



# Electoral Matters Committee

Wed 11 Sep  
2019  
6.30 pm

Committee Room Two  
Town Hall  
Redditch

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

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a  
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# Electoral Matters

Committee

Wednesday, 11th September,  
2019

6.30 pm

Committee Room 2 - Town Hall  
Redditch

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## Agenda

### Membership:

Cllrs:	Matthew Dormer (Chair)	Greg Chance Bill Hartnett
	Mike Rouse (Vice- Chair)	
	Michael Chalk	

**1.** Apologies for absence and named substitutes

**2.** Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

**3.** Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 1 - 2)

**4.** Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019 (Pages 3 - 64)

Members are invited to consider submissions that have been received in respect of polling districts, places and stations.

**5.** Next Meeting

Members are invited to note that the next meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee will take place on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019.

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# Electoral Matters

## Committee

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Thursday, 11th July, 2019

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Michael Chalk, Greg Chance and Bill Hartnett

### Officers:

Darren Whitney and Melissa Bassett

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

After a request by The Chair it was

**RESOLVED that**

**the start time for future meetings be 6.30 p.m.**

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. POLLING PLACES REVIEW

The Electoral Services Manager introduced the report and explained that legislation required a formal review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations be completed every five years, with the next review to be completed by January 2020.

The following areas were highlighted during the presentation of the report:

- The review would cover Polling Districts (geographical areas), Polling Places (buildings or areas where Polling Stations would be located) and Polling Stations (where polling would take place).

.....  
Chair

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- The Committee would decide on Polling Districts and Polling Places and the (Acting) Returning Officer would decide on the amount of polling stations within the polling place.
- This form of review would not cover Parish or Ward boundaries.
- Stakeholders would have the chance to make initial comments and to comment on proposals before the conclusion of the review.
- Although the review would need to be completed by January 2020, the Committee were advised that 29 November 2019 would be an ideal completion date to align with the printing of the revised Electoral Register on 1 December 2019.

Following the presentation, Members asked for clarification in respect of:

- Any submissions would also be sent to the relevant Ward Member for comment.
- County Councillors would be part of the stakeholders and asked for their comments.
- Comments in regard of schools and portable buildings would be welcomed but should include alternative venues if suggesting closure.

There were no further discussions, the Committee

## **RESOLVED that**

- (a) the timetable as set out in appendix 2 for the review be agreed; and**
- (b) that the review would commence on 17 July 2019.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 7.11 pm

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**Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors M Dormer, Leader and D Thain, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	Part of consultation
Not a Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report sets out the results of the initial consultation, the comments of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and as based on Electoral Commission Guidance (a copy of the guidance is included in appendix 4).
- 1.2 The initial consultation ran from 17 July to 28 August all submissions and summaries are recorded in the various appendices below. Polling Station Inspectors reviewed all of the current polling stations within the area at the Local and Euro Parliamentary Elections in May. Officers have considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, including verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. They have also assessed any changes that maybe needed to Polling Districts. The ARO's comments are included within appendix 1.
- 1.3 The proposals below, as detailed in the attached Appendices, set out Officers' proposals arising from the Review and initial consultation. Members of the Committee are asked to consider the proposals and make recommendations for the final consultation running from 12 September to 7 October. The results of these will inform the final results of the review.
- 1.4 Once complete, certain people or organisations may appeal to the Electoral Commission to have changes made if they feel the Local Authority has not met reasonable expectations of the electorate, or taken into account the need for accessible polling stations.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 that the proposals for Polling Districts in the report and appendix 1 and 2 (as amended) be published for final consultation.**

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**2.2 that the proposals for Polling Places in appendix 1 and 3 (as amended) be published for final consultation.**

**3. KEY ISSUES****Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's final decisions, there may be some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this review, but which can be contained within existing budgets.
- 3.2 Depending on the outcome of the review there may be additional costs or savings regarding polling stations that are to be used in future elections. Additional finance would be required if Members choose to use additional temporary portable buildings.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.3 The Review is undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 3.4 a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate Polling Places rests with the Council or relevant Committee (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Redditch Borough Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
- b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.5 "Relevant authorities" (such as Redditch Borough Council) must
- "a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and
- "b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for, are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled and, when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."

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**Service/Operational Implications****'Starting Points' for selection of Polling Places/ Stations**

- 3.6 Polling Stations located within publicly funded premises (such as schools and local authority meeting rooms) are generally preferred as their availability can be relied upon and costs are low (the ARO has statutory powers to requisition such premises, which are generally well located and accessible). However, the schools themselves and pupils' parents are often understandably reluctant to accept their use as Polling Stations because of the impact of closures on their activities or on childcare.

If schools are designated, First Schools are normally selected because of reduced impact on important examination processes for older pupils.

- 3.7 Second choice for Polling Stations would be private venues. However these have the disadvantage of being more costly, as more commercial fees may be charged. The ARO cannot guarantee their availability, as owners/managers of premises have the right to refuse hire at any time, without explanation.

- 3.8 When there are no other appropriate alternatives, portable buildings may be used for Polling Stations. However, these are significantly more expensive than other premises and may often provide inadequate accommodation and accessibility for voters with disabilities.

- 3.9 As a rough guide, an average Portable Polling Station costs around £1,500 to hire, heat & light (installation of Portable Unit plus portable toilet / provision of power/generator).

The equivalent average cost of private premises would be between £200 - £400. Premises provided via public funding charge only for additional heat, light and caretaking, and therefore cost only around £100 - £200 each time.

- 3.10 There are other logistical considerations relating to the siting of a portable building. The delivery and collection require a team from the Council's depot to be on site to supervise the placing of the building and to maintain the generator connection.

**Key Issues**

- A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.

- 3.11 Appendix 1 to the report, together with the maps where relevant, detail Polling Districts and associated electoral areas, and the proposals arising from the consultation, together with consultee comments and responses to those comments arising from the consultation.

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3.12 The final column in Appendix 1 details recommendations and comments from the ARO for the Committee's consideration.

B. Polling Places beyond Polling District/Ward boundaries

3.13 In a number of cases, no suitable premises have been identified within relevant Polling Districts/Wards, and therefore proposals include Polling Places situated outside Polling District/Ward boundaries.

3.14 In drawing up such proposals, priority has been given in every case to the best solution for electors.

C. Polling District boundary changes

3.13 Polling District boundaries have not been reviewed for a considerable time and electoral officers with help of GIS officers have reviewed the polling district boundaries and recommend a number of changes. These only affect Polling District boundaries and not Ward, Parish or County Division ones. In effect changing where electors go to vote.

a) Abbey Ward Boundary between ABA and ABC:

This tidies up the boundary between the two polling districts moving the boundary to the centre of the A441 so that the new development is in ABC rather than ABA.

<b>From ABA to ABC Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
Alfrick Close	14	2	Redditch Baptist Church
Farndon Close	15	13	
Hadzon Street	12	16	
Linthurst Crescent	65	55	
Odell Street	77	14	
Weights Lane	3	7	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>107</b>	

b) Batchley and Brockhill Ward Boundary between BYD and BYB

This tidies a small anomaly along Brockhill Lane.

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<b>BYD to BYB Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
Brockhill Lane	4	9	Portable Building on Carthorse Lane
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	

c) Central Ward Boundary between CEA , CEB and CEC

This simplifies an extremely complex and out of date boundary between CEA, CEB and CEC. The new boundary between the three polling districts moves from the junction of Plymouth Road and Salop Road along Salop Road to Mount Pleasant, north along Mount Pleasant to Beaufort Street, following Beaufort Street to the alley joining to Old Crest Avenue.

<b>CEC from CEA and CEB Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
<b>From CEA</b>			Southcrest Evangelical Church
Bromfield Road	73	134	
David's Close	5	5	
Haresfield Close	36	38	
Stoneleigh House	14	13	
Salop Road	18	25	
<b>From CEB</b>			
Beaufort Street	8	20	
Mount Pleasant	98	90	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>325</b>	

d) Crabbs Cross Boundary between CCB and CCC

Tidies up an anomaly at the North West end of polling district CCB. This is basically the area north of Callow Hill Lane to Moreton Lane including Longborough Close.

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<b>CCB to CCC Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
Callow Hill Lane Longborough Close	2 5	4 14	Gazebo at Callow Hill
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	

- e) Headless Cross and Oakenshaw Ward Boundary between HOA, HOB and HOC

This change deals with simplifying a very complex and outdated boundary. The proposed boundary is not perfect, however it irones out unusual boundary lines and follows roads and defined features. The new boundary travels south down Bredon View then east along Byron Road to Malvern Road where it moves south down to Vaynor Drive. It moves east along Vaynor Drive to the Evesham Road where it moves south until reaching the edge of the wood. It then follows the edge of the wood until reaching Coldfield Drive. It travels north up Coldfield Drive until joining the original boundary line.

<b>From HOA and HOC to HOB Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
<b>From HOA</b>			Rocklands Social Club
Byron Road	4	7	
Evesham Road	12	16	
Hanover Court	58	66	
Malvern Road	8	16	
<b>From HOC</b>			
Evesham Road	1	0	
Four Oaks Close	51	54	
Guinness Close	71	80	
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>239</b>	



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<b>From HOB to HOA Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
Bredon View Vaynor Drive	12 6	23 11	Vaynor First School
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>34</b>	

f) Lodge Park Ward Boundary between LPB and LPA

This tidies a small anomaly along Holloway Lane.

<b>LPB to LPA Polling District</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Electors</b>	<b>Polling Station</b>
Holloway Lane	2	3	Oakhill First School (see appendix 1)
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	

g) Winyates Ward Boundary between WIA and WIB

This tidies an anomaly along Winyates Way. No residential properties or electors are affected.

D. Areas where more details are required

3.15 Further, more detailed explanation of proposals may be required in the following instances.

- a) CHB Church Hill Ward currently Abbeywood First School – Abbeywood First School have requested a number of times for the polling station to be moved from the school. The request has been considered and rejected by Council previously. Officers have looked at various different premises in the past and St Andrews Methodist Church has been deemed suitable. It is already a polling station but the premises is big enough to cover the CHB polling district for voting purposes. Use of a portable building has also been suggested to be located in Maisemore or Jersey Close, aside from the suitability of portable buildings officers have been unable to find a location large or level enough to site a portable building.
- b) LPC Lodge Park Ward – LPC has an historic low turnout of electors, at the last local elections 20%. Electors in LPC could easily be combined with LPB saving on polling station staff resource. Walking time is not increased by a

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large amount, however, it is recognised that electors walking to the polling station would have to use two subways. Officers would recommend that the polling place be moved for a trial and if successful LPC and LPB polling districts be merged.

**Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.7 The Council's Customer Care / Equalities policies directly cross-relate, particularly in relation to access issues. Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Places and Stations. In the past SCOPE have criticised the use of portacabins as polling stations especially if there is an alternative within the polling district.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.
- 4.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 4.3 In terms of Environmental risks, it is of course preferable that the choice of Polling Station location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles. It is preferable where possible not to use a portable building where a generator is required.
- 4.4 In terms of Human Resources risks, the ARO must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements.

**5. APPENDICES**

- 1 Proposals for final consultation including AROs comments
- 2 Maps – Polling District Changes
- 3 Maps – Polling Place Changes
- 4 Electoral Commission Guidance

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Previously published Polling Stations Review reports / Minutes.
- Relevant Statutory provisions.

**7. KEY**

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Redditch Returning Officer, Sue Hanley, is designated (Acting) Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections.

This is because formally the Returning Officer for a County Constituency such as Redditch is the High Sheriff for that County, which is a purely honorific title/role.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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APPENDIX 1

Redditch Polling District & Polling Place Review 2019  
Proposals for final consultation

Ward	2019 Ward Electorate	May 2019 Polling Place Electorate (includes postal votes)	Proposed Dwellings (5+)	Polling District Code	Parish	County Division	Current Polling Place	No Change Submission	No Change Submission received from	Change	Change Submission from	Ward Cllr Comments to Review Response	Electoral Services	Returning Officer Comments
Abbey		1674	10	ABA		Arrow Valley West	Abbeydale Community Club	No change	RB8 7/8 Cllr J Grubb					No change
Abbey		1229		ABB		Arrow Valley West	Portable Building Rush Lane	No change	RB9 7/8 Cllr J Grubb					This is not ideal due to the siting of the portable building and the need for a ramp but nothing else in the area available so suggest no change.
Abbey	4651	1729	207	ABC		Arrow Valley West	Redditch Baptist Church	No change	RB10 7/8 Cllr J Grubb					No change
Astwood bank & Feckenham		2401		AFA		Redditch South	Astwood Bank Church Hall							No change
Astwood bank & Feckenham		1649		AFB		Redditch South	Portable Building Banners lane						Officers contacted Red Lion pub on Enfield Road however they were not interested in having a polling station.	
Astwood bank & Feckenham	4734	659		AFC	Feckenham	Redditch South	Feckenham Village Hall							No change
Batchely & Brockhill		1601		BYA		Redditch North	Batchley Community Centre						Nothing else in available in BYA	No change
Batchely & Brockhill		2146		BYB		Redditch North	Portable Building Carthorse Lane						St Benedict's Social Club was considered but is no longer in operation.	The need for a ramp for this station does not make it ideal but no other venues are available so suggest no change.
Batchely & Brockhill		1818		BYC		Redditch North	Batchley Community Centre							No change
Batchely & Brockhill	6143	548		BYD		Redditch North	Portable Building Burrington Close						Nothing else available in the area	No change
Central		1580		CEA		Redditch North	Bentley Close Communal Room	No change	RB1 24/7 Resident, comments regarding name and parking					No change
Central		1130	14	CEB		Redditch North	REDDI Centre							No change

