

Appendix A: Polling station suitability and equalities consideration

Electoral Registration Officer

1.1 Where a local authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area, the ERO must amend the register of electors accordingly – either on a notice of alteration or by publishing a revised register. The changes to the register take effect on the date that the ERO publishes a separate notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be done to coincide with the publication of a notice of alteration/publication of a revised register.

1.2 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

1.3 The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

Considering accessibility issues

1.4 Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.

1.5 According to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission the duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements. For service providers and those exercising public functions, these requirements are:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to provide that auxiliary aid.

1.6 In the Scope 2010 report 'Polls Apart 2010: Opening elections to disabled people' it was made clear that access is still a barrier to some disabled people who want to cast their vote in person.

1.7 Below, are some of the main physical access issues identified by SCOPE, which should be considered as part of a review:

- polling places and stations with steps into the entrance, or otherwise inaccessible
- narrow doorways and corridors
- lack of space within the polling place that did not enable motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability.
- lack of space and secrecy for the elector and their companion to discuss the elector's choice of vote.
- lack of low-level polling booths or booths/tables that did not provide disabled voters with confidence that they could cast their vote in secrecy as they were positioned close to the polling station staff.
- a lack of chairs to enable people to rest.
- a lack of a clear display of guidance or aids (such as tactile voting devices) to enable people to feel confident about the process.
- inadequate lighting

1.8 These factors, and accessibility issues more generally, will also need to be considered by the Returning Officer as part of their training for polling station staff.

1.9 In addition to writing to those groups or individuals the local authority has identified as having expertise in access issues, the authority should also engage any internal disability access group and/or disability officer as part of the review.

Current polling place details

Polling place identifier	CC
Polling place name	Knights Wood
Polling place address	Skinner's' Kent Primary School The Avenue Knights Wood Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 3GS
Number of electors	739
Building availability for future elections/referendums	Yes

Polling place review

Check	Yes or no	Comment
Are there any suitable transport links?	Yes	Although residents in the area are already only a short distance away from the polling place
Are there any access issues regarding main/busy roads, railways, rivers, etc.?	No	Located off the industrial estate, however the area itself is not busy
Is the polling place capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment? If so, could it accommodate all allocated voters going in and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?	Yes	
Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections?	Yes	
Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?	No	Recently built, no scheduled large development

External areas access and facilities

Check	Yes or no
Are there good public transport links to the polling place?	Yes
Is the approach to the building safe and free from obstructions and does it have a dropped kerb?	Yes
Is the building clearly identifiable?	Yes
Is additional signage required between street and entrance?	No
Is there the facility to put up the required signage for polling day?	Yes
Are there parking facilities for disabled people?	Yes
Are there parking facilities for polling staff?	Yes
Does the approach to the building have external lighting?	Yes
Does the building have level access?	Yes
Has a purpose-built ramp been installed?	Yes
If so, does it have a handrail?	Yes
Does the ramp have a gentle slope?	Yes
Does the building require a temporary ramp or is there an alternative disabled access?	No
Is the entrance door wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair?	Yes
Are the doors light enough for frail/elderly voters to open?	Yes
Can the 'Guidance for voters' notice be clearly displayed outside the premises, as required by the election rules?	Yes
Are there any external security concerns?	No
Can tellers be accommodated outside the building?	Yes

External plan

Show external layout, street name(s), car parking (including disabled car parking), ramps,



Car Park for electors
Main entrance to school
(via stairs and ramp).

steps, lighting, appropriate places for signage, etc.

The image above shows a large car park on the left of school which will be able to



Main entrance to school via stairs
and ramp
Disabled parking

accommodate electors even during busy times.

The image above shows the main entrance to the polling station with access into the building via stairs and a ramp. Disabled parking is located on the right of the picture and directly next to the hall being used for the polling station.



Plenty of space for signage

Lighting just outside station

The image located at the front of the school shows adequate lights along with plenty of space for signage to be put up so that the school can be clearly identified as a polling station.

Internal areas access and facilities

Check	Yes or no
Are all doors easy to open (including by wheelchair users) or do they need to be permanently locked back?	Yes
Are there any internal steps or obstructions/hazards?	No
Are any doormats level with the floor?	Yes
Is the floor covering non-slip (including in wet weather)?	No
Are there any corridors that may cause access problems?	No
Is there adequate lighting in the corridors?	Yes
Are there toilet facilities?	Yes
Is there a kitchen that staff can use?	Yes
Is the area adequately lit for day and night-time?	Yes
Is there adequate space for signage?	Yes
How many polling stations can the building accommodate?	One
Does the building have a telephone available (land line) in the event of mobile network problems?	Yes

Internal access leading to polling station(s)

Show internal areas of the building, excluding the actual polling station where voting will take place, including corridors that link to the polling station, kitchen and toilets, and highlight any possible signage requirements and potential hazards. Also indicate door swing direction and



Entrance to building (main reception)

ease of opening, any areas of poor lighting, and any areas of uneven floor, etc.



