

Polling District and Polling Places Review Consultation Paper 2023

1. Introduction and proposals

- 1.1 Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places for UK parliamentary constituencies at least once every five years. The next statutory review must take place between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.
- 1.2 New parliamentary constituencies come into effect on 1 November 2023. A general election can be called at any time and no later than January 2025. Also, the Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections (the “GLA Elections”) will take place on 2 May 2023.
- 1.3 This review needs to take place as soon as possible so that the electoral register can be published on the new parliamentary boundaries and can be used for these coming elections. The aim is for the review to be complete in time for the General Purposes Committee to give due consideration to the proposals whilst still allowing sufficient time for the Electoral Registration Officer to implement the proposals by mid-January 2024.
- 1.4 Consultation with the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and then with the public and stakeholders is a required part of the review process.
- 1.5 Having reviewed the electorates at each polling place, it is proposed to make a change to the polling district boundary between “CEN-A” and “CEN-B”. No other changes are proposed to the current approved polling scheme.
 - Comments are invited on the entire polling scheme, both the proposed change and the remainder that is proposed to be unchanged.
 - The polling district codes may need to be changed when the outcome of the review is implemented – we will make sure they are distinct from the codes used where there are shared parliamentary constituencies.

2. Background

- 2.1 Reviews of the polling districts and polling places were conducted in 2021 and 2022:
 - The 2021 review was triggered by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) with the new wards coming into force for the local elections on 5 May 2022. The revised polling scheme was approved by the Corporate Committee on 16 November 2021 and was implemented at the May 2022 elections.
 - The 2022 review followed the May 2022 elections and was carried out to refine the polling scheme and to include feedback and lessons from the elections. This included feedback from candidates and agents, polling station staff, polling station inspectors, the RO team and comment/complaints received from voters in polling stations.

- 2.2 New rules have recently been introduced by the government. This includes the requirement for voters to show photo ID at the polling station and strengthens the requirements to ensure that the electoral process is accessible. These changes mean:
- new equipment is provided to each polling place to make it accessible to more people.
 - electors will be in the station slightly longer as the process for issuing ballot papers has an extra step. This may lead to queues at busier times.
 - an area or space needs to be provided for ID to be checked in private if the elector requests this.

3. Scope of the review

The reviews consider:

- How to divide each parliamentary constituency as evenly as possible - the Electoral Commission guidance is that there should be, at most, 2250 electors per polling station (excluding postal voters).
 - the proposed polling districts align with the ward structure of the borough.
- Suitable locations are needed for polling to take place, accounting for:
 - each polling district must have a polling place.
 - a polling place may be used as a location for more than one polling station.
 - natural boundaries or features such as railways or hills may limit access to that location.

3.1 The following terms are being used in this document:

- Polling Districts: A polling district is a geographical area created by dividing parliamentary constituencies. For any local elections, they are divisions of the wards in the borough.
- Polling Places: A polling place is the building or area in which the polling stations will be designated. There will only be one polling place for each polling district.
- Polling Stations: A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

3.2 The following principles are used in the review:

- Reasonable walking distance is assumed as 10-15 minutes, and distances aim to account for topography.
- A further aim is to minimise the use of schools:
 - Some schools are happy to be used and can either plan an inset day or have a separate space that can be used with minimal disruption.
 - Where a school must close, then options in the local community are sought.
 - Schools that need to close are used as the polling place where an alternative space is not available.

4. Developing the proposals

The current electorate allocated to each polling place has been checked. The polling districts that have an in-person electorate (i.e., excluding postal voters) above the Electoral Commission guidance of 2250 have a polling place designated that is large enough to allow for two polling stations. Thus, the current polling scheme already meets the Electoral Commission's guidance. This is because the review that was carried out in 2021 considered future population trends, including increases due to developments taking place in some areas of the borough. The 2021 review also aimed to future proof the capacity of the polling places considering the anticipated Voter ID requirements. Further refinements were made during the 2022 review.

Not all the polling places are ideal or are used to their full potential but, in terms of location and allocated electorate, they meet the requirements. There is an ongoing programme of work to review how polling places are used and made accessible for polling days.

5. Consultation

Notice has been given of the intention to conduct a review of the polling districts and polling places.

Attached are:

- The proposed changes to the polling district boundary between polling districts CEN-A and CEN-B (Appendix 1).
- The current polling scheme, the remainder of which will be unchanged (Appendix 2).

The Acting Returning Officer for Hornsey & Wood Green and Tottenham parliamentary constituencies was consulted on these proposals and made the following comments:

- I support this proposal for the change to the boundary between polling district CEN-A and polling district CEN-B in Crouch End Ward of the Hornsey and Wood Green constituency.
- I support the proposal to make no other changes to the designated polling scheme. This current review follows two in-depth reviews in 2021 and 2022 that sought to future-proof the polling scheme, both in terms of population increases (including new developments) and legislative changes. I am aware that work is on-going to improve access arrangements to some polling places and I support this piece of work.

This paper is the second stage of the consultation. Comments are invited on the proposals from:

- Elected representatives

- Members of the public
- Organisations who have an interest in supporting accessibility
- Other key stakeholders

Comments should be sent to elections@haringey.gov.uk or by post to Haringey Council, George Meehan House, High Road, Wood Green, London N22 8YX.

The deadline for consultation is Wednesday 15 November 2023.