

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

London Borough of Lewisham

September 2024 to January 2025

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1 Introduction and purpose of the report

- 1.1. By order of section 18c of the Representation of the People Act, the Returning Officer for Lewisham Council is required to undertake a review of all polling districts and places every 5 years.
- 1.2. The last scheduled Review took place between August and December 2021. This current review must be completed by 31 January 2025.
- 1.3. This report provides the initial recommendations of the Returning Officer for councillors to consider. They draw on feedback from residents as well as the views of the election team.
- 1.4. Definition of terms:
 - Polling Station: A room or building which is used for the issuing of ballot papers to voters
 - Polling Place: The building or area where polling stations are situated
 - Polling District: An area of residential properties containing electors who are allocated to a polling place

For example, the polling district will be a large area comprising a series of roads and estates, the polling place is a local school, and the polling station is the main hall within the school.

2 Scope and Objectives of the Review

- 2.1. The Review will examine all Polling Districts and Polling Places but ward boundaries cannot be altered as part of this Review.
- 2.2. Polling Places will be selected according to the following criteria:
 - Compliance with Electoral Commission guidance
 - Accessibility will be a central consideration
 - Availability and cost – we require Polling Places that can be used for every election at a cost that is reasonable to the taxpayer

- No more than 2,250 electors to be allocated to each Polling Station, noting that a Polling Place can accommodate multiple Polling Stations

2.3. By way of context, it is noteworthy that some Polling Places that would normally be used are no longer of suitable quality, and in some Polling Districts the Polling Places are no longer available.

2.4. Information will be provided for each ward detailing any issues requiring solutions and the proposed new polling arrangements.

3 The Timetable

13 September 2024	Publish Notice of holding a review and start of consultation period
14 October 2024	Start of ward consultation meetings
25 October 2024	Deadline for representations
14 November 2024	Publish ARO's revised proposals, applying representations and feedback
22 January 2025	Formal meeting of the council to approve the new proposals
31 January 2025	Publish the electoral register using new polling districts

4 Key Issues for the Proposals

4.1. According to Electoral Commission guidance, no polling station should have more than 2,500 electors allocated to it. This excludes postal voters and those not eligible to vote. Where a polling district has more than 2,500 electors allocated to it the electorate is split between 2 polling stations in the same venue. In Lewisham we believe the figure of 2,500 is slightly too high, and set a figure of 2,250 for the maximum number of electors allocated to a single polling station. Should the electorate be higher, we allocate a second polling station in the polling place. This is known as a double polling station.

4.2. Polling stations should be local to the voters. Where possible, voters should be no more than 15 minutes walk from their polling station.

4.3. Continuity of the polling scheme is important. Many residents will become familiar with the location of their polling station and any change could lead to a decline in turnout. However, it is still possible to change the location – ensuring that the new location is suitable and sufficient notice has been given by more than one communication channel, including direct contact.

4.4. No polling station should have fewer than 1,300 electors allocated to it – this will ensure value for money in terms of costs per voter. This minimum number of voters will only apply where it is practical. If the walk would be too great a distance then a local venue for an isolated group of voters can be preferable.

4.5. All new polling places must be assessed for accessibility, proximity to voters in that polling district and facilities for staff such as toilets, kitchen and parking.

- 4.6. Physical barriers such as railway lines, parks, and main roads can prevent an easy division of electors to polling districts. The proposals must take these into account and regard the safety of electors travelling to and from their polling place.
- 4.7. Transport links in polling districts should be considered – they can improve accessibility for electors. Where changes are required the Review will note the provision of bus stops and parking spaces.
- 4.8. When allocating electors to polling places and stations the review will account for previous electoral turnout, reviews undertaken and lessons learnt after each election and the capacity of polling staff to deal with high turnouts.
- 4.9. The management of polling stations and staff for elections demands a lot of resource and risk. Sometimes a double polling station, serving a large number of electors, allows us to reduce cost and focus our staff and equipment on a single venue. That gives us extra resilience and opportunities to maximise the use of our best staff and resources. Where there are 2 polling venues in close proximity, we should consider combining the district and using a single venue, to realise these benefits.
- 4.10. The Returning Officer notes that the use of schools as polling places can cause significant disruption to pupils, teachers and parents. With plenty of notice schools can often use the occasion as a training day, and give parents/carers more than enough time to make alternative arrangements. Communication between schools and electoral staff gives schools the time to do this. However, we will continue to be proactive in identifying alternative venues to schools wherever possible but cannot rule out using them.

5 The Decision Making Process

- 5.1. The notice of review was published on Friday 13 September. Residents and interested parties have been invited to submit representations.
- 5.2. The Returning Officer's proposals have been subject to an internal decision making process involving lead officers for electoral services, facilities and the health and safety team. They are now presented to all Councillors who will give expert feedback using their excellent local knowledge.
- 5.3. Ward meetings will be held with councillors to review these proposals alongside all submissions received from residents, and any other information. These meetings will be used to revise the proposals and come to agreements for each ward on a draft final scheme.
- 5.4. The Returning Officer will publish a report listing their final proposals. As part of the report, all representations will be published with the Returning Officer's response. This will be presented to the Governance Committee to consider and approve before being submitted to Full Council in January 2025.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1. Appendix A provides an equalities impact assessment (EIA).
- 6.2. The EIA examines the electoral process and provides information and actions for how we can make voting in polling places accessible for all residents who are eligible to vote.
- 6.3. The recommendations made in the EIA are reflected in the Returning Officer's proposals.

7. Polling District References

- 7.1. Polling districts must give reference to both the ward and the parliamentary constituency.
- 7.2. Lewisham polling districts are formatted in the following way:

First letter references the Parliamentary constituency
Second 2 letters references the Ward
Followed by a number
Special districts have a letter A at the end

- 7.3. As our Parliamentary constituencies have changed, the polling district references must change too. Our revised polling districts will now appear as:

WARD	CONSTITUENCY	PD REFERENCE
Bellingham	Lewisham East	EBE
Catford South	Lewisham East	ECA
Downham	Lewisham East	EDO
Grove Park	Lewisham East	EGR
Hither Green	Lewisham East	EHG
Lee Green	Lewisham East	ELG
Rushey Green	Lewisham East	ERU
Blackheath	Lewisham North	EBL
Brockley	Lewisham North	NBR
Deptford	Lewisham North	NDE
Evelyn	Lewisham North	NEV
Ladywell	Lewisham North	NLA
Lewisham Central	Lewisham North	NLC
New Cross Gate	Lewisham North	NNG
Telegraph Hill	Lewisham North	NTE
Crofton Park	Lewisham West & East Dulwich	WCR
Forest Hill	Lewisham West & East Dulwich	WFO
Perry Vale	Lewisham West & East Dulwich	WPE
Sydenham	Lewisham West & East Dulwich	WSY

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LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

BELLINGHAM WARD

Bellingham Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	6,194	768	6,962
Local Elections	6,715	834	7,549

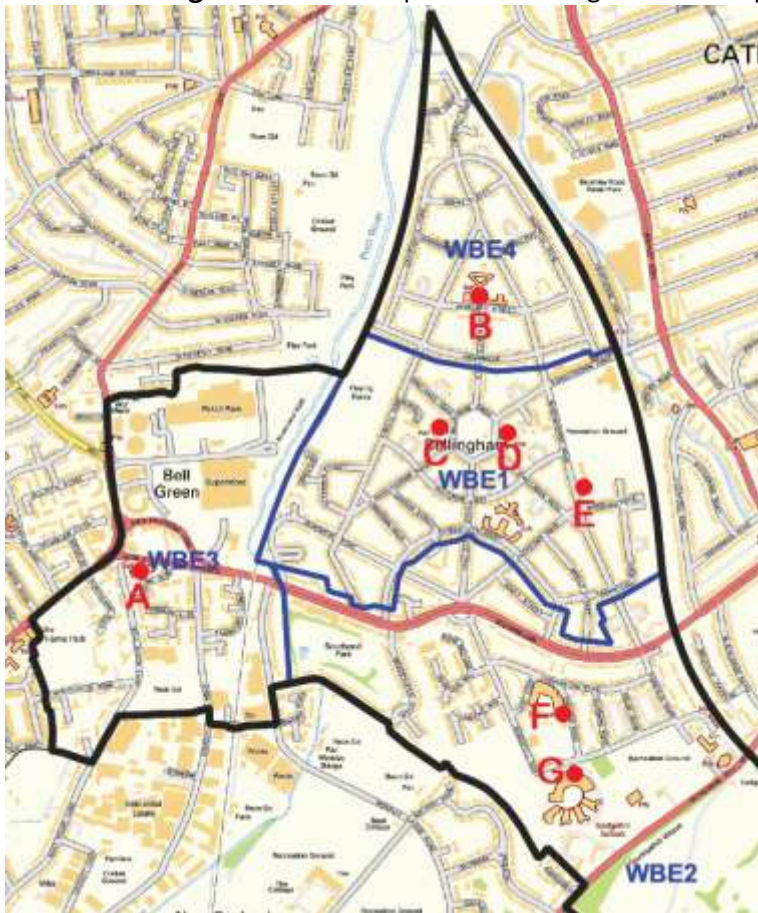
Summary

- The current polling scheme has 4 polling districts, with polling places towards the centre in each district. This is close to the ideal situation but turnout in this ward is the lowest in the borough
- It is believed the low turnout is not due to the polling places – their location or facilities – but related to other factors that are outside the scope of this review
- The only issue in this ward is the polling station for WBE2. Previously we used the Sedgehill Community Centre, but that has been knocked down. Then we used the Dumps Playground, but that is being closed and not due to reopen until Spring 2026
- Note the next scheduled elections are in May 2026, so the Dumps Playground should be available. This means we can retain that polling place but ensure we have a temporary solution for any unscheduled polls that could take place before May 2026

The ARO's proposal

- Retain the current polling districts and places
- For WBE2, retain the Dumps Playground, and use one of 2 options:
 - A portacabin outside the same site
 - Sedgehill Academy has a large foyer area. This would be a good space for a polling place and could be used without significant disruption to the school

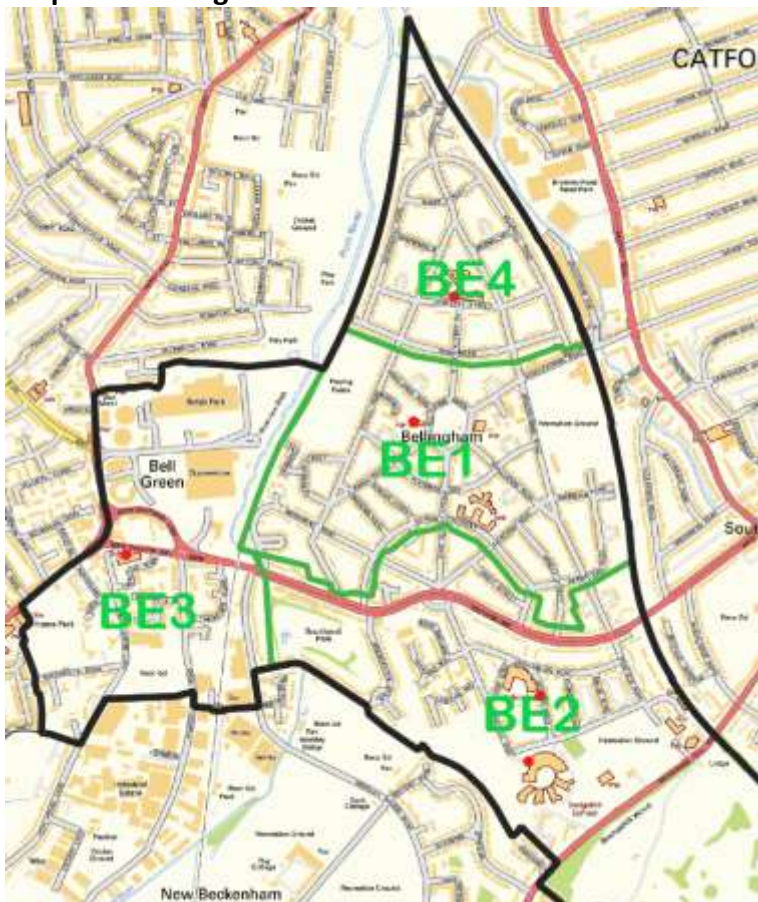
Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Haseltine Primary School
B	Athelney Primary School
C	Christ Church United Reformed Church
D	St. Dunstan's Church
E	Bellingham Gateway Youth and Community Centre
F	Dumps Adventure Playground
G	Sedgehill Academy, Foyer area

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

EBE1	Christ Church United Reformed Church The Dumps
EBE2	(Sedgehill School for polls before May 26)
EBE3	Haseltine Primary School
EBE4	Athelney Primary School

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

CATFORD SOUTH WARD

Catford South Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,556	1,760	11,316
Local Elections	10,319	1,878	12,197

Summary

This ward is average size and has benefited from a turnout that matches the borough wide average. In the past few years we've had problems with the polling place for ECA4, and in 2024 had to settle with sending all voters to the polling place of the neighbouring district ECA5 at St. John's Church. This arrangement actually worked very well, and there has been no problems reported by voters. Elsewhere in the ward we have found the electorate in ECA1 is slightly too large, with the polling station not quite big enough to manage a large double station. We've also experienced issues with the polling place in ECA3, the Synagogue. This venue is expensive, and there are restrictions on the refreshments the staff are able to bring.