Main reception, leading to polling station and kitchen



The following images show the main entrance to the polling station. Large power assisted double doors into the main reception. Double doors leading into the main hall used being



used for the polling station and a unisex, disabled toilet located in the reception area.

As previously mentioned, the doors in reception lead to the main hall where the polling station is located. Kitchen facilities are available for members of staff, only a short walk from reception and the polling station.

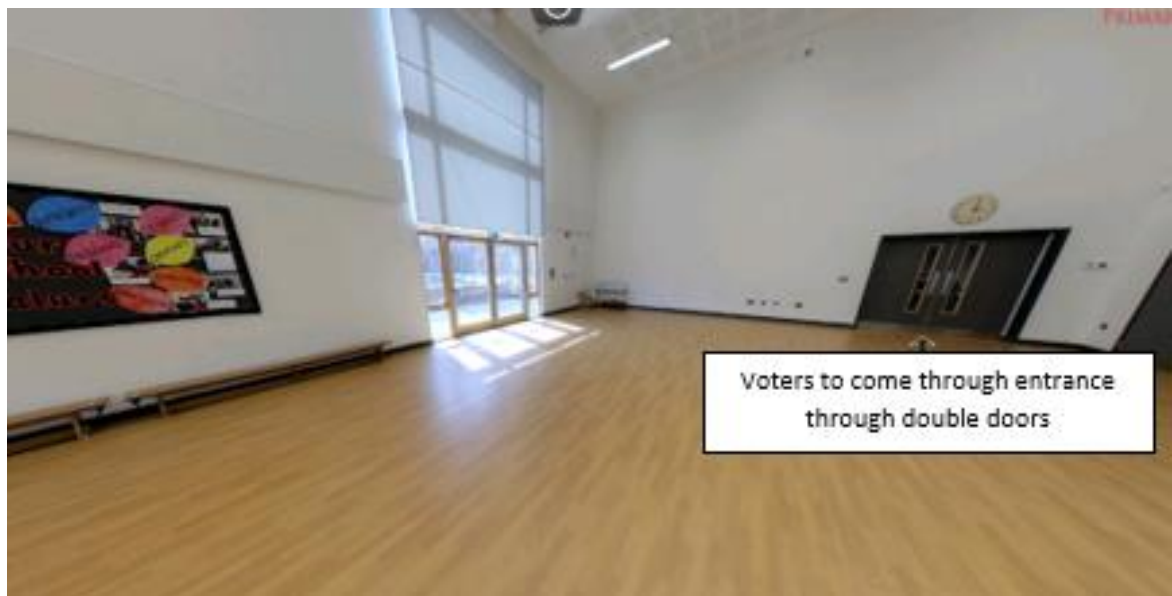
The polling station(s)

Check	Yes or no
Is there sufficient space to accommodate and manage the flow of a high volume of electors in the case of a high turnout of electors?	Yes
If multiple polling stations need to be provided, are there other rooms available, or can the space be clearly divided to provide adequate room for more than one polling station?	Yes
Is there sufficient space inside the polling	Yes

station to comfortably accommodate staff, voters, polling agents and observers?	
Could ballot booths be positioned in a way that would preserve the secrecy of the ballot, even where there may be a high volume of electors?	Yes
Is there adequate lighting for day and night-time?	Yes
Is there suitable furniture (tables and chairs) available for all types of election for polling staff and for those voters who may need to rest?	Yes
Could motorised wheelchairs be accommodated?	Yes
Can the official notices be clearly displayed, including the large-print version of the ballot paper(s)?	Yes

Internal –The polling station

Identify the size and shape of the area available for polling. Include the position of the door(s), any windows and how the furniture and equipment should be laid out to accommodate all those entitled to be inside the polling station, considering access requirements for all voters, including those in wheelchairs, and demonstrating how the space should be used to ensure the most efficient flow of voters and the effective administration of the voting process.





The images detail the size of the area being used for the polling station. The space is large enough to accommodate a polling station which is compliant with COVID-19 guidelines. The station has 3 entrance and exit points which can be used for one-way systems.

Further Equality Considerations

Disability

The main assessment above includes consideration of issues which may affect those who are affected by disability.

Carers

There are no further considerations to be made for those who are carers.

Race

There are no further considerations to be made for different races.

Sex

There are no further considerations to be made for different sexes.

Age

All electors must be over the age of 18 in order to vote. The main assessment above includes considerations of issues that may affect older voters.

Religion/Belief

The proposed polling station is within a school setting and is accessible to all religions and beliefs, so there are no further considerations.

Sexual Orientation

There are no further considerations to be made for particular sexual orientations.

Pregnancy/Maternity

There are no baby changing facilities available within the school area. However, as electors are only likely to be on the school grounds for a very short period of time, this is not considered to be a significant issue.

Marital or civil partnership

There are no further considerations to be made for those who are married or in a civil partnership.

Gender reassignment

There are gender-neutral toilet facilities available.

Armed forces community

There are no further considerations to be made for those who are a part of the armed forces community.