

From: Saxlingham Nethergate Parish Council [mailto:████████████████████]  
Sent: 15 May 2019 06:37  
To: 'appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk' <appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk>  
Subject: Polling Station, Saxlingham Nethergate

Dear sirs,

Saxlingham Nethergate Parish Council wishes to appeal a decision of South Norfolk District Council in relation to the polling place identified by that Council as part of a review of polling districts and places on the grounds that the polling district and place review was not conducted so as to:

- meet the reasonable requirements of electors in the constituency
- take sufficient account of disabled access to polling stations

The Parish Council was surprised to discover that the polling station for Saxlingham Nethergate for the local elections on 2 May had been moved from this parish to the parish of Shotesham. The Shotesham polling station at Trinity Hospital is some two miles from Saxlingham Village Hall and the distance for some electors who live in the south or west of the parish will be considerably more.

As we understand from the Electoral Commission guidance in terms of the designation of polling districts and polling places <sup>[1]</sup>:

“4.1 Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:

- each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply
- the council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
- the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district)”

The guidance states at paragraph 2.11 (inter alia) that “In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district. This means that a parish must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish within it, or any un-parished part of the local authority area within it, unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish to be its own polling district.”

Clearly:

- a) Saxlingham Nethergate does not have a small number of electors – it has 100 more electors than Shotesham <sup>[2]</sup>;
- b) Other premises in the parish were available if the Village Hall was not available, e.g. the Church Room, the Saxon Club, the Scout Headquarters;
- c) the situation of the polling station for Saxlingham Nethergate in Shotesham does materially affect the convenience of the electors;
- d) Shotesham is a “different parish”.

It seems to the Parish Council therefore that the decision to move the polling station for Saxlingham Nethergate to another parish does not comply with the above guidance or with the statutory requirements.

It is entirely possible that this decision will have had an adverse effect on turnout for the local elections for the Newton Flotman ward insofar as the electors of Saxlingham Nethergate are concerned. This is neither fair nor conducive to assisting the principle of democratic engagement. It certainly does not encourage participation in elections and does not ensure proper representation across the ward.

This decision has now been thrown into sharper focus with the decision of the Government that the European Parliamentary elections will be held on 23 May.

I look forward to hearing from you,

  
  
Parish Clerk, Saxlingham Nethergate

  
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[1] <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/electoral-administrator/polling-place-reviews>

[2] See Parish Wards Stations analysis on SNDC website at <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/elections-and-registration/current-elections>