

# Council Report

13 September 2023

## Limited Scope Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	<b>No</b>
Council Plan reference	<b>Not in Council Plan</b>
Wards affected	<b>Danesborough &amp; Walton</b>

### Executive summary

The Council is required to undertake compulsory reviews of all Polling Districts and Places according to statutory timetables (the next one must be completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025). However, there are also circumstances where ad hoc, limited scope reviews maybe appropriate, in order to respond to a particular issue, such as a traditional polling station no longer being available, or because of the development of a new estate or community.

Further to feedback from polling station staff and some Ward Councillors, the Electoral Registration Officer proposes to undertake a limited scope review of Wavendon Polling District, with a view to allocating a new Polling District and Polling Station for the Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South developments.

In order that new electoral registers, which will be published on 1 December 2023 can reflect any new arrangements, it is also proposed that a six-week consultation be undertaken. Final proposals will then be presented to Council in November 2023 and all agreed changes will be reflected in the publication of the revised electoral register on the 1 December 2023.

### 1. Proposed Decision/s

- 1.1 That the undertaking of a limited scope Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (PDR), for the current Polling District of Wavendon (HC), be agreed.
- 1.2 That a 6-week consultation on the draft recommendations, as set out in section 5, be agreed.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Currently, Wavendon Polling District comprises a large area, including Wavendon Village and the majority of the [Strategic Land Allocation \(SLA\)](#) area, including the new communities of Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South.
- 2.2 Wavendon Polling District is in Danesborough & Walton Ward. It makes up part of the new Milton Keynes Central parliamentary constituency and is currently served by one polling station at Wavendon Community Centre.
- 2.3 The Polling District has seen a significant rise in the number of local government electors from 650 in 2018 to 2,786 now. Of these, around 70% are drawn from Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South. The Polling District will continue to see considerable growth in the coming years with Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South eventually comprising nearly 3,000 dwellings and up to 4,300 electors.
- 2.4 A map of the existing Wavendon Polling District is attached at Annex A. A small part of the SLA area (to the west of Newport Road / A1530) falls partly within Wavendon Polling District and Partly within Wavendon Gate Polling District, because the later makes up part of Walton Parish (Walton Community Council). It is not proposed to change the Polling Districts or Polling Stations for the areas to the west of Newport Road / A1530.

## 3. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 3.1 Requests have been received from Ward Councillors and polling station staff to review arrangements. Action is required prior to the May 2024 polls as the current polling station at Wavendon Community Centre exceeds the upper limit of 2,250<sup>1</sup> allocated polling station electors and it is likely that the pressure will continue to grow. Parking at the current Polling Station is also very limited.
- 3.2 Electors at Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South predominantly access Wavendon Community Centre by car, which currently involves electors having to travel out of the estate and via the A421 (a journey of up to 10 minutes dependant on traffic). Due to the concentration of growth in the polling district, the community centre is neither central, nor easy to find for the majority of the electors it serves. Preliminary analysis of marked polling station registers indicates that polling station turnout from Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South is lower than estates with a similar density. This could be for a number of reasons, including the lack of an obvious and central polling station.
- 3.3 The most immediate solution would be to split the polling station at Wavendon Community Centre, making it a double (two polling stations operating from the existing venue) for 2024 polls, however given that a parliamentary election with significantly higher turnout must be held before the next compulsory review period, the Electoral Registration Officer is of the view that it would be expedient to resolve the position as soon as practicable.
- 3.4 It is not possible to retain the existing polling district and allocate some streets to a new polling station as one polling place must be designated for the whole of a polling district.

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<sup>1</sup> The EC recommends a maximum of 2,250 electors (reduced from 2,500 due to Voter ID) be allocated to one Poling Station.

- 3.5 Whilst there are some alternatives (see section 7), officers propose that a new polling district is created comprising Eagle Farm South and part of Glebe Farm to the east of Newport Road, with a polling station provided at Glebe Farm all through School. Initial discussions with the school have been promising and it is proposed to use the community hall for polling.
- 3.6 Officers have also considered whether it would be appropriate to include other areas of Milton Keynes as part of this limited scope review. However, given that a compulsory review will be taken in the medium term there is no pressing need to do so with any urgency, elsewhere in the city.

