

Appendix A

Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

FINAL REPORT

London Borough of Lewisham

January 2025

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1 Introduction and purpose of the report

- 1.1. By order of section 18c of the Representation of the People Act, the Returning Officer for Lewisham Council is required to undertake a review of all polling districts and places every 5 years.
- 1.2. The last scheduled Review took place between August and December 2021. This current review must be completed by 31 January 2025.
- 1.3. This report outlines the final proposals of the Returning Officer that will be formally approved by the Council at the Full Council meeting on 22 January 2025. The new polling scheme will come into effect on 31 January 2025 when the new register is published.
- 1.4. The initial recommendations of the Returning Officer were published on Friday 13 September 2024. The public consultation closed on 25 October 2024 and councillor consultation closed on 18 December 2024.
- 1.5. Definition of terms:
 - Polling Station: A room or building which is used for the issuing of ballot papers to voters
 - Polling Place: The building or area where polling stations are situated
 - Polling District: An area of residential properties containing electors who are allocated to a polling place

For example, the polling district will be a large area comprising a series of roads and estates, the polling place is a local school, and the polling station is the main hall within the school.

2 Supporting Documents

- 2.1. The initial report outlining the Returning Officer's proposals was published on 13 September and has been circulated to all councillors and communication channels. The report can be found on our website at: [Lewisham Council - Polling district review](#)

- 2.2. Supporting documents can be found as appendices at the end of this report, and include:
- A – Equalities Impact Assessment
 - B – A list of all submissions and representations received, with the response and any resulting changes made to the proposals

3 The Timetable

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 September 2024 | Publish Notice of holding a review and start of consultation period |
| 14 October 2024 | Start of ward consultation meetings |
| 25 October 2024 | Deadline for representations |
| 14 November 2024 | Publish ARO's revised proposals, applying representations and feedback |
| 18 December 2024 | Meeting of the Governance Committee to review the proposals |
| 22 January 2025 | Formal meeting of the council to approve the new proposals |
| 31 January 2025 | Publish the electoral register using new polling districts |

4 Key Issues for the Proposals

- 4.1. According to Electoral Commission guidance, no polling station should have more than 2,500 electors allocated to it. This excludes postal voters and those not eligible to vote. Where a polling district has more than 2,500 electors allocated to it the electorate is split between 2 polling stations in the same venue. In Lewisham we believe the figure of 2,500 is slightly too high, and set a figure of 2,250 for the maximum number of electors allocated to a single polling station. Should the electorate be higher, we allocate a second polling station in the polling place. This is known as a double polling station.
- 4.2. Polling stations should be local to the voters. Where possible, voters should be no more than 15 minutes walk from their polling station.
- 4.3. Continuity of the polling scheme is important. Many residents will become familiar with the location of their polling station and any change could lead to a decline in turnout. However, it is still possible to change the location – ensuring that the new location is suitable and sufficient notice has been given by more than one communication channel, including direct contact.
- 4.4. No polling station should have fewer than 1,300 electors allocated to it – this will ensure value for money in terms of costs per voter. This minimum number of voters will only apply where it is practical. If the walk would be too great a distance then a local venue for an isolated group of voters can be preferable.
- 4.5. All new polling places must be assessed for accessibility, proximity to voters in that polling district and facilities for staff such as toilets, kitchen and parking.
- 4.6. Physical barriers such as railway lines, parks, and main roads can prevent an easy division of electors to polling districts. The proposals must take these into account and regard the safety of electors travelling to and from their polling place.

- 4.7. Transport links in polling districts should be considered – they can improve accessibility for electors. Where changes are required the Review will note the provision of bus stops and parking spaces.
- 4.8. When allocating electors to polling places and stations the review will account for previous electoral turnout, reviews undertaken and lessons learnt after each election and the capacity of polling staff to deal with high turnouts.
- 4.9. The management of polling stations and staff for elections demands a lot of resource and risk. Sometimes a double polling station, serving a large number of electors, allows us to reduce cost and focus our staff and equipment on a single venue. That gives us extra resilience and opportunities to maximise the use of our best staff and resources. Where there are 2 polling venues in close proximity, we should consider combining the district and using a single venue, to realise these benefits.
- 4.10. The Returning Officer notes that the use of schools as polling places can cause significant disruption to pupils, teachers and parents. With plenty of notice schools can often use the occasion as a training day, and give parents/carers more than enough time to make alternative arrangements. Communication between schools and electoral staff gives schools the time to do this. However, we will continue to be proactive in identifying alternative venues to schools wherever possible but cannot rule out using them.

5 The Decision Making Process

- 5.1. The notice of review was published on Friday 13 September. Residents and interested parties have been invited to submit representations.
- 5.2. The Returning Officer's proposals have been subject to an internal decision making process involving lead officers for electoral services, facilities and the health and safety team. They are now presented to all Councillors who will give expert feedback using their excellent local knowledge.
- 5.3. Ward meetings will be held with councillors to review these proposals alongside all submissions received from residents, and any other information. These meetings will be used to revise the proposals and come to agreements for each ward on a draft final scheme.
- 5.4. The Returning Officer will publish a report listing their final proposals. As part of the report, all representations will be published with the Returning Officer's response. This will be presented to the Governance Committee to consider and approve before being submitted to Full Council in January 2025.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1. Appendix A provides an equalities impact assessment (EIA).

6.2. The EIA examines the electoral process and provides information and actions for how we can make voting in polling places accessible for all residents who are eligible to vote.

6.3. The recommendations made in the EIA are reflected in the Returning Officer's proposals.

7. Polling District References

7.1. Polling districts must give reference to both the ward and the parliamentary constituency.

7.2. Lewisham polling districts are formatted in the following way:

First letter references the Parliamentary constituency
Second 2 letters references the Ward
Followed by a number

7.3. As our Parliamentary constituencies have changed, the polling district references must change too. Our revised polling districts will now appear as:

| WARD | CONSTITUENCY | PD REFERENCE |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Bellingham | Lewisham East | EBE |
| Catford South | Lewisham East | ECA |
| Downham | Lewisham East | EDO |
| Grove Park | Lewisham East | EGR |
| Hither Green | Lewisham East | EHG |
| Lee Green | Lewisham East | ELG |
| Rushey Green | Lewisham East | ERU |
| Blackheath | Lewisham North | NBL |
| Brockley | Lewisham North | NBR |
| Deptford | Lewisham North | NDE |
| Evelyn | Lewisham North | NEV |
| Ladywell | Lewisham North | NLA |
| Lewisham Central | Lewisham North | NLC |
| New Cross Gate | Lewisham North | NNG |
| Telegraph Hill | Lewisham North | NTE |
| Crofton Park | Lewisham West & East Dulwich | WCR |
| Forest Hill | Lewisham West & East Dulwich | WFO |
| Perry Vale | Lewisham West & East Dulwich | WPE |
| Sydenham | Lewisham West & East Dulwich | WSY |

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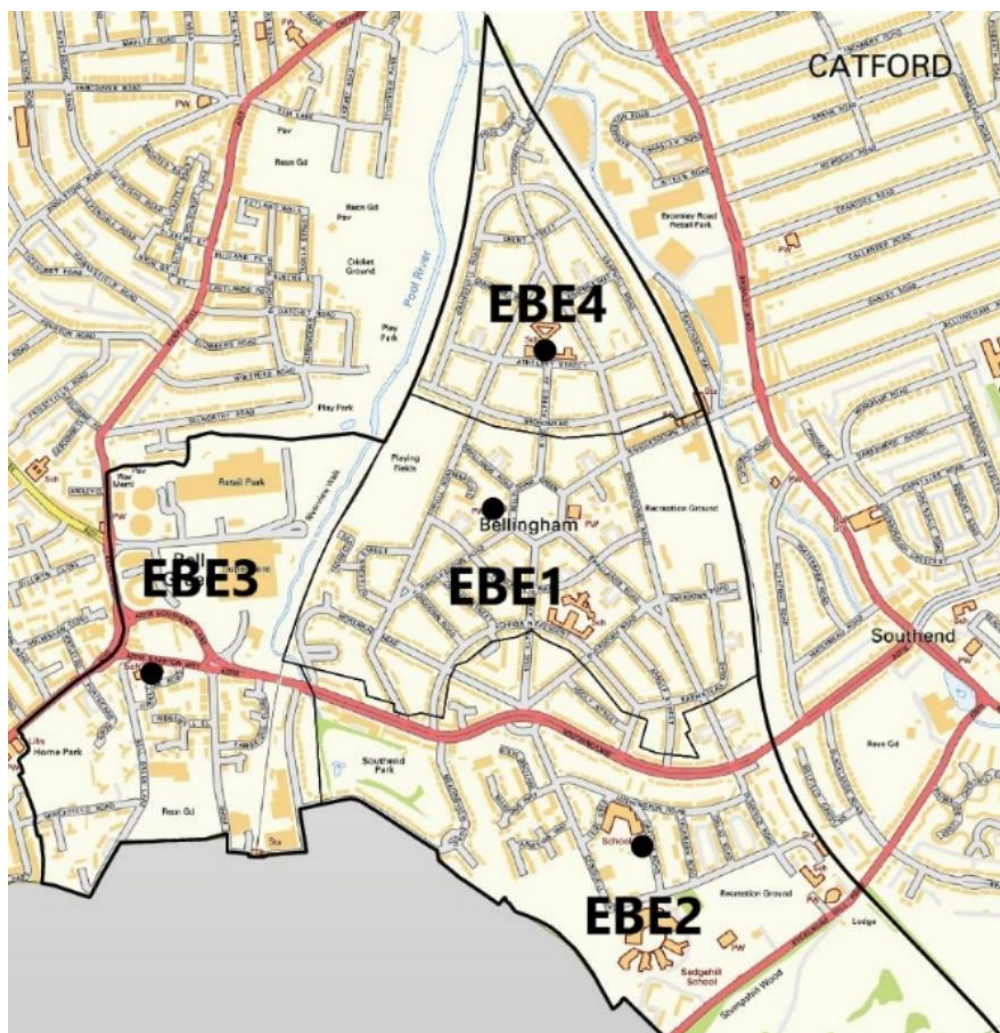
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

