

**Comments Relating to St Sebastian's Memorial Hall**

Q6. Tell us why you don't think this polling place is suitable.	Q7. What alternative venue would you suggest?	Q8. Do you have any other comments on the polling district scheme?
Local places are vital to polling numbers		
This is better than closing the Oaklands Junior school every year. The road to cross to the Memorial Hall can get quite busy though. I would still pick the Memorial Hall over the school.		
Disrupting children's education by using schools as a polling station should not be part of a plan or scheme. There are always other options		
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I have always been concerned about local, schools closing for polling . Not only does the junior school so lose, but also the infants this is one of the larger infant junior schools in the area and a large amount of children lose a teaching day on a regular basis		
Stop using Oaklands my Children have missed enough school days!!!! If people can't get there then they need to learn how to complete a postal vote!		
The st sebs hall would work if all internal parking is set aside for disabled & infirm but there is very little of it. I'm not sure if you'd get the same turn out as currently when using Oaklands school. If the field next to the hall is turned into a car park - then it would be great 👍 If not, Pinewood site would be much better for parking facilities but further for people to walk to.		
Very glad that after 15 years of asking and numerous petitions it's actually going to happen.		
We where told by previous ward councillors that St.Seb's wasn't possible!		
Either Pinewood or the Howard Palmer Room, rear of St Sebastian's Memorial Hall		
Stop using Oakland's school please.		

It is unacceptable to keep closing Oaklands Schools. Local children have missed so much school over the last few years, it is indefensible to make them miss even more, when reasonable alternatives exist for the polling station. I believe this factor should be considered ahead of all others - especially 'convenience'. Throughout history people have died in their fight for the vote. I don't feel it's unreasonable to ask current residents to 'maybe walk a bit further' to exercise their democratic duty, in order that children may get the most from their education.

Why not use village hall or Pinewood? No more schools please

I feel incredibly strongly that our children should not be losing education particularly after the lost learning in the pandemic. St Sebastian not a great option but better than a school.

Pinewood Activity Centre would be a much better choice as it has more parking & is not so close to a busy/dangerous junction. Oaklands, & no other schools, should not be closed for this purpose. Children missed enough education through Covid & subsequent strikes but parents get penalised for taking their children out of school for any reason!

We definitely need Oaklands School removing as a polling station. It is so detrimental to the children's education after the disruption of both covid and strikes. For once, we need to prioritise education and put children first. There are many other suitable public buildings which should be used instead.

No

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Closing schools down for government polling had a drastic effect on children's education, especially post covid. I don't understand why schools should be affected in polling stations.

I would wish for Oaklands schools to be no longer used for polling as this interferes with my children's schooling

No

It would be great for this to no longer impact the schools and children after Covid and strike days it is important for children to not miss extra school days.

No

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I am worried that St Sebastians will not offer enough parking plus there is little opportunity to access it on foot

I am delighted to see that there is a proposed move from using Oaklands Junior school to st Sebastian's memorial hall. I still don't understand why in this modern age - voting online or postal system is not used.

Sustainability and education are the most important things to consider.

Please cut down on missed school days, missed work days (having to look after children) and excess traffic / pollution by considering postal / online systems..

This community has lost enough school time for our children from using Oaklands Infant and Junior schools as the polling station for so many years. This is no longer practical - and the education of the children is far more important given how much schooling they have lost due to the pandemic. St Sebastian's is more than adequate to serve as an alternative location for this area.

An even better alternative might be the Church of the Holy Ghost on New Wokingham Road. Using our schools must be avoided wherever possible.

Please approve additional car parking spaces around ST Sebs Memorial Hall to make it accessible.

Oaklands Junior School was not available to select on the previous page.  
Why is this the case?

As a parent and a local resident, the use of this school is detrimental to the to the local community. It is unbelievable that the local officials feel that it is acceptable for our children to loose out on vital learning when their education has been so disrupted over the last 3 years. The staff, parents and children are doing so much to "catch-up" from the disruption and should not be penalised just because the local elected officials fail to consider an appropriate alternative. It is not just one school that is disrupted, it is 3, the Juniors, the Infants and the Nursery. This is around 400-450 pupils, which easily means over 600 families are impacted by continued use of this venue (number of which are being financially penalised, including myself, as they are having to take time off work for childcare - how is this acceptable?). I'm certain that I read something from the Education Secretary advising that local authorities needed to examine use of school venues and take all steps to avoid disruption to pupils. Feels like this has fallen on deaf ears?!

I understand that the venue has to have easy access however, have any of you checked the local roads on election days? It is absolute carnage. The school is too close to a parade of local shops, so the congestion in the area is horrific. This is a safety aspect that is being ignored and again poses a risk to our children, as they are likely to be outside playing because they cannot attend school due to this exercise.