Central	4502	1773		CEC		Redditch North	Southcrest Evangelical Church							No change
Church Hill		1746		CHA		Arrow Valley East	Church Hill Community Centre	No change. Would like to keep current arrangements.	RB12 20/8 Ward Cllr Hartnett					No change
Church Hill		1662		CHB		Arrow Valley East	Abbeywood First School	No change. Would like to keep current arrangements.	RB13 20/8 Ward Cllr Hartnett	A number of reasons including;- Safeguarding issues Staff welfare Alternatives: St Andrews Methodist Church, YMCA, Willow Trees Children's Centre, Health Centre  Inappropriate for schools to be used as polling stations. Loss of education, childcare costs for parents, school gates being closed forcing electors to travel longer distances. Alternatives: Portable building on Maisemore or Jersey Close. Private house to act as a polling station.	RB6 12/8 Paul Nash Abbeywood First School/Church Hill Middle School  RB7 12/8 Ward Cllr Rouse	Cllr Rouse: I support the arguments made against closing the school for educational, safeguarding and staff welfare reasons.  I do not support any of the proposed alternative sites and maintain a preference for a site that is more central to the Polling District.  Cllr Isherwod: I totally agree to Cllr Mike Rouse statement on both regards.	Officers have visited St Andrews Methodist Church and confirm it could easily be used for CHB voters. The only concern is the amount of parking available.  Officers have visited Maisemore and Jersey Closes can cannot find land large or level enough to site a polling station.	As St Andrews Methodist Church could service the electors CHB recommend that this is used as polling place but kept under review (see map).
Church Hill		1216		CHC		Arrow Valley East	Marfield Barn	No change. Would like to keep current arrangements	RB14 20/8 Ward Cllr Hartnett					No change
Church Hill	5788	1145		CHD		Arrow Valley East	St Andrews Methodist Church	No change. Would like to keep current arrangements	RB15 20/8 Ward Cllr Hartnett					No change
Crabbs Cross		2136		CCA		Redditch South	The Church of Jesus Christ of the LDS	No change. Site suitable appropriate for service provided	RB4 5/8 Cllr G Prosser				Cllr S Akbar: fine with current provision	No change
Crabbs Cross		1532		CCB		Redditch South	Windmill Community Centre	No change. Site suitable appropriate for service provided	RB4 5/8 Cllr G Prosser				Cllr S Akbar: fine with current provision	No change
Crabbs Cross	4470	780		CCC		Redditch South	Gazebo at Callow Hill	No change. Site suitable appropriate for service provided	RB4 5/8 Cllr G Prosser				Cllr S Akbar: fine with current provision	No change
Greenlands		3365		GRA		Arrow Valley West	St Johns Church Hall							No change

Greenlands	6713	3327	42	GRB		Arrow Valley West	Woodrow Community Centre							No change
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw		1804		HOA		Redditch South	Vaynor First School			Move from Vaynor First School: Alternatives should be considered rather than closing schools for elections. Parents and children suffering for election closure. Alternatives: Porta cabin	RB2 30/7 Ward Cllr Tom Baker-Price		Have been unable to find any suitable alternatives in the area.	Since the there does not seem to be any suitable alternative suggest no change.
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw		1654	14	HOB		Redditch South	Rocklands Social Club							No change
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw		1702		HOC		Redditch South	Oakenshaw Community Centre			Why are there two polling stations for Oakenshaw? Expensive to use porta cabins and unnecessary in this area.	RB5 5/8 Resident	Cllr Baker-Price: Comments regarding turnout. Thinks current provision is appropriate.	Officers agree with Cllr Baker-Price and think Oakenshaw Community Centre should remain as the polling station for HOC	No change
Headless Cross & Oakenshaw	6561	1369		HOD		Redditch South	Portable Building Grangers lane			Why are there two polling stations for Oakenshaw? Expensive to use porta cabins and unnecessary in this area.	RB5 5/8 Resident	Cllr Baker-Price: Comments regarding turnout. Thinks current provision is appropriate.	Having a porta cabin in this polling district is not ideal however this does not need a generator as there is an electrical hook up. Officers have considered St Peters CE in Crabbs Cross (not available) or Crabbs Cross Methodist Church. Both involve quite a walk across the foot bridge over Rough Hill Drive.	Maybe consider Crabbs Cross Methodist Church otherwise suggest no change.
Lodge Park		1755		LPA		Arrow Valley West	Oak Hill First School	No change Supports Oakhill First School as safest place. Could support Lodge Park Club as it has function room with separate entrance.	RB11 20/8 Ward Cllr Andrew Fry	Constant complaints as County Cllr re parking and closure of the school. Local Club has offered. Alternative: Lodge Park Club	RB3 31/7 County Cllr Pattie Hill		As the County Cllr states Lodge Park Social Club has offered in the past, officers trying to arrange a visit to assess current suitability. It should be noted that Oakhill First School did make a submission but this received after the deadline.	If Lodge Park Club is still a suitable venue and is willing to host suggest polling place is changed (see map).
Lodge Park		1642		LPB		Arrow Valley West	Harry Taylor House	No change Perfect for Lakeside	RB11 20/8 Ward Cllr Andrew Fry					No change
Lodge Park	3796	373		LPC		Arrow Valley West	Beoley Road West Communal Room	No change Aware that has less than 400 electors of which around 80 vote. Would like to see this remain as many elderly people live in St Georges and may fear walking through underpasses to Harry Taylor House.	RB11 20/8 Ward Cllr Andrew Fry				Could easily combine this polling district with LPB as 70 electors voted in 2018 a 20% turnout. Extra walking time to Harry Taylor House is minimal but it is recognised that electors would have to use the underpasses if walking. Could trial moving electors and if proved positive combine the two polling districts.	With the low turnout of electors would be happy to consider moving electors to Harry Taylor House (see map).
Matchborough		2079		MBA		Arrow Valley East	Matchborough East Community Centre							No change

Matchborough	4486	2388		MBB		Arrow Valley East	Matchborough Meeting Rooms							No change	
West		1939		WEA		Redditch North	Webheath Village Hall							Officers can see no reason why WEA and WEB cannot be joined to be one polling district. The Electoral Commission has been contacted and they confirm there is no maximum for electors in a polling district just the amount of electors that can vote at any one station.	No change to polling station but recommend WEA and WEB are combined.
West	4609	2652		WEB		Redditch North	Webheath Village Hall							See WEA above	No change to polling station but recommend WEA and WEB are combined.
Winyates		2608	8	WIA		Arrow Valley East	Tenacres Children's Centre								No change
Winyates		1831		WIB		Arrow Valley East	Roman Way First School								No change
Winyates	6118	1656		WIC		Arrow Valley East	Winyates Green Community Centre								No change

Notes

- 1 Unless stated Officers recommend no change
- 2 This table represents the situation at the close of the first consultation on the review



Current Polling District ABC

APPENDIX 2  
Maps - Polling District Changes

Tardebigge Ward  
TAC

BYD

ABB

BYB

Abbey Ward  
ABA

ABC

BYA

LPC

BYC

LPB

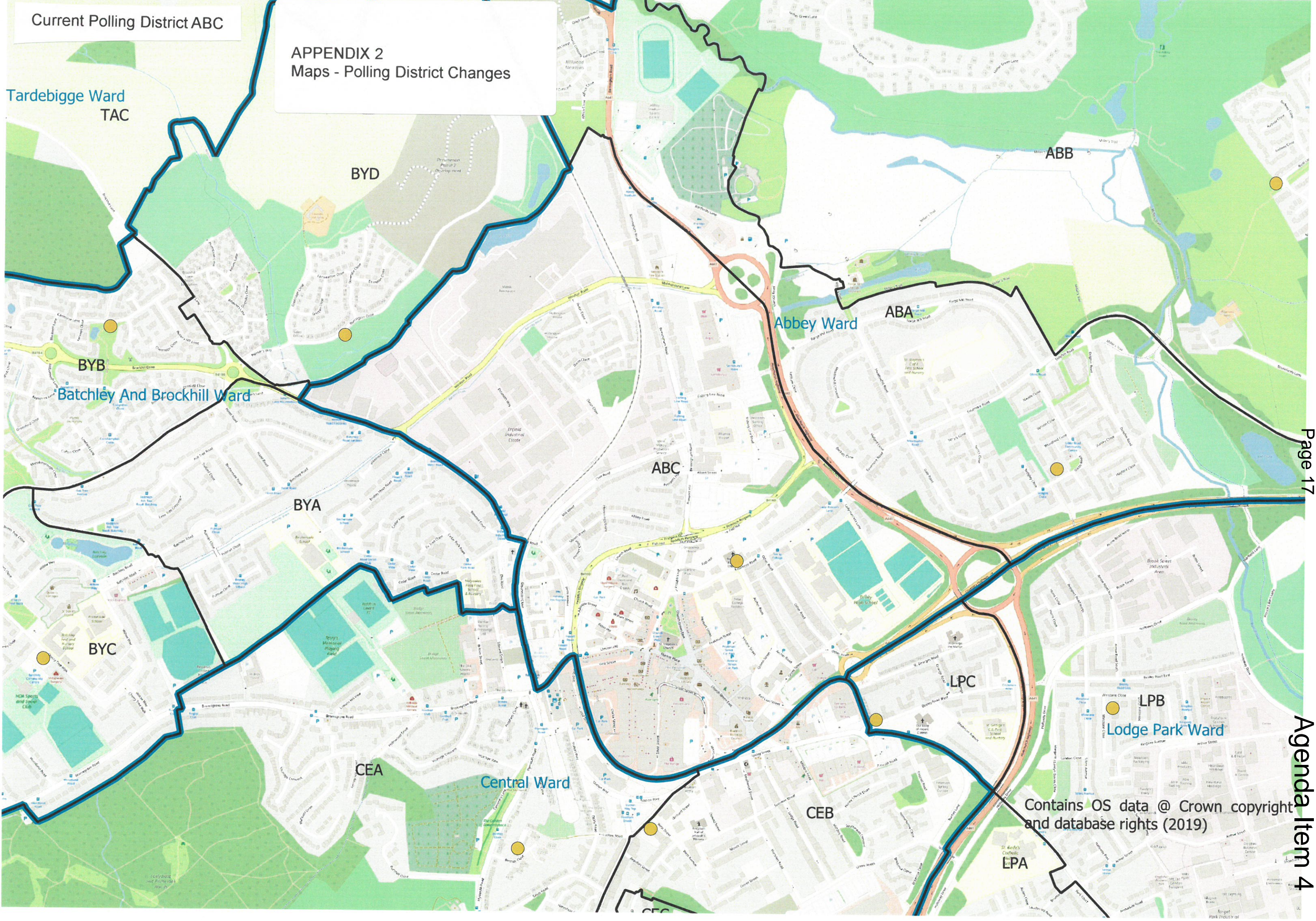
CEA

Central Ward

CEB

EPA

Lodge Park Ward  
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Revised Polling District  
ABC

Tardebigge Ward  
TAC

BYD

ABB

Abbey Ward

ABA

BYB  
Batchley And Brockhill Ward

ABC

BYA

BYC

LPB

Lodge Park Ward

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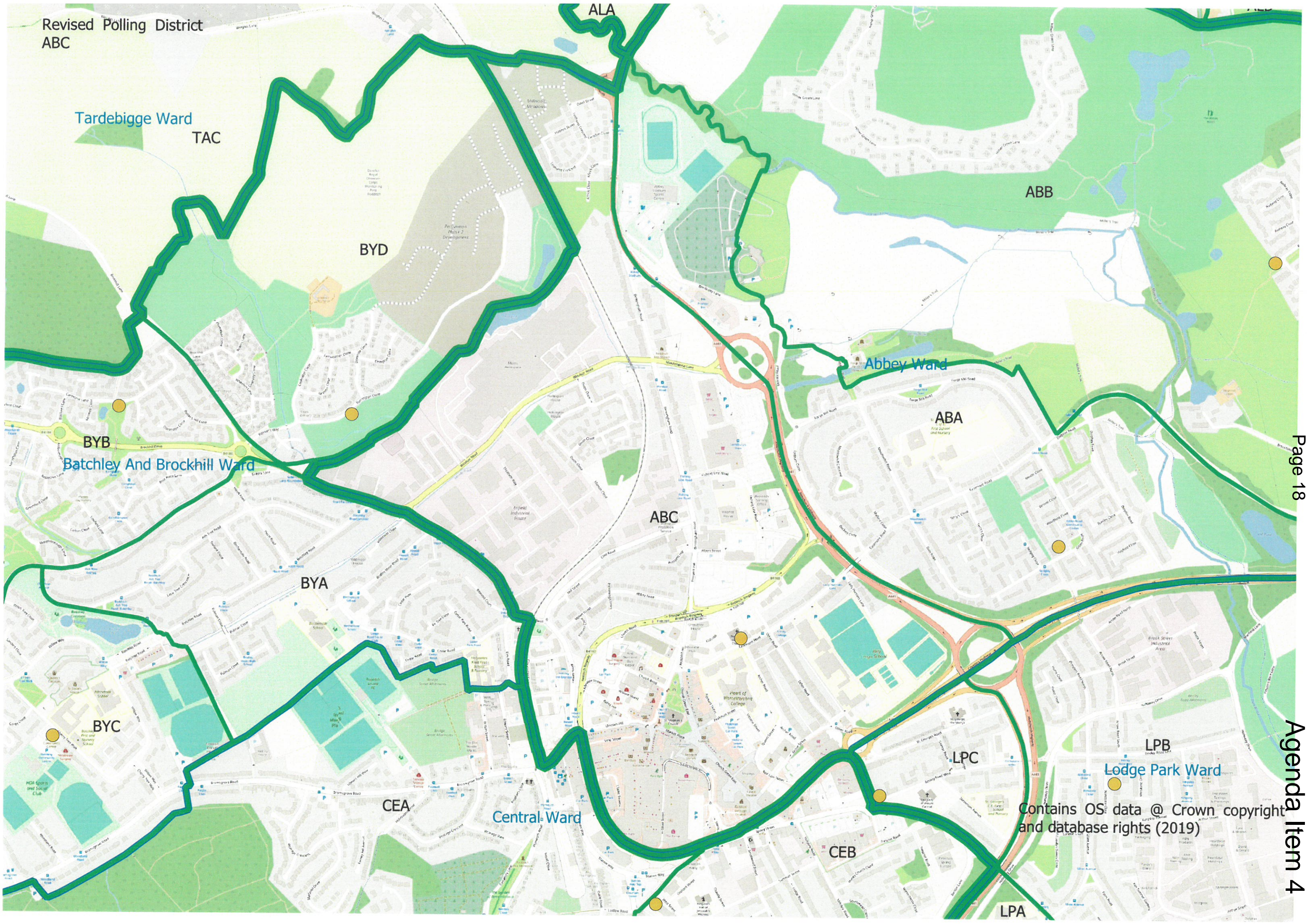
CEA