BELLINGHAM WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward
- The polling place for EBE2, the Dumps Playground, is being renovated and will be finished just in time for the next scheduled elections in May 2026. Any unscheduled polls before May 2026 will require a different polling place for this district. If that happens we will use a portacabin or an area within nearby Sedgemoor School

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| EBE1 | Christ Church United Reformed Church | 1,929 |
| EBE2 | Dumps Adventure Playground | 1,894 |
| EBE3 | Haseltine Primary School | 1,066 |
| EBE4 | Athelney Primary School | 1,305 |
| Total | | 6,194 |



Key

- Black lines show the ward and polling district boundaries
- Black dots show the polling station locations

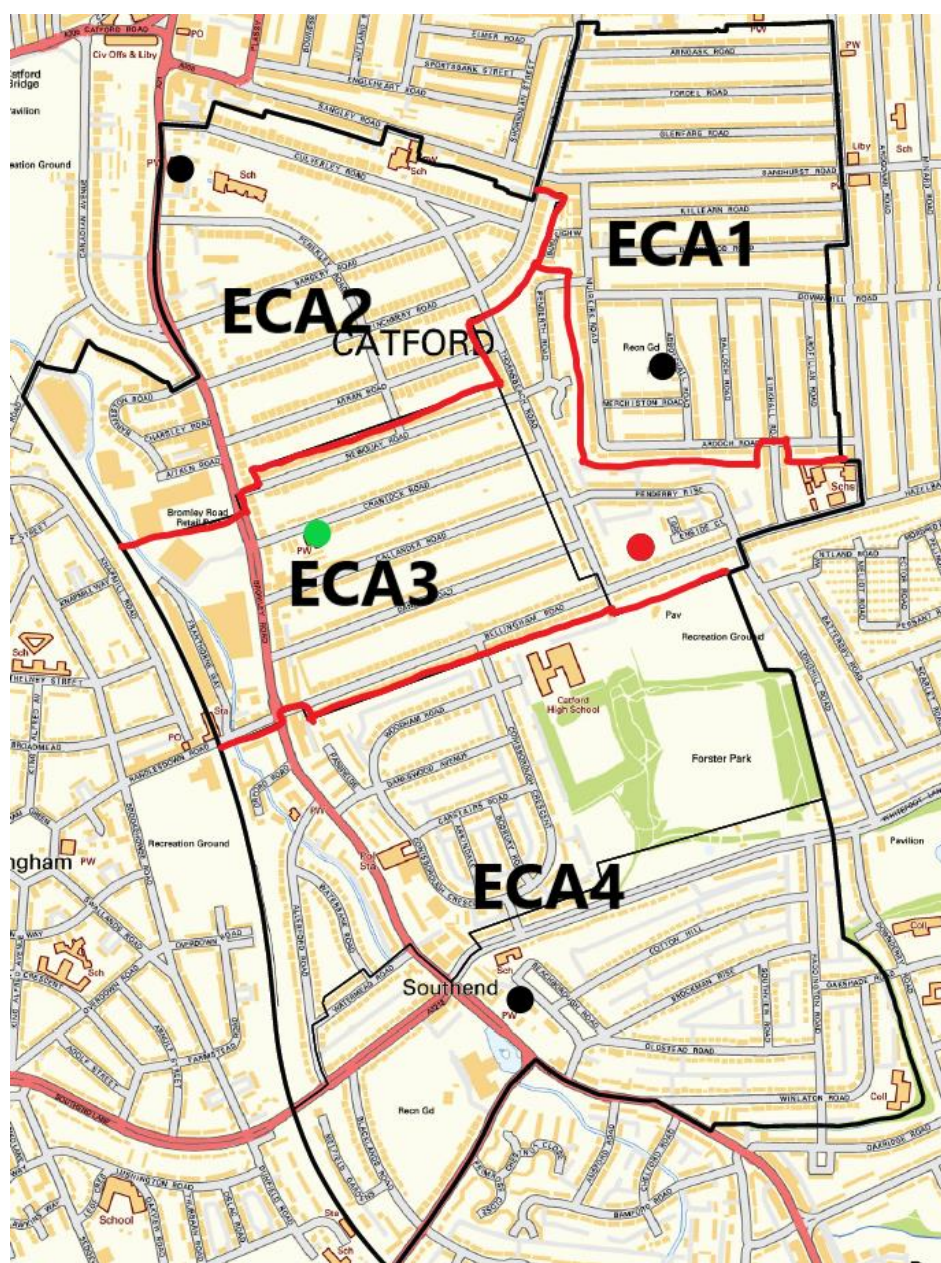
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

CATFORD SOUTH WARD

Summary

- Merge the 2 districts that both use St. John's Church as the polling place
- Add a new polling place at the Bellingham Bowling Club
- Amend the boundaries around the new venue to minimise walking distance for all voters

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| ECA1 | Abbotshall Healthy Lifestyle Centre | 2,539 |
| ECA2 | Laurence Centre | 1,847 |
| ECA3 | Bellingham Bowling Club | 1,706 |
| ECA4 | St. John's Church | 3,492 |
| Total | | 9,574 |



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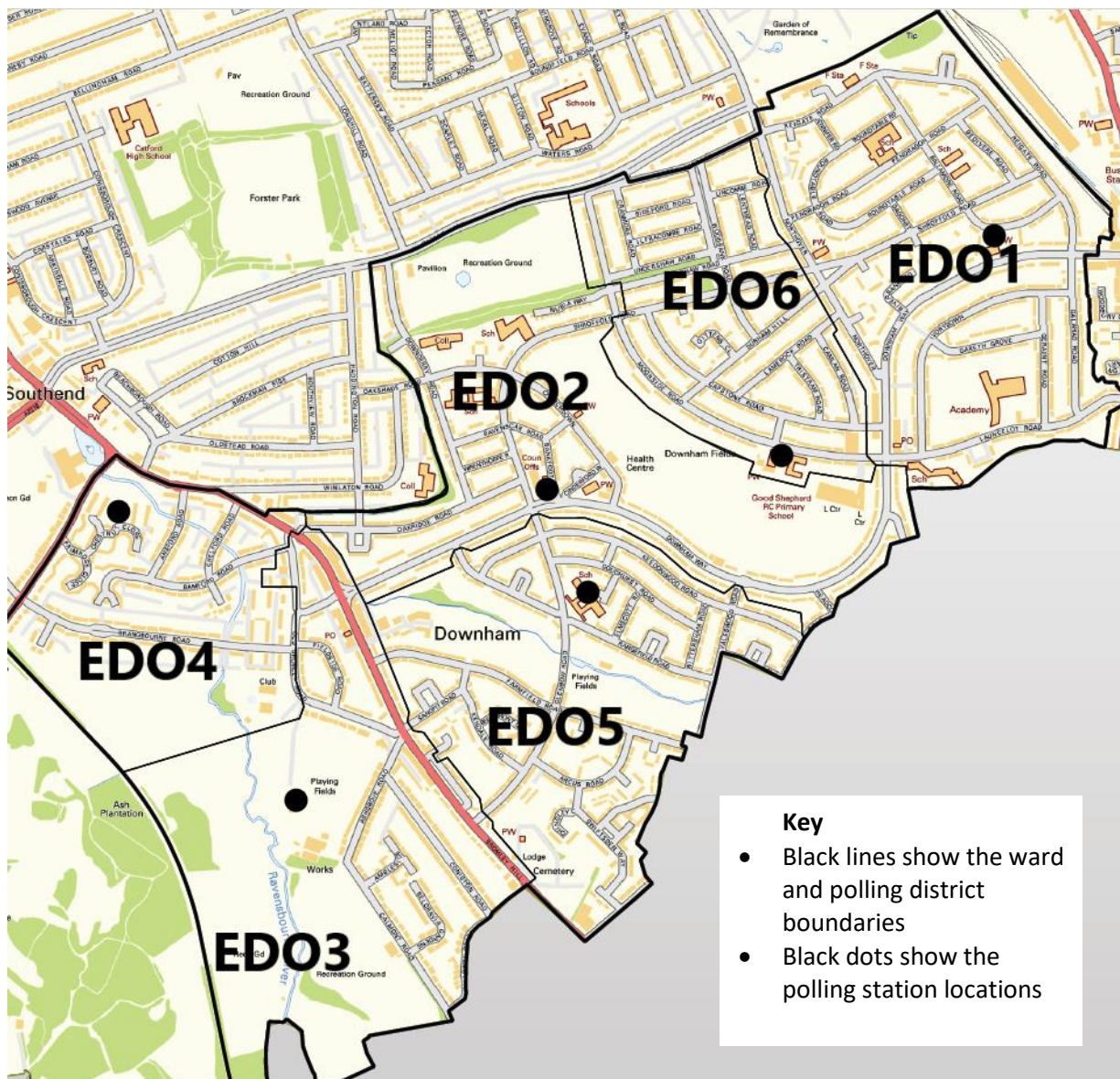
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

DOWNHAM WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward
- Suitable alternative venues were sought but not identified

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| EDO1 | King's Church, (Main Hall), The Green | 2,537 |
| EDO2 | Downham Community Centre | 1,488 |
| EDO3 | Ten Em Bee Sports Development Centre, | 903 |
| EDO4 | Catford Wanderers Sports Club | 1,001 |
| EDO5 | Rangefield Primary School | 1,966 |
| EDO6 | Good Shepherd Primary School | 1,741 |
| Total | | 9,636 |



