



REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS 2024

(ACTING) RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As required by the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) the City of London Corporation is undertaking a statutory review of the Corporation's polling districts and polling places.
- 1.2 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling district and polling places. The Corporation must undertake and complete a review of all polling districts and polling places in its area within a 16 month period commencing from 1 October 2023 to 31 January 2025. The last review was completed in 2019.
- 1.3 Stuart Love, the Chief Executive of Westminster City Council, is the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Cities of London and Westminster Parliamentary constituency. He has asked that Ian Thomas CBE, Town Clerk of the City of London, act on his behalf and submit a report on the review relating to the City of London.

2. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1 The City of London electoral area is currently geographically divided into four polling districts that are part of the Cities of London & Westminster Parliamentary constituency. The polling districts are also currently part of the City and East constituency for Greater London Authority elections.
- 2.2 The existing City of London Ward boundaries and the polling places used for City Ward elections are not included in the scope of this review.
- 2.3 Through the review the Corporation must:
 - Seek to ensure that all the electors in the constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances;
 - Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including

those with disabilities, and when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled people.

- 2.3 Each polling district must be allocated a polling place, which is a building in which the polling station is located. A polling station is the room within the polling place where ballot papers are issued and where voting takes place.
- 2.4 In order to comply with Electoral Commission guidance the number of electors allocated to a polling station should not exceed 2,500. The Corporation may designate multiple polling stations to a polling place so that each polling station does not exceed 2,500 electors.
- 2.5 The current arrangements for each ward are set out below. All electorate figures are as of 12 August 2024. The recommendations are set out at the end of the report.

3. REVIEW TIMETABLE

- 3.1 The timetable for the review is as follows:

22 August 2024	Publication of the Notice of Review
22 August 2024	Publication of the (Acting) Returning Officer's Report on the existing arrangements and proposals for future arrangements
22 August 2024	Start of the consultation period
4 October 2024	End of the consultation period
7 November 2024	Final report on the review for approval by the Policy and Resources Committee of the City of London Corporation
1 December 2024	Publication of electoral register including any amendments.

- 3.2 As part of this review, the (Acting) Returning Officer must submit comments on existing arrangements and proposals for the future. This report constitutes the City of London's initial proposals for future arrangements.
- 3.3 Electors may make representations to the City of London regarding the review and the content of this report. The City of London would also welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to make a representation or comment on the content of this report. Persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, propose alternative locations that may be used as polling places.
- 3.4 Information and documents regarding the review can be obtained from:

Electoral Services
City of London
Town Clerk's Department

PO Box 270
Guildhall
London
EC2P 2EJ

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/voting-elections/review-of-polling-places>

- 3.5 Representations should be made in writing to the above postal address or emailed to: electoralservices@cityoflondon.gov.uk
- 3.6 The (Acting) Returning Officer's comments and representations made during the consultation period will be considered and included in a report to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 17 October 2024. The Policy and Resources Committee will be asked to consider and approve the recommendations of the report.
- 3.7 Any changes to the existing polling district boundaries agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee will be incorporated into the Electoral Register published on 1 December 2024.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The principles underlying the City's approach to polling district and polling places are:
 - To retain, as far as possible, the current location of polling places and polling district to minimise disruption to voters
 - To ensure that, in line with Electoral Commission's guidelines, no more than 2,500 electors are allocated to each polling station
 - To ensure that, as far as practicable, polling places are accessible to people with disabilities.
 - To consider what impact planned and approved residential development may have on the number of electors in each polling district.
- 4.2 A map showing the existing polling district boundaries and locations of the polling places within those polling districts is available on the City Council's website: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/voting-elections/review-of-polling-places>
- 4.3 The existing arrangements were used most recently in the UK Parliamentary election on 4 July 2024.
- 4.4 As part of the Review, an audit of all the existing polling places was conducted. The audit examined the suitability of the polling places in terms of facilities and access for all voters including disabled voters

5. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The City of London currently has four polling districts; AL, BL, CL, and DL

5.2 **AL polling district:**

This polling district is situated in the western part of the City and covers the Bread Street, Castle Baynard, Cordwainer, Cheap, Farringdon Within, Farringdon Without, Queenhithe and Vintry Ward areas.