Central Ward

LPC

CEB

LPA





Tardebigge Ward  
TAC

BYD

Batchley And Brockhill Ward

BYB

Abbey Ward

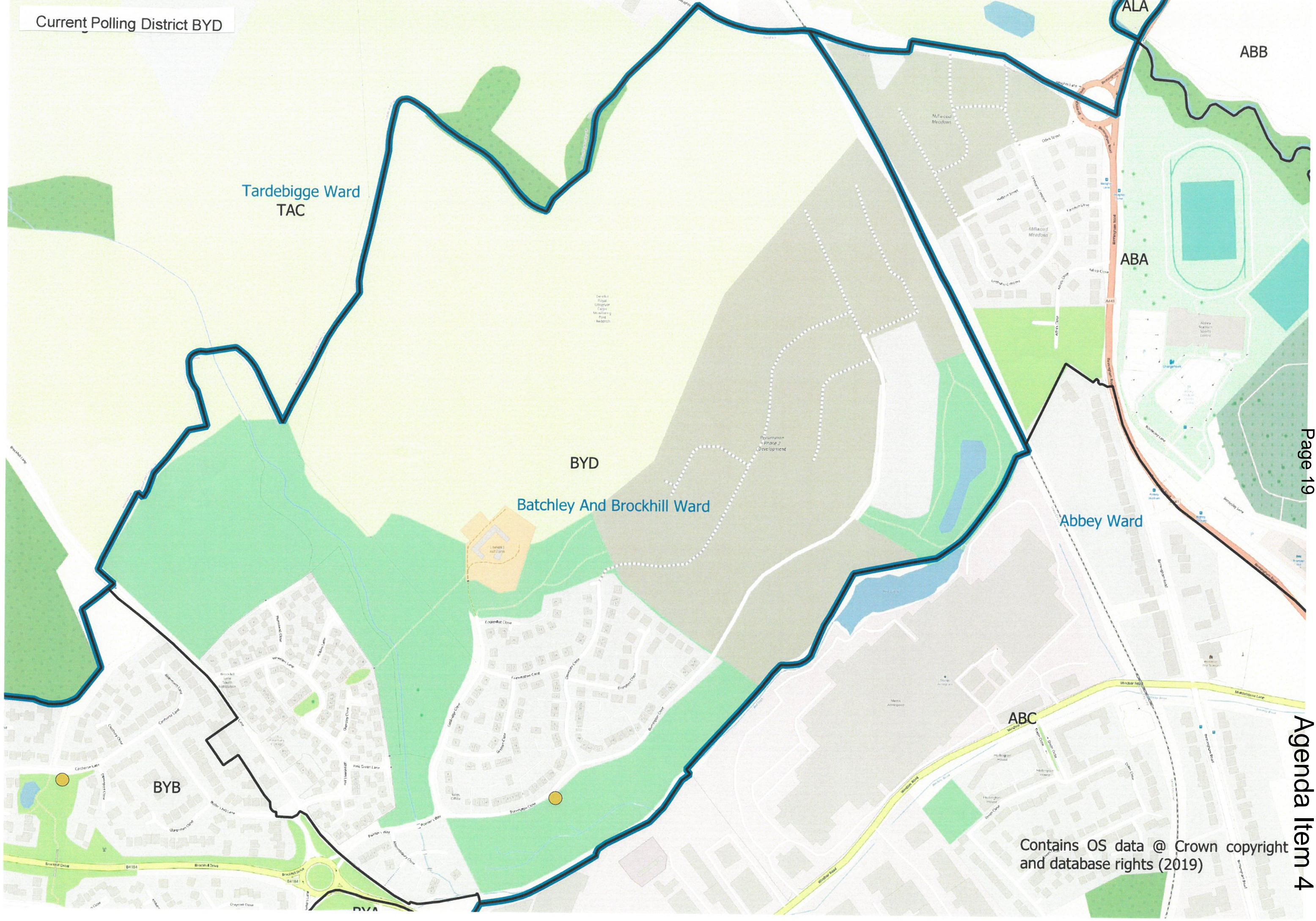
ABC

ABA

ABB

ALA

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Tardebigge Ward  
TAC

BYD

Batchley And Brockhill Ward

BYB

ABC

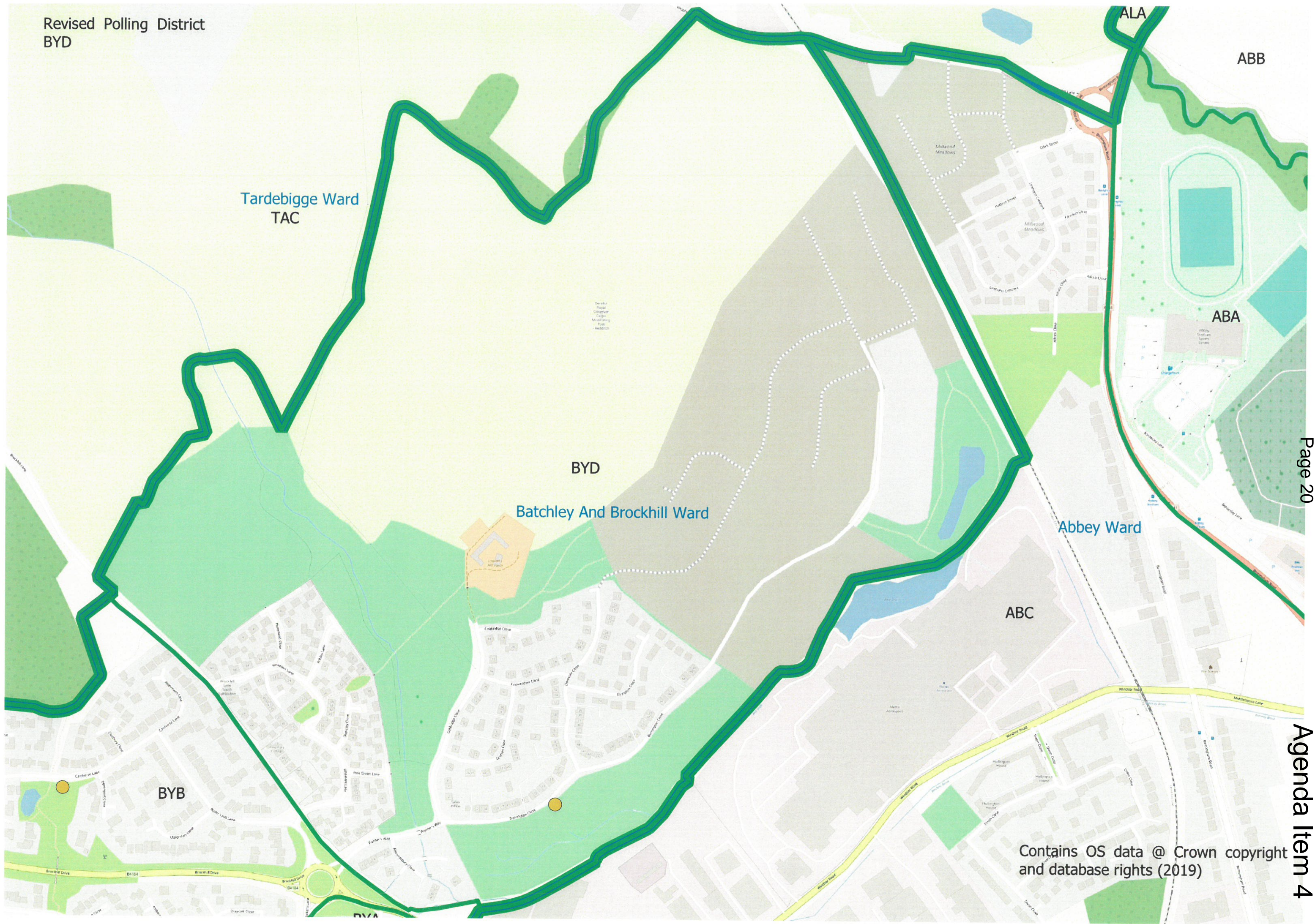
Abbey Ward

ABA

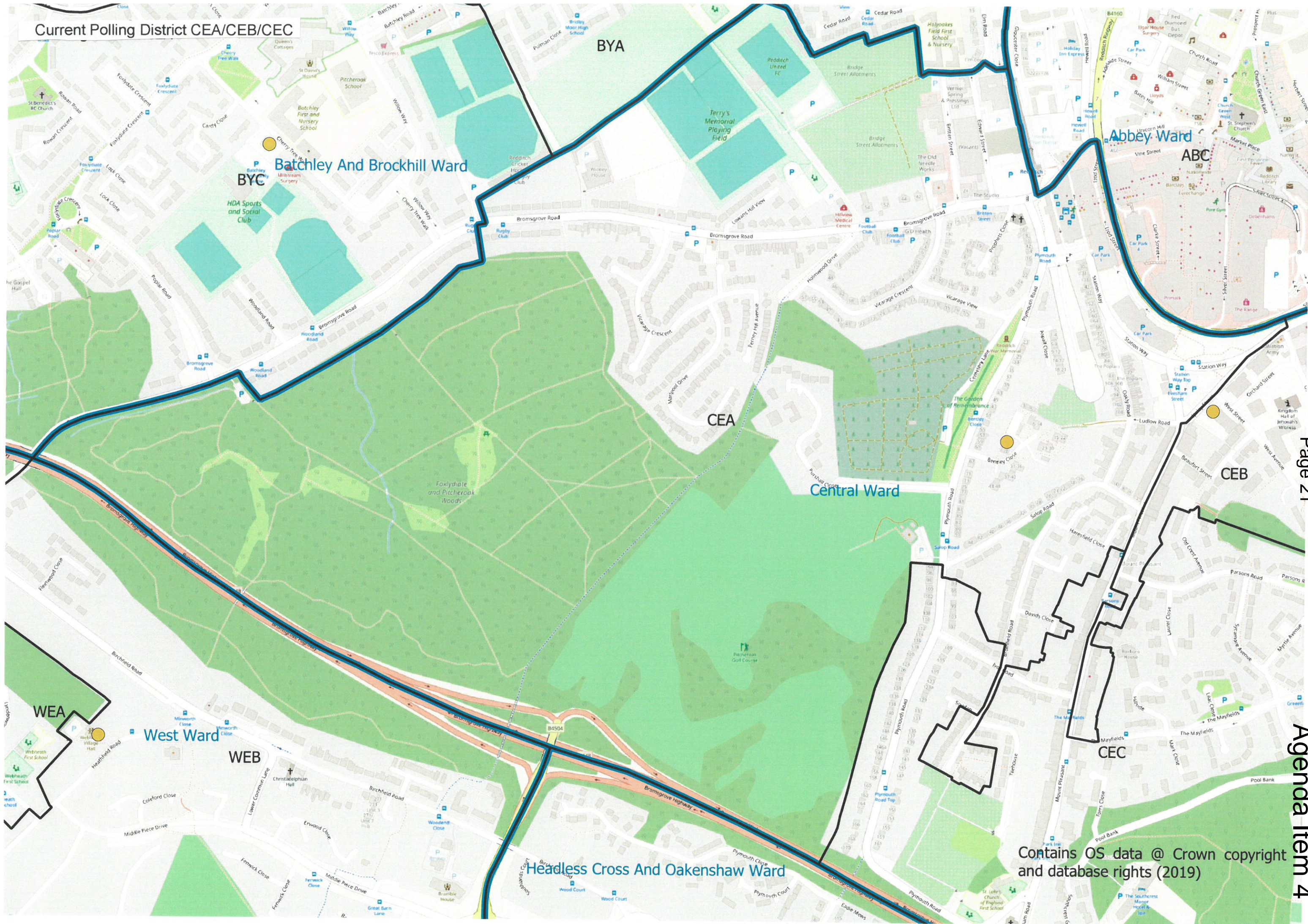
ABB

ALA

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Batchley And Brockhill Ward

BYA

BYC

CEA

Central Ward

CEB

CEC

West Ward

WEB

WEA

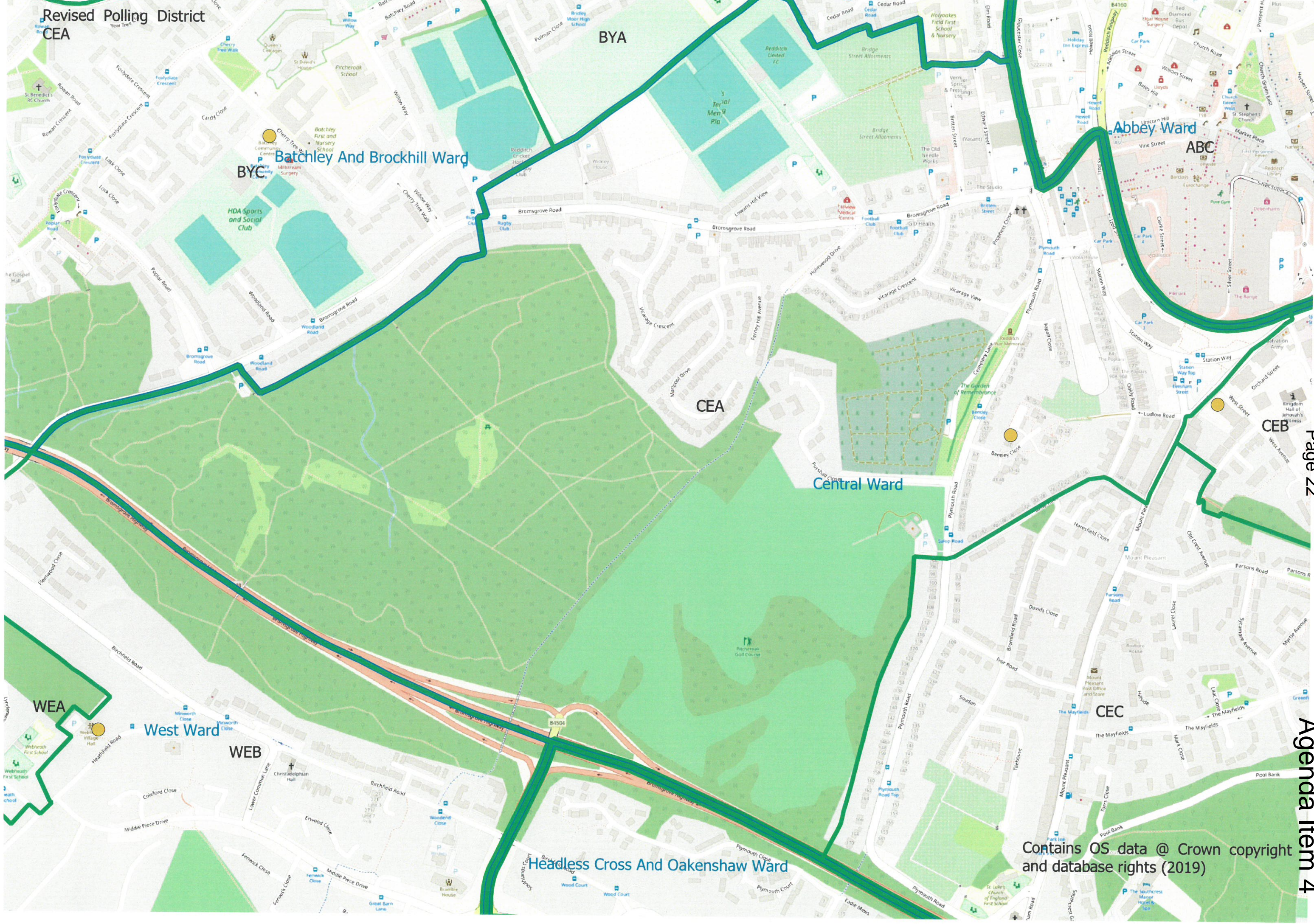
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward

Abbey Ward

ABC

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Revised Polling District  
CEA

BYA

Batchley And Brockhill Ward

BYC

CEA

Central Ward

WEA

West Ward

WEB

Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward

Abbey Ward

ABC

CEB

CEC

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Revised Polling District  
CCB

