

Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review 2023

Correspondence sent to the Acting Returning Officer in connection with the review:

Polling Districts CU, CV, CW, CX, CY

“Have you considered Memorial Playing fields Pavilion as a polling station in Syston? It was refurbished last year. May not be quite close enough to where you need though but thought I’d share the idea.”

Polling District DA

“I am satisfied with and have no comment on the review of the Cropston polling station.”

Polling District CA1 and CA2

“I agree with the changes proposed for Anstey and having two Polling Stations within Jubilee Hall, with all the excellent facilities there, including adequate parking.

Polling District CA1 and CA2:

“Anstey Parish Council welcome the proposal to have the Jubilee Hall as the polling station for Anstey. I need to make you aware that the hall is currently undergoing building work to have an extension. The hall will be closed from Christmas 2023 with the aim of reopening in the Summer (August). During the time that the hall is closed the car park will also be unavailable.”

Polling District B and O

“The review acknowledges that there were “*some issues*” regarding the “Treehouse”, as a polling place for Polling Districts B and O (Loughborough Ashby Ward).

One of the issues was that the entry was around the back of the building (see pix), where the bins are kept. The reason for this was because the Treehouse could only be accessed by staircases from the front whereas there was a lift from the rear doors.

Disability Access: Hidden from view, students complained that they couldn’t find it. The solution proposed in the ARO’s review is to have a front entrance (see pix) up a flight of stairs as well as one at the rear. Hence de facto, there would be a front entrance and a back entrance for electors with disabilities. Disabled electors and others using the rear doors would then be expected to join a queue, possibly winding down the staircase at peak time.

In order to conform with equalities policies it is the practice NOT to require people with disabilities to use separate entrances.

Alcohol: The authority has always resisted using licensed premises in the past. The Treehouse is a large entertainment and meeting venue. It sits immediately above a bar accessed via a short spiral staircase (see right of pix and of bar below).

The Student Union: The Treehouse is an integral part of the Students Union building and not, as the name might imply, a separate building. Evenings are usually accompanied by loud noise and occasional revelry in the rest of the building. Because their events are usually organised well in advance by third parties and affiliated organisations, with the best will in the world, they aren't easily cancelled. When I went to the polling station in May, the access to the lift and stairs was through a room where female students were preparing for a dance event.

Numbers of Electors: The elector figures for the Treehouse Polling Place in the ARO's Review are already exceeded and whilst *local elections* attract little attention from students, elector registrations will rise considerably up to a *general election*. Voter numbers rise obviously accordingly, with many students choosing to vote at or after 5pm.

One Polling Place (*as currently*): Polling Districts O and B need to vote in one place because polling districts mean little to electors living in a campus environment.

The Edward Herbert Building (EHB): The University has several alternative buildings where they hold many and varied events. The management of the university are active in promoting voting to students by email and other channels. They will be keen to make voting as accessible as possible. The EHB Sports Hall is the obvious alternative venue. It has the capacity, it has toilets and spaces accessible for all, above all it is a sober environment and under University management."

Polling District B, O and J1:

"Loughborough Constituency Labour Party would like to make a submission with regard to the 2023 Charnwood Polling Station Review. Having read through your proposals, we would like to make comments on polling station arrangements in two wards: Loughborough Ashby and Loughborough East.

The polling districts of concern in Loughborough East are B and O. There are a number of issues mentioned in your comments, with 'The Treehouse', the location used as a polling station in these districts for the first time this year, namely access and inadequate signage, both of which issues potentially negatively impacted on voter turnout. Put simply, voters could neither find the polling station nor access it. We had multiple complaints on polling day and calls from people frantically trying to find the polling station. There is little doubt that some voters who we were not in contact with could not find the polling station and simply gave up. The Treehouse is, therefore, unsuitable as a polling station. We would like to suggest that the polling station for districts B and O be changed to Hazelrigg Building, which has been used without issue in the past.

The polling district of concern in Loughborough East is J1. A mobile unit is currently being used as a polling station, something which the returning officer has acknowledged is not an ideal long-term solution. It is expensive and it is accommodating well above the recommended number of electors. We appreciate that there is not a wealth of potential alternative locations within the polling district

area; however we would like to suggest that the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Temple on the corner of Moira Street and Loughborough Road may be suitable and encourage you to explore this option.”

Melton & Syston Constituency (Acting) Returning Officer:

“I confirm I have no comments or observations to make, other than to support the review as a mechanism for ensuring the most appropriate and accessible Polling Places and Polling Stations are used.”