The main residential areas within the polling district are situated around Smithfield Market, the Temples, City West, Carter Lane and Queenhithe.

As of August 2024, there were 2102 electors in the polling district, of which 475 had a postal vote and would therefore not attend the polling station to cast their vote.

Planning Permission has been granted for the following residential developments in the polling district:

- 4-7 Lombard Lane (2 Units)
- 68 Long Lane (1 Unit)
- 10 Little Trinity Lane (9 Units)
- 3-4 Bartholomew Place (9 Units)
- Site Bounded By 34-38, 39-41, 45-47 & 57B Little Britain & 20, 25, 47, 48-50, 51-53, 59, 60, 61, 61A & 62 Bartholomew Close, London EC1 - last phase with previous phases completed (91 Units)

5.3 **AL polling place:**

Electors in the AL polling district currently vote at St. Bride's Foundation, St. Bride's Place, off Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 8EQ. This is located centrally within the polling district. As this polling district has the greatest geographical spread of electors of the three polling districts, a centrally located polling place is beneficial to the electors and ensures that electors in the different parts of the polling district are not disadvantaged.

There is a small stone threshold at the entrance to the building. This is accessible for most wheelchair users. No comments or complaints were made by electors about accessibility at the polling station at the UK Parliamentary Election in 2024.

The polling station electorate of 1627 is well below the Electoral Commission's guidelines of a maximum of 2500 electors, and this will not be impacted by the planned development in the polling district.

5.4 **BL polling district:**

This polling district is situated towards the North of the City and has the largest number of electors. It covers the Aldersgate, Bassishaw, Coleman Street and part of the Cripplegate Ward areas. The polling district contains the Barbican estate.

As of August 2024, there were 3422 electors in the polling district, of which

979 had a postal vote.

Planning Permission has been granted for the following residential developments in the polling district:

- The Turret, John Wesley Highwalk, Barbican (1 unit)
- Bernard Morgan House, 43 Golden Lane London (99 units)

5.5 **BL polling place:**

The electors of the BL polling district currently vote at St Giles Cripplegate Church, Barbican, EC2Y 8DA. This is situated centrally within the Barbican Estate. Access to the polling place is either via steps or a ramp with which is suitable for wheelchair users. Additional outside lighting is provided by the polling place staff to ensure adequate lighting.

The polling station electorate of 2443, and there are therefore two polling stations located within the polling place to accommodate this volume of electors. This means that the Electoral Commission's guideline of a not more than 2500 electors allocated to each polling station is not exceeded.

There would also be sufficient space in the polling place for a third polling station if it were required. The planned residential developments in the polling district are not expected to cause an increase in the electorate to require this, however.

5.6 **CL polling district:**

This polling district is located on the Eastern side of the City and covers Aldgate, Billingsgate, Bishopsgate, Bridge and Bridge Without, Broad Street, Candlewick, Cornhill, Dowgate, Langbourn, Lime Street, Portsoken, Tower and Walbrook Ward areas.

The main residential areas are the Middlesex Street Estate and the Mansell Street Estate which are located on the Eastern Boundary of the polling district. As of August 2024, there were 1565 electors in the polling district, of which 342 had a postal vote.