WEB  
West Ward

Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward  
HOA

CCC

Crabbs Cross Ward

CCB

CCA

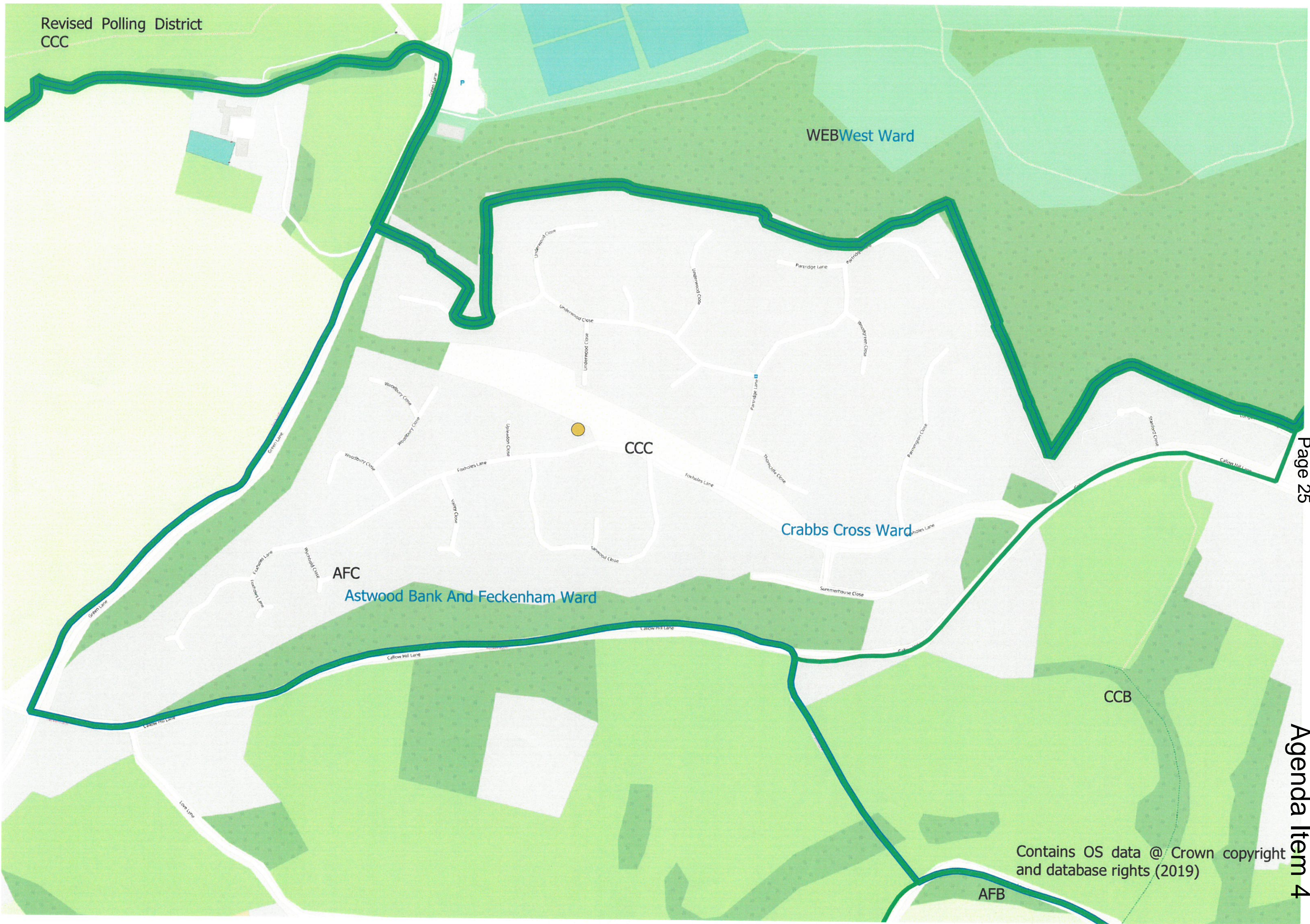
AFC

Astwood Bank And Feckenham Ward

AFB

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WEB West Ward

CCC

Crabbs Cross Ward

AFC  
Astwood Bank And Feckenham Ward

CCB

AFB

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Current Polling District HOA, HOB, HOC

Central V  
CEC

HOB

Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward

HOA

HOC

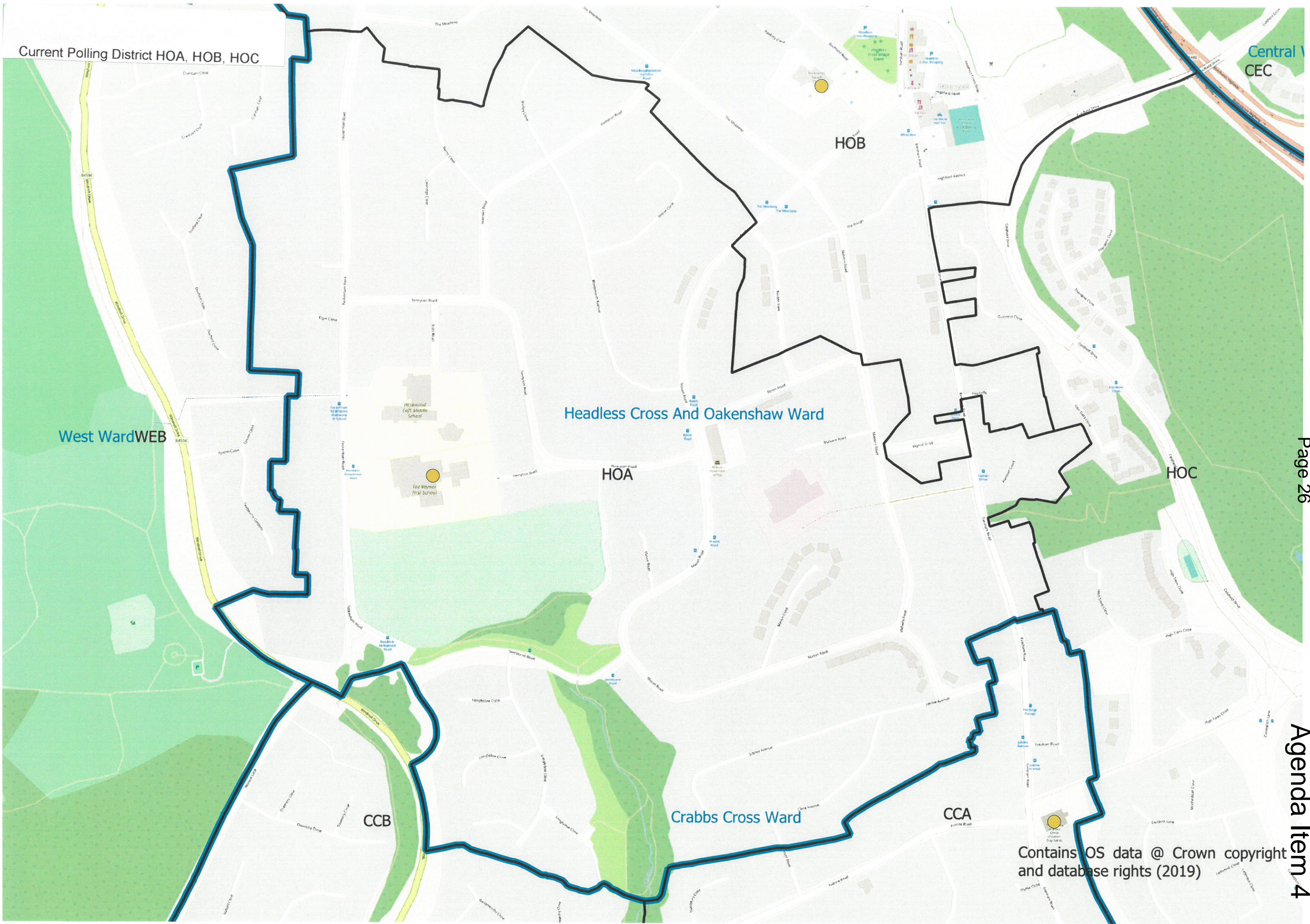
West WardWEB

CCB

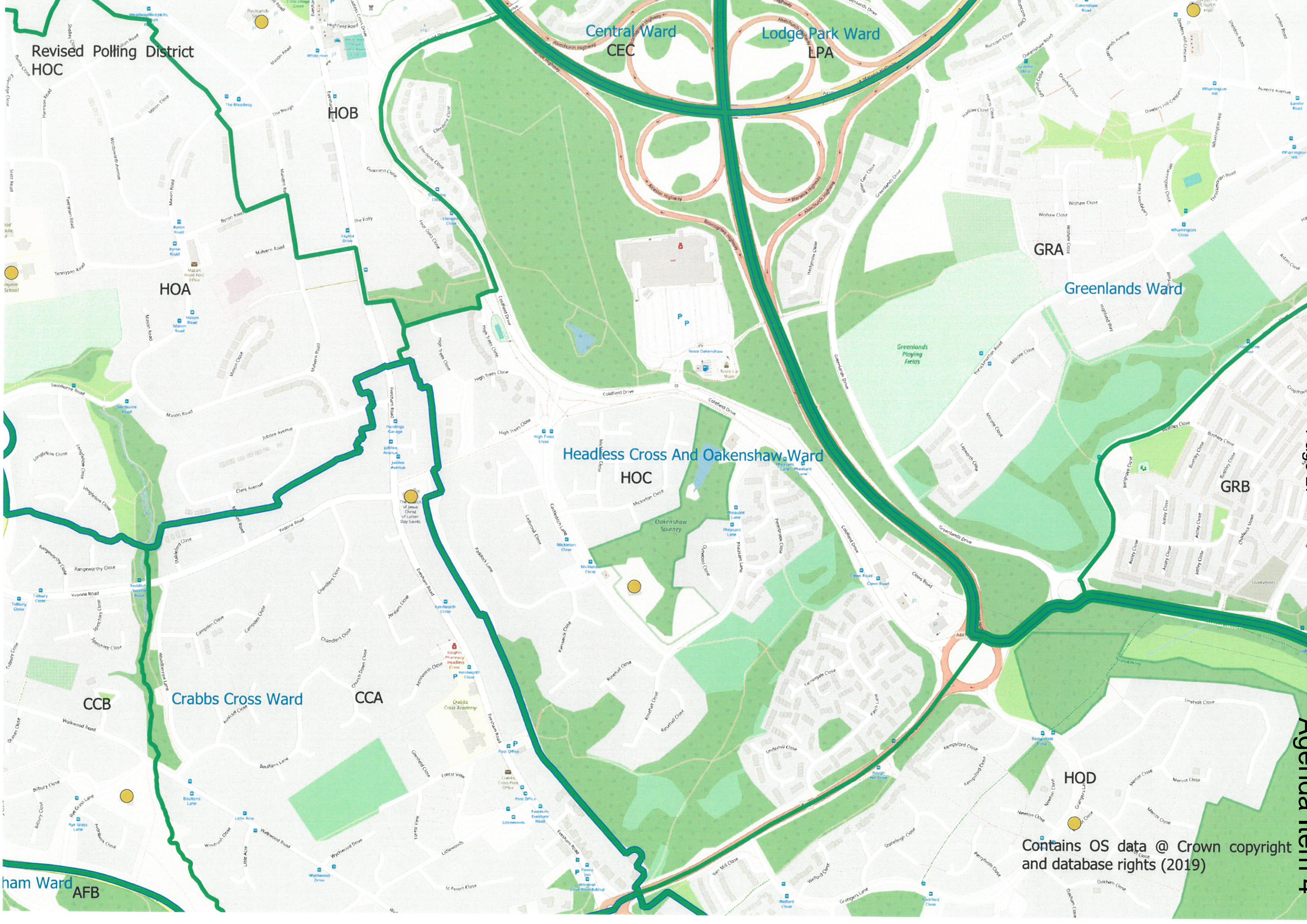
Crabbs Cross Ward

CCA

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Revised Polling District  
HOC

Central Ward  
CEC

Lodge Park Ward  
LPA

HOB

HOA

GRA

Greenlands Ward

Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward  
HOC

GRB

CCB

Crabbs Cross Ward

CCA

HOD

ham Ward  
AFB

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Current Polling District LPA

