

Suggestions for alternative polling stations

Holywell Ward

Council received a response from Councillor Bell to consider adding a third polling place within the Holywell Ward area, basically to redistribute part of the electorate currently allotted to the Chessbrook Education Centre. However, no additional premise or location was provided or suggested by Councillor Bell in his request.

Officer's response: Councillor Bell was re-contacted with a request for any suggestion of additional premise or location but without reply, and officers have been unable to locate an additional premise or suitably sized site with the potential for ongoing use as a polling place.

Pros: Additional polling stations can assist in raising elector turnout at all election levels.

Cons: Any additional polling place would mean additional costs going forward, and if it were appropriate and necessary to provide a temporary polling station i.e. Portakabin plus essential access ramp, toilet facilities and possibly power generator, the costs would be very high e.g. on the last occasion it was necessary to provide a temporary Portakabin polling station the cost was almost 60% of all the other Borough polling stations combined. With regard to Councillor Bell's request I would highlight the detail below with regard to the Council's current designated Polling Scheme for Watford Borough plus a map detailing the Holywell Ward with current polling districts KA, KB and KC with 2 x designated polling places is attached as Appendix 2a illustrating size and location of electorate in relation to current locations: -

Watford Borough Ward Polling Arrangements at Major and Combined Polls			
Note - in some instances the total station numbers are occasionally reduced when a single poll is held i.e. double stations run as single and such like dependent upon election type			
WARD	Total Polling Places	Total Polling Stations	Total Electorate (May 2019)
Callowland	3	(2 x 2 + 1 =) 5	5,578
Central	4	(1 x 2 + 3 x 1 =) 5	6,241
Holywell	2	(1 x 3 + 1 x 2 =) 5	6,470
Leggatts	3	(2 x 2 + 1 =) 5	5,728
Meriden	3	(2 x 2 + 1 =) 5	5,765
Nascot	2	(1 x 3 + 1 x 2 =) 5	6,560
Oxhey	2	(2 x 2 =) 4	5,276
Park	2	(1 x 3 + 1 x 2 =) 5	6,283

Stanborough	3	$(1 \times 2 + 2 \times 1 =) 4$	5,608
Tudor	3	$(1 \times 3 + 2 \times 1 =) 5$	5,192
Vicarage	3	$(2 \times 2 + 1 \times 1 =) 5$	5,597
Woodside	3	$(2 \times 2 + 1 =) 5$	5,801

Recommendation: that existing 2 x polling places / 5 x polling stations within the Holywell Ward be retained without addition.

Leggatts Ward

DA – The Orchard Primary School, Gammons Lane, Watford, WD24 5JW

Response received: The executive head teacher has asked the council to consider moving the polling station from his school to another venue. He acknowledges the need for the council to have polling stations and their democratic role. However the school has to close on polling day due to its layout and design. He suggested St Mark's Church, Leggatts Way, Watford, WD24 5NQ as an alternative polling station.

Officer's response: Following receipt of the responses the Electoral Services Manager visited St Mark's Church. The pros and cons of the change have been set out below. Based on this officers are of the opinion that changing the polling station to St Mark's Church would not be a viable option. It could have a negative impact on voter turnout.

Pros: The premises contained suitable facilities, has disability access into the building, the polling place, but will require some adaptation to permit smooth and safe wheeled access into the actual polling station. This could be managed if necessary. It had adequate car parking facilities.

Cons: However the location of the premises is on the edge of the polling district. Although it is suitable for some of the properties in the area many others would have to travel a lot further and potentially these voters may be less likely to walk to the polling station. For example those voters living in Goodwood Avenue and all other properties in the west of the polling district DA. This additional distance may be a problem for some voters.

A map of polling district DA is attached as Appendix 2b showing the location of Orchard Primary School and St Mark's Church.

Recommendation: that Orchard Primary School be retained as the Polling Station for Polling District DA

Leggatts Ward continued
DC – Cherry Tree Primary School,

Response received: The council received two responses regarding this polling station, as shown in Appendix 1. The Head Teacher contacted the council and asked officers to consider moving the polling station from her school to Everett Rovers Football Club on the adjacent playing field. The full response is set out in Appendix 1.

The second response was from a committee member of Everett Rovers Football Club, Dodd Road, Watford, WD24 5FS. A new club house had been opened earlier this year with facilities, disabled access and car parking with over 50 spaces. It could be used at short notice and would not cause disruption to other venues, e.g. schools. The full response is set out in Appendix 1.

Officers' response: Following receipt of the responses the Electoral Services Manager visited the premises and walked around the area to identify any access from Berry Avenue and the other roads on the estate. Based on the visit and the pros and cons below officers are of the opinion that moving the polling station from Cherry Tree Primary School to Everett Rovers Football Club is not a viable option. There is concern that the move would have a negative impact on voter turnout.

Pros: As stated in the response from the football club, the premises contained acceptable facilities, appropriate disabled access to the venue and car parking facilities.

Cons: However the premises is located on the boundary of the polling district. Residents requiring to drive to the polling station would need to drive off the estate into St Albans Road towards the Dome Roundabout, then along the A41 towards the M25 and then turn off the A41 into Dodd Road. When leaving the polling station, residents would have to rejoin the A41, (left turn only allowed) go up the roundabout to come back down the A41 to the Dome Roundabout or go via High Road Leavesden-Ashfields-Courtlands Drive working their way back to the estate. For pedestrians there is a small footpath at the edge of Cherry Tree Park that goes behind North Watford Jamia Mosque to the A41. At the end of this footpath there is a long flight of steps to the A41 or an extensive footpath taking the pedestrian away from the destination in order to get to the A41 step-free. There are several trees along the footpath's boundary and officers are unsure how well-lit this would be in the evening, particularly when the trees are in full leaf. Along the A41 the walk is uphill. This route may not be ideal for some voters who have to or would prefer to walk to the polling station or have some form of disability.

A map of polling district DC is attached as Appendix 2c showing the location of Cherry Tree Primary School and Everett Rovers Football Club.

Recommendation: that Cherry Tree Primary School be retained as the Polling Station for Polling District DC