

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

Essex Disabled People's Association Survey

There are 67 buildings presently designated as polling places in the present scheme, one for each designated polling district. Of these:

- 47 are effectively village or parish halls, usually owned by the parish council, or a village hall committee or charitable trust.
- 1 is a former village hall now run as an office/interview facility by the drugs advisory service.
- 4 are churches or church halls.
- 4 are public hire buildings owned by either Great Dunmow or Saffron Walden Town Council.
- 1 is a WI hall.
- 2 are public houses.
- 3 are schools (one state run, two private schools).
- 3 are buildings other than schools owned by Essex County Council.
- 1 is owned by UDC.
- 1 is owned by a commercial company.

The majority of buildings surveyed had some minor issues highlighted in connection with accessibility of the buildings to disabled electors. A few had no issues raised at all.

In eleven cases, more major faults were identified. They are:

Ashdon Village Hall

1. The principal entrance is on the other side of the building to the car park and the surface of the car park is constructed of loose pea shingle.
2. A steep slope would make the main entrance very difficult for wheelchair users and those with mobility impairment.
3. The main entrance door has a width of only 735mm, although the alternative entrance is adequate.
4. There is a 15.5m long, internal sloped approach to the polling area from the main entrance.
5. Recessed coconut matting is too thin to fill the mat well and therefore not level with the floor.
6. Internal doorway at top of the internal slope is only 710mm wide.

Broxted Village Hall

1. Car park area constructed with loose pea shingle.
2. There are steps leading to the main entrance with no handrail and no ramped approach is provided, although there is an alternative entrance.
3. The nosings on the steps have not been highlighted.
4. The alternative, level access entrance is at the rear of the building, via a long pathway.

Duddenhoe End Village Hall

1. The access route from the car park has loose paving slabs which make for an uneven surface.

2. There is no level or suitably ramped approach to the entrance door, although there is an alternative level access provided. Unfortunately, this is uneven due to the varying levels of concrete. There is a short ramp, which makes the gradient rather steep. There is no handrail provision.

Elmdon Village Hall

1. The approach to the building is via a grass and slab paved path.
2. There is no level or suitably ramped approach to the entrance door; an alternative entrance is provided at the rear of the building. There is a long path to the rear of the building which is accessed by grass. The door width into the rear of the building is narrow.
3. The threshold to the building is only present on the outside of the building but could cause problems with access for wheelchair users.

Great Canfield Church Hall

1. The parking area is surfaced with grass and loose pea shingle.
2. The doorway from the hall into the polling area has a threshold of 35mm. Current guidelines in Part M of the Building Regulations require thresholds of 15mm.

High Roding W.I. Hall

1. There is parking only on the roadway or grass verge; only one space is accessible via a drop kerb; if temporary parking was allocated on the grass/mud verge there is no safe or easy transfer area.
2. There is a threshold of 30mm to the principal entrance door. Current guidelines require 15mm.
3. The doorway from the front hall into the polling area is only 715mm wide.

Little Hallingbury Village Hall

1. There is no colour contrast to the hand rail provided at the steps to the main entrance, and the nosings are not highlighted.
2. The alternative entrance does not comply with current guide lines as a wheelchair user would have to ask for the wooden portable ramp to be placed in position. Lightweight portable ramps are preferred or something permanent.
3. There is a 40mm threshold to the principal door entrance. Current guidelines require only 15mm.
4. There is a loose coconut mat inside the main entrance. This can cause tripping hazards for the visually impaired and is difficult for a wheelchair user to negotiate.
5. Funding for the required changes is vital.

Manuden Village Hall

1. On road parking only is provided; there is a drop kerb nearby.
2. There is only one step of 200mm up into the principal entrance; there is no suitably ramped approach. A portable ramp is available if needed but this cannot be securely attached to the step.
3. The only other entrance also has a 200mm step.
4. The principal entrance door has an internal threshold of 35mm.
5. Ramped access is vital to this location. Funding for the required changes is vital.

Newport Village Hall

1. The road outside the front of the building is uneven.
2. There is one curved step and one straight step leading to the main entrance; the nosings on the steps are not highlighted.
3. There is no ramped approach to the main entrance but an alternative entrance is provided via an externally ramped access; however with only one door open there is only 700mm width opening.
4. Coconut matting in the mat well inside the main entrance is very worn.

Quendon and Rickling Village Hall

1. The access to the main access is via an unmade car park.
2. No handrail is provided at the main entrance steps and there is no contrasting material on the step nosings.
3. There is no suitably ramped approach provided to the entrance door and there is no alternative entrance.
4. The coconut matting in the entrance well is worn and presents a trip hazard.
5. This has been subject to a review by the Access Group and still no action has been taken to improve access into the hall for wheelchair users. Funding is required to support this work.

Stansted Youth Centre

1. There is no handrail or colour contrast to the step nosings at the main entrance.
2. There is no suitably ramped approach to the entrance door although an alternative level access is provided.
3. There is an internal step down to the principal entrance. The alternative access has a 55mm threshold to the internal doorway. Current guidelines require a 15mm threshold.