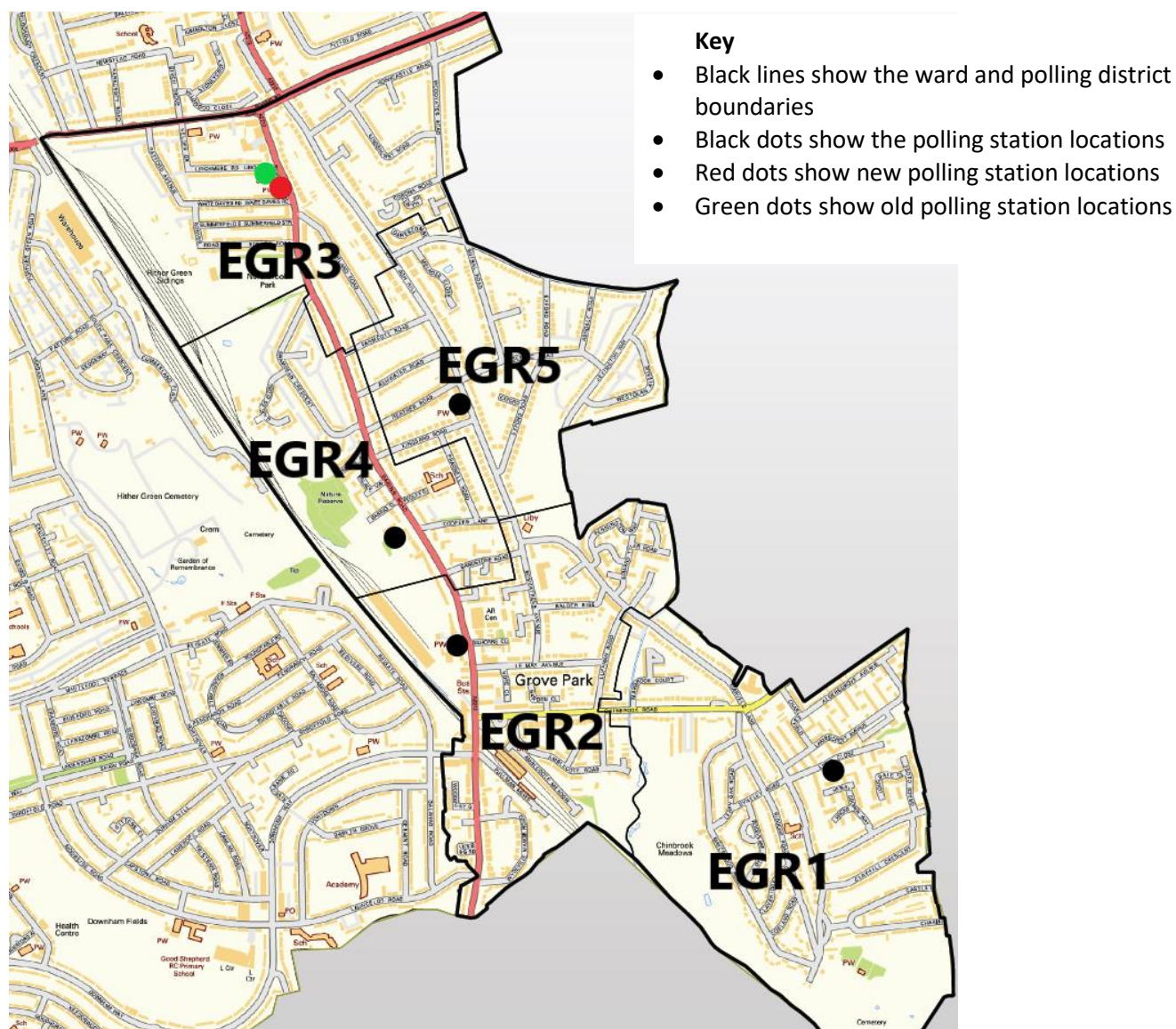
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

GROVE PARK WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts are proposed in this ward
- New polling place selected for EGR3 – moving from Baring Primary School to Trinity Presbyterian Church
- This change is being made to avoid the impact on the school which has previously had to close for each election to allow the hall to be used as the polling station. Representations have been received from the school and concerned parents

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|---------------------------------|--------|
| EGR1 | WG Grace Community Centre | 2,514 |
| EGR2 | St. Augustine's Church Hall | 1,681 |
| EGR3 | Trinity Presbyterian Church | 1,892 |
| EGR4 | Ringway Centre | 861 |
| EGR5 | Burnt Ash Methodist Church Hall | 1,466 |
| Total | | 8,414 |



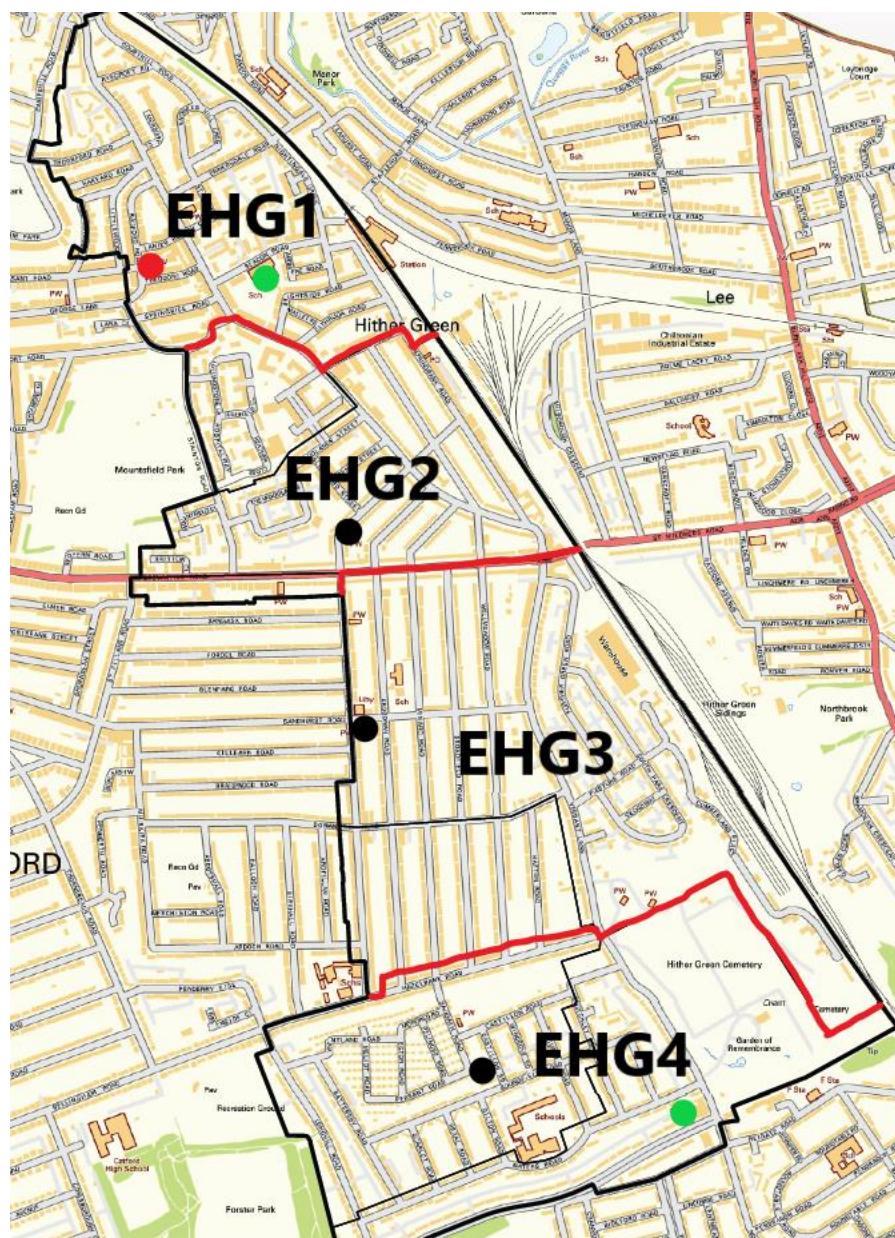
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

HITHER GREEN WARD

Summary

- Merge the old districts of EHG4 and EHG5
- Move the polling place from Brindishe Green School to Hither Green Baptist Church. This will prevent disruption to the school which has to close to be used as a polling place at elections
- Move the boundaries of the remaining districts to minimise the walking distance for voters

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|--------|
| EHG1 | Hither Green Baptist Church | 2,442 |
| EHG2 | St. Christopher's Christian Fellowship | 2,268 |
| EHG3 | St. Andrew's Church Hall | 3,128 |
| EHG4 | Goldsmiths Community Centre | 2,425 |
| Total | | 10,263 |



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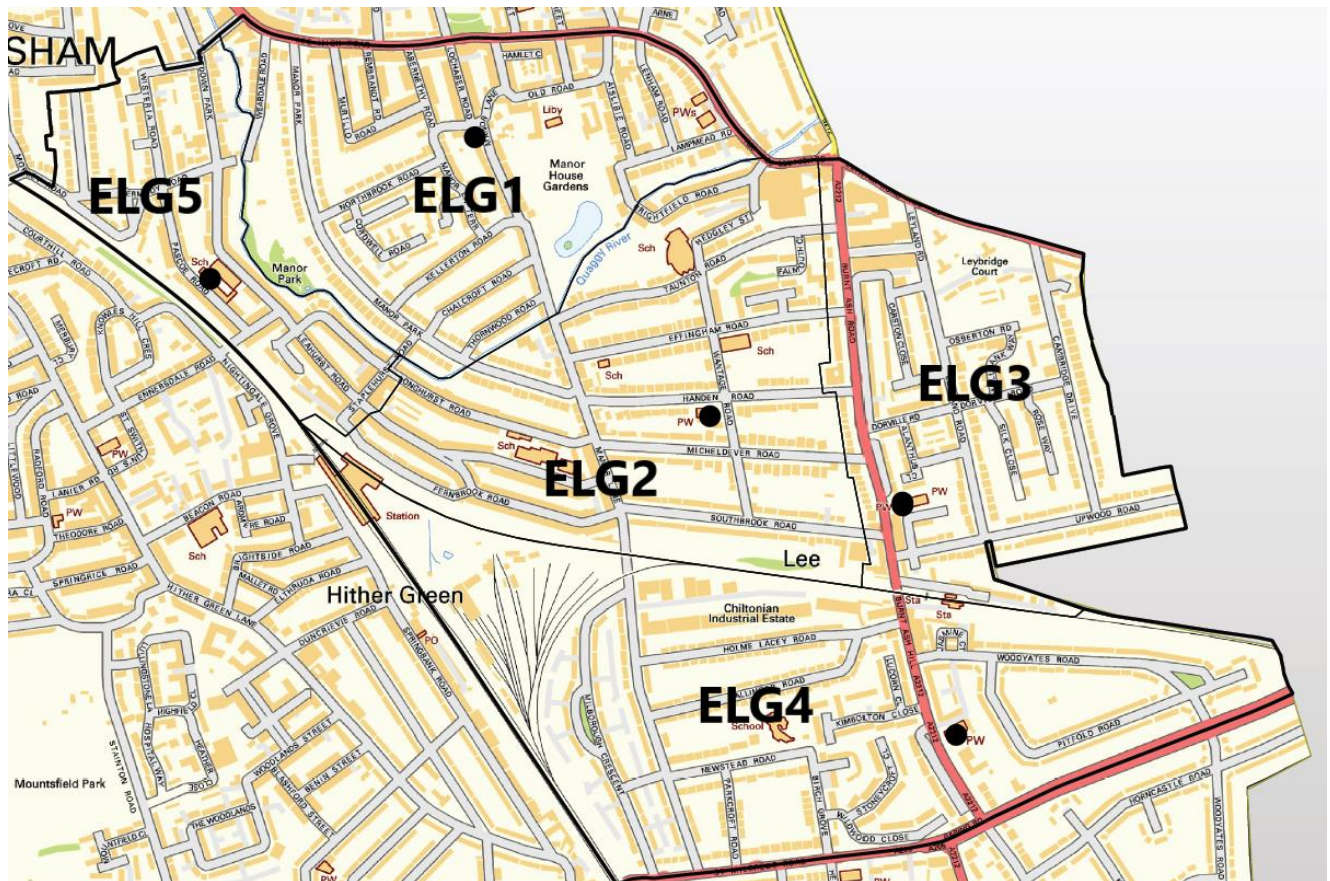
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

