

Castle Ward: Recommendations

A submission was received from the Tamworth Conservative Councillors requesting that the Oxbridge Estate and neighbouring properties becomes a polling district in their own right with electors sent to the Buckingham Road temporary polling station (ME5) in the neighbouring Mercian Ward. On paper this seems quite a logical proposition and has been considered carefully but in reality there would be a number of issues. Firstly, it is not sensible to move electors from a disabled friendly building like Sunset Close Community Centre which has dedicated disabled access and has parking (including disabled space) albeit limited to a temporary station which has none of these. These properties are situated on a convenient public transport route that stops and collects passengers on Lichfield Street at the end of Sunset Close. There are no transport links to the temporary station on Buckingham Road. A move here would also mean that electors would need to cross a very busy road that is well used by heavy goods vehicles and others accessing the neighbouring industrial estate. There is no pedestrian crossing on this road to ensure that less able bodied electors could cross the road safely. A move here would also require another temporary polling station as the existing temporary station covering the ME5 polling district could not accommodate the additional electors from this area particularly at a high turnout election. The estimated cost for an additional temporary station is in the region of £1,300 or approximately £5 for every elector on this housing estate whether they vote at a polling station or not. Presently, only 289 out of 418 electors from this estate chose to vote at a polling station and turnout in 2019 at Sunset Close Community Centre for the entire CA1 polling district was an average of 17%.

Temporary polling stations are only used where there is no suitable alternative in the locality. Although, temporary stations are suitably equipped to enable access for all voters (ramps and handrails for disabled access) there are still ongoing concerns due to the inherent characteristics of temporary stations, such as their narrow entrance and limited internal area and access issues from paths across uneven/muddy ground which is exacerbated if the weather is poor on or around polling day. If the Authority was to move away from a perfectly accessible building in favour of a temporary station so that the location is slightly more convenient it could open the door for a claim regarding disability discrimination. Complaints have been received regarding accessibility to the temporary station on Buckingham Road at the recent elections in May 2019. These complaints were in regard to the uneven surface surrounding the temporary station. Therefore, it is not practical to send more electors to a polling station where we are aware of accessibility issues and for this reason I am recommending a “no change” to the CA1 polling district.

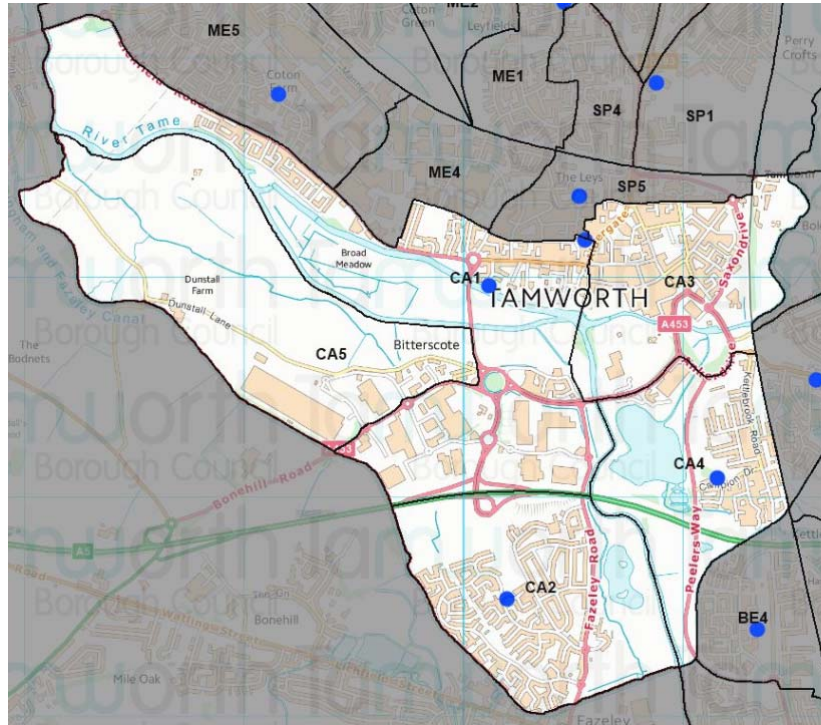
Castle Ward: Recommendations continued

The estate currently being built on the former Dunstall Farm site will become the newly created CA5 polling district. The electorate in this polling district will be monitored and when required a polling station within the polling district or adjacent polling districts will be found. For this reason it is recommended that polling place represent the same area as the polling district plus the adjoining polling district(s) within the ward to allow a greater degree of flexibility in deciding where a polling station should be located should the need arise.

Five other submissions were received regarding the remaining polling districts, places and stations in the Castle Ward all recommended “no change”. Therefore, as there have also been no comments made by any electors asking for change at any of the recent elections via our polling station questionnaires or as part of this consultation it is recommended that the polling districts below do not have any changes made to them with the exception of the creation of the new CA5 polling district:

- CA1
- CA2
- CA3
- CA4

Castle Ward (Proposed)



Estimated Electorate = Number of properties x 2.06

Estimated Polling Station Electorate = Based on the average of 82% of electors choosing to attend a polling station.

Note regarding CA5 - The estimated electorate figures are based on completion of building works = estimated number of properties x 2.6. The estimated Polling station electorate is based on 18% of electorate opting to vote by post. The electorate in the area will be monitored and when required a polling place within the polling district or adjacent polling districts will be found. There are no registered electors as yet in this area.

New PD	Proposed Polling Station	Address	Estimated Electorate	Estimated Polling Station Electorate	No of polling stations
CA1	Sunset Close Community Centre	Sunset Close, Off Lichfield Street, B79 7QJ	3,164	2,595	2
CA2	The Green – Temporary Station	Land Adjacent to Durham Close, County Drive	2,915	2,390	2
CA3	Community Meeting Room, St John's RC Church	St John's RC Church, St John's Street, B79 7EX	1,882	1,544	1
CA4	Sea Cadet Centre	St John's RC Church, St John's Street, B79 7EX	1,420	1,164	1
CA5	Sunset Close Community Centre	Sunset Close, Off Lichfield Street, B79 7QJ	2,119	1,738	Combine with polling stations in CA1 until electorate is large enough for own polling station