Planning Permission has been granted for the following residential developments in the polling district:

- 75, 79, 85, 89, 95 & 97 Middlesex Street & 2 & 14 Gravel Lane, London, E1 7DA (9 units)
- Staff Mess Room Sixth Floor, Petticoat Square, London, E1 7EA (1 unit)
- Site Bounded by Stone House And Staple Hall, Bishopsgate, Devonshire Row, London, EC2 (160 units)
- 133 Middlesex Street, London, E1 7JF (3 units)
- 15 - 16 Minories & 62 Aldgate High Street, London, EC3N 1AX (87 units)
- 17 - 18 Widegate Street, London, E1 7HP (3 units)
- 53-54 Aldgate High Street, London, EC3N 1AL (1 unit)
- 206 - 210 Bishopsgate, London, EC2M 4NR (5 units)

5.7 **CL polling place:**

Electors in the CL polling district currently vote at the Artizan Street Library and Community Centre, 1 Artizan Street, London, E1 7AE, and as a result of an urgency to Policy & Resources Committee on 18 March 2021 Portsoken Community Centre, 20 Little Somerset Street, London E1 8AH, was designated as a reserve polling station for all future elections in the event that Artizan Street Library is not available. Both are in the East of the polling district, which is also where the most populous areas in the polling district are located. They are therefore in a convenient position for the majority of electors in the polling district.

Artizan Street Library polling station itself is located in a large ground floor room that is sectioned off from the rest of the Centre. There is good, level access from the street to the polling station, and good heating and lighting. Portsoken Community Centre is fully accessible with good heating, lighting and facilities.

The polling station electorate of 1223 as of August 2024, which is well below the Electoral Commission's guidelines of not more than 2500 electors per polling station. The planned development in the area is unlikely to increase the number of electors attending the polling station close to that level.

5.8 **DL polling district:**

This polling district is located in the North of the City and contains the Golden Lane Estate in the Cripplegate Ward. This polling district was created in the 2014 polling district review and is smallest polling district in terms of both geography and electorate.

As of August 2024, there were 716 electors in the polling district, of which 175 had a postal vote.

Planning Permission has been granted for the following residential developments in the polling district:

- Great Arthur House, Golden Lane Estate, London, EC1Y 0RE (3 units)
- Cromwell Tower, Cromwell Place, Barbican, London, EC2Y 8DD (1 unit)

5.9 **DL polling place:**

The electors of the DL polling district currently vote at the Sir Ralph Perring Centre, Golden Lane Estate, London, EC1Y 0SH. It is in a good location for the electors in the polling district.

There is level access from the street to the polling station and is suitable for wheelchair users. No comments or complaints were received about the polling station during the European Parliamentary Election in 2019.

The polling station electorate of 541 as of August 2024, which is well within the Electoral Commission's guidance of not more than 2500 electors being

allocated to a polling station.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The electorate at each polling station is currently within the Electoral Commission's recommendation of not more than 2500 electors allocated to a polling station. There are developments expected within all of the polling districts during the next few years, however the size of the electorate will not increase to the extent that this will be exceeded.
- 6.2 All four of the polling places have good disabled access. The polling place in polling district AL has a small stone ledge that is accessible for wheelchair users, the polling place in the BL polling district has a ramp to the building, and the polling places in polling districts CL and DL provide good flat access from the street to the polling station. No comments or complaints were received regarding the polling stations, or accessibility at the polling stations, at the UK Parliamentary election on 4 July 2024.
- 6.3 However, given that we have an urgency in place that allows for us to change the polling station in CL, and we have used urgencies in the recent past (2019 UK Parliamentary General Election) to change the use of the polling place that we amend the Scheme of Delegations to ensure that the Comptroller & City Solicitor can approve the change of a usual polling station for a suitable alternative should the approved polling stations become unavailable. During an election timetable or if a snap election is called the requirement to arrange a polling place is paramount. The process of amending polling places under urgency does not lend itself to speed at which officers must act to ensure a suitable polling place is secured.

Recommendation 1: That no change be required to the boundaries of the polling districts.

Recommendation 2: That no change be required to the location of the polling places within the polling districts.

Recommendation 3: An amendment to the Scheme of Delegations to allow the Comptroller & City Solicitor to approve the change of a polling station location in AL, BL, CL or DL.

Ian Thomas CBE
Town Clerk
City of London Corporation

On behalf of

Stuart Love
(Acting) Returning Officer
Cities of London and Westminster Parliamentary constituency.

22 August 2024