The ARO's proposal

- Formalise the arrangement of the double station at St. John's Church, merging those 2 districts
- Move the boundary for ECA2, bringing in some voters from the old ECA3
- Create a new polling place for ECA3 in the very good venue at the Bellingham Bowling Club
- Move the boundary between ECA3 and ECA1, reducing ECA1 to a more manageable size

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating polling places

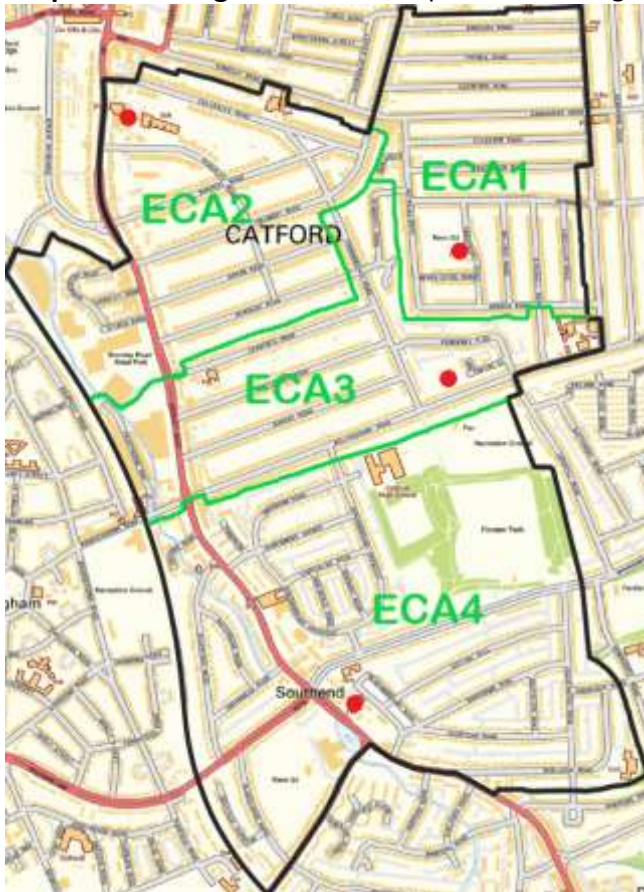


Potential Polling Places

A	Laurence Centre
B	Holy Cross Church Hall
C	Corbett Community Library
D	St. Andrew's Church Hall
E	Abbotshall Healthy Lifestyle Centre
F	Torridon Primary School
G	Bellingham Bowling Club
H	Catford and Bromley Synagogue
I	Haskins Community Room
J	St. John's Church
K	Green Man - Phoenix Community Housing

District	Voters	Polling Place
ECA1	3478	Abbotshall Healthy Lifestyle Centre
ECA2	1775	Laurence Centre
ECA3	1301	Catford and Bromley Synagogue
ECA4	1787	St. John's Church
ECA5	1978	St. John's Church

Proposed Polling Scheme – with points indicating the polling place



District	Voters	Polling Place
ECA1	2720	Abbotshall Healthy Lifestyle Centre
ECA2	1986	Laurence Centre
ECA3	1834	Bellingham Bowling Club
ECA4	3755	St. John's Church

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

DOWNHAM WARD

Downham Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,636	1,660	11,296
Local Elections	10,573	1,820	12,393

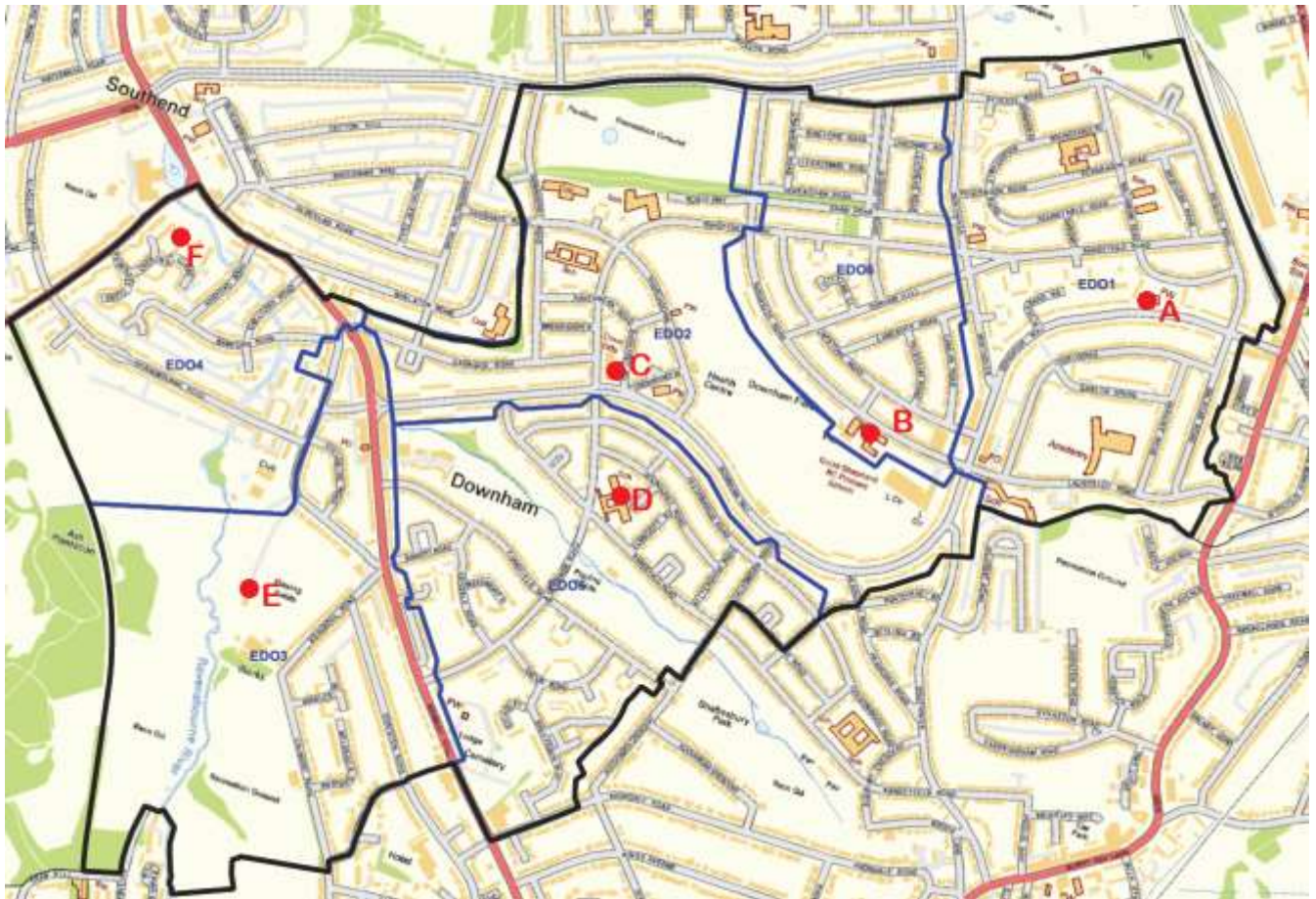
Summary

- Downham ward has had a low turnout at elections for many years
- There are fewer voters allocated per polling station than the average for Lewisham
- 2 districts in this ward have low electorates of around 1,000 voters
- Normally we would seek to reduce the number of districts and push up the ratio of voters to stations, but given the low turnout, we feel that would be counter-productive
- There is also a lack of alternative venues, especially in the very south of the ward
- The geography, road layout and density of housing do not allow for a reduction in the number of districts without causing many voters having a walking distance to their station of over 15 minutes

The ARO's proposal

We propose to keep the polling scheme in this ward unchanged. However, we would appreciate any comments or suggestions on the existing polling scheme, and any potential alternative polling places.

Current and Proposed Polling Scheme – with points indicating polling places



Polling Districts and Polling Places

EDO1	A	King's Church, (Main Hall), The Green, BR1 5LS
EDO2	C	Downham Community Centre, (Large Hall), Wesley Halls, BR1 5PE
EDO3	E	Ten Em Bee Sports Development Centre, BR1 4JY
EDO4	F	Catford Wanderers Sports Club, SE6 2NU
EDO5	D	Rangefield Primary School, Rockets Building, BR1 4RP
EDO6	B	Good Shepherd Primary School, Moorside Road, BR1 5EP

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

GROVE PARK WARD

Grove Park Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,414	1,558	9,972
Local Elections	9,246	1,673	10,919

Summary

- This is another ward where the current polling scheme has been working well
- But we have had feedback from residents and teachers regarding the use of Baring Primary School
- The school has to close for polling day and there is no way of placing the polling station in a separate area in the school
- There are 2 churches in close proximity, both of which would be very good alternatives
- Elsewhere in the ward there is a youth centre and library that are not currently used. However, their location is not as good as the current polling places and so we are not recommending a switch in those districts

The ARO's proposal

We propose to keep the polling districts in this ward unchanged, and retain all polling places except for EGR3. In this district we will change the polling place to one of the neighbouring churches. The final decision will be made after a site visit and assessment of each venue.

Current and Proposed Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	St Mildred's Church
B	Baring Primary School
C	Trinity Presbyterian Church
D	Burnt Ash Methodist Church Hall
E	Ringway Centre
F	Grove Park Library
G	St. Augustine's Church Hall
H	Grove Park Youth Club
I	W.G.Grace Community Centre

Polling Districts and Polling Places

EGR1	W.G.Grace Community Centre
EGR2	St. Augustine's Church Hall
EGR3	Trinity Presbyterian Church, or St. Mildred's Church
EGR4	Ringway Centre
EGR5	Burnt Ash Methodist Church Hall

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

HITHER GREEN WARD

Hither Green Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	10,262	1,966	12,228
Local Elections	11,253	2,088	13,341

Summary

Hither Green has the highest number of local government electors in the whole of Lewisham. The polling station turnout is around 55% for Parliamentary elections and 30% for local elections, which aligns with the borough average.

Brindishe Green Primary School has asked to be relieved of polling duties, and we have had a few complaints from residents in the past to that effect too (parents of pupils at the school). St. Swithun's Church would be a good replacement.

If we move HG1 to St. Swithun's Church, there are a large number of voters towards the bottom of HG1 who would now be much closer to St. Christopher's, which is the polling place for HG2.

Brownhill Road Baptist Church has been used as a polling place in the past, but it is on the main road and there is no disabled parking, or staff parking, on that side of the road.