CEA

CEB

Central Ward

CEC

HOB

Dakenshaw Ward

HOC

LPA

Lodge Park Ward

GRA

Greenlands Ward

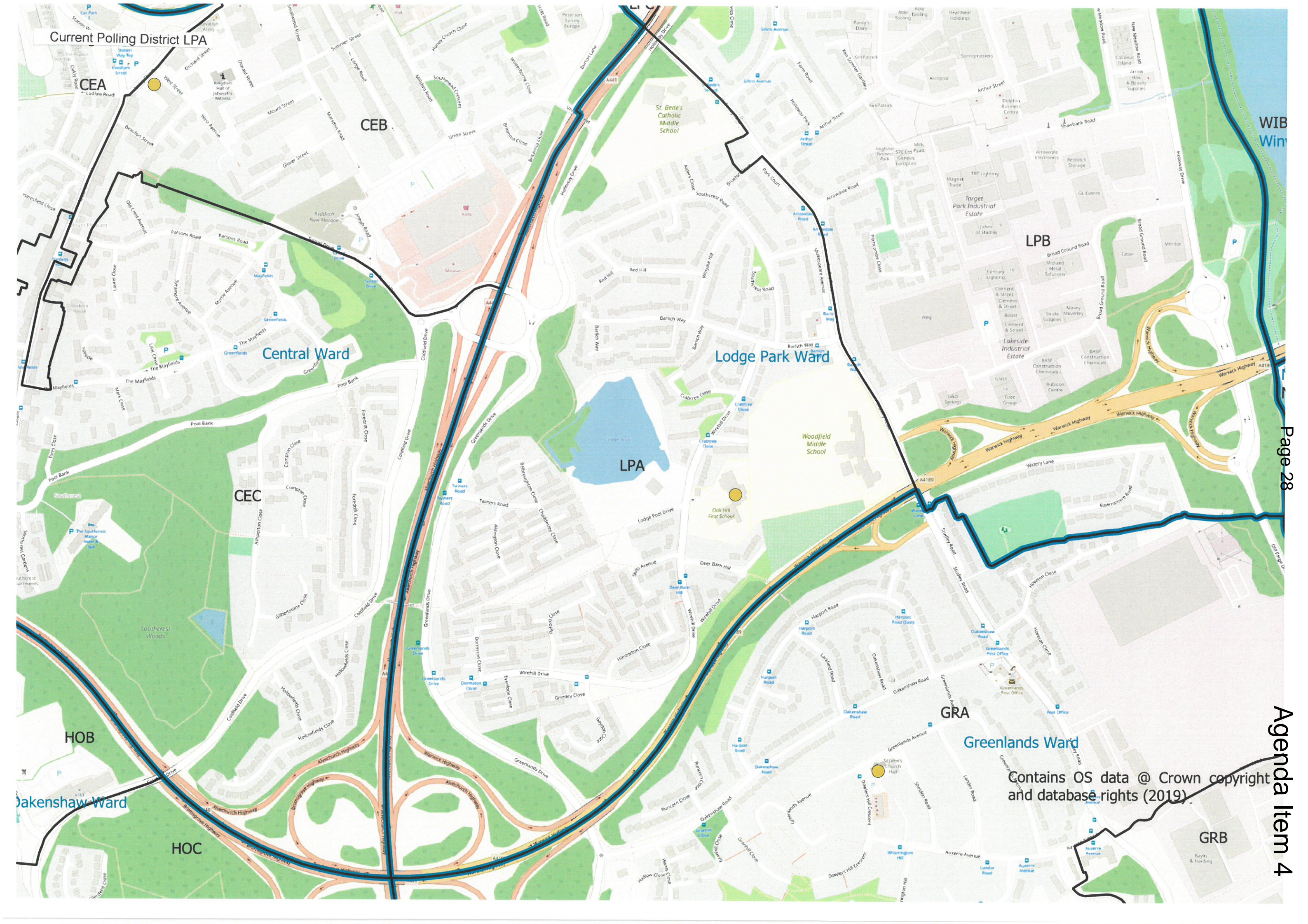
GRB

WIB  
Win

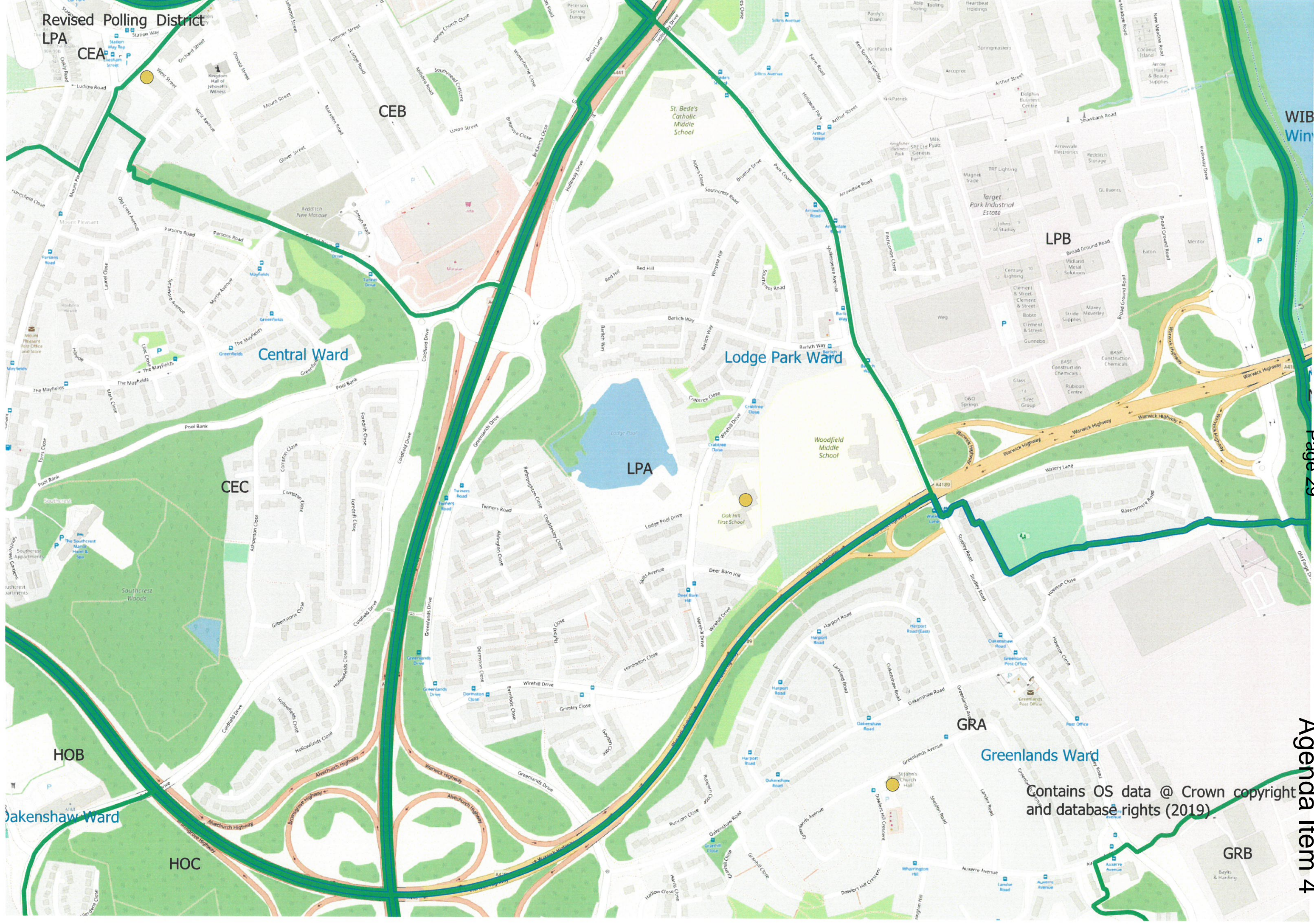
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Agenda Item 4

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Revised Polling District  
LPA

CEA

CEB

Central Ward

Lodge Park Ward

LPA

LPB

CEC

HOB

Dakenshaw Ward

HOC

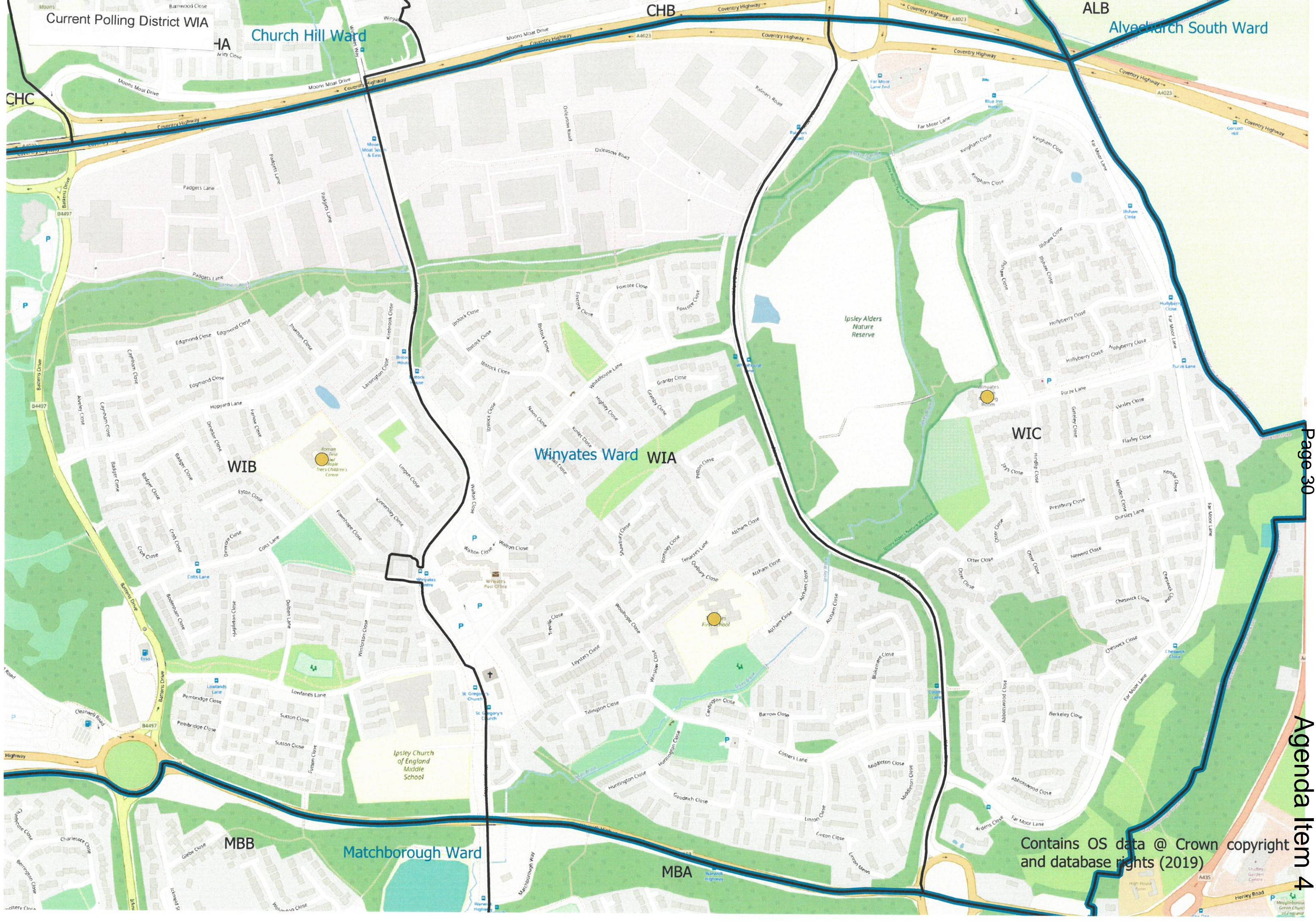
GRA

Greenlands Ward

GRB

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Current Polling District WIA

Church Hill Ward

CHB

ALB

Alvechurch South Ward

CHC

HA

WIB

Winyates Ward WIA

WIC

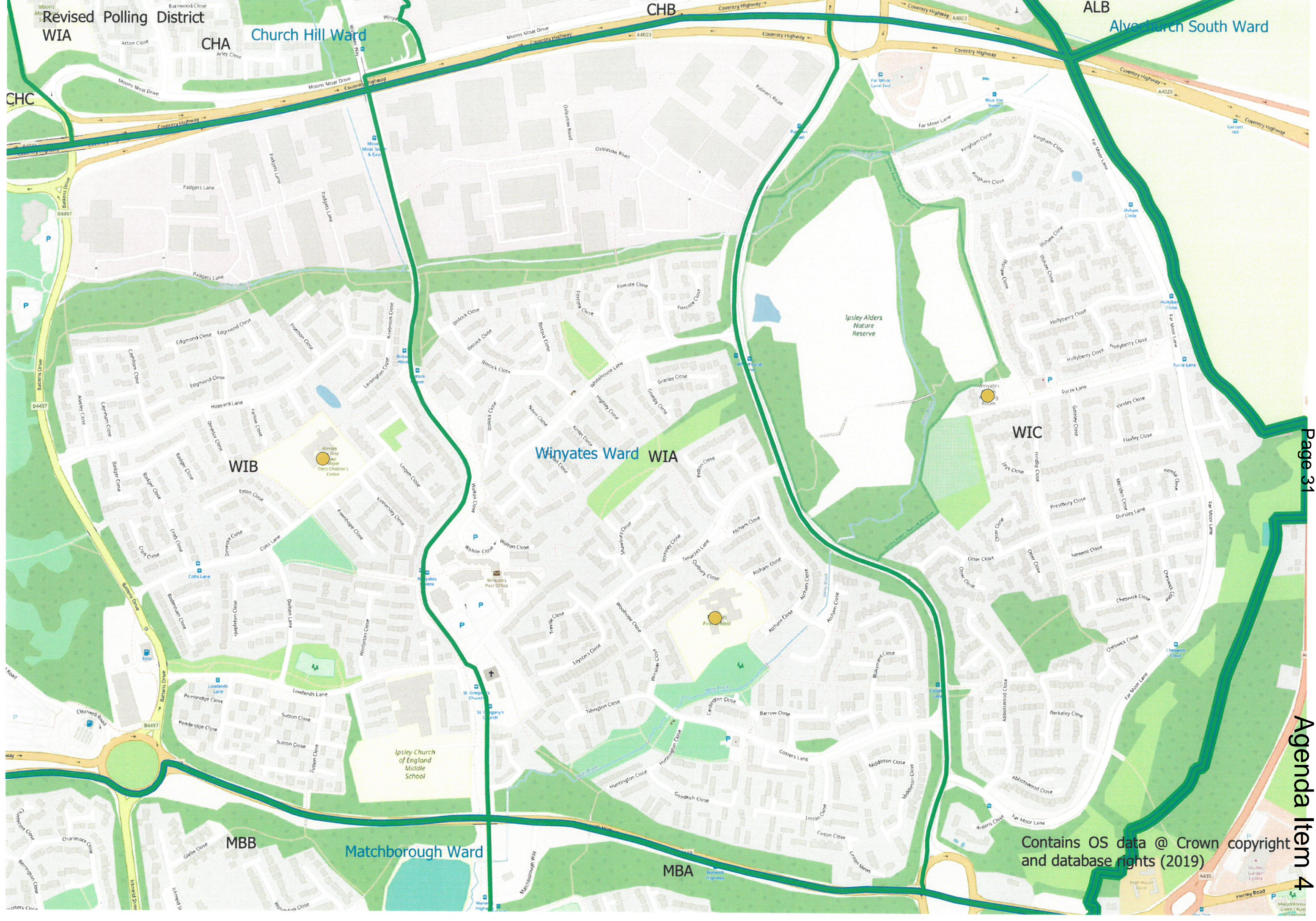
MBB

Matchborough Ward

MBA

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Revised Polling District  
WIA

