

PRINCIPLES OF REVIEW

1. The legislation suggests an approach starting with polling districts, followed by choosing polling places and then considering polling stations. In practice, however, it is important that good quality polling places/stations are identified first, which can then be used as part of the process of defining suitable polling district arrangements that comply with the requirements set out in the legislation.

Polling districts

2. The following should be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:
 - Are the boundaries well-defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
 - Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the polling district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g., steep hills, major roads, railway lines, rivers?

Polling places

3. There are several factors that will need to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:
 - **Location:** Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
 - **Size:** Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
 - **Availability:** Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?
 - **Accessibility:** Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?
4. Ideally, there would be the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area within which to establish polling stations. In practice, however, the choice of polling places will often be a balance between the quality of a building (access, facilities, etc.) and the proximity of the building to the electors. When making a decision, all factors will need to be considered and the authority will need to be able to demonstrate their reasoning behind the decision.

5. Where, because of local circumstances, a polling place has been selected that is not fully accessible, then reasonable adjustments must be undertaken to provide access for all electors. Alternatively, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to designate a polling place that falls outside the polling district.
6. Part of the decision-making process involves assessing if the polling place can accommodate more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment, particularly in circumstances where the number of electors allocated to a polling place is high. The number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500.
7. In instances where there may be a higher turnout, such as at a UK Parliamentary election, (Acting) Returning Officers may wish to set up multiple polling stations within the polling place. Consideration will need to be given to whether the size and layout of the area or building can accommodate such arrangements.

Polling stations

8. When assessing the suitability of a room or area for use as a polling station, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider how the size and layout would allow for the most effective throughput of voters, including in those instances where there is a high number of electors in the polling station at any one time on polling day. Each polling station should be designed to provide suitable conditions for the elector to vote in private, for staff to conduct elections in an efficient and effective manner and for those entitled to observe the voting process to do so without compromising the secrecy of the ballot.
9. To avoid creating polling districts in which it is difficult if not impossible to find suitable buildings to use as polling stations, existing and potential polling stations will be considered at the initial stage of developing a proposed polling district scheme for any Ward.
10. The maximum number of electors in any proposed polling district should not exceed 5000. This is the number that the Electoral Commission recommend would justify a double station at any polling stations (i.e., two polling station teams in the same room or rooms)
11. Where ward boundaries are not coterminous with existing parliamentary constituency boundaries, separate polling districts will be developed for the parts that straddle the constituencies
12. Where feasible, polling district boundaries do not go down the middle of minor roads but include properties on both sides. This avoids voter confusion about being allocated to separate polling stations