LEE GREEN WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward
- No representations or submissions were received
- Councillors provided feedback that they were happy with the current arrangements

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| ELG1 | Lochaber Hall | 2,071 |
| ELG2 | The Church of the Good Shepherd Lee | 1,855 |
| ELG3 | Lee Green United Reformed Church | 1,354 |
| ELG4 | Our Lady of Lourdes Church | 1,868 |
| ELG5 | Trinity Primary School | 1,046 |
| Total | | 8,194 |



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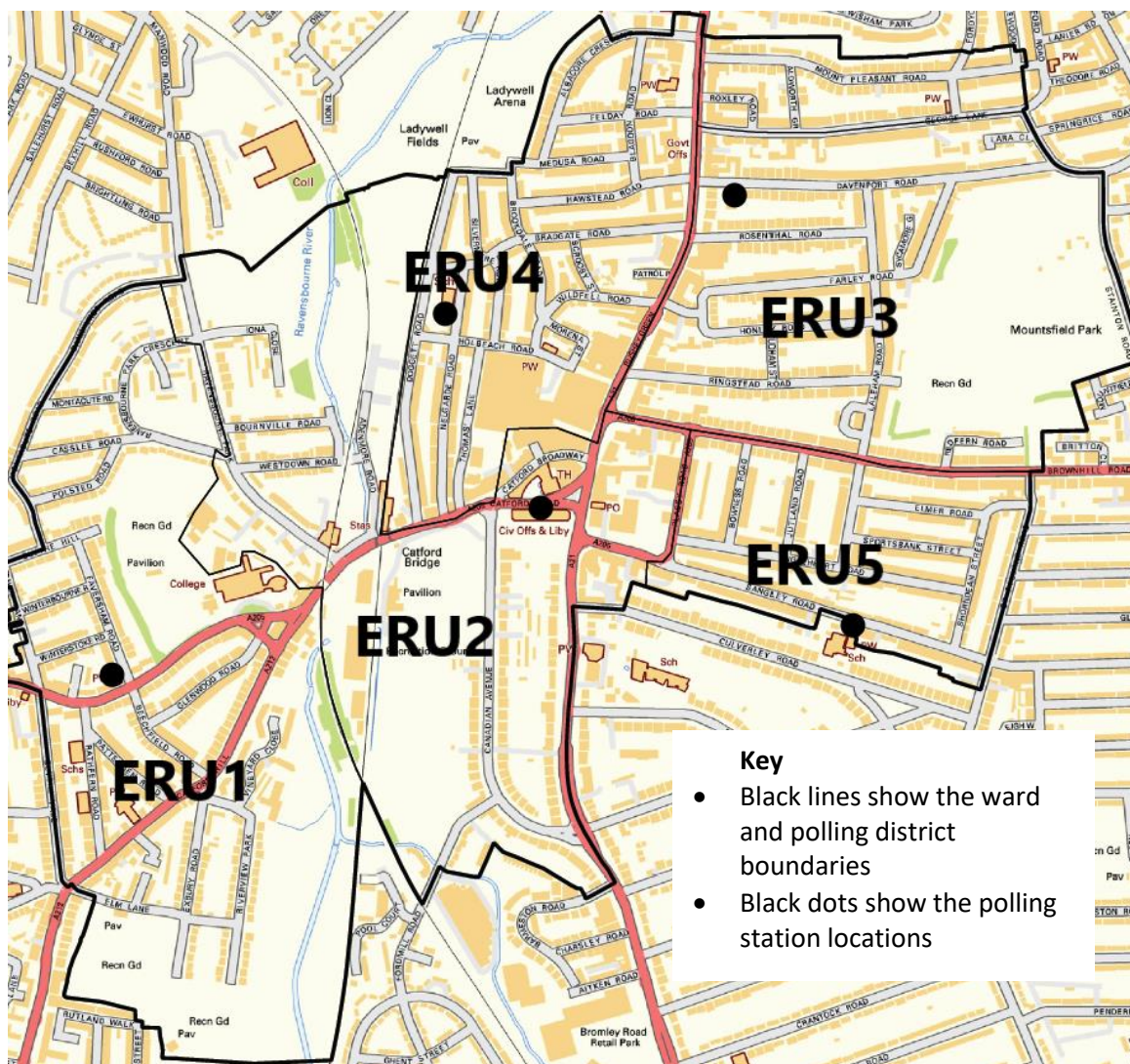
LEWISHAM EAST CONSTITUENCY

RUSHEY GREEN WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward
- A proposal was made to move the boundary for ERU4 and move the polling station to the Youth Theatre. However, this proposal was rejected due to the Youth Theatre being too far towards the edge of the district which would mean a longer distance for voters to travel. There were no other proposals for this ward so the scheme remains unchanged
- Councillors provided feedback that they were happy with the current arrangements

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| ERU1 | Trinity United Reform Church | 1,781 |
| ERU2 | Laurence House, Lewisham Council | 1,734 |
| ERU3 | Lewisham Irish Centre | 2,519 |
| ERU4 | Holbeach School | 1,805 |
| ERU5 | Holy Cross RC Church, Hartley Hall | 1,442 |
| Total | | 9,281 |



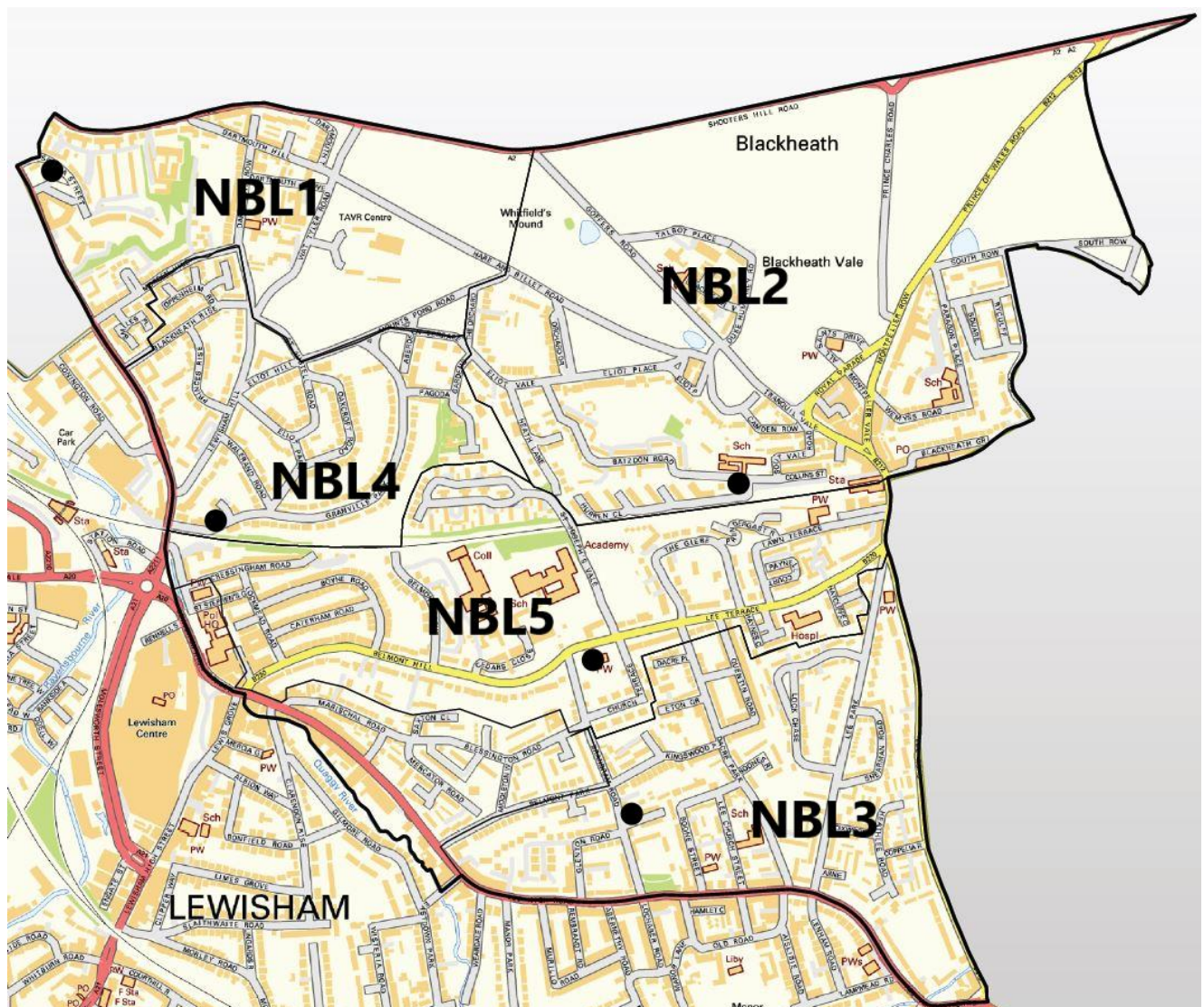
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