Church Hill Ward

CHB

ALB

Alvechurch South Ward

CHC

CHA

WIB

Winyates Ward WIA

WIC

MBB

Matchborough Ward

MBA

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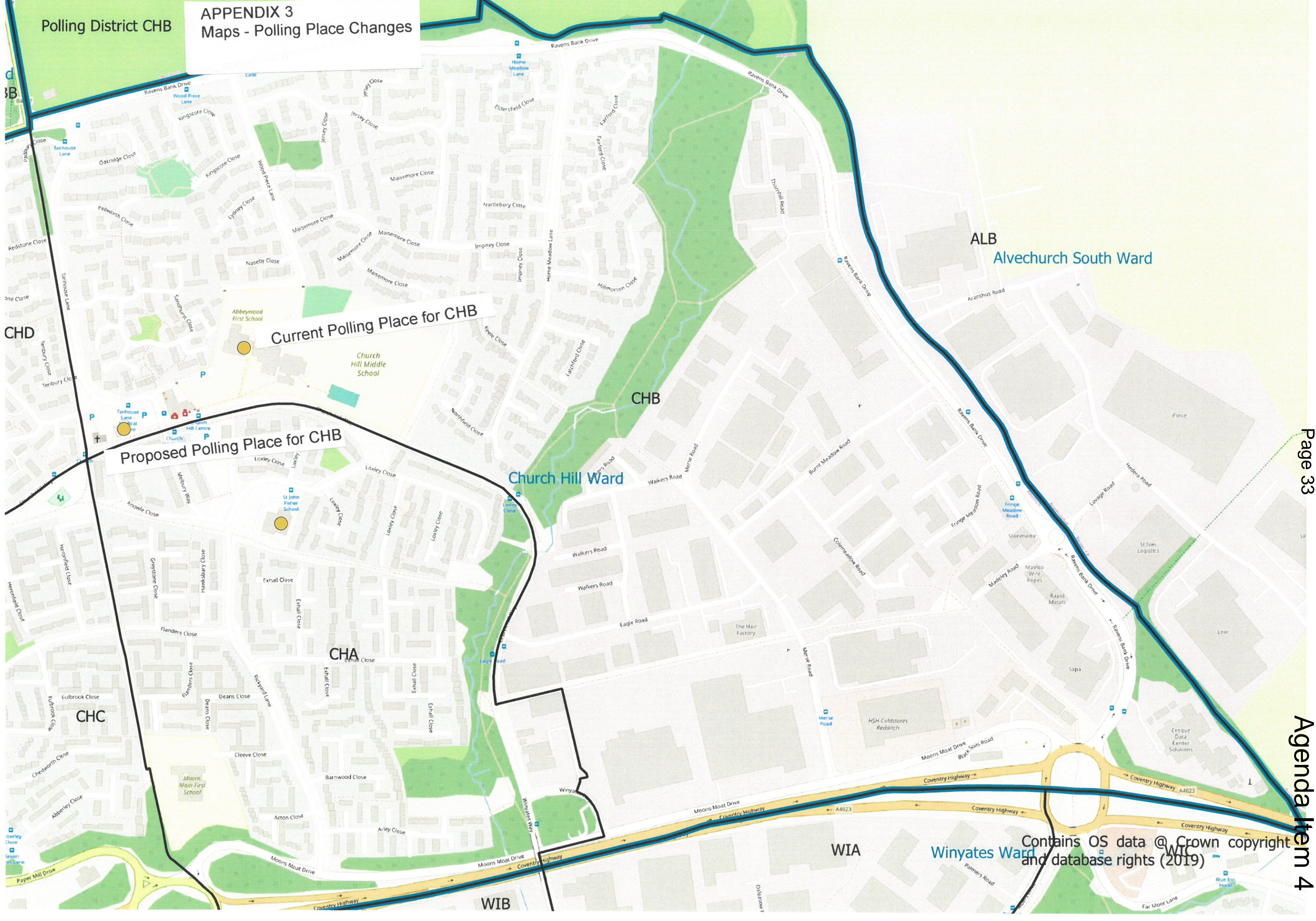


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Polling District CHB

# APPENDIX 3 Maps - Polling Place Changes



Current Polling Place for CHB

Proposed Polling Place for CHB

ALB  
Alvechurch South Ward

Church Hill Ward

CHA

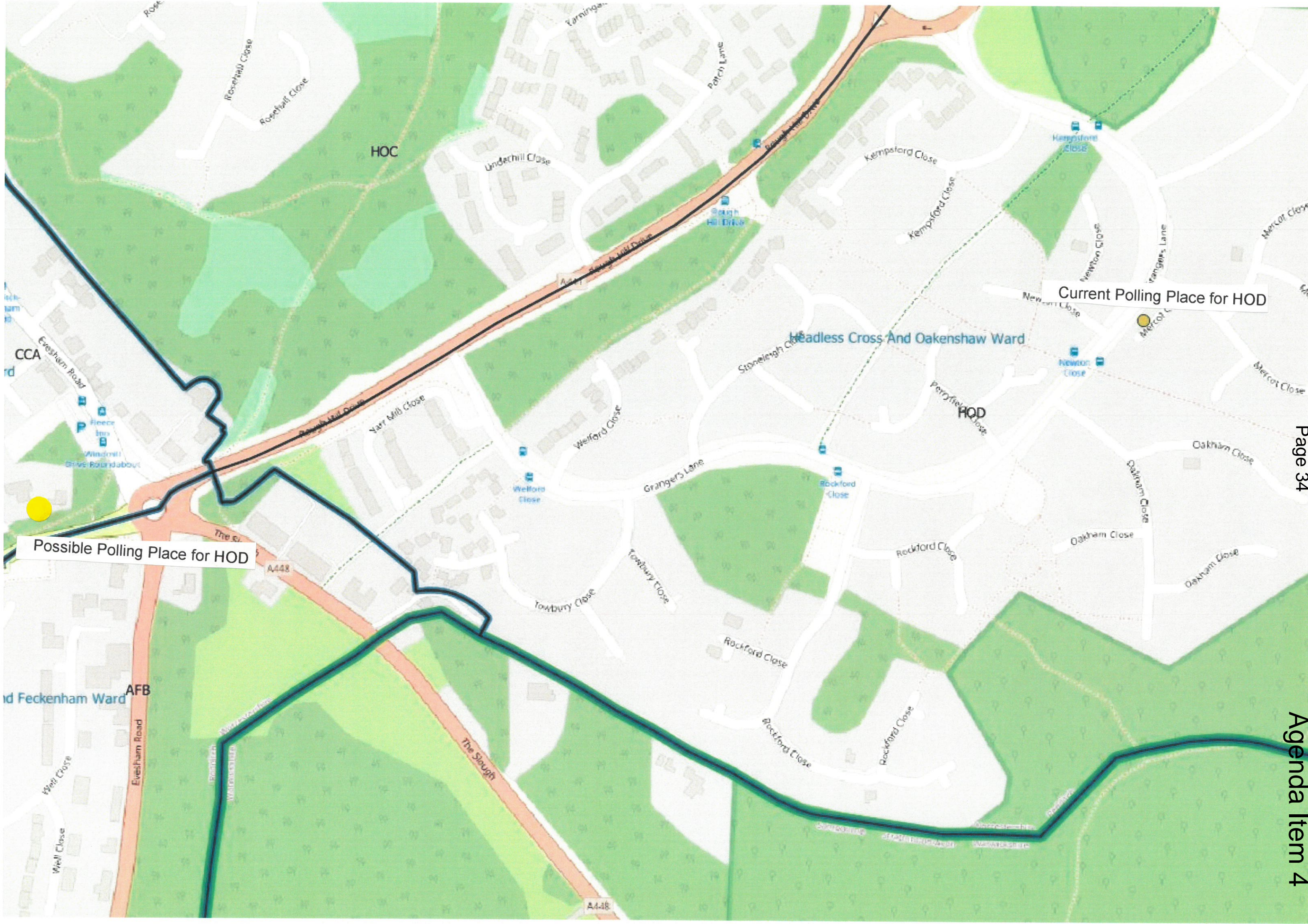
CHC

WIA  
Winyates Ward

WIB

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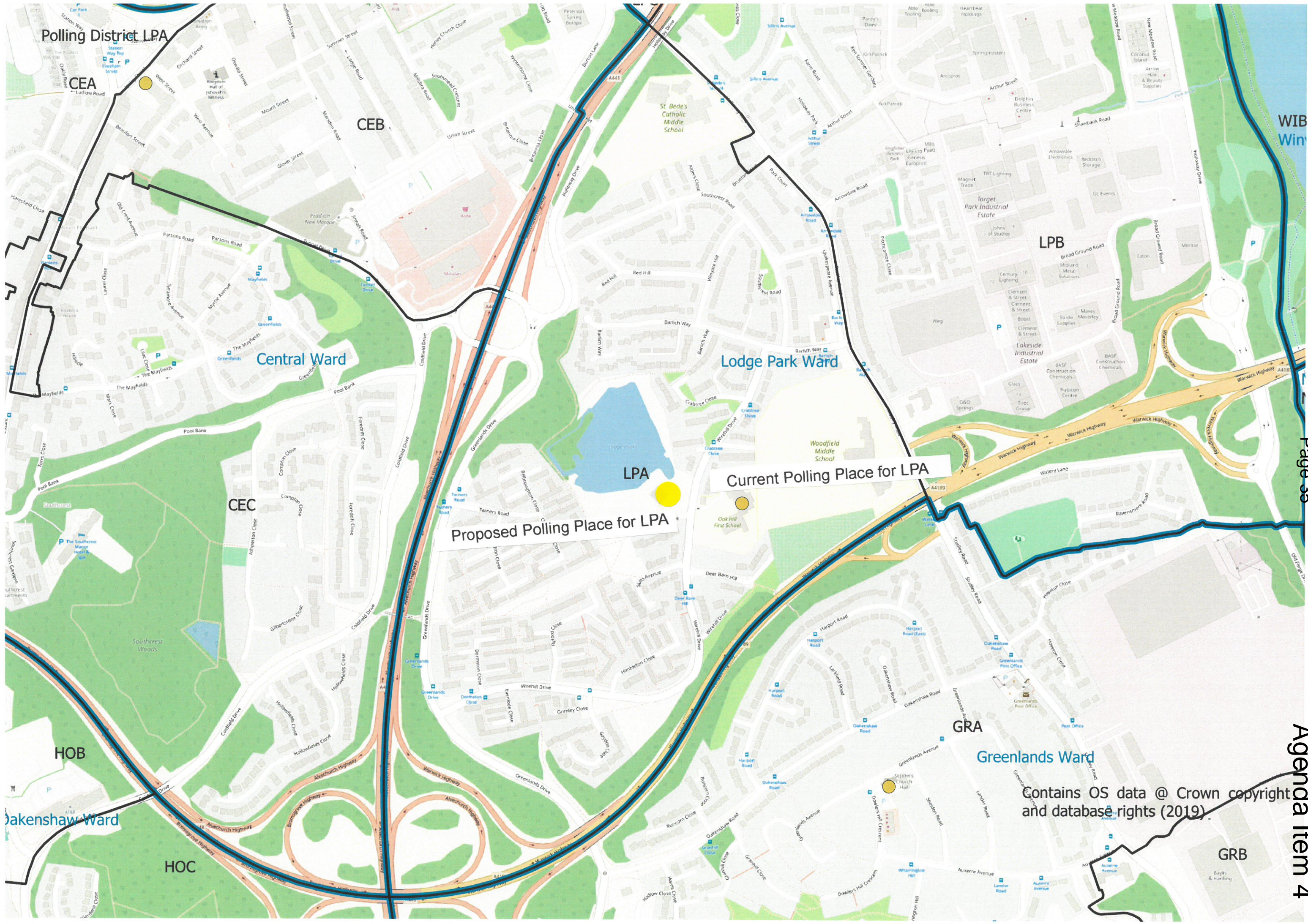


Possible Polling Place for HOD

Current Polling Place for HOD

Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward



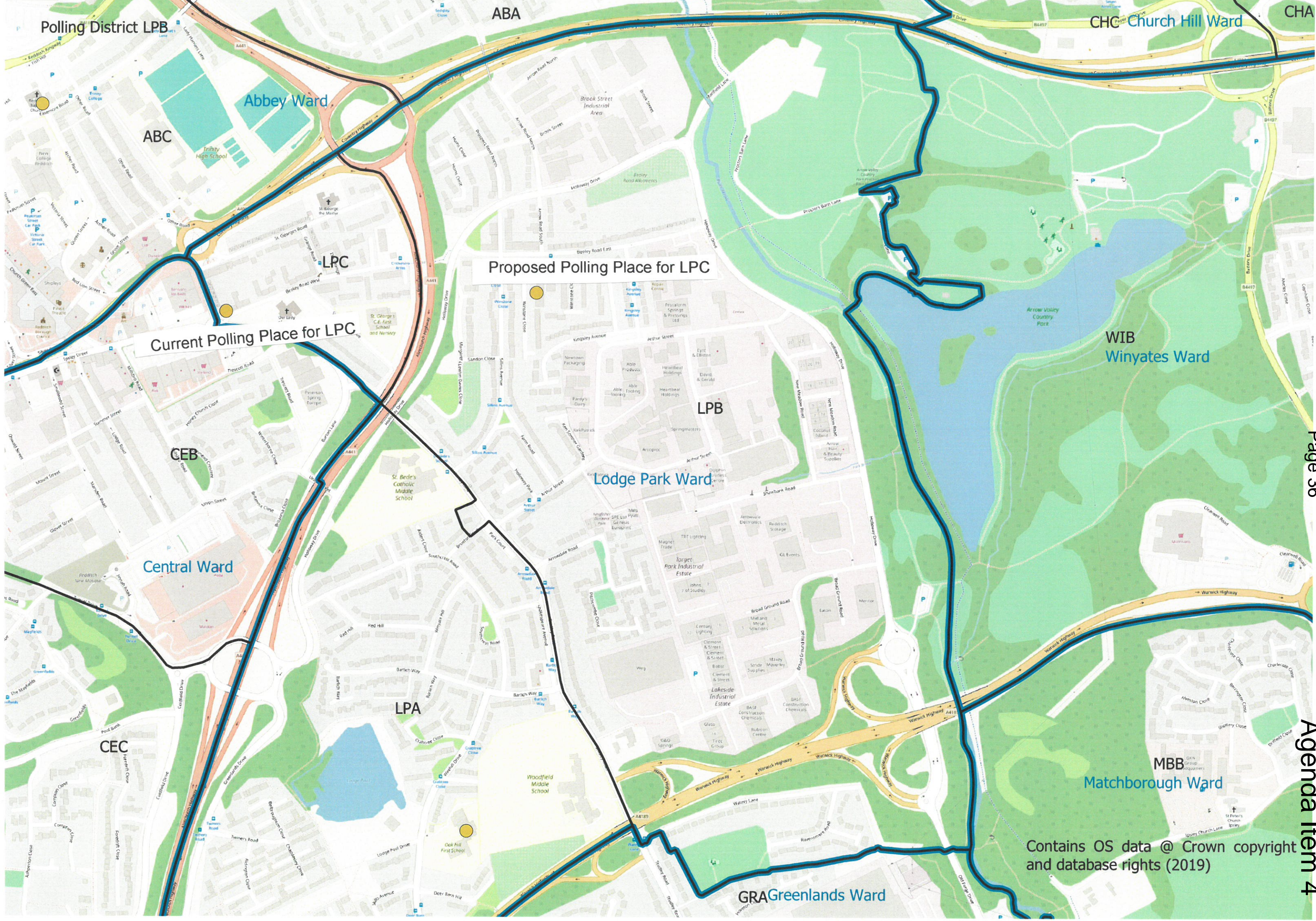


Proposed Polling Place for LPA

Current Polling Place for LPA

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Current Polling Place for LPC

Proposed Polling Place for LPC



# Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

This guidance provides a staged approach to conducting a review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations according to the relevant legislative requirements. It builds on the guidance we have previously issued, and has benefited from feedback from local authorities on their experiences of carrying out their previous reviews. It also incorporates learning from the Commission's experience of administering the appeals process over the past five years.

## 1 Timing of compulsory reviews

1.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The next compulsory review must now be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 (inclusive).

1.2 Subsequent compulsory reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.

1.3 A 'review' is all the steps set out in Schedule A1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983). Further information on what these steps are is included [later in this document](#). The review process, from the publication of the notice of the review until the publication of the documents at the end, must take place within the specified period.