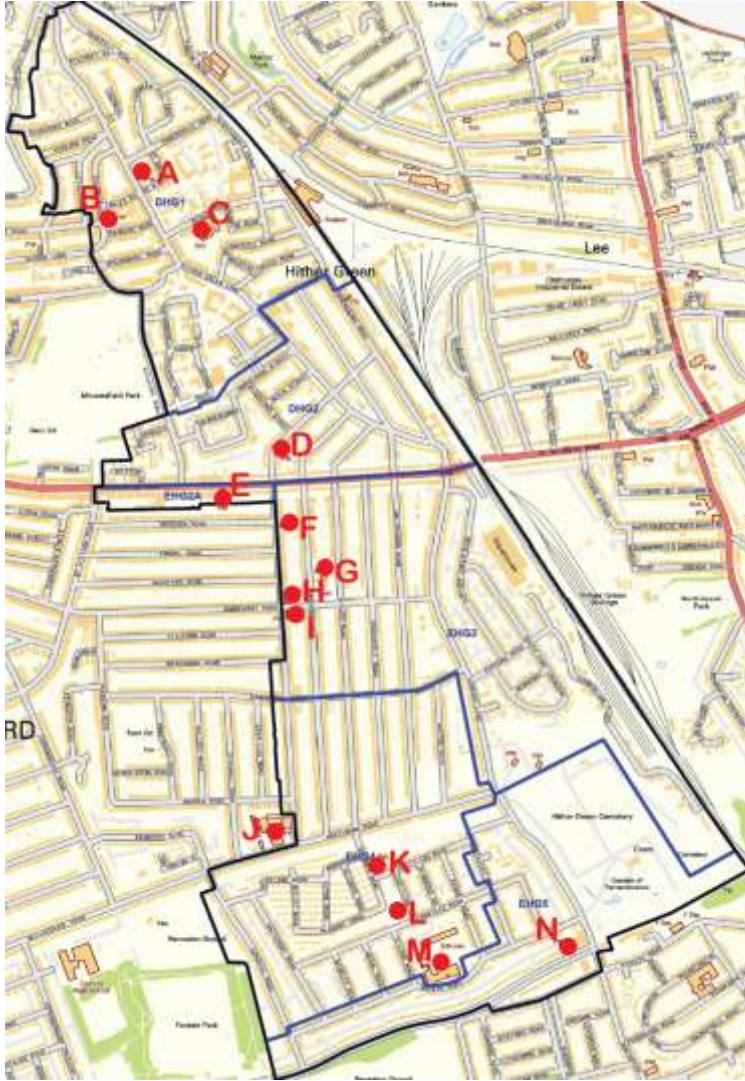
In the south of the ward, in HG5, the turnout is the lowest in this ward. Many of the voters in that district actually live closer to Goldsmiths, the polling place for HG4. Therefore, merging those districts is a good option.

In HG4, the roads above Hazelbank Road are closer to St. Andrew's Church, so the boundary could be moved downwards and give those voters less distance to walk.

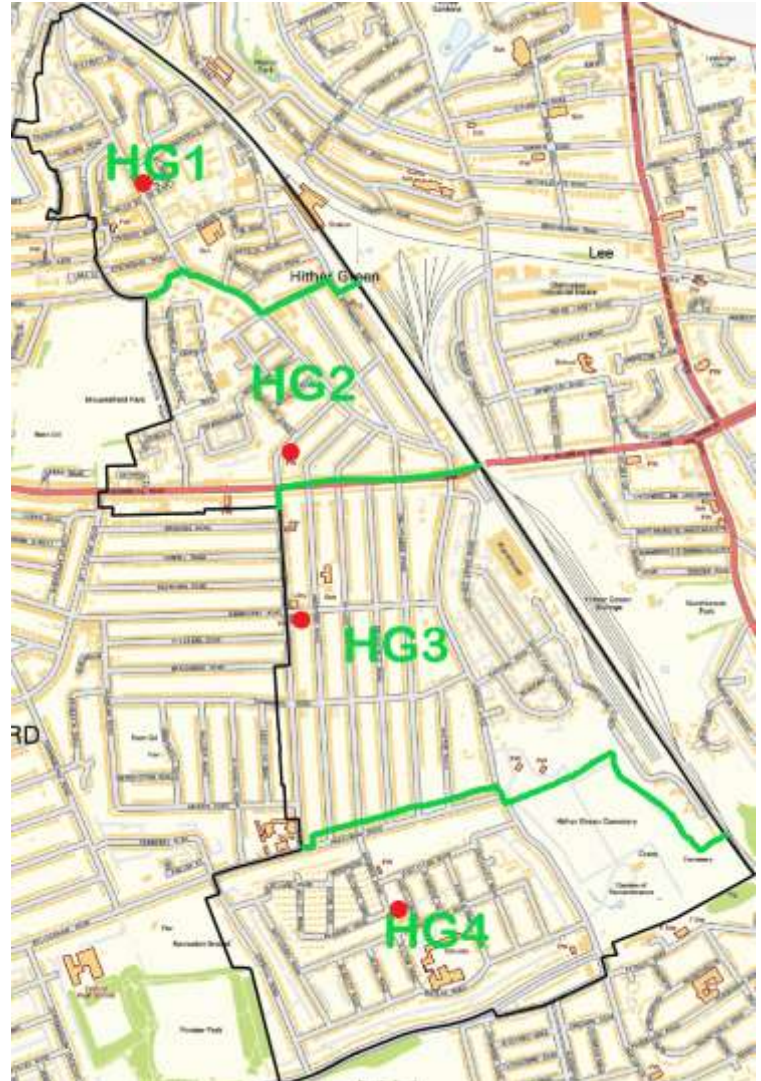
The ARO's proposal

- Move the polling place for HG1 to St. Swithun's Church, relieving Brindishe School
- Move the boundary in HG2 to include the voters to the west of Hither Green Lane in the estate around the old hospital site
- Merge HG4 and HG5, sending all voters to Goldsmiths Community Centre
- Move the boundary for HG4 down to Hazelbank Road
- This creates 4 districts, each with a double station, with the large hall at St. Andrew's with a large double station. This would allow for a good use of our staff resources and optimise our use of the best venues

Current Polling Scheme



Proposed Polling Scheme



Potential Polling Places

A	St. Swithun's Church Hall
B	Hither Green Baptist Church
C	Brindishe Green Primary School
D	St. Christopher's Christian Fellowship
E	Brownhill Road Baptist Church
F	Hither Green Methodist Church
G	Sandhurst Primary School
H	Corbett Community Library
I	St. Andrew's Church Hall
J	Torridon Primary School
K	St. Mark's Church
L	Goldsmiths Community Centre
M	Greenvale School
N	Hope Church Downham

Polling Scheme

Current Scheme

District	Voters	Polling Place
DHG1	2974	Brindishe Green Primary School
DHG2	1314	St. Christopher's Christian Fellowship
EHG3	1975	St. Andrew's Church Hall
EHG4	1780	Goldsmiths Community Centre
EHG5	763	Hope Church Downham

Proposed Scheme

District	Voters	Polling Place
HG1	3164	St. Swithun's Church Hall
HG2	2939	St. Christopher's Christian Fellowship
HG3	4053	St. Andrew's Church Hall
HG4	3142	Goldsmiths Community Centre

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

LEE GREEN WARD

Lee Green Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,194	1,483	9,677
Local Elections	8,906	1,551	10,457

Summary

- The main issue in this ward is the polling district ELG5
- The layout of roads, paths and properties isolates this area, which is unfortunate because there are no alternative venues other than Trinity Primary School
- The good news is that the school has a very accessible reception area which works well as a polling place and can be used whilst allowing the school to remain open
- Elsewhere in the ward there are 2 polling places quite close together for ELG3 and ELG4
- There could be an option to amend the districts of ELG2, ELG3 and ELG4 and create just 2 districts

The ARO's proposal

We propose to keep the polling scheme in this ward unchanged. However, we would appreciate any comments or suggestions on removing the district of ELG3, and redistributing those voters to ELG2 and ELG5.

Current and Proposed Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Trinity Primary School
B	Lochaber Hall
C	Manor House Library
D	Emmanuel Gateway Church New Testament Church of God
E	Little Elms Nursery
F	Brindishe Lee Primary School
G	The Church of the Good Shepherd Lee
H	Lee Green United Reformed Church
I	St. Winifred's Primary School
J	Our Lady of Lourdes Church

Polling Districts and Polling Places

ELG1	Lochaber Hall
ELG2	The Church of the Good Shepherd Lee
ELG3	Lee Green United Reformed Church
ELG4	Our Lady of Lourdes Church
ELG5	Trinity Primary School

LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

RUSHEY GREEN WARD

Rushey Green Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,281	1,690	10,971
Local Elections	10,381	1,846	12,227

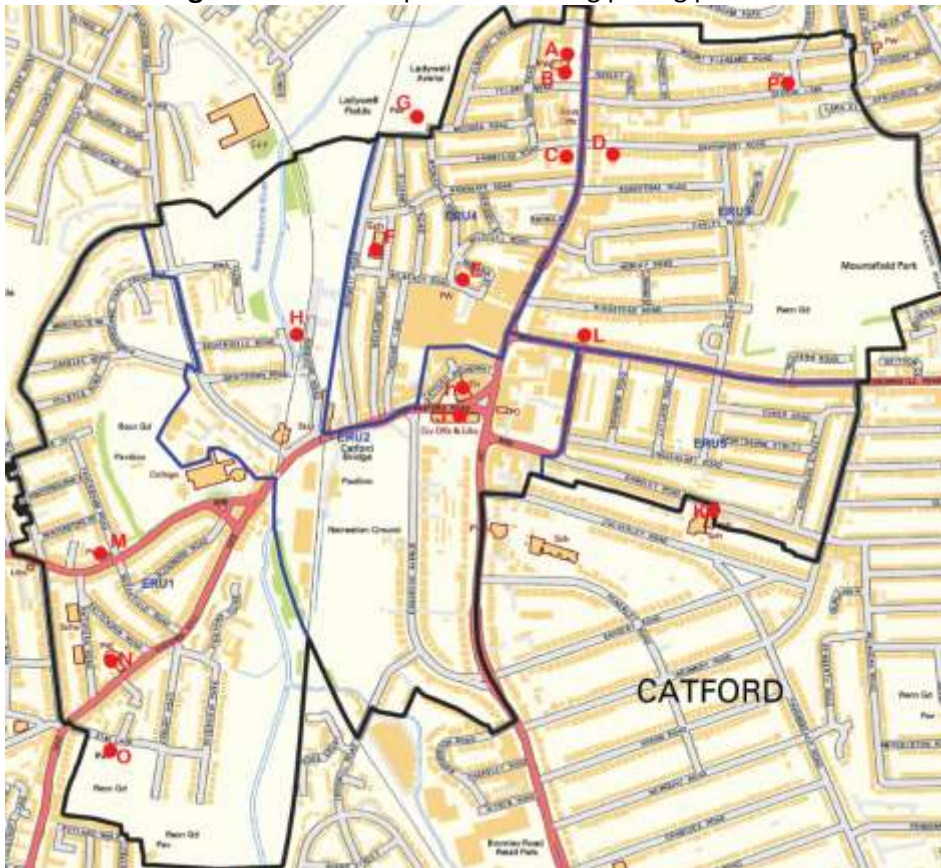
Summary

There are a lot of potential polling places in this ward, but there are some streets and blocks of houses that are over 12 minutes walk from the closest possible venue. The roads of Rushey Green, Lewisham High Street and Brownhill Road are difficult for pedestrians to cross, and we are forced to use those roads as polling district boundaries. This makes any revision to the polling scheme in this ward quite difficult.

The ARO's proposal

Holbeach Primary School is a good venue but they have to close on polling day, which has a significant impact on the local residents with pupils attending the school. The school itself is only 7 minutes walk from Laurence House, so our proposal is to move the boundary for ERU2 right up to the school and across to Rushey Green road. Then the rest of ERU4 will go to a new polling place at the Lewisham Youth Theatre. This venue was used in a previous polling scheme under its previous name of the Saville Centre. We don't propose any other changes in this ward but would be interested in any feedback on sending the ERU5 voters to Laurence House, instead of Holy Cross Church.