## 4. Consultation

- 4.1 There are no statutory consultation periods for a review of this type. Whilst we would usually allow a minimum of 12 weeks for any consultations involving Parishes, the benefit of a shorter consultation is that any new arrangements can be reflected in newly published electoral registers on 1 December 2023. The Chair of Wavendon Parish is content with a shorter consultation period, given the circumstances.
- 4.2 Although it is legally possible to fully republish registers to coincide with the usual publication of monthly alterations (for example at the start of February 2024), this would have the effect of renumbering electors in all Wards, relatively close to May 2024 elections.
- 4.3 Consultation would include direct contact with Wavendon Parish Council (including an offer to attend their October meeting), social media, emails to existing electors in the affected areas and a mailing to any property with a registered elector in the proposed new Polling District.

## 5. Draft Recommendations

- 5.1 To split the existing polling district of Wavendon (HC) along the boundary shown in Annex B / Annex C with the effect that:
- a) a new polling district is created comprising the areas of Eagle Farm South and Glebe Farm (to the east of Newport Road / A1530) (Annex B); and
  - b) the remainder of Wavendon Polling District (including land to the west of Newport Road / A1530) will continue to vote at Wavendon Community Centre (Annex C).
- 5.2 The new polling district will be named Wavendon Farm and will have its polling place designated as Glebe Farm all through School and its polling station will be the community / sports hall within the school.

## 6. Implications of the decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	N
Communication	Y	Procurement	N
Energy Efficiency	N	Workforce	N

#### a) Financial implications

There are very small direct costs incurred by the Council in undertaking a review, predominantly associated with consultation. These costs are likely to be less than £1,000 and can be accommodated from existing budgets.

Additional staffing resources will not be required to support this review and consultation.

#### b) Legal implications

The requirements for the timing and completion of compulsory reviews are set out in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

Any review would be undertaken in accordance with the required steps set out in schedule A1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983), and the process will be guided by the Electoral Commission's guidance for [Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations](#).

Although the compulsory period is not till October, the 2013 Act provides for a principal council to conduct a review at any time. Statutory guidance and legislation (RPA 1983) requires that principal councils keep their polling districts and places under review, to ensure that the arrangements for those areas continue to be effective in light of circumstances such as a major change in the population of a community or housing development.

### 7. Alternatives

- 7.1 To not undertake a limited scope review, instead considering the estates of Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South as part of the next scheduled compulsory review. This is not recommended as there is a demonstrable need to review arrangements ahead of the next parliamentary election.
- 7.2 To undertake a limited scope review after the May 2024 polls, and instead provide for a double polling station at Wavendon Community Centre ahead of the May 2024 polls. This is also not recommended as the available parking at Wavendon Community Centre is not commensurate the current electorate and a review post May 2024 would also require republication of December 2023 registers.
- 7.3 Alternative draft proposals could be considered as part of a limited scope review. For example:
  - a) Separate Polling Districts and Polling Stations could be considered for Glebe Farm and Eagle Farm South respectively. However, whilst this may eventually be required, once both communities are fully completed and occupied it is unlikely to be necessary in the short term.
  - b) Alternative polling stations could be considered for either Wavendon as a whole or for the remainder of Wavendon Polling District at Wavendon Community Hub. However, whilst this venue is modern and has excellent parking it is not central to Glebe Farm or Eagle Farm South.

## 8. Timetable for implementation

8.1 An indicative timetable of events is set out below:

Item	Dates (all 2023)
Full Council decision to conduct a review and agree draft recommendations for consultation	13 September
Notice of Review published	14 September
Review proposals are published	14 September
Consultation Period (6 weeks)	14 September – 26 October
Consideration of consultation responses & final proposals are prepared for Full Council	27 October – 9 November
Final proposals are considered by Full Council	22 November
Final proposals are published – concludes the review	23 November
Publication of the Revised Register (reflecting agreed changes)	1 December

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### List of annexes

Annex A – Current Polling District Map for Wavendon

Annex B – Proposed new Polling District Map for Wavendon Farm

Annex C – Proposed revised Polling District Map for Wavendon