BLACKHEATH WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| NBL1 | Parkside SE10 | 1,522 |
| NBL2 | John Ball Nursery School | 1,253 |
| NBL3 | Brandram Road Community Centre | 1,982 |
| NBL4 | Granville Park Centre | 2,058 |
| NBL5 | St. Margaret`s Church | 1,870 |
| Total | | 8,685 |



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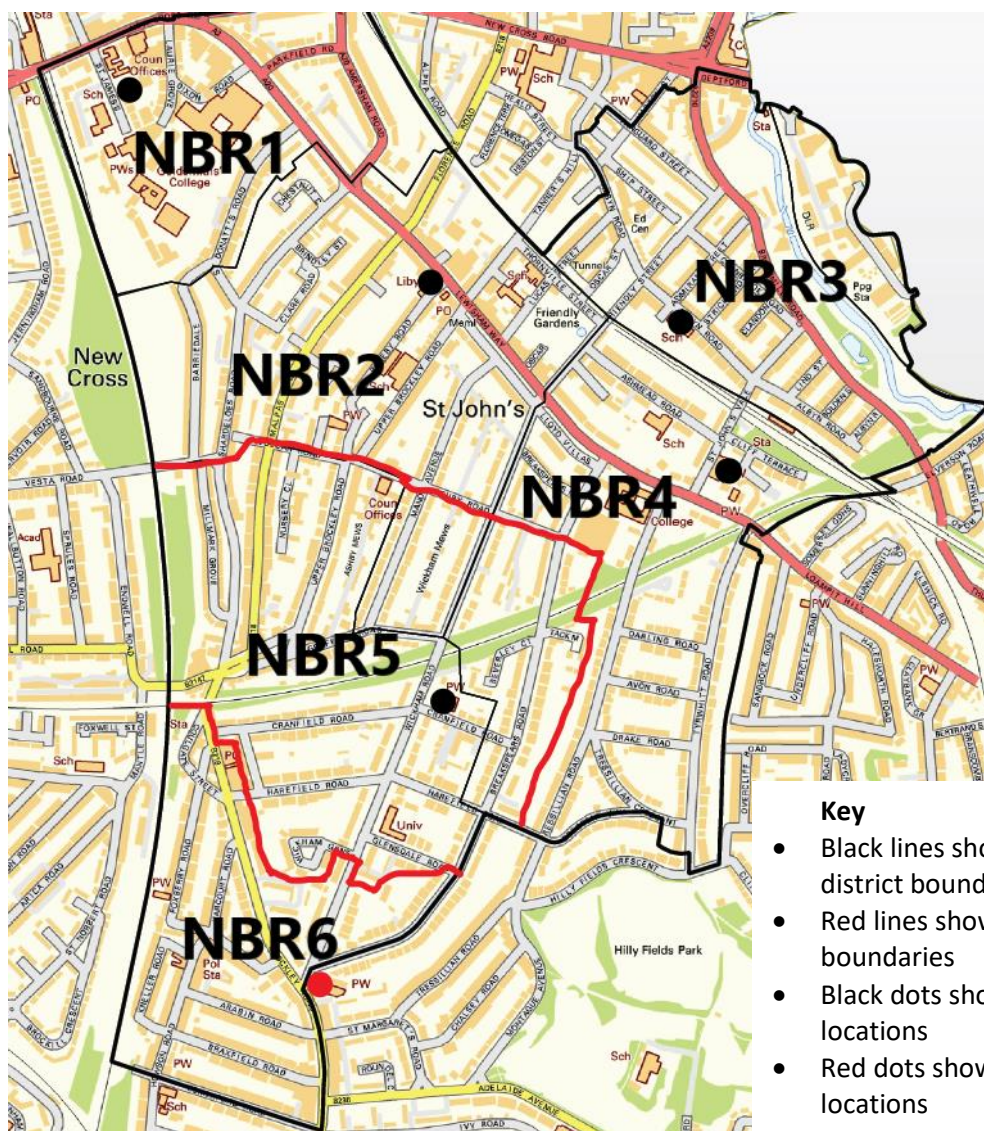
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

BROCKLEY WARD

Summary

- A new polling district has been created in the bottom south of the ward, with the polling place at St. Andrew's Church. Previously these voters had to walk past this church another 12 minutes to reach their allocated polling place
- The boundaries for NBR2, NBR4 and NBR5 have been amended to improve the distribution of voters and minimise the walking distance voters need to take

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| NBR1 | St. James Family Learning Centre | 1,082 |
| NBR2 | Lewisham Arthouse | 1,889 |
| NBR3 | St. Stephen's CoE Primary School | 2,023 |
| NBR4 | St. John's with Holy Trinity | 1,315 |
| NBR5 | St. Peter's Church | 2,275 |
| NBR6 | St. Andrew's Church | 1,331 |
| Total | | 9,915 |



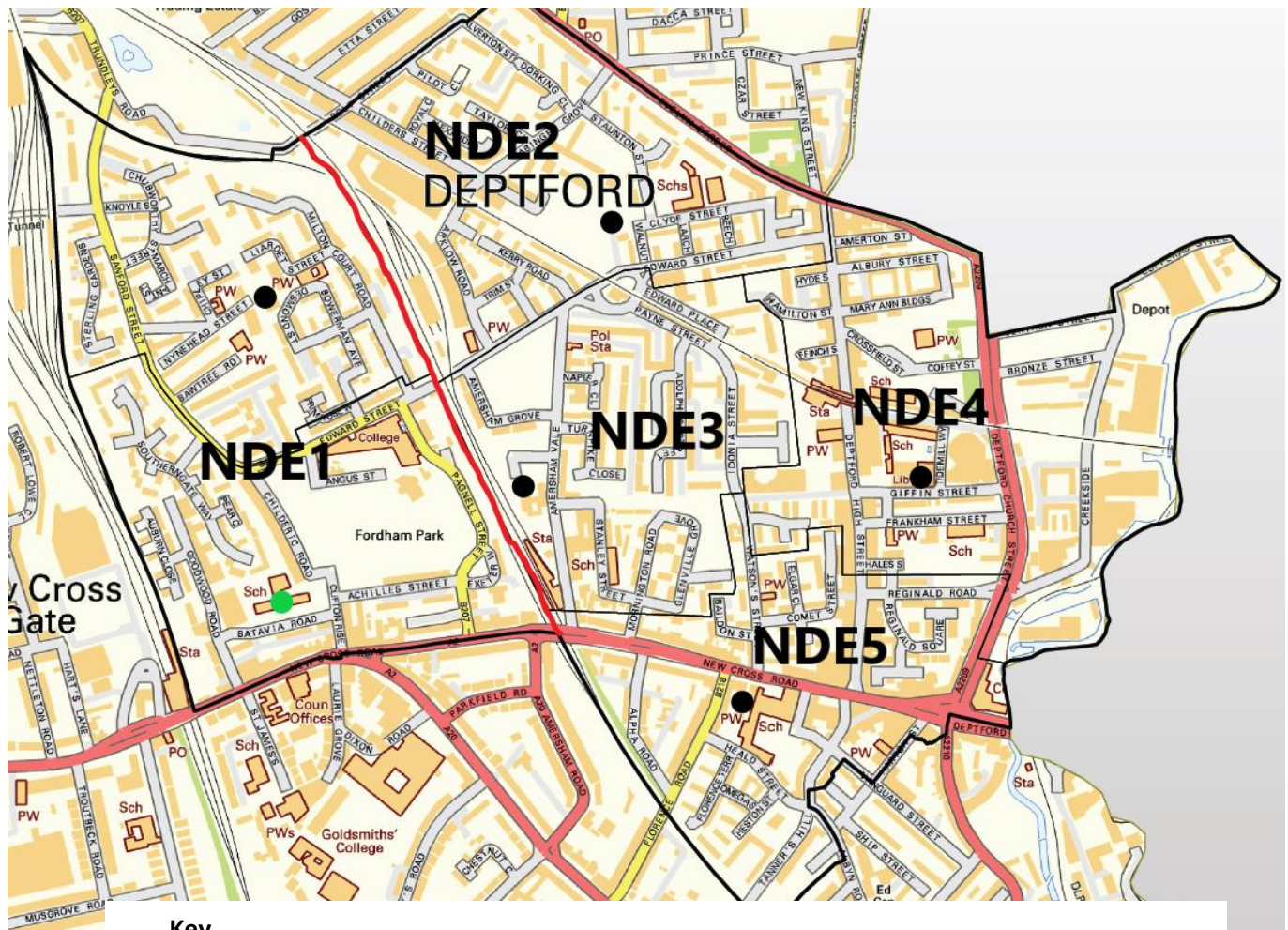
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

DEPTFORD WARD

Summary

- The 2 districts on the west of the railway line have been merged, with all voters allocated to a polling place at Woodpecker Community Centre
- Previously the 2 polling places were very close to each other. This change removes Childeric Primary School as a polling place, with very little impact on voters due to the short walking distance

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| NDE1 | Woodpecker Community Centre | 1,534 |
| NDE2 | Evelyn Community Centre | 968 |
| NDE3 | Mulberry Centre | 2,145 |
| NDE4 | The Library at Deptford Lounge | 1,184 |
| NDE5 | New Cross Road Baptist Church Hall | 3,127 |
| Total | | 8,958 |



