

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Date of Meeting: 15th February 2010

Public

Key Decision: No

Recorded in Forward Plan:

No

Inside Policy Framework

Title: REVIEW OF POLLING ARRANGEMENTS

Report of: Assistant Director (Governance)

Report reference: GD 12/10

Summary:

This Report presents the results of the annual review of polling arrangements and makes recommendations for changes to existing arrangements as appropriate. Responsibility for designating polling places lies with the full Council. This Report is presented to the Executive for information before submission to the Council meeting on 2nd March.

Recommendations:

(See over)

Contact Officer: David Mitchell

Ext: 7555

Recommendations:-

It is recommended to Council that

- (1) Belle Vue Primary School continue to be the polling place for districts MA and MB (paragraph 18);
- (2) the polling arrangements in polling district MD remain unchanged (paragraph 19);
- (3) the West End Temperance Hall in Caldewgate be designated as the polling place for district JB (paragraph 21);
- (4) the Cumbria Deaf Association office at 3 Compton Street be designated as the polling place for district JD (paragraph 23);
- (5) polling districts in Stanwix Urban and Wetheral wards be re-designated as below (paragraph 27) and the Electoral Registration Officer make the necessary changes to the electoral register but, in order to avoid any confusion at the forthcoming City and parliamentary elections, these changes be implemented after the parliamentary election:

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Existing Polling District</u>	<u>New Polling District</u>
Stanwix Urban	BA	BA
	BB	BB
	BC	BC
	BD	BD
	PBG	incorporated within BA
	PBJ	BE
	PBN	BF
	Wetheral	PAZ
	PBA	RB
	PBD	RC
	PBE	RD
	PBF	RE
	PBH	RF
	PBL	RG
	PBM	RH

- (6) the polling arrangements in all other wards remain unchanged (paragraph 15);
- (7) the Returning Officer be given authority, after consultation with relevant Ward Councillors and the Portfolio Holder, to change polling place locations at the elections in 2010 if the usual premises prove to be unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances (paragraph 28).

Introduction

- 1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Representation of the People Act 1983 to divide its area into polling districts, to designate a polling place for each district and to keep both polling districts and polling places under review. The Departmental Service Plan provides for an annual polling review to be carried out.
- 2 For the purposes of the current review, all City Councillors have been consulted on the polling arrangements in their particular wards. The current polling places are listed in the Appendix and these have been reviewed in the light of any representations received. Any agreed changes to polling places will be implemented at the forthcoming City Council elections on 6th May or at the parliamentary general election if it takes place before then. (The general election must be held before 3rd June.)

Statutory Provisions

- 3 In exercising its duty to keep polling districts and places under review, the 1983 Act requires Councils to seek to ensure that all electors have "*such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances*". Each parish should be a separate polling district. 'Polling place' is not defined in the Act but it refers to the building or area in which the polling station is situated.
- 4 The Act also says that a Council must "*seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place is accessible to electors who are disabled*". The effect of this requirement is that a building should not be designated as a polling place if the only means of access to any polling station situated in it would be by means of steps, when another more suitable building is available in the polling district. However, a building would not be a more suitable polling place if it is so far away from most of the electors in the area as to be inconvenient for them to reach it.
- 5 With the exception of portable cabins, the majority of polling places are accessible to disabled voters and where there have been particular difficulties, temporary access ramps have been installed. Polling compartments specifically designed for voters in wheelchairs have also been provided. In addition, any disabled voter can be assisted by the Presiding Officer in the polling station or may be helped by a companion. Large versions of ballot papers are displayed in every polling station and devices are provided to assist blind or partially sighted voters cast their own vote.

Free use of rooms

- 6 In addition to free use of school premises, described in paragraph 11 below, any room the expense of which is payable out of any rate may also be used free of charge. This applies to a room in a local authority building e.g. a Community Centre.

Duties of Returning Officer

- 7 It is the responsibility of the Returning Officer to provide sufficient polling stations within each polling place and to allot electors to the stations as he thinks most convenient. One or more polling stations may be provided in the same room. The Returning Officer also has a duty to appoint the polling staff and provide the necessary equipment.