1.4 The length of the review process is not prescribed, provided all the steps required by the legislation can be undertaken within it. However, the time allowed for consultation should be sufficient to enable interested persons and groups to read and understand the proposals, gather comments and respond with any alternative arrangements that they may wish to submit. The local authority may wish to have regard to any council guidelines on public consultation when carrying out the review.

1.5 Local authorities will need to decide when to carry out the review within the specified 16-month-period. In practice, (Acting) Returning Officers will often be asked to decide when the review should take place. In reaching their decision on timing, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider what other statutory duties and processes they and their staff will be carrying out in that time and how the review will fit with these.

1.6 In relation to the 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2020 period, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider the following:

- **The canvass**

As in England and Wales the Acting Returning Officer is also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), any canvass period will be a busy time during which to conduct a review. Consideration will need to be given to resource requirements if the review process is to be started on or shortly after the start of a canvass as there will be some overlap between canvass activity and the review.

In Scotland, as the office of the Returning Officer is separate to that of the Electoral Registration Officer, the conduct of the canvass may have less of an impact on the conduct of the review.

- **Publication of the register**

The potential additional workload resulting from undertaking the review at the same time as carrying out canvass activity needs to be balanced against the benefits of completing a review in time for publication of the revised register. Completing the review in time for publication of the revised register means that any changes can be reflected in it, and that no subsequent alterations to the structure of an already published register will need to be made, thus avoiding the potential need to publish a further revised register.

- **Elections during the review period**

During the review period, there will be scheduled polls and could potentially be unplanned polls. . In each case, consideration will need to be given to how the work on a review would interact with any election/referendum preparations, including when work would need to be completed to avoid an impact on election/referendum processes.

- **Scheduling approval of the proposals**

It is important to factor into the timetable the most likely scheduled date of the council/committee meeting where the detailed review proposals would be formally considered and approved. The review officers should work closely with the lead officer in charge of these meetings to ensure that the date of the meeting and related deadlines can be factored into the review timescale.

- **Changes to electoral boundaries**

A number of local authorities may also have their local electoral boundaries reviewed during the 16-month period. If this is the case, (Acting) Returning Officers will need to consider how the electoral boundary review will fit with the polling district /polling place review and whether it would be possible and desirable to align the two.

Where the polling district/place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are fully in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries, but should also take any new boundaries

that are not yet in force into account. To avoid having to review the polling districts and polling places again once the new boundaries are fully in force, any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect could be made into separate polling districts as part of the review.

Also, until the new boundaries are fully in force, the register will need to be constructed in a way that is capable of reflecting the current and the new boundaries. Again, this can be achieved by making any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect into separate polling districts.

For the same reasons where, as a result of a review of one set of electoral boundaries, the boundaries for different elections are no longer co-terminous, those areas that are no longer co-terminous could be also be made into separate polling districts.

## 2 Roles and responsibilities and definition of terms

### Roles and responsibilities

#### **The local authority**

2.1 The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area. A relevant local authority is, in England, the council of a district or London borough, in Scotland, a local authority, and, in Wales, the council of a county or county borough.

2.2 Depending on the structure of the local authority, it may not be the full council which makes the decisions on any changes to polling districts or polling places. Some local authorities may have delegated that function, in which case the decision on polling districts and polling places becomes the responsibility of a committee or sub-committee. This will be set out in the council's constitution.

#### **The Electoral Registration Officer**

2.3 Where a local authority makes any alterations to the polling districts within its area, the ERO must amend the register of electors accordingly – either on a notice of alteration or by publishing a revised register. The changes to the register take effect on the date that the ERO publishes a separate notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be done to coincide with the publication of a notice of alteration/publication of a revised register.

#### **The (Acting) Returning Officer**

2.4 The (Acting) Returning Officer must comment during any review of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places on both existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used if any new proposal for polling places were accepted.

2.5 The election rules require the (Acting) Returning Officer to decide how many polling stations are required for each polling place and they must allocate electors to the polling stations in such manner as they think most convenient.

#### **The Electoral Commission**

2.6 While legislation provides no role for the Commission in the review process, it does provide for a role after the conclusion of the review.

2.7 Once the local authority has published the results of its review, specified interested parties (see paragraph 7.2 below) may make representations to the Commission to reconsider any polling districts and polling places. We may



direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that we think necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, we may make the alterations ourselves.

## Definition of terms

### UK Parliamentary constituencies

2.8 The Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 states:

'There shall for the purpose of parliamentary elections be the county and borough constituencies (or in Scotland the county and burgh constituencies), each returning a single member, which are described in Orders in Council made under this Act. [...] In this Act and, except where the context otherwise requires, in any Act passed after the Representation of the People Act 1948, "constituency" means an area having separate representation in the House of Commons.'

2.9 UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries cannot be changed by the review.

### Polling district

2.10 A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of a UK Parliamentary constituency for the purposes of a UK Parliamentary election.

2.11 In England, each parish is to be a separate polling district and, in Wales, each community should be a separate polling district, unless there are special circumstances. This means that a parish or community must not be in a polling district which has a part of either a different parish or community 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/community has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish/community to be its own polling district.

2.12 In Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more polling districts unless there are special circumstances. Given the size of wards in Scotland, it is difficult to envisage what those special circumstances might be in practice.

2.13 When a parish or community is not a separate polling district or a Scottish electoral ward is not split into two or more polling districts, the special circumstances and the recommendation resulting from these should be clearly set in the review document for the council or relevant committee to consider.

### Polling place

2.14 A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be selected by the (Acting) Returning Officer. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district.

2.15 We are aware that some authorities designate the entire polling district as the polling place. However, Section 18B(4)(e) of the RPA 1983 states that 'the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station'. We therefore consider that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).

### **Polling station**

2.16 A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the local authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election.

## **3 Scope of compulsory reviews**

3.1 Polling districts and polling places for other elections are not automatically part of the compulsory review. However, as polling districts and polling places for other elections are based on UK Parliamentary polling arrangements, the requirements of any other elections that are held within the local authority area should be taken into consideration as part of the review. This means that although it is the (Acting) Returning Officer who is the primary Returning Officer for the purposes of the review and has a statutory role to participate in it, all Returning Officers within the constituency (if they are not also the (Acting) Returning Officer) should be involved in the review process.

## **4 Requirements of a review**

### **Overview of the legislative requirements**

#### **Designation of polling districts and polling places**

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
- in Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more separate polling districts, 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 polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station

### **Accessibility**

4.2 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
- seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled

4.3 The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

4.4 See also [‘Considering accessibility issues’](#) below.

### **Formal review process (Schedule A1 steps)**

4.5 When carrying out the review, local authorities must:

- publish a notice of the holding of a review
- consult the (Acting) Returning Officer for every parliamentary constituency which is wholly or partly in its area
- publish all representations made by an (Acting) Returning Officer within 30 days of receipt by posting a copy of them at the local authority’s office and in at least one conspicuous place in their area and, if the authority maintains a website, by placing a copy on the authority’s website
- seek representations from such persons as it thinks have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability. Such persons must have an opportunity to make representations and to comment on the representations made by the (Acting) Returning Officer(s).
- on completion of a review, give reasons for its decisions and publish:
  - a. all correspondence sent to an (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
  - b. all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority thinks has particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons who have different forms of disability
  - c. all representations made by any person in connection with the review
  - d. the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
  - e. details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within the local authority area as a result of the review

- f. details of the places where the results of the review have been published

## Considering accessibility issues

4.6 Local authorities have a duty to review the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and ensure that every polling place, and prospective polling place, for which it is responsible is accessible to disabled voters 'so far as is reasonable and practicable'.

4.7 According to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission the duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements. For service providers and those exercising public functions, these requirements are:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid<sup>1</sup> puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to provide that auxiliary aid.

4.8 In the Scope 2010 report 'Polls Apart 2010: Opening elections to disabled people' it was made clear that access is still a barrier to some disabled people who want to cast their vote in person.

4.9 Below, are some of the main physical access issues identified by SCOPE, which should be considered as part of a review:

- polling places and stations with steps into the entrance, or otherwise inaccessible
- narrow doorways and corridors
- lack of space within the polling place that did not enable motorised wheelchair manoeuvrability
- lack of space and secrecy for the elector and their companion to discuss the elector's choice of vote
- lack of low level polling booths or booths/tables that didn't provide disabled voters with confidence that they could cast their vote in secrecy as they were positioned close to the polling station staff
- a lack of chairs to enable people to rest
- a lack of a clear display of guidance or aids (such as tactile voting devices) to enable people to feel confident about the process
- inadequate lighting

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of a polling station, an auxiliary aid could, for example, be a ramp for wheelchair users.

4.10 These factors, and accessibility issues more generally, will also need to be considered by the Returning Officer as part of their training for polling station staff.

4.11 In [Appendix A](#) of this guidance we provide an accessibility checklist that can be used to assess the suitability of each polling place and polling station which covers these, as well as other issues.

4.12 In addition to writing to those groups or individuals the local authority has identified as having expertise in access issues, the authority should also engage any internal disability access group and/or disability officer as part of the review.

## 5 Planning the next compulsory review: 1 October 2018 – 31 January 2020 (inclusive)

5.1 Local authorities will need to decide when they are going to conduct the next compulsory review within the timescales provided by the legislation.

5.2 Even though the next compulsory review cannot start before 1 October 2018, local authorities can start planning for the review before then. There are also some preparatory steps, detailed below, which can be taken that fall outside the formal legal requirements of the review.

5.3 For example, local authorities may start compiling statistics and information which may assist them during the review. These may include:

- Electorate figures, broken down to street level within wards and existing polling districts.
- Any local authority or national statistics that estimate population change within the area.
- In England and Wales, a report from the authority's planning section detailing any proposed areas of new development and the approximate number of dwellings and expected population numbers for those areas. In Scotland, this information can be obtained from the Housing Land Audit.
- Detailed up-to-date maps of a scale that will assist in the designation of polling district boundaries.
- Details of current polling places and an indication as to their overall suitability for purpose (including, for example, any surveys, diagrams or photographs completed with the assistance of Presiding Officers or polling station inspectors or as part of a previous review or post-election evaluation). Further guidance can be found under ['Assessing the current arrangements and proposals for change'](#).
- Any comments or complaints regarding the current arrangements from the public, elected members or other bodies.

- Up-to-date information gained from the existing and possible future polling station venue managers as to continued availability (highlighting, for example, planned renovation work or other future plans).
- Details of potential alternative buildings (public, private or temporary type constructions) that might appear suitable.
- Advice and guidance from local disability groups and disability organisations (such as, for example, SCOPE or Capability Scotland), and any expert help from officers within the council who are responsible for equality schemes.
- Terms of reference and the criteria for assessing the suitability of the current/proposed arrangements

5.4 Local authorities could also set the timetable for conducting the review. This may include booking the date of the council/ executive/committee meeting where the detailed review proposals would be formally considered.

5.5 The documents required to be published or communicated during the review, such as the notice of review and the letters to Returning Officers and those with expertise in disabled access, could also be prepared. However, the notice cannot be published nor the letters sent before 1 October 2018.

5.6 When planning for the review, the local authority will also need to identify who will lead and support the review, drawing personnel not only from electoral services but also from other parts of the authority who may have expertise to assist. Again, this can be done ahead of the start of the compulsory review period.

## Carrying out a preliminary review

5.7 The local authority should undertake a preliminary review of the current polling districts and polling places with a view to establishing their suitability, and identify any potential alternatives where required. This may be done before the start of the specified review period.

5.8 There is no requirement to change any of the polling districts and polling places if they are suitable, but any 'no change' decision must be fully justified as part of the overall proposals.

5.9 The review process should be structured, and must be conducted formally with supporting documentation. This will ensure that there is a complete audit trail for all decisions taken and will contribute to the transparency of the process.

5.10 Close liaison with other departments of the council, such as communications, those providing services to disabled residents, and planning will help to increase the efficiency of the overall review process.

5.11 The local authority planning and property services departments, for example, will be able to provide guidance on the availability of locations and

premises and details of any residential developments that might have an impact on future electorate figures.

5.12 Modelling possible options where changes are deemed necessary can be undertaken by using mapping and planning tools available within the local authority, particularly as most authorities will now have access to GIS mapping services which can pull data from a variety of sources.

5.13 Local authorities should determine the most appropriate method of involving relevant local authority staff and other interested groups as appropriate.

### **Assessing the current arrangements and proposals for change**

5.14 The legislation suggests an approach starting with polling districts, followed by choosing polling places and then considering polling stations. In practice, however, it is important that good quality polling places are identified first, which can then be used as part of the process of defining suitable polling district arrangements that comply with the requirements set out in the legislation. [Appendix A](#) provides template checklists to assist with the evaluation of current/proposed polling places and polling stations.

#### **Polling districts**

5.15 The following should be considered as part of the assessment of the suitability of polling district boundaries:

- Are the boundaries well-defined? For example, do they follow the natural boundaries of the area? If not, is it clear which properties belong in the polling district?
- Are there suitable transport links within the polling district, and how do they relate to the areas of the polling district that are most highly populated? Are there any obstacles to voters crossing the current polling district and reaching the polling place e.g., steep hills, major roads, railway lines, rivers?

#### **Polling places**

5.16 There are a number of factors that will need to be considered when reviewing existing polling places or when assessing new polling places, including:

- **Location:** Is it reasonably accessible within the polling district? Does it avoid barriers for the voter such as steep hills, major roads, rivers, etc.? Are there any convenient transport links?
- **Size:** Can it accommodate more than one polling station if required? If multiple polling stations are required, is the polling place capable of accommodating all voters going into and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?
- **Availability:** Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections? Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?



- **Accessibility:** Is the building accessible to all those entitled to attend the polling place?

5.17 Ideally, there would be the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area within which to establish polling stations. In practice, however, the choice of polling places will often be a balance between the quality of a building (access, facilities, etc.) and the proximity of the building to the electors. When making a decision, all factors will need to be considered and the authority will need to be able to demonstrate their reasoning behind the decision.

5.18 Where, because of local circumstances, a polling place has been selected that is not fully accessible, then reasonable adjustments must be undertaken to provide access for all electors. Alternatively, the local authority should consider whether it would be appropriate to designate a polling place that falls outside the polling district.

5.19 Part of the decision-making process involves assessing if the polling place is capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment, particularly in circumstances where the number of electors allocated to a polling place is high. The number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500.

5.20 In instances where there may be a higher turnout, such as at a UK Parliamentary election, (Acting) Returning Officers may wish to set up multiple polling stations within the polling place. Consideration will need to be given to whether the size and layout of the area or building can accommodate such arrangements.

### **Polling stations**

5.21 When assessing the suitability of a room or area for use as a polling station, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider how the size and layout would allow for the most effective throughput of voters, including in those instances where there is a high number of electors in the polling station at any one time on polling day. Each polling station should be designed to provide suitable conditions for the elector to vote in private, for staff to conduct elections in an efficient and effective manner and for those entitled to observe the voting process to do so without compromising the secrecy of the ballot.