I fail to understand why other central, easy access venues such as venues at Pinewood (like Scout huts) could not be used. Equally venues in the village, such as Crowthorne Parish Hall, or the hall connected to St John the Baptist Church cannot be used.

If these are not big enough (although I would say that they are equal to the hall at the Junior School), then why cannot funding be assigned to hold this at a venue such as Wellington Sports Centre.

All of these venue have step free access and there is parking available.

Whilst my comments are specific to our school, I believe that alternatives should be sourced for all impacted schools in the borough.

Why is Oaklands Junior School not available for selection?

I have lived in Crowthorne for over 30 years however, for the last 7 years (although I suspect it has been longer), the local authority has chosen to use our local school as a polling station. This is unacceptable due to the significant disruption it causes for our children. They have lost out on a tremendous amount of education time over the last 3 years and adding to this disruption for the benefit of local counsellors is completely unacceptable. Over 400 children have to miss out on a days education and I fail to see why an alternative venue cannot be sourced - the school was never used when I was a pupil.

I also live close to the school - adjacent road to Butler Road, and the traffic chaos on polling day is absolutely horrific. I've not been able to exit my drive on a number of occasions and I've seen a number of near miss collisions over the years. The roads around the school are congested on a normal school day, but add to this with the number of local residents, all of which tend to drive and not walk to the venue creates sheer carnage.

This is so disruptive to the children not being able to attend the school. After Covid every school day matters. There is very limited parking which means the streets are very congested.

Oaklands Junior school is not suitable as it means closing 3 educational facilities each time, Acorns under 5's, Oaklands Infants & Oaklands Juniors.

This is outside of the population centre.  
To access requires a significant walk by most voters and the crossing of a very busy nine mile ride junction.  
Driving- severe lack of parking places.

Morgan Rec was used when I was younger. Whilst I accept that it has steps to the hall, I fail to see why a temporary ramp could not be installed. This has parking directly to the venue. Other venues in the village such as the Parish Hall of one of the church halls could also be considered as they could easily accommodate this exercise. A number of venues at Pinewood would provide a suitable alternative. There is an abundance of parking and all of these venues have step free access.

Share across the various school, for example Hatch Ride. Could venues such as St Sebastian Hall be used or the un used community hall at Bucklers Park which is very close to the polling area.

Pinewood scout Hall, or at the very least alternative with Hatchride school.

Bigshotte park pavillion.  
This is at the centre of the population.  
There is a car park.  
Most will walk.  
Large enough and accessible. Already owned by WBC and vacant.

Stop penalising our children

There needs to be more consideration the area, ensure fairness across all of the children to ensure the same children are not being impacted each year by using the same school

Try aiming for community spaces like church Halls or encourage postal votes more.

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because I walk and it means crossing the nine mile ride where there are no crossings and the road is busy and will be even more busy on polling day. As a pedestrian you cannot see the traffic coming from Wokingham as its obscured by the bend in the rd by the roundabout. I should be able to walk to my polling station especially if we are reducing our carbon footprint as a borough.	The existing venue of Oaklands school. It always has been used is walkable and I don't understand why the school has to close as it didn't close for polling when I was there.	Polling should be accessible to all not just those who drive. Unless you install a crossing outside on the nine mile ride neither St Sebs or Pinewood are safely accessible on foot due to the huge volume of traffic now using that rd due to housebuilding/ developments
The hall is on a busy nine mile ride junction with limited parking and right on the outskirts of the village meaning many people will not walk there.	Continue to use Oaklands School (or use Hatch Ride School perhaps)	-
Insufficient parking and remote from bulk of residents	St Sebastians Playing Field Hall	-
Not enough parking	Oaklands School	-
This is on the edge of the area and very few people are in a sensible walking distance of it. Access by car is difficult with access from a busy main road and egress onto a country lane with a poor junction back onto the same busy road. There is insufficient parking and what there is cramped so not suitable for the number of people that will need to come and go during the day.	Until a better location is found then use of Oaklands school should continue. School have been used as polling stations for many years and I would suggest that issues which have been tolerated are only now becoming difficult due to other issues caused by lack of funding and shortage of staff at the school.	-
Not enough parking, will result in parking on a dark country lane which is not wide enough for two cars to pass comfortably. HGVs also drive down this road regularly	At Sebastians cricket club	Leave it where it is - has been at Oaklands for years.
Honey Hill running down the side of the hall is totally unsuited for parking and will cause a traffic jam.	St Sebastians Cricket Pavilion	No
Oaklands school is within walking distance of a large portion of Crowthorne residents. St sebs does not have the same catchment, ultimately I would expect that fewer people will turn out and vote.	Oaklands school.	-
Not centrally located which means more people will have to drive, there's very little parking to accommodate this and Honey Hill can be a road with limited visibility	Stick with Oaklands school	The relocation to st sebs memorial hall is a terrible idea