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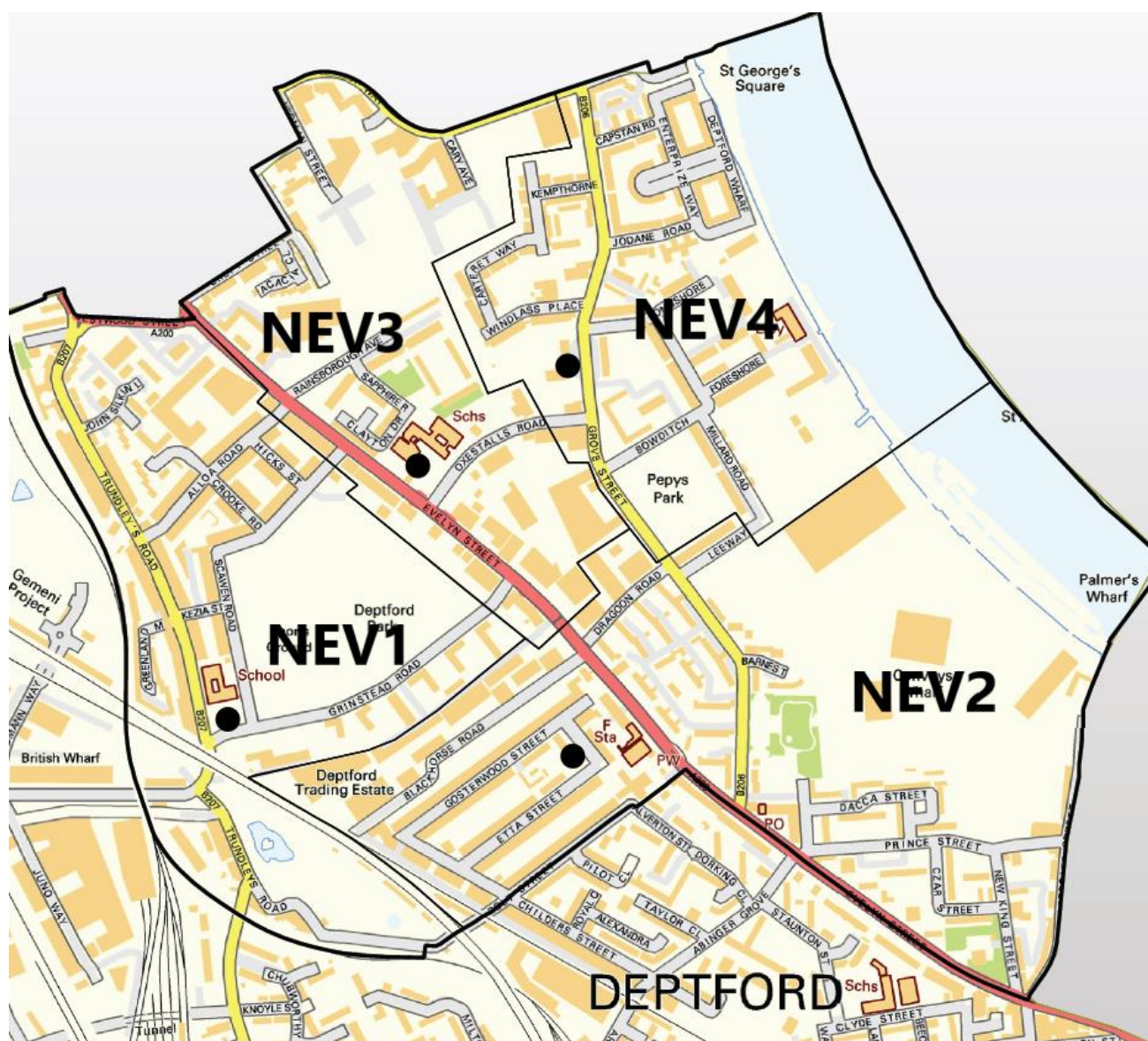
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

EVELYN WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------|
| NEV1 | Twin Oaks Primary School | 1,178 |
| NEV2 | Clyde Early Childhood Centre | 1,749 |
| NEV3 | Deptford Park Primary School | 1,896 |
| NEV4 | Evelyn Childrens Centre | 2,288 |
| Total | | 7,111 |



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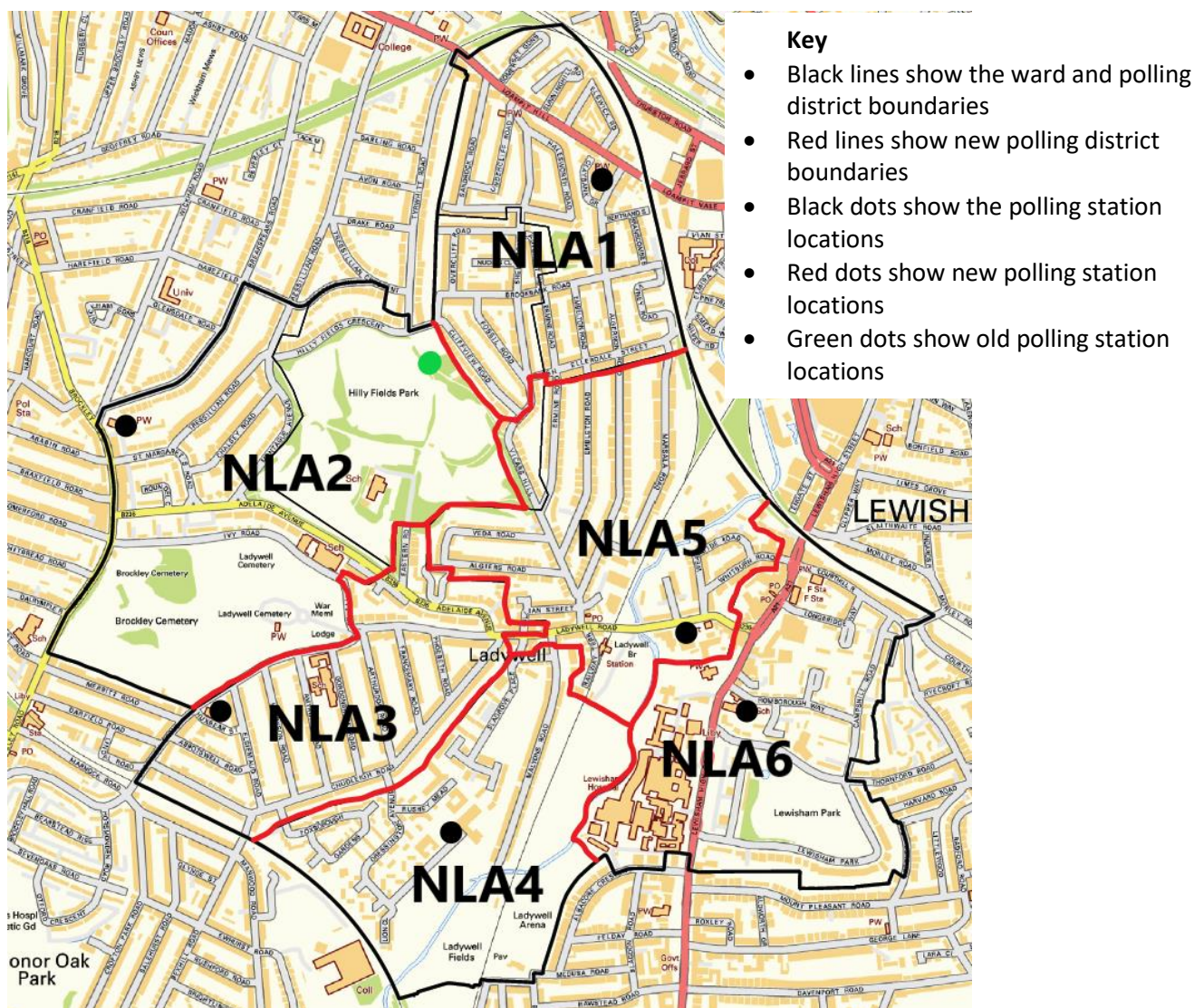
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

LADYWELL WARD

Summary

- Removed the polling place at Francis Drake Bowling Club and redistributed the voters to the neighbouring districts
- No other changes will be made – various options were investigated using several new polling place venues and polling districts, but it was determined that voters would be negatively impacted and the current arrangements were preferable

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| NLA1 | Winners Chapel | 2,402 |
| NLA2 | St. Andrew's United Reform Church | 1,227 |
| NLA3 | Crofton Park Baptist Church | 2,157 |
| NLA4 | St. Mary's Centre | 923 |
| NLA5 | John Evelyn Campus | 1,114 |
| NLA6 | St. Mary's CoE Primary School | 1,006 |
| Total | | 8,829 |



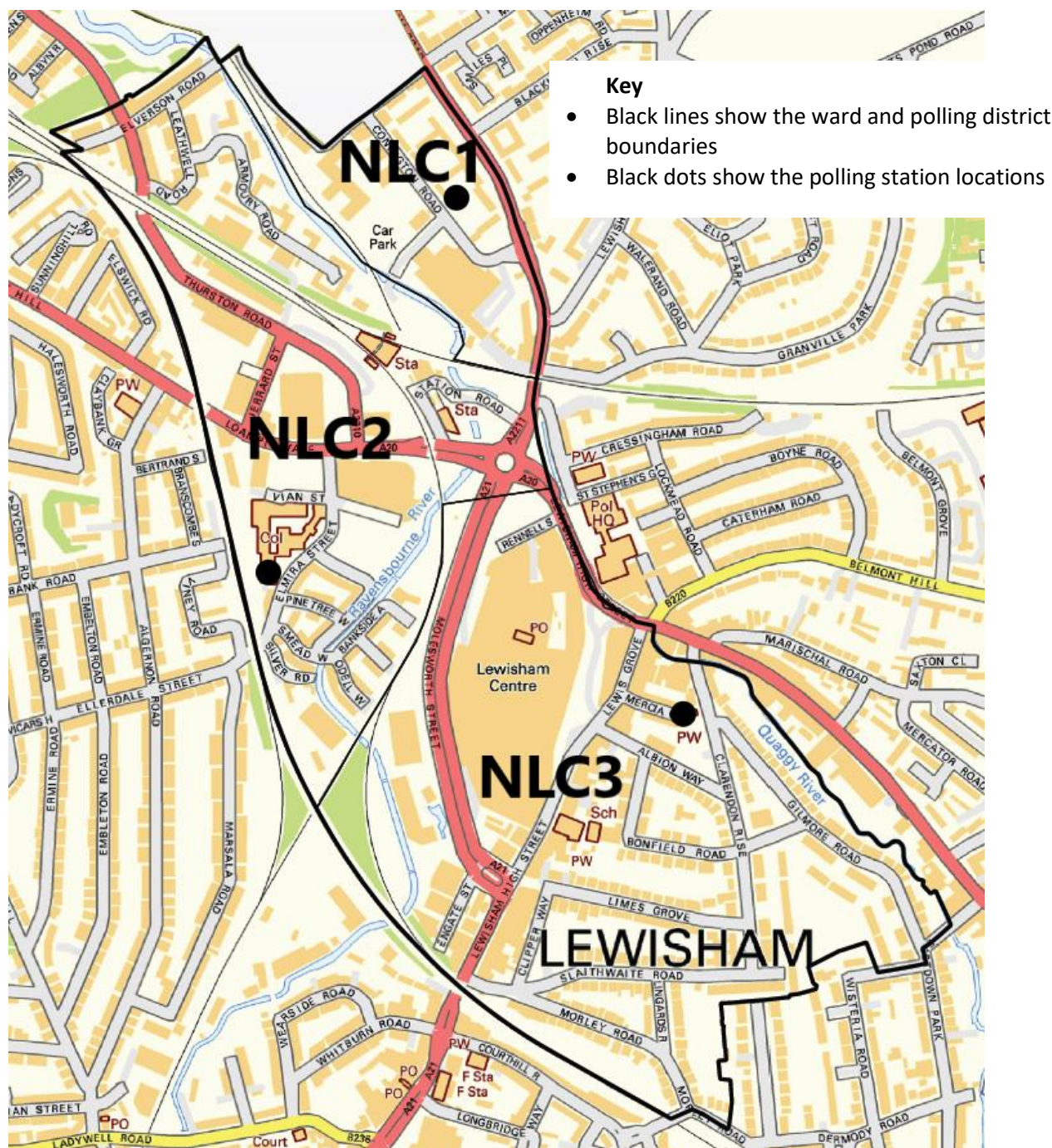
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

