

Summary of Representations in relation to the Woking polling place review – St Johns East polling district, Al-Asr Centre (1 of 2)

On 25 January 2016 the Commission received a representation from the appellant in relation to the Council's review of the polling districts and polling places in the Woking parliamentary constituency in 2015. The appellant enclosed a copy of an emailed representation to the Council in relation to the review dated 22 September 2015. The representations fell into the following two grounds for appeal:

1. That Woking Borough Council did not conduct the review so as to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency of any body of those electors.

The appellant made representations as to the lack of sufficient on- or off-street parking at the Al-Asr Centre. He stated that there are "realistically no designated parking spaces for the Centre" and that this was neither adequate nor safe for those travelling to vote by car. He noted a general problem in relation to unlawful parking near the Centre and added that there might be difficulties on polling day with electors needing to cross busy roads in order to reach the Centre. He raised a concern that this could discourage electors from voting in person.

The appellant raised a concern that the Centre is located too far away from the western part of the polling district and that this would mean that electors residing in the western part of the polling district would need to walk a long distance in order to vote. In so doing electors would need to cross a 40mph road and a five way roundabout, which lacks pedestrian crossing facilities.

The appellant stated that the Centre does not have suitable facilities for voting as the interior is too small and there is insufficient room for tellers in the building.

The appellant was also concerned that the building could potentially be used as a mortuary on polling day.

2. That Woking Borough Council did not conduct the review so as to take sufficient account of the accessibility to disabled person of polling stations within a designated polling place.

The appellant raised concerns about disabled access to the Al-Asr Centre, noting that there is limited level access and that there is a slope from the street to the main entrance. He also noted that issues around parking and the location of the Centre would have a greater effect on elderly and disabled electors in the St Johns East polling district than on other electors.

The appellant also raised issues which fell outside of the Commission's remit in considering a polling place review appeal:

The appellant suggested that the previous polling place, Goldsworth Primary School, the Kingsway Centre or the Surrey History Centre would be more suitable as a polling place. In particular, he considered that the larger size, superior on-site parking facilities and central location of the School made it a preferable polling place, compared to the Al-Asr Centre.

The appellant queried the arrangements to be made should the Centre become unavailable at short notice for use as a polling place.

The appellant also raised concerns around the administration of elections generally in Woking.