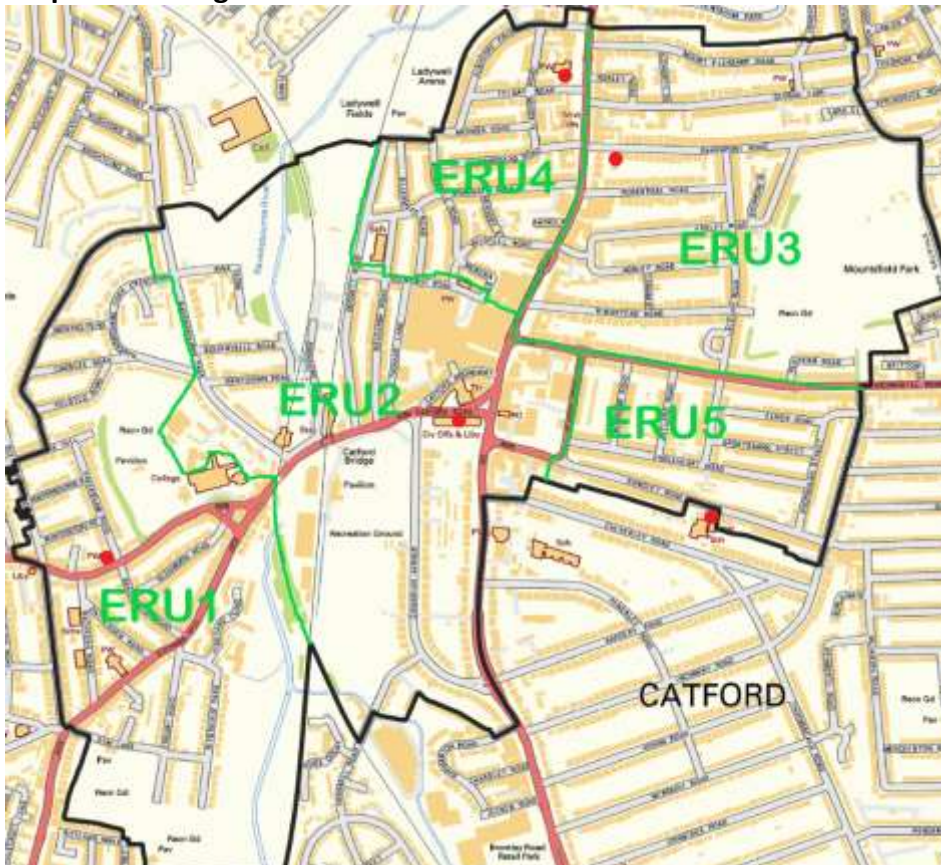
Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Lewisham 7th Day Adventist Church
B	Lewisham Youth Theatre
C	Kaleidoscope Centre
D	Lewisham Irish Centre
E	Holbeach Baptist Church
F	Holbeach Primary School
G	Ladywell Arena
H	Ladywell Bowling Club
I	Lewisham Civic Suite
J	Laurence House
K	Holy Cross Church Hartley Hall
L	Salvation Army
M	Trinity Church
N	King's Church
O	Elm Lane Pavilion
P	Holy Trinity Church

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

ERU1	Trinity United Reform Church
ERU2	Laurence House
ERU3	Lewisham Irish Centre
ERU4	Lewisham Youth Theatre
ERU5	Holy Cross RC Church Hall

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

BLACKHEATH WARD

Blackheath Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,685	1,968	10,653
Local Elections	9,588	2,069	11,657

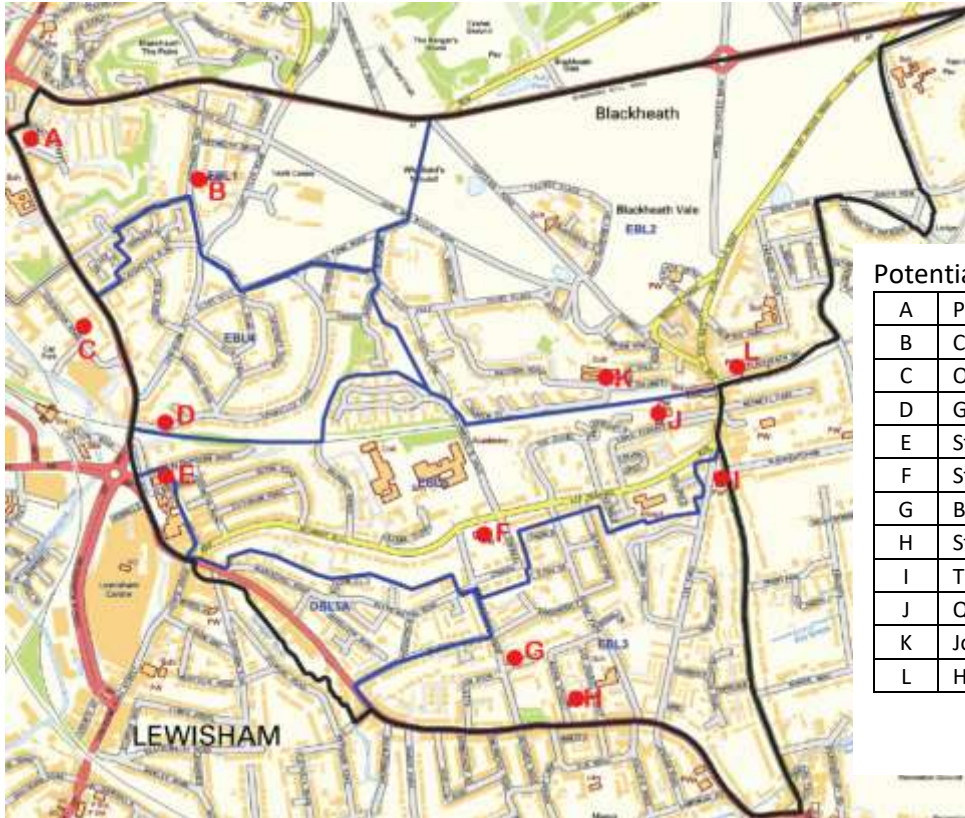
Summary

- A lot of work was done in the last review of polling districts and places to improve the polling scheme in this ward
- Since that review in 2019, the scheme has performed very well, with turnouts consistently above the borough average
- There are some alternative venues that have been investigated and ruled out for reasons including cost, location, and disabled access
- The polling places at Brandram Community Centre and St. Margaret’s Church are very close together. However, both districts have a large electorate and both polling places have double polling stations. Neither venue has the capacity for 4 polling stations, which is why it is not possible or practical to combine these districts

The ARO’s proposal

We propose to make no changes to the polling districts and places in this ward. We welcome the views of elected members, political parties and local residents.

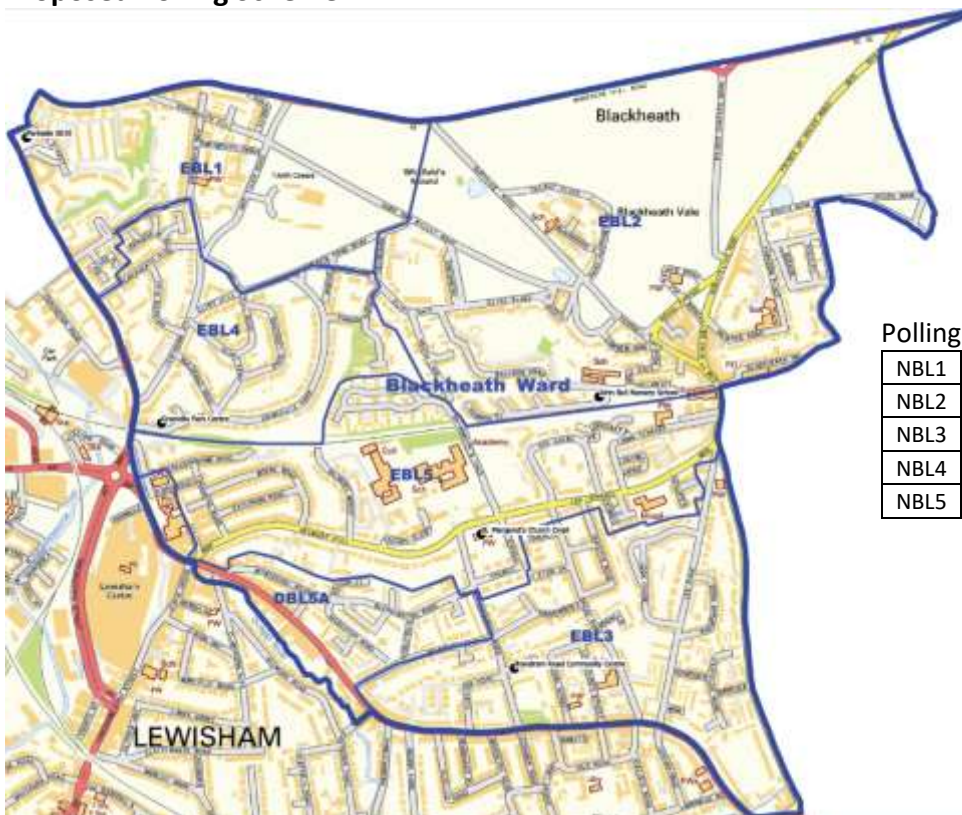
Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Parkside SE10
B	Church of Ascension
C	Orchard Gardens Community Centre
D	Granville Park Centre
E	St. Stephen and St. Mark Church Hall
F	St. Margaret's Church
G	Brandram Road Community Centre
H	St. Margaret's Lee School
I	The Church of Jesus Christ the Latter
J	Quaker Meeting House
K	John Ball Nursery School
L	Heath House Prep School

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

NBL1	Parkside SE10
NBL2	John Ball Nursery School
NBL3	Brandram Road Community Centre
NBL4	Granville Park Centre
NBL5	St. Margaret's Church

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

BROCKLEY WARD

Brockley Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,915	1,586	11,501
Local Elections	10,814	1,698	12,512

Summary

- This is one of our largest wards and there are 3 districts with double polling stations
- The steep hill from Lewisham Way down Friendly Street, and the railway line, dictate the shape of DBR3. This was a new district introduced in 2019 with the new venue of St. Stephen's Primary School, and it has worked very well
- Lewisham Arthouse was another new venue from the last review and it has also been well received
- The DBR1 district has some properties that are quite isolated from the rest of the ward, and the polling place there is quite small. But we still feel this has worked well

The ARO's proposal

We propose to make no changes to the polling districts and places in this ward. We welcome the views of elected members, political parties and local residents.

Current Polling Scheme – and Proposed Scheme



Proposed Polling Scheme

NBR1	St. James Family Learning Centre
NBR2	Lewisham Arthouse
NBR3	St. Stephen's C of E Primary School
NBR4	St. John with Holy Trinity Church
NBR5	St. Peter's Church

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

DEPTFORD WARD

Deptford Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,958	1,273	10,231
Local Elections	10,111	1,428	11,539

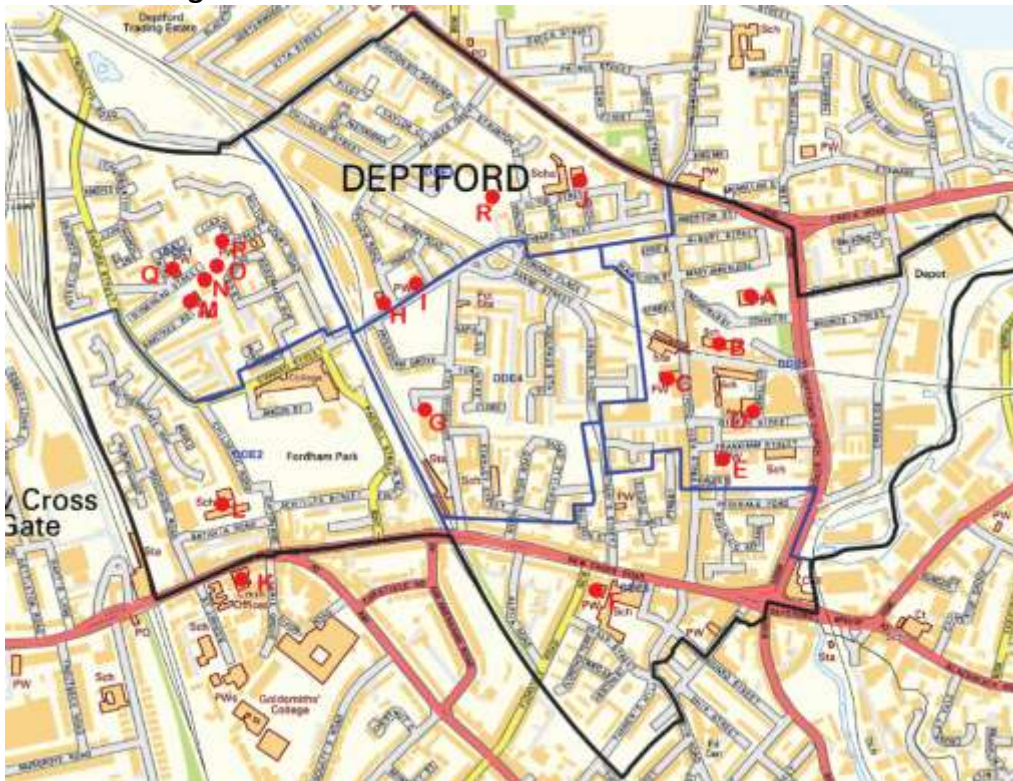
Summary

- Deptford has experienced 2 by-elections alongside the various borough-wide polls over the last 12 months, so there has been a lot of opportunity to test the polling scheme
- This ward benefits from having a lot of potential polling venues, but after careful consideration now and in previous reviews, we believe the current venues are the best choice
- The layout of the roads and venues has dictated the shape of each district, with most voters enjoying a very short walk to their polling place
- DDE2 has a low electorate of around 1100 voters, which is amongst the smallest in the borough. Because of this, it could be useful to redistribute those voters to a neighbouring district
- Another idea is to merge the districts of DDE4, DDE5 and DDE6 into just 2 districts