Review Criteria

- 8 Apart from those outlined above, there are no specific statutory criteria for determining the suitability of premises for election purposes or even the number of polling stations to be provided for a given electorate. At previous reviews, however, the following factors have been taken into account:
 - ◆ the convenience of the location within the polling district for the majority of electors
 - ◆ internal size and layout of the premises having regard to the number of voters allotted to the polling station(s)
 - ◆ lighting and heating
 - ◆ extent of parking provision
 - ◆ proximity to public transport
 - ◆ cost (where there is a choice between similar premises)
- 9 The suitability of polling places are considered according to these criteria, taking account of the availability of alternative premises. An electorate of about 1000 - 1200 is a manageable number per polling station at a parliamentary election but the number of voters to be allocated to any particular polling place will have regard to the distribution and density of households within the Ward concerned. The continuing rise in the number of electors who vote by post (currently around 15% of the City's electorate) means that the total number of electors allocated to individual polling stations can also be increased because a decreasing proportion are voting in person.

Mobile Polling Stations

- 10 Where no suitable permanent buildings are available, mobile stations are used instead. Portable cabins, however, are much less satisfactory than permanent premises due to space limitations and lack of facilities. They are also becoming increasingly difficult to staff and equip. Units are hired from a commercial supplier and guarantee of delivery is an important consideration, particularly in the event of a parliamentary election at short notice.

Use of Schools

- 11 The 1983 Act also provides for the use, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll or the counting of the votes of "*a room in a school maintained or assisted by a local education authority or a school in respect of which grants are made out of moneys provided by Parliament*", subject to making good any damage and defraying any expenses. These provisions also apply to grant maintained schools. There is no requirement that a school must close when part of it is being used as a polling station, but nearly all do so because of practical difficulties in staying open or on security grounds.
- 12 Closure for elections, however, can be disruptive to the school timetable and inconvenient for working parents. In response to requests from school governing bodies, the number of schools used as polling places has been reduced in recent years. The Local Education Authority and MP for Carlisle have made representations previously against the use of schools for election purposes.
- 13 In the light of these concerns and in response to requests from school governing bodies, the number of schools used as polling places has been reduced in recent years. Only ten schools in the Council's area are now used as polling venues. For the reasons given in paragraph 10 above, mobile stations are not considered to be viable alternatives to school premises. The use of schools in one ward is considered below (paragraphs 16 to 19).

Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts

- 14 The large majority of polling places are satisfactory and have remained unchanged for many years. Choice of suitable buildings is limited and in most cases there is no alternative to the present arrangements. This year the City and parliamentary elections may be combined on 6th May but there is a possibility that they could be held on different days within a few weeks of each other. It is therefore suggested that changes should be kept to a minimum this year, unless premises that were used as polling stations are actually no longer available, in order to avoid as far as possible the need to switch venues between elections. This can cause confusion for voters and may present logistical difficulties in setting up and equipping polling stations.

- 15 Suggested changes to polling venues in Belle Vue and Castle wards are discussed below. Consequential changes to the designation of polling districts in Stanwix Urban and Wetheral wards, arising from the review of parliamentary constituencies, are also considered. In the absence of representations in respect of any other wards, **it is recommended that the polling arrangements in the following wards remain unchanged:**

Belah	Denton Holme	Lyne
Brampton	Great Corby & Geltsdale	Morton
Burgh	Harraby	Upperby
Botcherby	Hayton	St. Aidans
Currock	Irthing	Stanwix Rural
Dalston	Longtown & Rockcliffe	Yewdale

BELLE VUE WARD

- 16 Belle Vue Primary School is the designated polling place for over 2100 electors in districts MA and MB (see Map 1). Prior to the amalgamation of the former Infant and Junior Schools in 2008, both of these schools had been used as the polling station on different occasions. At the last two reviews, the Headteacher made strong representations on behalf of the governors that the school should no longer be used for election purposes because such use would necessitate the closure of the whole school on polling days, to the detriment of the education of nearly 400 pupils. A parent of a pupil, supported by the MP for Carlisle, has also requested that the polling station be moved from the school.
- 17 Similar representations were made during the last review against the continued use of Norman Street School in St. Aidan's ward and the Council agreed to relocation. In that case, however, it was considered that there were alternative premises (Greystone Community Centre and St. Aidan's Church Hall) that would be as convenient as the school for many of the electors affected. While it is recognised that closure for elections can be disruptive, the difficulty in the case of Belle Vue school is identifying suitable other buildings in the area. It has been suggested that either the Church of the Nazarene or the Museum Public House, both on Moorhouse Road, could be used. Both have been considered at previous reviews but have been discounted. The Church is less conveniently located than the school and lacks parking provision, and the Museum, although it is centrally situated for the majority of electors in this part of the ward and has a large car park, does not have a separate space to accommodate the two polling stations required. A portable cabin is not considered to be a reasonable option, particularly given the number of electors concerned.
- 18 In view of the fact that no new premises have been identified as possible alternatives to the school, **it is recommended that Belle Vue Primary School continue to be the polling place for districts MA and MB.**

