximately 40m. There is no parking at the hall itself but one or two cars may be able to park on the road.</p> <p>The hall is more central than the hall at Bolford Street but in every other respect is considered a less suitable location.</p> <p>The access arrangements can be described as follows. There are three sets of external steps leading to the main entrance, comprising of 11 steps in total. It would be difficult but not impossible for a wheelchair bound voter to access the hall via the main entrance. The doorway width of 1.2m would permit access but the steps would be awkward and lead into a constricted lobby space and then internal doors 1.15m wide.</p> <p>However, there is a steep well surfaced path leading round the side of the building to another entrance with a doorway width of 1.4m. This door gives direct access to the main hall. The distance from the road to the side entrance is approximately 30m. At one point where the path turns a corner the width of the path is only 0.6m. This is the main entrance used by disabled users of the hall.</p> <p>Access arrangements are not considered to be of a sufficiently high standard to be used for polling, provided that a more accessible building is available. Ideally, it should be possible to use the same entrance for all electors and this is the general aim in designating polling places.</p> <p>The internal space dimensions of the hall measure 6m x 9.5m. This space is not considered adequate to accommodate two polling stations.</p>
	Score awarded	36
Recommendation	Retain Bolford Street Hall as the polling place for Thaxted.	