The ARO's proposal

- Merge DDE2 and DDE1, to create a larger district, with all voters going to the Woodpecker Community Centre
- This is a large venue that could easily act as a double station
- The maximum walking distance is 11 minutes, which is well within our target
- It would mean releasing Childeric Primary School from polling duties

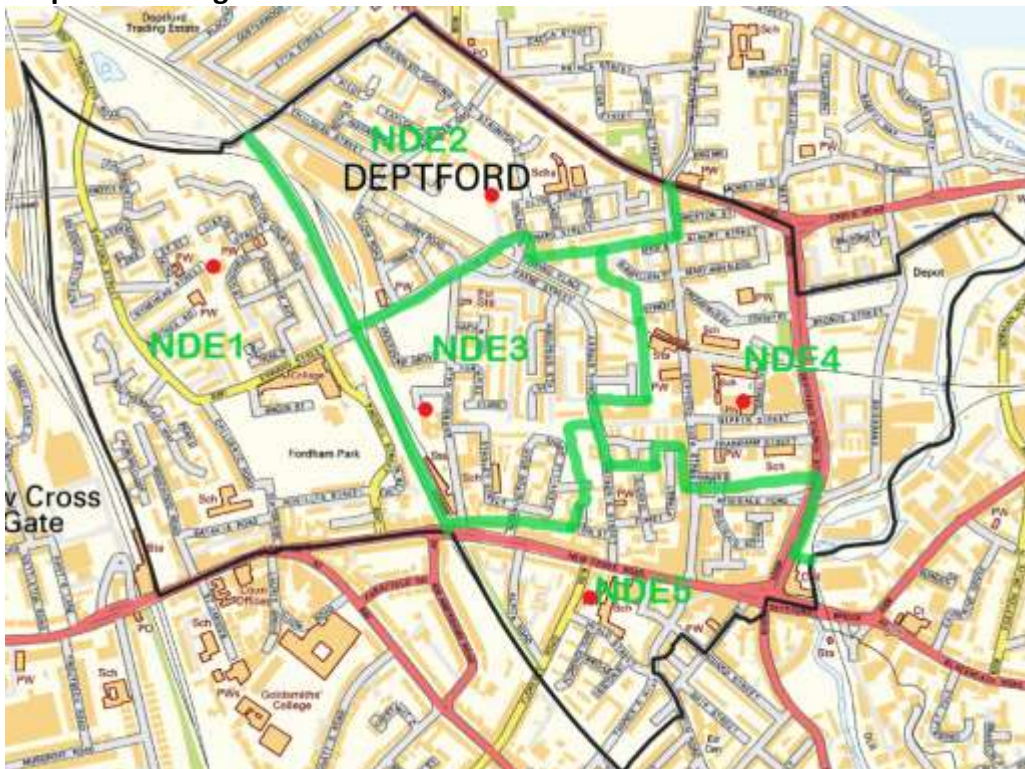
Current Polling Scheme



Potential Polling Places

A	St. Paul's Church
B	St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School
C	Our Lady of the Assumption Church
D	The Library at Deptford Lounge
E	The Shaftesbury Christian Centre
F	New Cross Road Baptist Church Hall
G	Mulberry Centre
H	Olivet Baptist Church
I	Celestial Church of Christ
J	Grinling Gibbons Primary School
K	Deptford Town Hall
L	Childeric Primary School
M	New Testament Church of God
N	Woodpecker Youth Club
O	Woodpecker Community Centre
P	St. Michael's United Church and Community Centre
Q	Living Flames Baptist Church
R	Evelyn Community Centre

Proposed Polling Scheme



NDE1	Woodpecker Community Centre
NDE2	Evelyn Community Centre
NDE3	Mulberry Centre
NDE4	The Library at Deptford Lounge
NDE5	New Cross Road Baptist Church Hall

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

EVELYN WARD

Evelyn Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	7,111	1,335	8,446
Local Elections	8,373	1,559	9,932

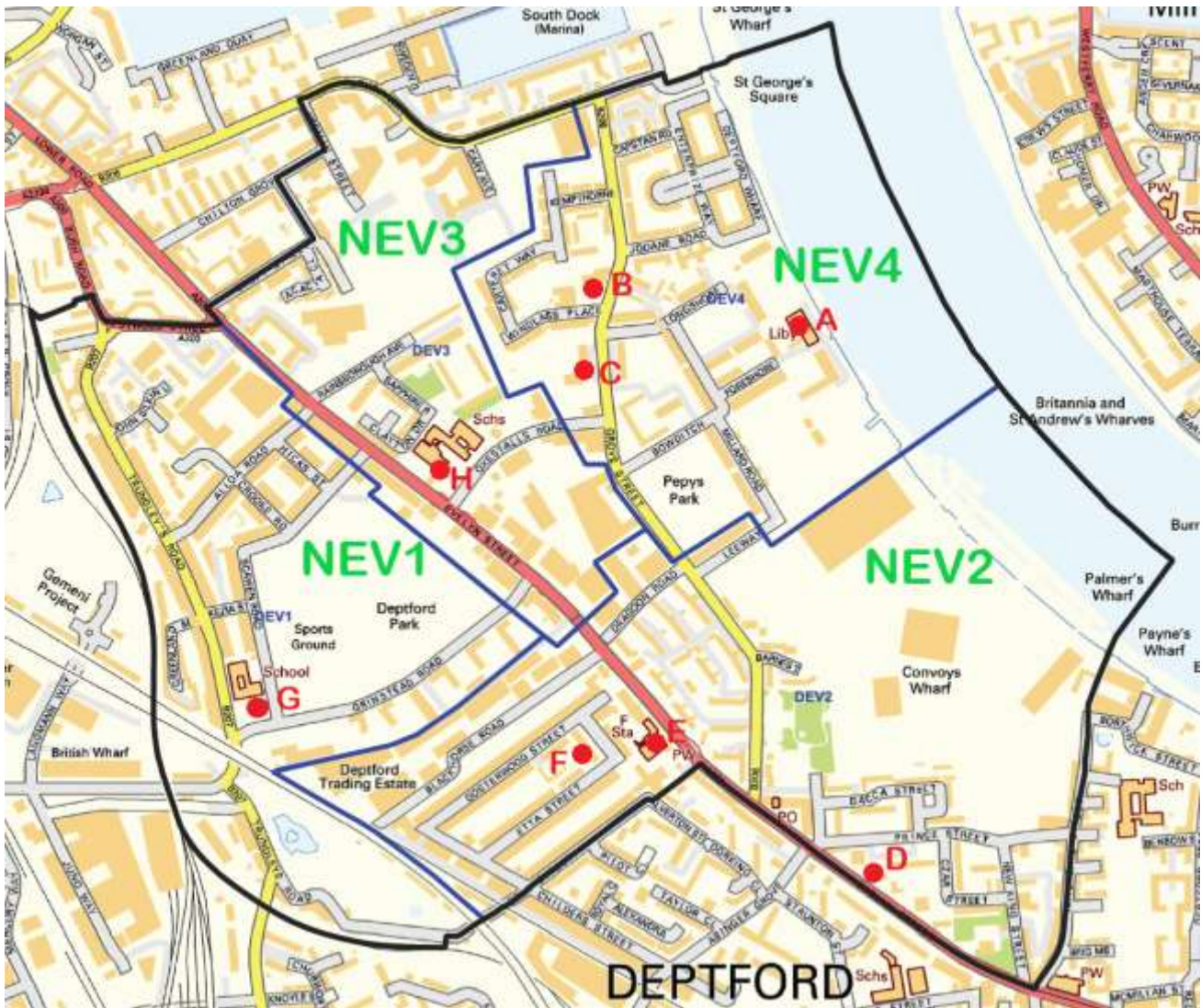
Summary

- Evelyn has the lowest electorate for a 3 member ward in the borough, but that may be down to a low registration rate and high mobility
- There are large areas with few residential properties, with some large blocks of houses and estates, and the current polling places are located close to where the majority of residents are living
- Of the potential polling places, St. Luke's Church would be a great replacement for the Clyde Early Childhood Centre. However, the site is currently being renovated and is not yet ready
- In NEV2 there is also the option of the Refugee and Migrant Network building. But the location is not as good as the Childhood Centre, being further down and across the busy main road
- In NEV4 there are a couple of alternatives to the Evelyn Children's Centre (being renamed as the Family Hub). The Riverside Youth Club has been used in the past and was a good venue, but is also being refurbished. The Pepys Community Library is a potential alternative but the location is not as accessible

The ARO's proposal

We propose to make no changes to the polling districts and places in this ward. We welcome the views of elected members, political parties and local residents.

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Pepys Community Library
B	Evelyn Childrens Centre
C	Riverside Youth Club
D	Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network
E	St. Luke's Church, Deptford
F	Clyde Early Childhood Centre
G	Twin Oaks Primary School
H	Deptford Park Primary School

Polling Districts and Polling Places

NEV1	Twin Oaks Primary School
NEV2	Clyde Early Childhood Centre
NEV3	Deptford Park Primary School
NEV4	Evelyn Childrens Centre

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

LADYWELL WARD

Ladywell Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,524	1,689	10,213
Local Elections	9,153	1,803	10,956

Summary

For a 3 member ward, Ladywell has a low number of voters. But Ladywell has 7 polling districts in the current polling scheme, which is the highest number along with Perry Vale, Sydenham and Forest Hill. The main reason for that is the geography of the ward, with several large open spaces, and the main roads.

The current scheme has 4 polling districts that are well below our ideal number of voters, and 2 of those have under 1000 voters. Small polling districts are an inefficient use of resources, and should be avoided unless necessary due to geography or special circumstances.

The objective to prevent any voter from having to walk more than 15 minutes can still be met if we reduced the number of polling districts in this ward, but there is a challenge with determining where the new polling district boundaries should lie, and which venues should be used.

There are 2 schools used in this ward, both of which have to close when used for polling. In both cases, the number of allocated voters is low. Perhaps these are the venues to remove from the scheme, due to the impact on the parents, pupils and staff for when the schools have to close, and the relatively small number of voters who will have a slightly longer distance to travel to their polling place.

The ARO's proposal

Due to the geography (road layout and open spaces) in this ward, there are many options for where to place the new district boundaries, and pros and cons to every option. It is not possible to maintain or improve the current distance to the polling station for every voter, but it is possible to maintain a similar level of service.