### **Use of schools**

5.22 It should be noted that for the purpose of taking the poll in England and Wales, the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to use free of charge schools maintained or assisted by a local authority as well as those schools that receive grants made out of moneys provided by Parliament. This includes academies and free schools. In Scotland, the rooms in schools that can be used free of charge for the taking of the poll are those in schools that are not independent schools within the meaning of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.



## 6 The review process

### Stage 1 – Notification of the review

6.1 The formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review. The notice must:

- be displayed at the local authority's office and in at least one conspicuous place within the authority
- be published on the local authority website

6.2 Additionally, the authority could display copies in other public buildings and, in particular, those buildings frequented by disabled residents. The authority's disability officer should be able to give guidance on the most suitable places for reaching disabled residents.

6.3 The content of the notice is not prescribed, but should state:

- that the local authority is conducting a review of polling districts and polling places
- that the (Acting) Returning Officer will make a comment on proposed polling stations, and an indication of when and where the (Acting) Returning Officer's representations will be made available
- that electors within the authority or within a UK Parliamentary constituency which has any part in the authority may make a representation
- that the authority would welcome the views of all residents, particularly disabled residents, on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that the authority would welcome any person or body with expertise in access for persons with any type of disability to comment on the authority's proposals, the (Acting) Returning Officer's representation or any other matters
- that persons or bodies making representations should, if possible, give alternative places that may be used as polling places
- the postal address, e-mail address and website address at which documents can be inspected and representations made
- an indication of the timetable of the review and a deadline for representations

6.4 The authority should also send a copy of the notice to interested parties such as elected representatives (Councillors, MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.), political parties, disability groups and other stakeholders. Additionally, the authority could issue a press release and use social media feeds to draw attention to the review and the process.

## Stage 2 – Consultation

6.5 The consultation stage is for representations and comments to be made on the existing and proposed arrangements for polling districts and polling places. There are two aspects of this stage:

- A compulsory submission from the (Acting) Returning Officer of the UK Parliamentary constituency or constituencies, which must then be published by the local authority.
- Submissions from electors and other interested persons and bodies, including elected representatives and those with expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people.

### **The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission**

6.6 The (Acting) Returning Officer's submission must comment on both the existing polling stations and the polling stations that would likely be used based on any proposed polling places. The (Acting) Returning Officer's report must also contain information as to the location of polling stations within polling places. Completing the templates at [Appendix A](#) may help to form a basis for this report.

6.7 The local authority must publish the (Acting) Returning Officer's comments within 30 calendar days of receipt. The comments should be published at the local authority offices and in at least one conspicuous place within each UK Parliamentary constituency contained wholly or partly in the local authority area. They should also be published on the local authority's website. Additionally, the (Acting) Returning Officer's response could be copied and made available in council offices, libraries, community centres or other places where residents may visit.

### **Consultees**

6.8 The authority should consult widely on the review and should seek out the views of interested groups or bodies, including electors, candidates and agents, political parties and members of the council, as well as other elected representatives (MPs, MSPs, AMs, MEPs, etc.).

6.9 It will be particularly important to consult with those who have specific experience of assessing access for persons with different disabilities. These could include disability sections or occupational health departments within the council, as well as local and national disability groups. The authority should give consideration to the different types of disability which may make voting in person more difficult, and should also consider the council's own policy on disabled access. Consultees should be asked for comment both in general and, if appropriate, about particular buildings or areas within the authority.

6.10 Any persons involved in the consultation have the right to comment on the recommendations proposed by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

6.11 Any elector for a UK Parliamentary constituency either wholly within or partly within the local authority area may comment on any of the recommendations within the whole local authority area.

6.12 Any person or body that makes a comment should be invited to suggest alternative polling districts/polling places and should be encouraged to give a reason for the alternative proposal so that it may be given appropriate consideration. As mentioned above, the notice published by the local authority should provide a deadline for the submission of comments.

### Stage 3 – Concluding the review

6.13 After considering all of the representations, the local authority must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, which must be approved by the council.

6.14 If the review results in the alteration of one or more polling districts, the Electoral Registration Officer must make the necessary alterations to the electoral register. Depending on the timing of the review and the extent of the changes, the ERO has three options to ensure the register reflects the new polling districts:

- update the register on publication of the revised register following the conclusion of the annual canvass
- re-publish a revised register at another point in the year
- publish a notice of alteration

6.15 Where the Electoral Registration Officer has decided to revise their register by republishing it to incorporate the changes, the law requires that the ERO publish a notice 14 calendar days before the publication of the revised version of the register in a local newspaper, at their office and at some other conspicuous place or places in the area. The legislation does not allow for a part publication of the register – a revised register can only be published for the whole of the local authority area.

6.16 Any alteration is effective on the date on which the Electoral Registration Officer publishes a notice stating that the alterations have been made, which should be published at the same time as the register is revised or a notice of alteration published, as appropriate.

### Stage 4 – Publishing the conclusions of the review

6.17 Once the council has agreed the proposals, details of the new polling districts and polling places must be made available to the public. These should be made available at the local authority offices, in at least one conspicuous place in the constituency (or constituencies), and on the local authority's website. The reasons for choosing each particular polling district and polling place must be given.

6.18 Along with the reasons for the final decision of the review, the following must also be published:

- all correspondence sent to the (Acting) Returning Officer in connection with the review
- all correspondence sent to any person whom the authority contacted because they had particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for disabled people
- all representations made by any person in connection with the review
- the minutes of any meeting held by the council to consider any revision to the designation of polling districts or polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the designation of polling districts and polling places within its area as a result of the review
- details of the places where the results of the review have been published

6.19 It is important that electors are made aware of any changes made to the place they must attend to vote. For example, the poll card for the next election they are entitled to vote at could indicate if their station has changed.

## 7 The appeals process

7.1 Following the conclusion of the local authority's review, certain persons have a right to make representations to the Commission. If, on receipt of such representations, we find that a local authority's review did not:

- meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency, or a body of them, or
- take sufficient account of the accessibility for disabled persons of a polling station/ polling stations within a designated polling place

then we may direct the authority to make any alterations to the polling places that we think necessary and, if the alterations are not made within two months, we may make the alterations ourselves.

## Who is entitled to make representations to the Commission?

7.2 The following may make representations:

- in England, any parish council which is wholly or partly situated within each constituency, or parish meeting where there is no such council
- in Wales, any community council which is wholly or partly situated within each constituency
- thirty or more registered electors in each constituency (although electors registered anonymously cannot make a representation)

- a person (except the (Acting) Returning Officer) who made representations to the authority when the review was being undertaken
- any person who is not an elector in a constituency in the authority's area but who the Commission thinks has sufficient interest in the accessibility of disabled persons to polling places in the area or has particular expertise in relation to the access to premises or facilities of disabled persons

7.3 In addition, the (Acting) Returning Officer may make observations on any representations made to us.

## Format for all representations

7.4 All representations must be made in writing, either by post, e-mail or fax. The representation must be as specific as possible and should clearly state the manner in which it is alleged that the local authority has failed to properly conduct the review. There are only two grounds on which a representation may be made. These are:

- the local authority has failed to meet the reasonable requirements of the electors in the constituency
- the local authority has failed to take sufficient account of accessibility to disabled persons of the polling station/ polling stations within a polling place.

7.5 Representations based on any other premise will not be considered.

7.6 The representation should include the location of the polling place and any other relevant information regarding the polling place at issue, stating specifically why it is inaccessible or does not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors.

7.7 A representation may also include for consideration specific proposals for changing the place that has been designated as the polling place.

## The decision-making process of the Commission

7.8 Upon receipt of a representation, we will request all relevant documentation from the local authority and will show the authority the representation.

7.9 The (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to make observations on the representation submitted to us and should give a report on the polling station(s) which would likely be used should the representation be successful.

7.10 The documentation from the local authority, the observations of the (Acting) Returning Officer and any other relevant information will be taken into consideration, in conjunction with the representation.

7.11 We may seek advice from persons with expertise on accessibility issues when making our decision.

7.12 We will set out in writing our conclusions and the reasons for our decision. Our decision will be issued to the person(s) who made the representation, the local authority and the (Acting) Returning Officer. The decision and related documents will also be published on our website. Local authorities are advised to publish the outcome of the appeal in the same way as the results of the review were published.

7.13 We may direct the local authority to consider any alterations to the polling places that we deem necessary under the review. After two months, if the local authority has failed to make the alterations, we can itself make the alterations as if the local authority had implemented them.

7.14 Representations should be sent to:

Legal Counsel  
The Electoral Commission  
3 Bunhill Row  
London EC1Y 8YZ  
Tel: 020 7271 0500  
Fax 020 7271 0505  
Email: [appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:appeals@electoralcommission.org.uk)

7.15 Further information on previous appeals, including the decisions made by the Commission can be found on [our website](#).

## 8 Making amendments to polling places outside of the compulsory review period and carrying out interim reviews

8.1 If a polling station becomes unavailable, the (Acting) Returning Officer should consider whether another polling station could be designated within the polling place. Changing the polling station within the polling place would not require a review.

8.2 If a building becomes unavailable before an election, the polling place can be changed by the local authority in accordance with their decision making arrangements. If delegation procedures are in place, for example to a committee of the council, these should be followed as set out in the council's constitution and the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to polling places should be contacted.

8.3 Between compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations used should be kept under consideration, and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. If any changes are identified as being

desirable, the same steps should be followed as for conducting the compulsory review.

8.4 The council can carry out an interim review and change some of their polling districts and polling places before the end of the 5-year cycle, but the same processes should be undertaken for the affected areas as for the compulsory review. Without going through these processes, the council will have difficulty evidencing their decision making and explaining how they took into consideration the views of disabled persons and the reasonable requirements of electors.

## Appendix A - templates

The following templates have been designed for use in evaluating the suitability of buildings as polling places and polling stations.

**Part A** – to be completed by the local authority with the details of the current polling places.

**Part B** – to be completed by the local authority to evaluate external areas' access and facilities both outside the perimeter of the building and within the boundary of the building itself.

**Part C** – to be completed by the local authority to assess internal access to the polling station, but excluding the polling station itself (i.e. covering the corridors leading to the polling station accommodation, but not the area in which polling will be carried out), and the facilities available within the building. Should the proposed building, room or area to be used as the polling station have direct access to the road/pavement or external parts, Part C can be excluded from this assessment.

**Part D** – to be completed by the (Acting) Returning Officer with the details of the area that is, or is likely to be, used as the polling station(s).

*(If local authorities already have up-to-date detailed information to assist with the completion of Parts B, C and D, this can be inserted into the individual templates together with any diagrams and/or photographs to enable the building to be re-assessed on a site visit. The information should be verified as part of the visit.)*

**Part E** – to be completed by the local authority with any comments or complaints received from stakeholders as part of the consultation exercise. Completion can provide evidence that the review considered the submissions as part of the formal evaluation process.

Any alternative proposals or suggestions put forward for new polling places/stations should be evaluated using the templates, and the results should be collated to facilitate the provision of appropriate feedback.



## Polling place / polling station – evaluation checklist

Part A – Current polling place details		
Polling place identifier		
Polling place name		
Polling place address		
Number of electors (If more than one polling station within the polling place, identify split of electors)		
Building availability for future elections/referendums		
Polling place review		
Check	√	Comment
• Are there suitable transport links?		
• Are there any access issues regarding main/busy roads, railways, rivers, etc.?		
• Is the polling place capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment? If so, could it accommodate all allocated voters going in and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?		
• Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections?		
• Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?		

***Identify any complaints/comments received from stakeholders at previous electoral events***

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part B – External areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are there good public transport links to the polling place?		
• Is the approach to the building safe and free from obstructions and does it have a dropped kerb?		
• Is the building clearly identifiable?		
• Is additional signage required between street and entrance?		
• Is there the facility to put up the required signage for polling day?		
• Are there parking facilities for disabled people?		
• Are there parking facilities for polling staff?		
• Does the approach to the building have external lighting?		
• Does the building have level access? Yes/No. If no –		
• Has a purpose built ramp been installed?		
• If so, does it have a handrail?		
• Does the ramp have a gentle slope?		
• Does the building require a temporary ramp or is there an alternative disabled access?		
• Is the entrance door wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair?		
• Are the doors light enough for frail/elderly voters to open?		
• Can the 'Guidance for voters' notice be clearly displayed outside the premises, as required by the election rules?		
• Are there any external security concerns?		
• Can tellers be accommodated outside the building?		

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

### External plan – B1

Show external layout, street name(s), car parking (including disabled car parking), ramps, steps, lighting, appropriate places for signage, etc.

***Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.***



Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part C – Internal areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are all doors easy to open (including by wheelchair users) or do they need to be permanently locked back?		
• Are there any internal steps or obstructions/hazards?		
• Are any doormats level with the floor?		
• Is the floor covering non-slip (including in wet weather)?		
• Are there any corridors that may cause access problems?		
• Is there adequate lighting in the corridors?		
• Are there toilet facilities?		
• Is there a kitchen that staff can use?		
• Is the area adequately lit for day and night time?		
• Is there adequate space for signage?		
• How many polling stations can the building accommodate?		
• Does the building have a telephone available (land line) in the event of mobile network problems?		

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

### Internal access leading to polling station(s) – C1

Show internal areas of the building, excluding the actual polling station where voting will take place, including corridors that link to the polling station, kitchen and toilets, and highlight any possible signage requirements and potential hazards. Also indicate door swing direction and ease of opening, any areas of poor lighting, and any areas of uneven floor, etc.

***Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.***



Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

Part D – The polling station(s)		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Is there sufficient space to accommodate and manage the flow of a high volume of electors in the case of a high turnout of electors?		
• If multiple polling stations need to be provided, are there other rooms available, or can the space be clearly divided to provide adequate room for more than one polling station?		
• Is there sufficient space inside the polling station to comfortably accommodate staff, voters, polling agents and observers?		
• Could ballot booths be positioned in a way that would preserve the secrecy of the ballot, even where there may be a high volume of electors?		
• Is there adequate lighting for day and night time?		
• Is there suitable furniture (tables and chairs) available for all types of election for polling staff and for those voters who may need to rest?		
• Could motorised wheelchairs be accommodated?		
• Can the official notices be clearly displayed, including the large-print version of the ballot paper(s)?		

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

**Internal – The polling station(s) – D1**

Identify the size and shape of the area available for polling. Include the position of the door(s), any windows and how the furniture and equipment should be laid out to accommodate all those entitled to be inside the polling station, taking into account access requirements for all voters, including those in wheelchairs, and demonstrating how the space should be used to ensure the most efficient flow of voters and the effective administration of the voting process.

**Part E – Comments from stakeholders during consultation**

Comment	Name/organisation	Response by (A)RO

Date reviewed:

Officer initials:

***Additional comments from (A)RO***