LEWISHAM CENTRAL WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| NLC1 | Orchard Gardens Community Centre | 750 |
| NLC2 | Prendergast Vale Primary School | 2,448 |
| NLC3 | College Park Baptist Chapel | 1,438 |
| Total | | 4,836 |



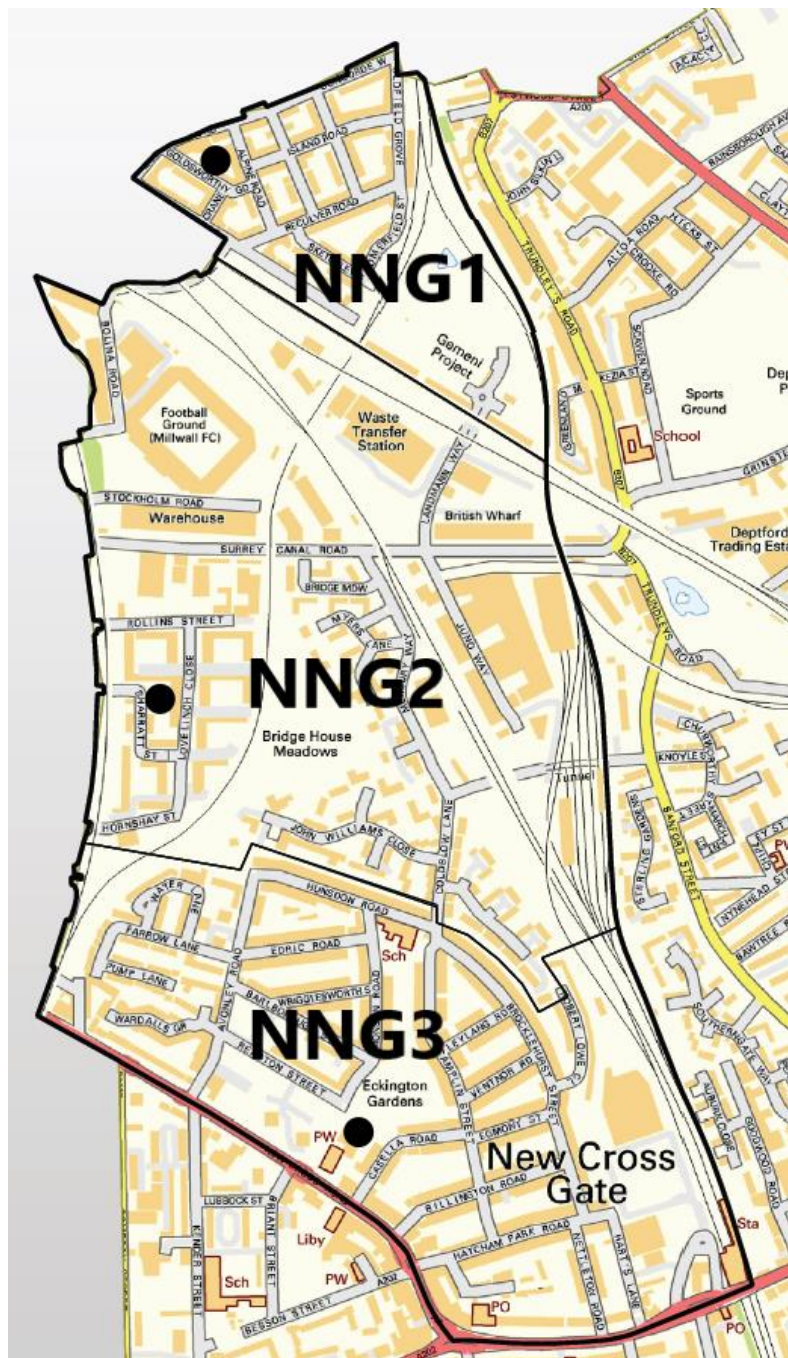
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

NEW CROSS GATE WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts or polling places are proposed in this ward

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| NNG1 | Lewington Centre | 966 |
| NNG2 | Scotney Hall | 1,280 |
| NNG3 | All Saints Community Centre | 2,808 |
| Total | | 5,054 |



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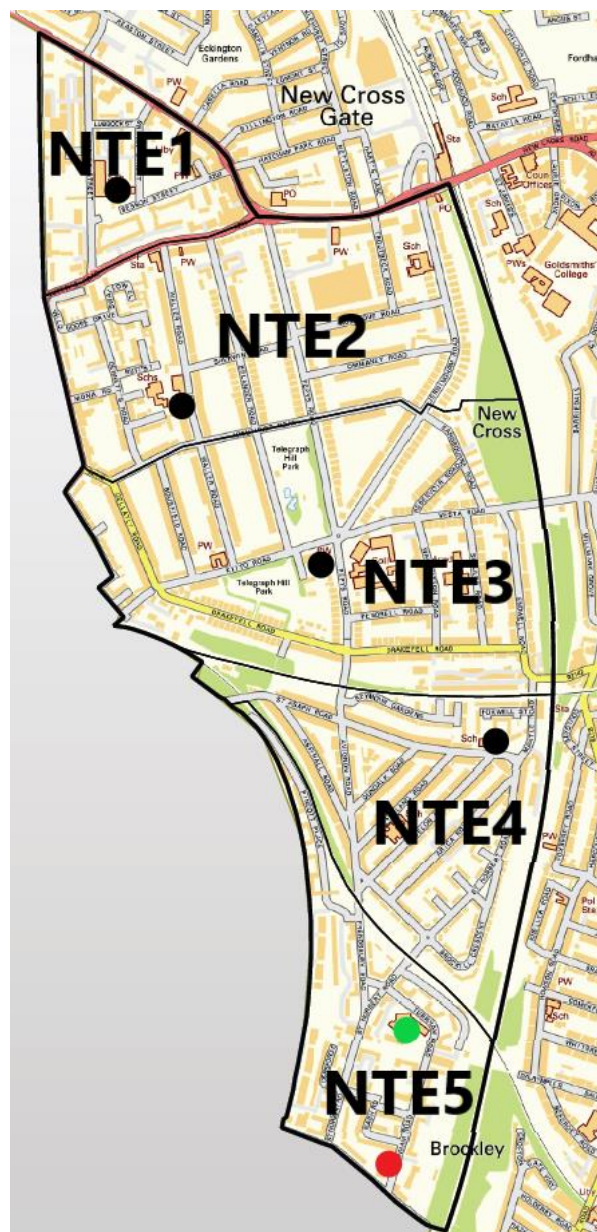
LEWISHAM NORTH CONSTITUENCY

TELEGRAPH HILL WARD

Summary

- No changes to polling districts in this ward
- New polling place for NTE5, replacing Turnham Academy with Honor Oak Community Centre. This will prevent the school having to close and will not negatively impact voters

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| DTE1 | Kender Primary School, (Nursery) | 1,168 |
| DTE2 | Edmund Waller Primary School | 2,456 |
| DTE3 | Telegraph Hill Centre | 2,746 |
| DTE4 | John Stainer Community Primary School | 1,751 |
| DTE5 | Honor Oak Community Centre | 1,473 |
| Total | | 9,594 |



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LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

CROFTON PARK WARD

Summary

- We have combined the 2 districts of DCR4 and DCR5, and will utilise the larger and more accessible of the polling station venues at St. Saviour's Church Hall, with a double polling station

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| WCR1 | Beecroft Garden Primary School | 1,696 |
| WCR2 | The Undercroft, St. Hilda's Church | 2,392 |
| WCR3 | Prendergast Ladywell Fields College | 1,578 |
| WCR4 | St. Saviours Church Hall | 3,257 |
| Total | | 8,923 |



LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

FOREST HILL WARD

Summary

- Removed the polling place at Eliot Bank Primary School and reallocated the 700 voters to neighbouring districts
- No other changes have been made

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| WFO1 | Kelvin Grove Primary School | 2,157 |
| WFO2 | Forest Hill Library | 1,767 |
| WFO3 | The Church (Worldwide) | 1,766 |
| WFO4 | Horniman Primary School | 1,321 |
| WFO5 | Christian Fellowship Centre | 1,683 |
| Total | | 8,694 |



LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

PERRY VALE WARD

Summary

- The 2 districts in the northwest of the ward are combined with a new polling place in the centre of the new district at Friends Meeting House. This removes the use of 2 schools and will not negatively impact voters as the distance to the polling place is well within our target and comparable to the previous scheme
- No other changes are proposed for this ward

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|--------|
| WPE1 | Forest Hill Friends Meeting House | 3,322 |
| WPE2 | The Fusion Centre at Forest Hill School | 1,435 |
| WPE3 | Perry Rise Baptist Church | 1,672 |
| WPE4 | Kilmore Primary School | 1,336 |
| WPE5 | St. George's Church | 1,644 |
| WPE6 | Blackheath Hockey & Catford Cricket Club | 1,172 |
| Total | | 10,581 |



