

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023

a) Background and scope

All Councils are required to divide their area into polling districts, and to designate polling places for each of those districts.

Polling districts are the “building blocks” of electoral areas (parishes, wards, divisions and constituencies) and they form the basis on which the register of electors is put together.

Polling places are the specific geographical areas identified for each individual polling district within which a polling station is usually located. In South Cambridgeshire, polling place boundaries are usually (but not always) set along the same boundaries as polling districts. This allows the Returning Officer the flexibility to move to an alternative polling station within the polling place should there be an urgent need (such as at a snap election or if there is late unavailability of a venue).

A **Polling Station** is the space within which the process of voting takes place and it will almost always be within the designated polling place.

Councils must keep polling districts and polling places under review in line with a statutory timetable. The last review took place in 2019. A new review must take place within 16 months of October 2023. It is prudent to undertake the review early to ensure readiness for a potential short notice General Election.

Polling district reviews are an opportunity for residents and other interested stakeholders in South Cambridgeshire to give their view on polling arrangements in the district. The focus is on ensuring polling districts and polling places are fit for purpose and that they enable and support effective local democracy.

Across most of the district, our polling district boundaries are the same as our parish boundaries. This provides a simple scheme which is easy to understand and consistent for voters. Some parishes, which are larger or split over multiple centres (such as Fulbourn or Teversham) are split into multiple polling districts to deliver a better and more local service for residents.

b) Review Timetable

12 September 2023	Initial scoping report to Civic Affairs Committee
2 October 2023	Commencement of 8-week consultation period
27 November 2023	End of consultation period
14 December 2023	Outcome report to Civic Affairs Committee
27 February 2024	Recommendations of Civic Affairs Committee to be considered by Council
1 March 2024	Republication of affected parts of Register of Electors

c) Consultation

A formal 8-week consultation period will start on 2 October 2023.

We invite comments, views and suggestions from residents and other interested parties on how we might improve polling arrangements in South Cambridgeshire.

Comments should relate to:

- The suitability and appropriateness of existing polling districts and polling places (see appendix A)
- The suitability and appropriateness of proposed changes to polling districts and places (see section below)
- The suitability and appropriateness of existing polling stations, particularly with respect to the accessibility of stations for disabled voters or the identification of alternative and potentially better venues (see appendix B)
- Constructive suggestions on how to improve arrangements, or positive comments in relation to current polling arrangements

d) Proposed Changes

The following changes are proposed to the current schedule of polling districts, places and stations. Feedback on these proposals is particularly welcomed.

1. To create new polling district arrangements for Cambourne

Cambourne has historically been designated as a single polling district (NP1). This recently changed with the development of Cambourne West which was designated as a separate polling district (NP2). The number of electors in Cambourne (NP1) has reached a level that means a single polling district no longer suits the needs of voters in the area.

As part of this review it is proposed that Cambourne be split into 4 separate polling district areas, roughly along the original masterplan boundaries for Great, Upper and Lower Cambourne. The current polling district of Cambourne West (which will be renamed West Cambourne) will be retained. This will enable more effective polling arrangements for residents across the Town.

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station
NP1 – Great Cambourne	The Town of Cambourne	The Hub
NP2 – Upper Cambourne	The Town of Cambourne	Great Cambourne Cricket Pavilion
NP3 – Lower Cambourne	The Town of Cambourne	Lower Cambourne Cricket Pavilion
NP4 – West Cambourne	The Town of Cambourne	The Hub

As West Cambourne starts to grow quickly it will become necessary to establish a permanent polling station in the polling district. This will be kept under review.

It should be noted that these proposed changes to polling district and polling place arrangements will not affect residents in any way beyond their local voting arrangements.

2. To delete polling district SD2 – Willingham Highgate

The Willingham Highgate Polling District (SD2) was created in response to changing parish boundaries between the parishes of Willingham and Over. The electors in this polling district can now be absorbed into SD1 Willingham with no effect on their polling arrangements, so this polling district is no longer required.

3. To update arrangements for polling district RA2 – Fen Ditton East

The parish of Fen Ditton was split into two parish wards by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) as part of their last review of electoral arrangements for the County Council.

Since that review development at Marleigh (in RA2) has grown significantly, and it is now appropriate to propose designation of a new polling place and polling station for this polling district.

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station
RA2 – Fen Ditton East (Marleigh)	Fen Ditton East Polling District	Marleigh Community Centre, The Hangar

4. To update arrangements for polling district OA3 – Impington South

The Meadows Community Centre has been demolished and rebuilt, and the new building lies over the boundary in the administrative area of Cambridge City Council. It remains the most appropriate building to use as a polling station for electors in Impington South, but our scheme of polling places will need to be updated to reflect that the station will not be in the polling district. There will be minimal adverse impact on voters.

Polling District	Polling Place	Polling Station
OA3 – Impington South	Cambridge City Council Polling District of BAB and the Impington South Polling District	The Meadows Community Centre

For Information:

RG2 – Six Mile Bottom: Unfortunately, we are no longer able to use the Sports and Social Club as polling station for Six Mile Bottom. We continue to keep this situation under review and will adopt a new polling station if a suitable venue becomes available. We regularly write to affected voters to ensure they are aware of the situation.

SD3 – Willingham South: Willingham South is an administrative polling district created when a new polling district was formed for Northstowe. Willingham South continues to be required in the short term as it falls within a different parliamentary constituency to the rest of Willingham. In due course, this polling district will need to be removed.

e) Accessibility of elections and the Elections Act 2022

New requirements and guidance on the accessibility of elections were introduced as part of the Elections Act 2022. As a result of these new rules we have undertaken a full audit of the accessibility of our preferred polling stations.

We are pleased to report that most of our polling stations offer excellent access for disabled voters. Where polling stations are not fully accessible, there will not usually be a better alternative available. In these circumstances we spend extra time and effort to work with our polling station staff to ensure we offer fair access to our elections for all voters.

We welcome feedback on the accessibility and suitability of our polling stations for disabled voters, particularly where alternative facilities might improve our service.

f) How to respond

Full details of this review (along with polling district ward maps) can be found on our website at www.scams.gov.uk/elections.

A schedule of the existing South Cambridgeshire polling districts, polling places and polling stations can also be viewed at Appendix (A). The results of our accessibility audit can be viewed at Appendix (B). The proposed polling district boundaries for Cambourne ward can be viewed at Appendix (C).

The easiest way to respond to this consultation is by completing our online form, which can be found on the polling district review pages on our website at www.scams.gov.uk/elections.

You can also respond by emailing elections@scams.gov.uk. You should make the subject of your email POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW.

You can also write to us at

Electoral Services
South Cambs District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

If you need to you can contact us by telephone on 01954 713000.

Please make sure we have received your responses by **27 November 2023**.

Any representations made during the review may be published alongside reports to the Civic Affairs Committee and Council and will help inform decisions made by those bodies.

Liz Watts

Electoral Registration Officer, Returning Officer and Chief Executive

List of Appendices

- a) Schedule of existing polling districts, places and stations
- b) Results of polling station accessibility audit
- c) Map showing proposed new polling district boundaries for Cambourne Ward

Online resources at www.scambs.gov.uk/elections

- Maps of all district wards split into existing polling districts