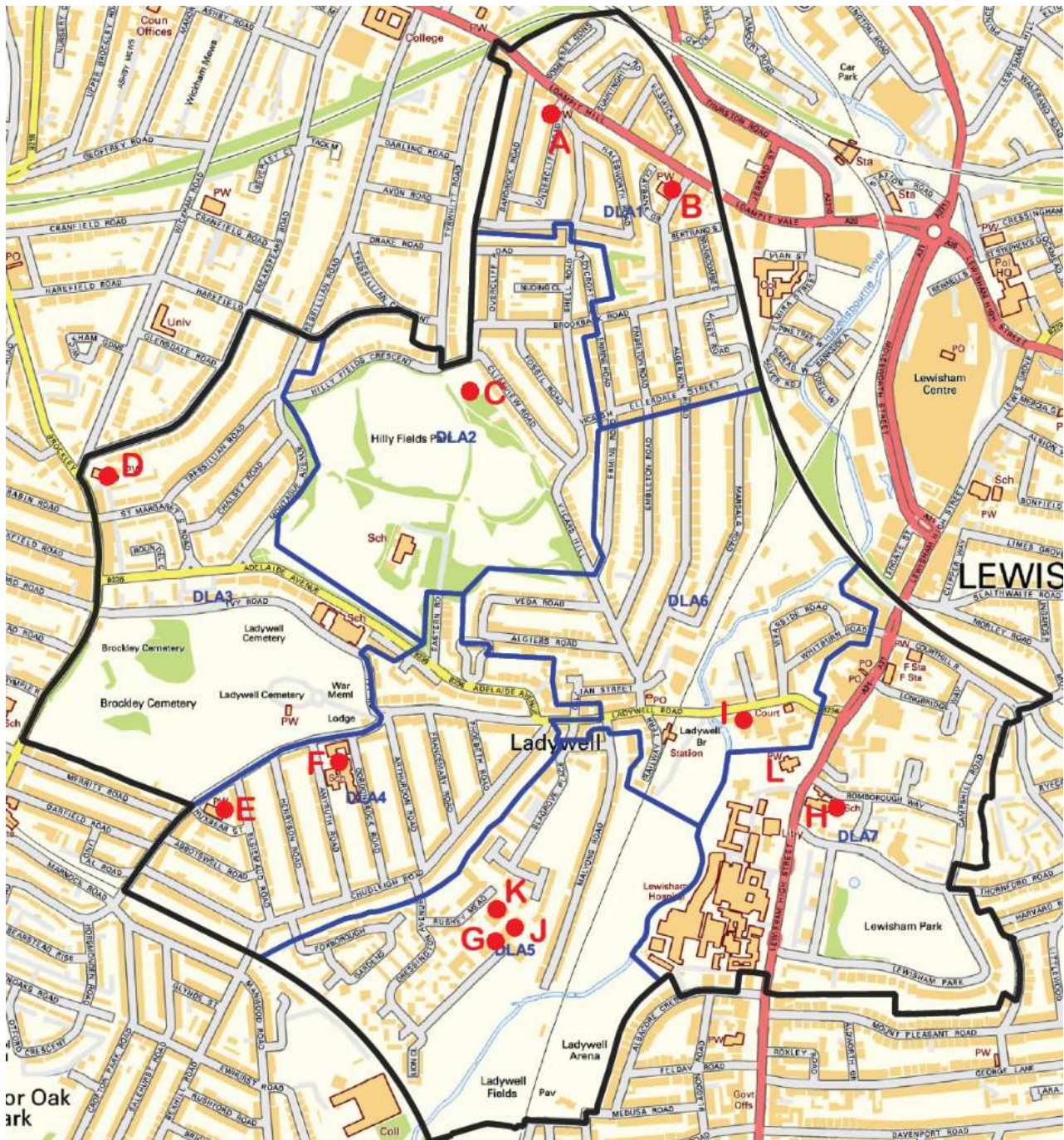
We have made 2 proposals for consideration.

The first scheme removes both schools and creates 4 districts, 2 of which would have a double polling station (2 polling stations within the same room).

The second scheme shows another way of moving the district boundaries, but retains St. Mary's School.

We expect the final scheme will be a mix of these 2 proposals, and would welcome feedback.

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating polling places

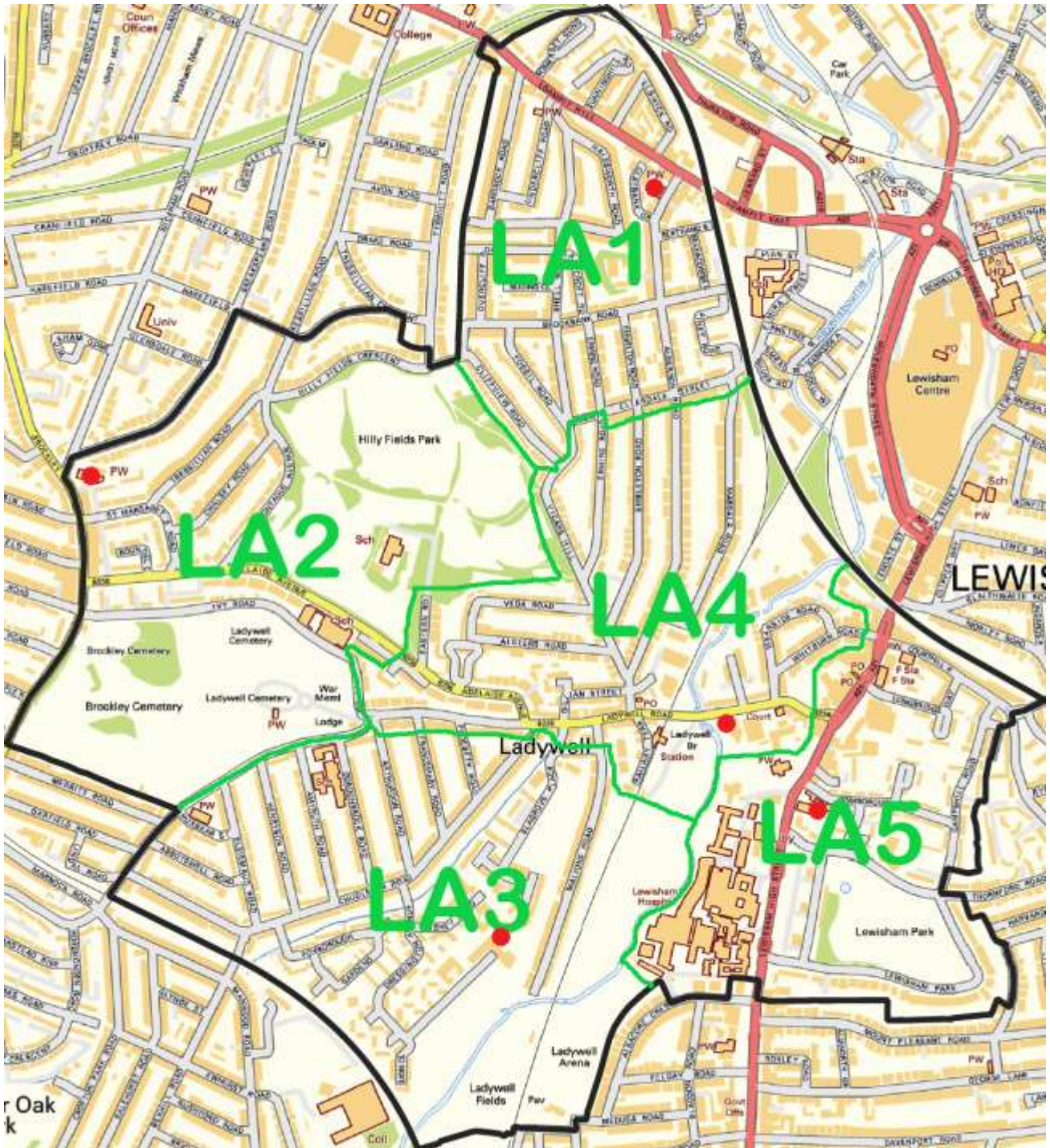


Potential Polling Places

A	Loampit Gospel Hall
B	Winners Chapel
C	Francis Drake Bowling Club
D	St. Andrew's United Reform Church
E	Crofton Park Baptist Church
F	Gordonbrock Primary School
G	John Evelyn Campus (Abbey Manor College)
H	St. Mary's CoE Primary School
I	St. Mary's Centre
J	The Ladywell Centre
K	Ladywell Family Hub
L	Church of St. Mary the Virgin

District	Voters	Polling Place
DLA1	1831	Winners Chapel
DLA2	778	Francis Drake Bowling Club
DLA3	1115	St. Andrew's United Reform Church
DLA4	1603	Crofton Park Baptist Church
DLA5	984	John Evelyn Campus
DLA6	1721	St. Mary's Centre
DLA7	1121	St. Mary's CoE Primary School

Proposed Polling Scheme



District	Voters	Polling Place
LA1	2402	Winners Chapel
LA2	1227	St. Andrew's United Reform Church
LA3	2157	John Evelyn Campus (Abbey Manor College) or Ladywell Family Hub
LA4	2214	St. Mary's Centre
LA5	1114	St. Mary's CoE Primary School

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

LEWISHAM CENTRAL WARD

Lewisham Central Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	3,790	705	4,495
Local Elections	4,636	814	5,450

Summary

This is the smallest ward in terms of geography and the number of voters. The turnout is around the borough average. There is one extremely small polling district in the top of the ward. This is a small estate, isolated from the rest of the ward. The community centre makes a good venue. We've considered merging this district with the neighbouring one, but it would create a much longer journey for these voters and would reduce the accessibility of voting for the elderly and mobility impaired.

DLC2 in the centre of the ward serves a lot of voters. We use a double station in this venue which has worked really well. We wanted to find another venue towards the north of this district but have not found any that would be suitable.

The ARO's proposal

We propose to make no changes to the polling districts and places in this ward. We welcome the views of elected members, political parties and local residents.

Current and Proposed Polling Scheme



District	Voters	Polling Place
DLC1	750	Orchard Gardens Community Centre
DLC2	2,448	Prendergast Vale College (Nursery)
DLC3	1,438	Collage Park Baptist Church

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

NEW CROSS GATE WARD

New Cross Gate Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	5,054	889	5,943
Local Elections	5,775	992	6,767

Summary

- This is a small ward and is divided into 3 separate and distinct areas
- The divisions create natural polling districts – a small one at the top, a medium sized district in the middle, and a much larger district at the south of the ward, with a lot of electors in a relatively small area
- The scheme has worked well, although the engagement in this area has been low for a number of years
- We need to do work on engagement to improve registration and participation, but we are confident the polling scheme is not a factor in preventing people from voting. The polling places are accessible venues, in good locations, and no voter has to walk very far

The ARO's proposal

We propose to make no changes to the polling districts and places in this ward. We welcome the views of elected members, political parties and local residents.

Current Polling Scheme – and Proposed Scheme



Potential Polling Places

A	St. Katharine with St. Bartholomew Church
B	Lewington Centre
C	Scotney Hall
D	Haberdasher's Hatcham Primary
E	All Saints Community Centre
F	The Old Library (now a bar)

Polling Scheme

NG1	Lewington Centre
NG2	Scotney Hall
NG3	All Saints Community Centre

LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

TELEGRAPH HILL WARD

Telegraph Hill Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,594	1,552	11,146
Local Elections	10,312	1,650	11,962

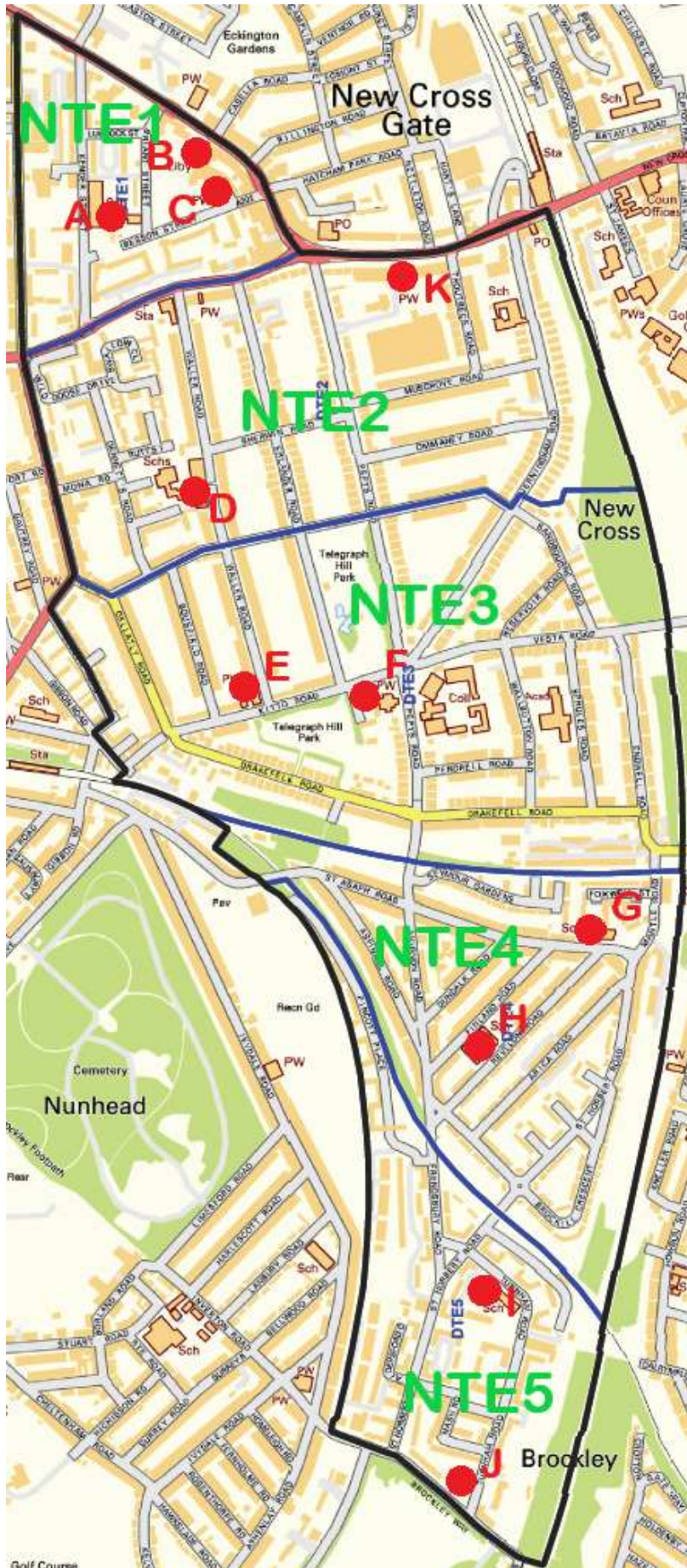
Summary

The main issue in this ward is the use of 4 primary schools as the polling places, and the potential impact this could have on those schools. However, only one of the schools has to close on polling day, with the other 3 able to remain open for all pupils (excluding a small nursery in one school). John Stainer Primary School is the one school that has to close. This is because there is no way of separating the polling place from the rest of the school, which is a requirement for safeguarding. Unfortunately, this district, NTE4, has no suitable alternative venue. Drumbeat School has been considered, but this is a school for pupils with special needs and disabilities, and it would need to close if used as a polling place. The council have determined that closing a special school causes a much greater impact on those pupils and parents/carers and therefore that venue has been ruled out. John Stainer Primary School have confirmed that when closing the school they use the opportunity to take one of their statutory inset days, so there is no loss of learning for the pupils.