On the edge of the heavily populated part of the borough rather than in the centre. Many will drive to get there and there is insufficient parking.	Oaklands School.	-
This is removed from the population centre. Access is limited. Walking you have to cross the busy nine mile ride by a busy junction. The venue has limited parking spaces.	Bigshotte Park Pavilion. It is currently vacant. Has a car park. Near the population centre. Easily accessible.	-
this location is poorly lit, is difficult to use if you have any mobility issues as the car park is uneven, often floods and is full of pot holes and trip hazards and has limited parking available. Events at the church, school and collection from after school clubs causes frequent problems with parking. I collect my children from brownies and guides at this location and frequently have issues with access and parking	Pinewood scout hut - lots of parking, good access and level, easy access	-

The Quinquennial Review of Polling Places held in 2018 exhaustively considered every possible alternative to using Oaklands Junior School Hall and reluctantly concluded that no other location met the requirements of the Electoral Commission for polling places. As basically nothing has changed in the Electoral Commission requirements, or the various halls in the ward, it is difficult to understand why this change is proposed apart from the wish not to close schools for elections, something that I am very willing to endorse in principle.

St Sebastian's Memorial Hall is on the fringe of the mass of housing in the Wokingham Without ward where well over 95% of the electorate lives south of Nine Mile Ride. Although the Memorial Hall has step free access it located in an awkward position on the north side of Nine Mile Ride which is a busy east-west route through the ward and has no street lighting to the east of the hall.

Vehicle parking is restricted and any polling place should be able to cope with the greater turnout at a general election as well as being suitable for one held in winter with short hours of daylight. For a general election, 3 polling stations would be required for the current electorate in Wokingham Without, each having a Presiding Officer and 2 polling clerks who are all likely to have cars making 9 in total that would then fill half the parking spots.

The busiest time (late afternoon and early evening) for polling coincide with the heaviest traffic on the roads and that is particularly true on Nine Mile Ride. All it needs is to have one car manoeuvring to park in the limited spaces and traffic will be held up in both directions on Nine Mile Ride, with cars waiting access to park. This even applies to those turning up for a Pilates class so illustrates what is likely to happen if used as a polling place.

There is no convenient on street parking adjacent to the hall; Honey Hill

The obvious solution is to retain the Oaklands Junior School Hall as the polling place for the ward. It is central to the mass of housing in the ward, it is residential roads with on-street parking (even though there are school hour parking restrictions in Butler Road that could be lifted on polling days) and all the roads have streetlighting with 30 mph limits. Being central this encourages walking and cycling to access the polling place.

I appreciate that Wokingham Without is unusual in only having a single polling place for what was and will be a 3 councillor ward with some 6,300 electors currently. It would be possible to split the ward into 3 or more PDs to enable other polling places to be used. But this has not been carried out because, quite simply, it has previously been decided that there is no other location suitable for use as a polling place.

There are currently planning permissions granted for some 1,750 in the South Wokingham SDL area south of the Wokingham to Bracknell railway and it is understood that there are plans for about another 1,000 within the SDL. It is also understood that there are plans for

There is no change to PDs FCB or XWB or the Wokingham Without ward boundaries as a result of the Electoral Review. As mentioned earlier, when house building begins in the SDL area south of the railway, the SDL area could be designated as a separate PD (and warding considered for Wokingham Without Parish Council) although electors would either vote by post or at the polling place that should be retained in Oaklands Junior School until a hall is constructed and available for use as a polling place within the PD/SDL.



has no street lighting and is narrow. The speed limit at that point on Nine Mile Ride is 40 mph and eastbound cars on Nine Mile Ride often approach the Honey Hill junction indicating left with the indicators not cancelling after the New Wokingham Road roundabout, when in fact they are continuing along Nine Mile Ride, making a hazard for the unwary trying to turn out of Honey Hill.

Being on the fringe of the housing area in the ward will reduce the numbers walking and cycling to the polling place, increase those trying to drive to it and is likely to reduce turnout in elections contrary to Electoral Commission aims.

There are footpaths through to Royal Oak Drive, Queens Ride, Hatch Ride and Holmbury Avenue but all are unlit, mainly through woodland, which will largely negate use after dark.

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In summary if a Risk Assessment were to be carried out this is likely to identify 4 risks as follows:

Congestion in parking leading to hold-ups in Nine Mile Ride and the possibility of minor bumps in parking -especially after dark.