- 19 St. Bede's Primary School is the polling place for the 700 electors in polling district MD (see Map 2). A Councillor for a neighbouring ward has requested that consideration be given to relocating the polling station from the school to St. Bede's Church Hall because a number of children in that ward attend the school and are affected by its closure on polling days. When a similar suggestion was made on a previous occasion, the Church was unable to make the hall available for election use. As highlighted in paragraph 14 above, continuity is considered to be important in a year when two elections may take place within a short space of time, and this view is supported by a Belle Vue ward Councillor. **It is therefore recommended that the polling arrangements in polling district MD remain unchanged.**

CASTLE WARD

- 20 The Ukrainian Club in Silloth Street is the current polling place for nearly 800 electors in polling district JB (see Map 3). The premises are now no longer available for polling purposes due to regular bookings of the club on Thursdays. An alternative venue is therefore required and possible options include Wigton Road Methodist Church Hall, the West End Temperance Hall at the junction of Church Street and Hawick Street or a portable cabin. The Methodist Church Hall, however, is already used as the polling station for over 1300 electors in polling district JC and around 350 electors in district HA of Denton Holme ward. It would put extra pressure on the limited space available at the Church Hall if an additional 800 electors were to vote there and would be less convenient for those electors. A portable building is not recommended for the reasons given in paragraph 10 above.
- 21 The West End Temperance Hall, however, is well located for the majority of residents in the Caldewgate area who voted at the Ukrainian Club and is large enough to accommodate a polling station. The entrance from Hawick Street has one shallow step but a ramp can be provided for wheelchair users. The leaseholder is happy to allow the Hall's use on election days. **It is therefore recommended that the West End Temperance Hall be designated as the polling place for district JB.**
- 22 No. 1 Chatsworth Square has been the polling station for district JD for a number of years (see Map 4) but Carlisle College, who occupy the building, are now unable to provide space to accommodate a polling station anywhere on their site. A ward Councillor has suggested a number of alternative venues in the area, including the Christian Science Centre at the junction of Victoria Place and Chatsworth Square, Cumbria Deaf Association's office at 3 Compton Street and church halls in Warwick Square and Warwick Road.

23 The most suitable option is considered to be the office of the Cumbria Deaf Association. It is in a similar location within the polling district to Chatsworth Square, has level access and offers spacious accommodation with good facilities. **It is therefore recommended that the Cumbria Deaf Association office at 3 Compton Street be designated as the polling place for district JD.**

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

24 Following the statutory review of all parliamentary constituencies in England undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England and completed in 2007, changes to constituency boundaries recommended by the Commission will come into force at the next general election. The aim of the review was to ensure that, as far as practicable, each constituency has a similar number of electors, using wards as the building blocks for constituencies.

25 Carlisle constituency was below average in terms of the number of electors in the constituency so one outcome of the review was to increase the size of the constituency by transferring the whole of Wetheral ward from Penrith and the Border constituency to Carlisle. Polling districts PBG (comprising Lansdowne Close, Lansdowne Court and part of Lansdowne Crescent), PBJ (the Millcroft/Whiteclosegate area) and PBN (Pennington Drive) are now in Stanwix Urban ward and will also transfer from Penrith the Border.

26 To indicate that the polling districts concerned will be part of Carlisle rather than Penrith and the Border constituency, it is necessary to change their designations to omit the letter 'P' as the distinguishing first letter. Unlike PBJ and PBN which are within Stanwix Rural parish and need to remain as separate polling districts, PBG is now part of the unparished urban area and can therefore be incorporated into the adjacent district BA because they both share the same polling station (a portable cabin in Knowefield Avenue).