The ARO's proposal

The only change we are proposing in this ward is to move the polling station for NTE5 to the Honor Oak Community Centre and Youth Club. This is a great community resource and will be an excellent polling place. It is just down the road from the previous polling place, Turnham Primary School, and will not impact voters.

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Kender Primary School
B	The old library (currently a pub)
C	Christ Faith Tabernacle Church
D	Edmund Waller Primary School
E	Church of Prophecy New Cross
F	Telegraph Hill Community Centre
G	John Stainer Primary School
H	Drumbeat School
I	Turnham Primary School
J	Honor Oak Community Centre and Youth Club
K	New Cross Christian Centre

Polling Districts and Polling Places

NTE1	Kender Primary School
NTE2	Edmund Waller Primary School
NTE3	Telegraph Hill Community Centre
NTE4	John Stainer Primary School
NTE5	Honor Oak Community Centre and Youth Club

LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

CROFTON PARK WARD

Crofton Park Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,923	1,577	10,500
Local Elections	9,464	1,619	11,083

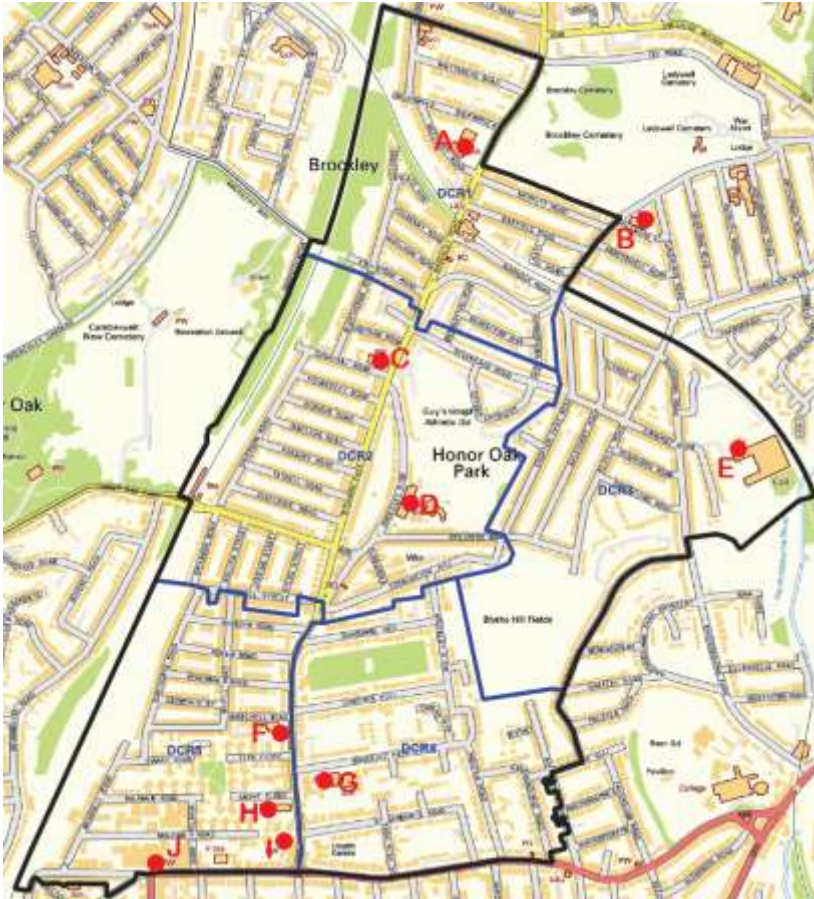
Summary

- The current polling scheme works well, with a central polling place for the majority of districts
- But the districts of DCR4 and DCR5 have polling places that are extremely close together
- There are some alternative venues but these are on the very edge of the ward and would not be an improvement

The ARO's proposal

- Our proposal is to combine the 2 districts of DCR4 and DCR5, and utilise the larger and more accessible of the 2 available venues at St. Saviour's Church Hall, with a double polling station

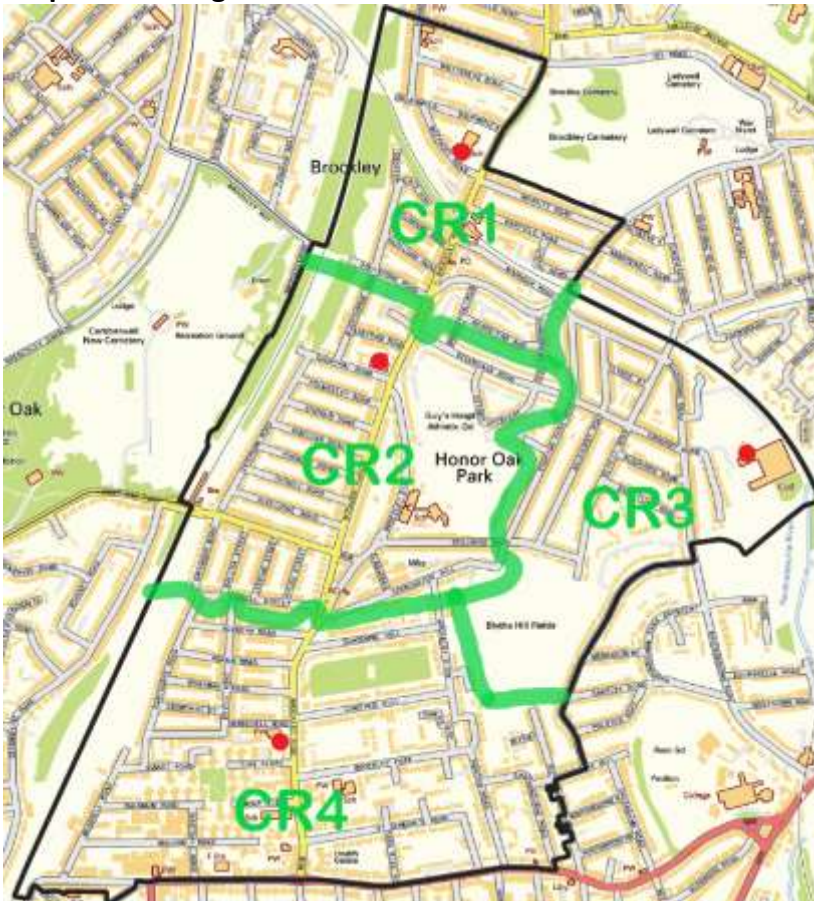
Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Beecroft Garden Primary School
B	Crofton Park Baptist Church
C	The Undercroft, St. Hilda's Church
D	Stillness Primary School
E	Prendergast Ladywell Fields College
F	St. Saviours Church Hall
G	Adult Learning Lewisham
H	Dalmain Primary School
I	Hope Church
J	CAC Bal of Gilead (Church)

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

WCR1	Beecroft Garden Primary School
WCR2	The Undercroft, St. Hilda's Church
WCR3	Prendergast Ladywell Fields College
WCR4	St. Saviours Church Hall

LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

FOREST HILL WARD

Forest Hill Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	8,694	1,762	10,456
Local Elections	9,325	1,835	11,160

Summary

- As the names suggests, this ward sits on a massive hill. This means we need to consider the impact of the slope on the walk that voters must take to reach their polling place
- The polling station at Eliot Bank Primary School has the smallest electorate of any polling place in the borough – only 717 for local elections. It also has the second lowest turnout for stations in the ward, despite being incredibly local for most of those voters
- Many of these voters would be able to walk down the hill to the library, or down towards Kelvin Grove Primary. There’s also the option of sending some of these voters across the South Circular to Horniman Primary School
- One option we’ve considered is using a space in the Horniman’s Museum. However, the location does not lend itself well to the polling scheme

The ARO’s proposal

- Having a very small polling district is not an efficient use of resources, so we’d like to reallocate the voters of WFO6 to the neighbouring districts
- The South Circular road does have decent crossing points, but it does get extremely busy so we’d rather send the voters to the other neighbouring districts
- The increased walk time is still within our target, with the maximum walk at 13 minutes up the hill (quicker on the way down of course)

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Kelvin Grove Primary School	E	Horniman Museum
B	Eliot Bank Primary School	F	Horniman Primary School
C	Forest Hill Library	G	Christian Fellowship Centre
D	The Church (Worldwide)		

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

WFO1	Kelvin Grove Primary School	WFO4	Horniman Primary School
WFO2	Forest Hill Library	WFO5	Christian Fellowship Centre
WFO3	The Church (Worldwide)		

LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

PERRY VALE WARD

Perry Vale Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	10,581	1,737	12,318
Local Elections	11,274	1,819	13,093

Summary

- The main issue in this ward is the polling place for WPE1
- This used to be Perrymount Primary school up until 2021 and we've struggled to find a suitable alternative
- In 2024 we put the polling place in Perry Rise Baptist Church, alongside the polling station for WPE4. But this is not a great walk for residents in WPE1 due to the steep hill
- One alternative is a polling place in the Forest Hill Methodist Church, which has meetings rooms in the building behind the school. However, they can only offer an upstairs room, which would not be accessible to voters with mobility issues
- There are several other options just outside the polling district, which we could utilise with a small change to the boundaries for WPE1 and WPE2
- If one of the new venues on South Road was large enough, it could be possible to use a single venue for both these districts, with a double polling station

The ARO's proposal

- Combine the districts of WPE1 and WPE2 to create a single large district
- Use Hamilton Hall or Christ Church, or both, to host 2 polling stations for this district
- Keep the other districts and polling places the same
- Although, it could be possible to merge the districts of WPE5 and WPE6 and place a double polling station in St. George's Church. The church is 7 minutes walk from the school, and 12 minutes from the property that is furthest away

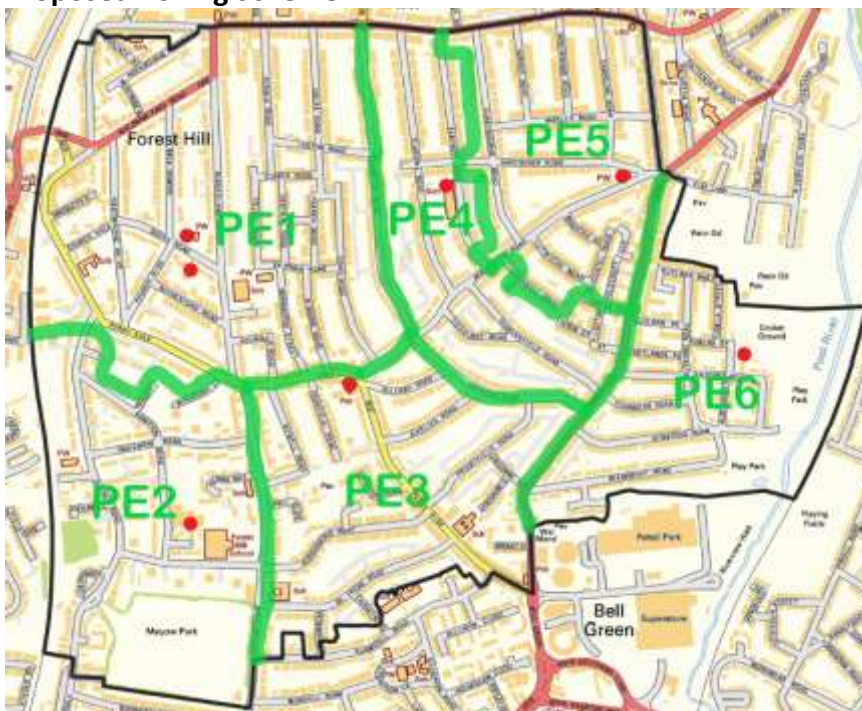
Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Rockbourne Youth Club	G	Forest Hill Methodist Church
B	Forest Hill Friends Meeting House	H	The Fusion Centre at Forest Hill School
C	St. George's C of E Primary School	I	Perry Rise Baptist Church
D	Hamilton Hall (Forest Hill Christadelphians)	J	Kilmore Primary School, Early Years Care Room
E	Christ Church	K	St. George's Church
F	Perrymount Primary School	L	Blackheath Hockey & Catford Cyphers Cricket Club