Congestion and a higher risk of collision resulting from turning into the St Sebastian's Memorial Hall car park and in turning out of Honey Hill.

Increased hazards to voters crossing Nine Mile Ride twice - particularly with increased car movements.

A reduced turnout of voters primarily because of the location on the fringe of housing in the ward (compared with the central position of Oaklands Junior School) although I appreciate that there are many variables affecting turnout so that judgement will be subjective. However, as the aim of a Polling Station Review is to identify the most suitable locations to

a community centre which will presumably have a hall suitable as a polling place and it would seem then to be logical to designate that as a separate PD. However, as houses are likely to be occupied well ahead of the construction of any community centre they would need to use the existing polling place and, while Oaklands Junior School could take extra electors arguably St Sebastian's Memorial; Hall could not without causing gridlock on Nine Mile Ride.

Parking within the school grounds is adequate for those voting and for polling staff. I appreciate that the closure of the schools for polling day is unpopular particularly with working parents and that the additional bank holiday this year for the King's Coronation meant that there were 3 bank holidays in May plus a closure for use as a polling place. I see no reason why the Acorns Pre--school need close: that could use the Ellis Road entrance. The schools could mitigate the inconvenience for parents by holding Inset days concurrent with polling days with the Infant School playground being used for school staff parking.

help drive up turnout, the Council's recommendation to move from  
Oaklands Junior School is surely wrong

<p>St Sebastian's Hall is on the very edge of the population centre of the ward and for many voters is a considerable walk which ends with having to cross the busy Nine Mile Ride where there's no crossing provision. The result of this is that more voters will drive, there is limited parking and potential traffic congestion making crossing the road even more dangerous. I think it is also likely that turnout will be reduced as some voters will not bother or be able to make the journey.</p>	<p>Oaklands School appears to be the only alternative available. I realise that it is not ideal as it causes a school closure for the day but due to the unusual nature of Wokingham Without, almost all the community facilities are outside the Ward. The Pinewood Centre is another option, but is arguably less accessible than St Sebs, although the parking wouldn't be an issue.</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>St Sebastians Hall is on the edge of the polling area. Whilst it is good to remove it from Oaklands school, to keep it open, most people will have to use a car to access this. There will not be enough parking at St Sebastian's.</p>	<p>It might need to stay at Oaklands. Both my daughters went to this school and it did not impact their education.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Not enough parking: There just aren't enough parking spaces. When it gets busy voters might struggle to find a spot. With parking restrictions on the Nine Mile Ride, some might end up parking far from the polling station, or they might not vote at all because it's just too much trouble.</p> <p>Too much traffic: The polling station is near a road that gets really busy, especially during rush hour. More cars coming in for voting could make the traffic jams even worse.</p> <p>It could be dangerous: The increase in cars could make the roads around the polling station more dangerous. The roads aren't built for a continuous stream of voters driving in and out all day. Plus, with folks needing to walk and cross the street from nearby houses, the risk of accidents is higher.</p> <p>In a nutshell, the chosen spot could lead to parking problems, bad traffic, and safety risks. Finding a different place with more parking and away from the busy roads, or improving the current spot by managing traffic better and adding more parking, would make voting easier and safer for everyone.</p>	<p>Maintaining the current school as the polling station is a sensible choice. It's positioned away from the busier main roads in a residential area, providing a safe and quiet environment that reduces the risk of traffic-related issues. The parking facilities are ample and similar to those at the proposed new location, which ensures convenience for voters. Additionally, the school's easy accessibility could encourage a higher voter turnout among local residents.</p> <p>If we could align voting day with an Inset day, it would prevent any disruption to children's education. This approach offers a balanced solution that prioritises both community safety and educational needs.</p>	<p>I only found out through email, I don't understand fully why it needs to move 1 mile away, why can't the council ensure that the write ballots end up in the correct location, sure this is simple process, location and postcodes for that location, or am I simply looking at it too simply? If voting wants to be encouraged, then it needs to be even easier to access.</p>

Lacking of parking and in a dangerous accessible location	Oaklands school or Hatchride school	-
<p>There is insufficient parking, which means some people will park in the small access road at the top of New Wokingham Road. They and the people who walk will have to cross the busy Nine Mile Ride at a point where visibility is limited.</p> <p>Also, as the aim is to have the maximum participation at elections, this site is on the edge of the polling area, well removed from the main housing areas. This does not encourage participation.</p>	<p>Either continue to use Oaklands School, which is around the middle of the housing area and has served the area well for many years.</p> <p>Alternatively, put a temporary polling station building on one of the roads around Oaklands School.</p>	<p>This recommendation is obviously totally flawed and should not be considered further.</p>