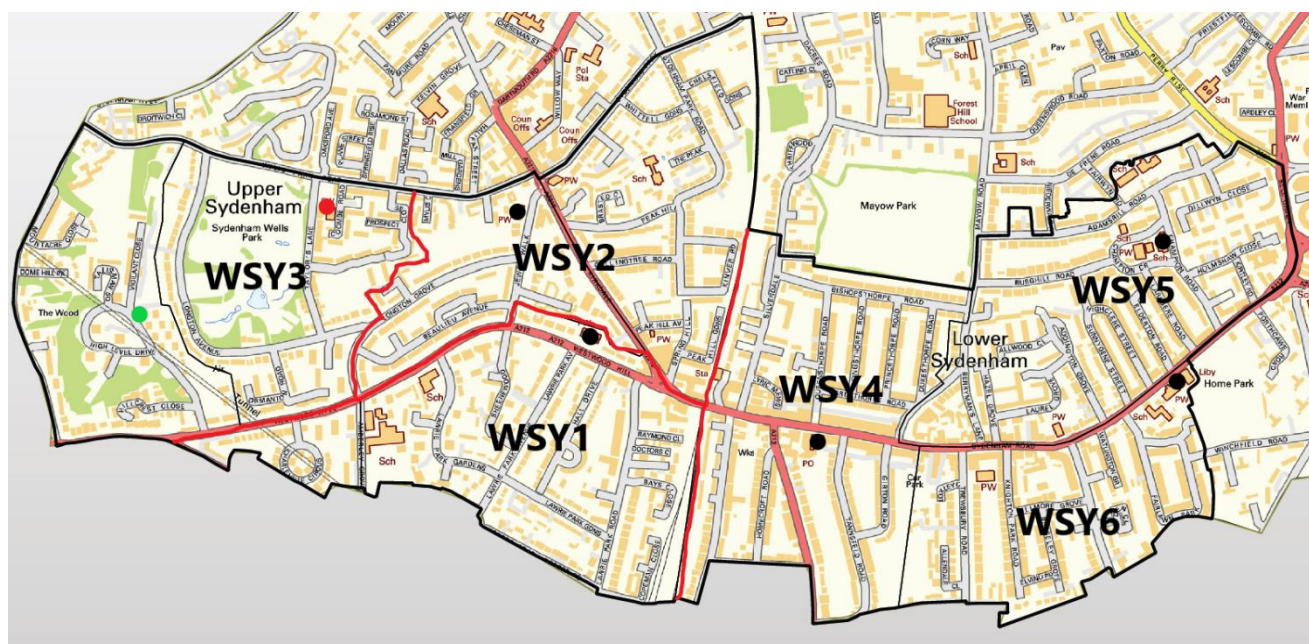
LEWISHAM WEST & EAST DULWICH CONSTITUENCY

SYDENHAM WARD

Summary

- Many representations were received regarding the use of St. Bartholomew's School, which has to close for every election when it is used as a polling place. In addition, we have removed the portacabin at High Level Drive as the cost and risks are very high and cannot be justified by the low turnout in that district
- Most of these voters have been allocated to a new district with a polling place at St. Philip the Apostle Church. The small number of remaining voters are allocated to WSY1 at St. Bartholomew's Church

| Polling District | Polling Place | Voters |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| WSY1 | St. Bartholomew's Church | 1,457 |
| WSY2 | The Grove Centre | 1,910 |
| WSY3 | St. Philip the Apostle Church | 1,475 |
| WSY4 | The Sydenham Centre | 1,857 |
| WSY5 | St. Michael's CoE School | 1,987 |
| WSY6 | Sydenham Library | 1,090 |
| Total | | 9,776 |



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Appendix B

Equalities Impact Assessment – Polling District and Places Review 24/25

A. Background

The Equality Act 2010 includes a general duty which requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

In order to comply with the general duty local authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community. Authorities which fail to carry out equality impact assessments risk making poor and unfair decisions which may discriminate against particular groups and worsen inequality.

B. Summary

This equality impact assessment will review the practise of voting at polling stations and assess the impact on residents, and specifically those with protected characteristics. The report will identify each protected characteristic and list the issues that can impact that group, along with recommendations and mitigations we can take in order to meet the requirements in section A.

All polling places are subject to a site assessment where electoral officers visit the premises and conduct a thorough assessment of the facilities, access and location. Note that no polling place will be recommended that doesn't pass the site assessment. The assessment includes access, size of venue, width of entrance and internal doors, space for tellers, lighting, ventilation, kitchen and restroom facilities, etc. In particular, the officer must conduct checks for the accessibility of the site in order to determine suitability as a polling place with regards to people with a disability. This includes:

- Access for the mobility disabled – e.g. wheelchair users, mobility scooters, etc
- Transport – bus stops, parking (regular and disabled)
- Light
- Access for visually impaired

C. Protected Characteristic – Race and Ethnicity

This group includes all residents/voters of a non-white race or a non-British ethnicity, including Gypsies, Travellers, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

Negative Impacts

- This group will contain people with English as a second language. This can lead to several negative impacts including; difficulty in identifying the polling station venue address, difficulty in speaking with polling staff, polling staff not understanding the voter, and accessibility of signs and notices

- Impact of systemic racism. Some people in this group may have experienced systemic racism and have a feeling or belief that their participation in elections is not welcome

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Maps on poll cards as well as written addresses
- Translated information in polling places
- Pictorial notices to identify polling stations, in addition to the large polling station signs
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

D. Protected Characteristic – Disability

As defined by the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This is a large group which includes:

- Mobility impaired
- Visually impaired
- Hearing impaired
- People with learning disabilities including reading and writing
- People with mental health conditions

Negative Impacts

- Where possible the polling place should be situation in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to in around 10 minutes
- Ability to access polling venues due to lack of wheelchair/mobility entrance, parking, light and space
- Insufficient light inside polling venue
- Signage and official notices – at wrong height or too small
- Inability to hear instructions of polling staff
- Difficulty in understanding the polling process
- Inability to read ballot papers or make a mark on ballot papers
- Some people may require more time and the ability to sit down for a rest before or after voting
- The route to the station could be long, or involve a steep hill

Recommendations and Mitigations

- All polling venues assessed for accessibility
- All polling places to be DDA compliant
- Seating available for voters who need a rest before or after voting
- Temporary ramps and lighting installed in polling venues where necessary
- Site visits prior to elections outside of summer to assess potential risks or issues due to weather or lack of daylight
- Hearing loops enabled where available

- Audio ballot of the ballot paper – playable on a phone (with polling staff able to play the audio on their phone if the voter does not have one)
- Extra training on assisting voters with a disability and statistics recorded by presiding officers
- Polling staff to follow standard procedures for handling of voters in polling places. Procedure to account for various disabilities – eg. Use of plain English, speaking clearly, listening carefully, being approachable, providing materials such as tactile voting device for the visually impaired, or the pictorial voting guide for learning disabled
- Additional training for presiding officers on the official procedures and forms required for them to assist voters with disabilities or for companions to assist voters with disabilities
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

E. Protected Characteristic – Sex / Gender

Men or women may face discrimination because of their gender.

Negative Impacts

- No specific negative impacts identified

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

F. Protected Characteristic – Gender reassignment

This group may experience discrimination and be anxious about how they are treated by officials.

Negative Impacts

- Being mis-gendered by the polling staff – e.g. referred to by the wrong gender
- Experiencing transphobia or other discrimination by polling staff – and the fear of that happening

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Procedure notes and training for polling staff is gender neutral
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve

- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

G. Protected Characteristic – Religion and belief

This includes people of every faith and can overlap with ethnicity in terms of cultural clothing and behaviours.

Negative Impacts

- Some people may not wish to enter a church, mosque or synagogue in order to vote
- Potential for some religious groups to experience discrimination, or the fear of discrimination, from polling staff

Recommendations and Mitigations

- When using a religious building, cover any overt iconography and where possible use a space in the building that is not usually used for worship. For example, at the Catford Synagogue, we use the youth group room
- Cultural awareness of polling staff and general polite behaviour towards residents
- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

H. Protected Characteristic – Sexual orientation

This includes all people within the LGBTQ+ category.

Negative Impacts

- Discrimination or the fear of discrimination by polling staff or other voters

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Employment practises that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

I. Protected Characteristic – Age

People in the older age group may be more likely to have mobility issues or indeed various disabilities. Young people may be voting for the first time and be nervous.

Negative Impacts

- See D, disability
- Younger people may be nervous about voting for the first time and not be aware of what to do
- Older people may require more time and the ability to sit down for a rest
- The route to the station could be long, or involve a steep hill

Recommendations and Mitigations

- Where possible the polling place should be situated in a convenient location for most residents in the polling district to be able to walk to in around 10 minutes
- Items and signage to be clearly displayed, especially the guidance to voters, so that all voters are aware of what they need to do
- Calm and welcoming atmosphere created by the polling staff so that new voters are confident and able to ask questions, with additional information leaflets or guidance on display
- A chair available for voters who need a rest before or after voting
- Employment practices that promote equality and inclusion, so that the polling staff are representative of the communities we serve
- Large scale voters survey after each election, asking questions about our service and accessibility, with anonymous equalities information that enable Lewisham to analyse the accessibility of our service for residents with protected characteristics
- Commitment within Lewisham to take action to promote equality where information or feedback identifies specific or general issues
- Equalities training for polling staff

J. Promotion of Participation and Absent Voting

The Returning Officer has a legal duty to promote participation in elections and referendums.

Electoral Services have an engagement plan which sets out how we will promote participation amongst all residents, including the groups identified above.

An important part of improving accessibility of voting is our promotion of postal and proxy voting. All electors are able to apply to vote by either of these methods. Where voting in a polling station presents a challenge or difficulty for an individual, the service will assist them in making an application for postal or proxy voting. This is in addition to the mitigation measures above, and not a replacement. In all cases, for all residents, we shall seek to provide a polling place that enables everyone easy access to vote.

K. The Requirement to show photographic ID in polling stations

The Elections Act 2022 introduced the requirement for voters to show ID in polling stations. The scale of that change is too significant to be included in this impact assessment. Lewisham has completed a separate Equalities Analysis Assessment regarding that policy. Note that this policy has now been in place for 2 years and there is data and reports that will inform our procedures around voter ID.