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

WPE1	Hamilton Hall (Forest Hill Christadelphians)	WPE4	Kilmore Primary School, Early Years Care Room
WPE2	The Fusion Centre at Forest Hill School	WPE5	St. George's Church
WPE3	Perry Rise Baptist Church	WPE6	Blackheath Hockey & Catford Cyphers Cricket Club

LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

SYDENHAM WARD

Sydenham Electorate Stats	Polling Station Voters	Postal Voters	Total Electorate
Parliamentary Elections	9,775	1,863	11,638
Local Elections	10,509	1,945	12,454

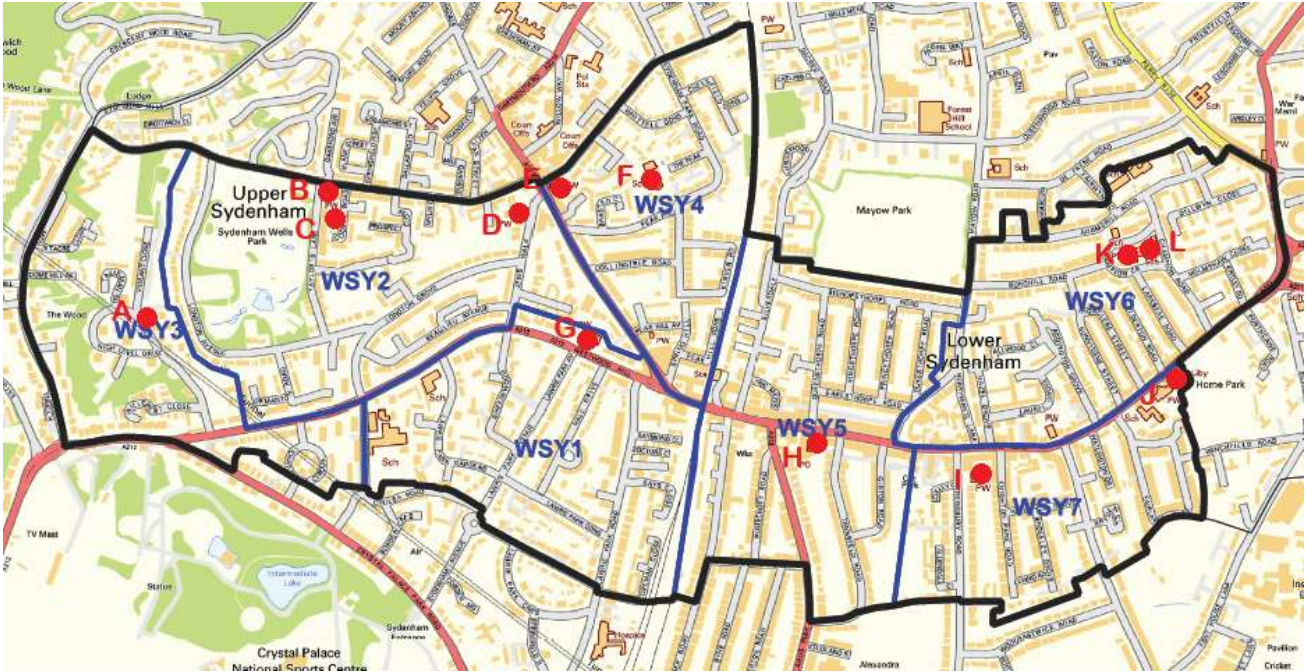
Summary

- The current polling scheme in Sydenham has 7 polling districts and polling places. This is the joint highest for all wards in Lewisham.
- Sydenham has the lowest average number of voters allocated to polling places in the borough.
- The portacabin on High Level drive is a priority for replacement, because:
 - Cost – it is the most expensive polling place in the borough
 - Risk – there are many risks for a temporary building, including vandalism, delivery, access, facilities for staff, fire, etc
 - Pollution from the generator – both noise and air pollution
 - Disruption to the shop owner (where it sits in front of) and residents because it takes up 3 parking spaces
 - Poor facilities for polling staff – there is no toilet, no running water, it's very small
 - Despite the proximity to the voters, the turnout in this station is well below average
- St. Bartholomew's CoE School in WSY4 is another priority to change. This is because we have received a large number of complaints over the last few years, due to the school having to close on polling day. We've also received a large number of representations from local residents asking to use another venue such as the Grove Centre, which is under 10 minutes walk away

The ARO's proposal

- Remove both the portacabin and St. Bartholomew's School
- Use the TNG Youth Centre on Wells Park Road, which is a good venue and a maximum of 12 minutes walk for voters in High Level Drive (less if they go through the park)
- Move the polling district boundaries to maximise the use of the Grove Centre, TNG Youth Centre and St. Bartholomew's Church
- Approach St. Michael's Church which is opposite St. Michael's CoE School, and use that venue instead, if possible
- This proposal changes Sydenham to 6 polling districts, which is more in line with the rest of the borough. The distance for voters to travel will also remain within the borough average

Current Polling Scheme – with points indicating current and potential polling places



Potential Polling Places

A	Portacabin on High Level Drive	G	St. Bartholomew's Church
B	TNG Youth Centre	H	The Sydenham Centre
C	St. Philip the Apostle Church	I	Church of St. Michael and All Angels
D	The Grove Centre	J	Sydenham Library
E	Church of the Resurrection of Our Lord	K	St. Michael's Church
F	St. Bartholomew's CoE School	L	St. Michael's CoE School

Proposed Polling Scheme



Polling Districts and Polling Places

WSY1	St. Bartholomew's Church	WSY4	The Sydenham Centre
WSY2	The Grove Centre	WSY5	St. Michael's CoE School
WSY3	TNG Youth Centre	WSY6	Sydenham Library

Appendix A

Equalities Impact Assessment – Polling District and Places Review 24/25

A. Background

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

In order to comply with the general duty local authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community. Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

B. Summary

This equality impact assessment will review the practise of voting at polling stations and assess the impact on residents, and specifically those with protected characteristics. The report will identify each protected characteristic and list the issues that can impact that group, along with recommendations and mitigations we can take in order to meet the requirements in section A.

All polling places are subject to a site assessment where electoral officers visit the premises and conduct a thorough assessment of the facilities, access and location. Note that no polling place will be recommended that doesn't pass the site assessment. The assessment includes access, size of venue, width of entrance and internal doors, space for tellers, lighting, ventilation, kitchen and restroom facilities, etc. In particular, the officer must conduct checks for the accessibility of the site in order to determine suitability as a polling place with regards to people with a disability. This includes:

- Access for the mobility disabled – e.g. wheelchair users, mobility scooters, etc
- Transport – bus stops, parking (regular and disabled)
- Light
- Access for visually impaired

C. Protected Characteristic – Race and Ethnicity

This group includes all residents/voters of a non-white race or a non-British ethnicity, including Gypsies, Travellers, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

Negative Impacts

- This group will contain people with English as a second language. This can lead to several negative impacts including; difficulty in identifying the polling station venue address, difficulty in speaking with polling staff, polling staff not understanding the voter, and accessibility of signs and notices

- Impact of systemic racism. Some people in this group may have experienced systemic racism and have a feeling or belief that their participation in elections is not welcome

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Maps on poll cards as well as written addresses
- Translated information in polling places
- Pictorial notices to identify polling stations, in addition to the large polling station signs
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

D. Protected Characteristic – Disability

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This is a large group which includes:

- Mobility impaired
- Visually impaired
- Hearing impaired
- People with learning disabilities including reading and writing
- People with mental health conditions

Negative Impacts

- Where possible the polling place should be situated in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to in around 10 minutes
- Ability to access polling venues due to lack of wheelchair/mobility entrance, parking, light and space
- Insufficient light inside polling venue
- Signage and official notices – at wrong height or too small
- Inability to hear instructions of polling staff
- Difficulty in understanding the polling process
- Inability to read ballot papers or make a mark on ballot papers
- Some people may require more time and the ability to sit down for a rest before or after voting
- The route to the station could be long, or involve a steep hill

Recommendations and Mitigations

- All polling venues assessed for accessibility
- All polling places to be DDA compliant
- Seating available for voters who need a rest before or after voting
- Temporary ramps and lighting installed in polling venues where necessary
- Site visits prior to elections outside of summer to assess potential risks or issues due to weather or lack of daylight
- Hearing loops enabled where available

- Audio ballot of the ballot paper – playable on a phone (with polling staff able to play the audio on their phone if the voter does not have one)
- Extra training on assisting voters with a disability and statistics recorded by presiding officers
- Polling staff to follow standard procedures for handling of voters in polling places. Procedure to account for various disabilities – eg. Use of plain English, speaking clearly, listening carefully, being approachable, providing materials such as tactile voting device for the visually impaired, or the pictorial voting guide for learning disabled
- Additional training for presiding officers on the official procedures and forms required for them to assist voters with disabilities or for companions to assist voters with disabilities
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

E. Protected Characteristic – Sex / Gender

Men or women may face discrimination because of their gender.

Negative Impacts

- No specific negative impacts identified

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

F. Protected Characteristic – Gender reassignment

This group may experience discrimination and be anxious about how they are treated by officials.

Negative Impacts

- Being mis-gendered by the polling staff – e.g. referred to by the wrong gender
- Experiencing transphobia or other discrimination by polling staff – and the fear of that happening

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Procedure notes and training for polling staff is gender neutral
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve

- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

G. Protected Characteristic – Religion and belief

This includes people of every faith and can overlap with ethnicity in terms of cultural clothing and behaviours.

Negative Impacts

- Some people may not wish to enter a church, mosque or synagogue in order to vote
- Potential for some religious groups to experience discrimination, or the fear of discrimination, from polling staff

Recommendations and Mitigations

- When using a religious building, cover any overt iconography and where possible use a space in the building that is not usually used for worship. For example, at the Catford Synagogue, we use the youth group room
- Cultural awareness of polling staff and general polite behaviour towards residents
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

H. Protected Characteristic – Sexual orientation

This includes all people within the LGBTQ+ category.

Negative Impacts

- Discrimination or the fear of discrimination by polling staff or other voters

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

I. Protected Characteristic – Age

People in the older age group may be more likely to have mobility issues or indeed various disabilities. Young people may be voting for the first time and be nervous.

Negative Impacts

- See D, disability
- Younger people may be nervous about voting for the first time and not be aware of what to do
- Older people may require more time and the ability to sit down for a rest
- The route to the station could be long, or involve a steep hill

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Where possible the polling place should be situated in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to in around 10 minutes
- Items and signage to be clearly displayed, especially the guidance to voters, so that all voters are aware of what they need to do
- Calm and welcoming atmosphere created by the polling staff so that new voters are confident and able to ask questions, with additional information leaflets or guidance on display
- A chair available for voters who need a rest before or after voting
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

J. Promotion of Participation and Absent Voting

The Returning Officer has a legal duty to promote participation in elections and referendums. Electoral Services have an engagement plan which sets out how we will promote participation amongst all residents, including the groups identified above.

An important part of improving accessibility of voting is our promotion of postal and proxy voting. All electors are able to apply to vote by either of these methods. Where voting in a polling station presents a challenge or difficulty for an individual, the service will assist them in making an application for postal or proxy voting. This is in addition to the mitigation measures above, and not a replacement. In all cases, for all residents, we shall seek to provide a polling place that enables everyone easy access to vote.

K. The Requirement to show photographic ID in polling stations

The Elections Act 2022 introduced the requirement for voters to show ID in polling stations. The scale of that change is too significant to be included in this impact assessment. Lewisham has completed a separate Equalities Analysis Assessment regarding that policy. Note that this policy has now been in place for 2 years and there is data and reports that will inform our procedures around voter ID.