27 **It is recommended that polling districts in Stanwix Urban and Wetheral wards be re-designated as below and the Electoral Registration Officer make the necessary changes to the electoral register but, in order to avoid any confusion at the forthcoming City and parliamentary elections, these changes be implemented after the parliamentary election:**

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Existing Polling District</u>	<u>New Polling District</u>
Stanwix Urban	BA	BA
	BB	BB
	BC	BC
	BD	BD
	PBG	incorporated within BA
	PBJ	BE
	PBN	BF

Wetheral

PAZ	RA
PBA	RB
PBD	RC
PBE	RD
PBF	RE
PBH	RF
PBL	RG
PBM	RH

OTHER POLLING PLACES

- 28 Polling stations are currently in process of being booked for the City Council elections in May (and a possible parliamentary general election on the same day) but confirmation of availability has not yet been received from all premises. In order to ensure that polling stations are provided for all electors, **it is recommended that the Returning Officer be given authority, after consultation with relevant Ward Councillors and the Portfolio Holder, to change polling place locations at the elections in 2010 if the usual premises prove to be unavailable due unforeseen circumstances.**

Polling Places – Urban Wards

APPENDIX

WARD	POLLING PLACE	POLLING DISTRICT	ELECTORATE (December 2009)
Belah	Kingmoor Junior School	AA;AB	2087
	Belah Community Centre	AC	772
	Portable cabin, Etterby Road	AD	1115
	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	AE	965
Stanwix Urban	Portable cabin, Knowefield Avenue	BA; PBG	1221
	St. Michael's Parish Centre	BB; BC; PBJ	2334
	St. Augustine's Parish Centre	BD	1113
St. Aidans	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	PBN	158
	St. Aidan's Church Hall	CA	1722
	Greystone Community Centre	CB	801
	St. Cuthbert's Court, Myddleton St.	CC	520
Botcherby	Greystone Community Centre	CD	1598
	Botcherby Community Centre	DA	1413
	Botcherby Family Centre	DB	752
	Portable cabin, Cumrew Close	DC	759
Harraby	Harraby Community Centre	DD; DE	1734
	The Pinegrove Hotel, London Road	EA	1116
	Inglewood Infant School	EB	1150
	Harraby Catholic Club	EC	1157
Upperby	Portable cabin, Cumwhinton Road	ED	1228
	Creighton Rugby Club	EE	266
	St. Margaret Mary's Social Club	FA	909
	CDC Building adj. Upperby School	FB	859
Currock	St. John's Ambulance, Scalegate Rd.	FC	1044
	Petteril Bank Community Centre	FD; FE	1361
	Currock Community Centre	GA	1080
	Bishop Harvey Goodwin School	GB	1425
Denton Holme	Currock Community Centre	GC	948
	St. Herbert's Church Hall	GD	1153
	Methodist Church Hall, Wigton Road	HA	347
	Denton Holme Community Centre	HB; HC	1948
Castle	St. James Parish Centre	HD	841
	Portable cabin, Longsowerby	HE	1221
	Portable cabin, Lorne Crescent	HF	419
	Newtown School	JA	900
Morton	Ukrainian Club, Silloth Street ¹	JB	787
	Methodist Church Hall, Wigton Road	JC	1363
	1 Chatsworth Square ¹	JD	734
	St. Cuthbert's Court, Myddleton St.	JE	525
Yewdale	St. Luke's Church Hall	KA; KB	2132
	St. Edmunds Chapel, Newlathes Ave.	KC	1337
	Portable cabin, Borrowdale Road	KD	736
Yewdale	Portable cabin, Scawfell Road	KE	574
	Yewdale Community Centre	LA; LB	2335
	Portable cabin, Richmond Green	LC	1170

	Portable cabin, Nairn Way	LD	937
	Richard Rose Morton Academy	LE	449
Belle Vue	Belle Vue Primary School	MA; MB	2155
	Newtown School	MC	1164
	St. Bedes School	MD	697
	Portable cabin, Hawthorn Grove	ME	706

Polling Places – Rural Wards

Ward	Polling Place	Polling District	Electorate (December 2009)
Brampton	Moot Hall, Brampton	PK	2249
	Brampton Community Centre	PKA	1234
	Milton Village Hall	PL	115
Burgh	Beaumont Parish Hall	NA	375
	Village Hall, Burgh-by-Sands	NB	637
	Thurstonfield Methodist Chapel	NC	351
	Village Hall, Great Orton	ND	362
Dalston	Victory Hall, Dalston	OA	1796
	Primrose Hall, Gaitsgill	OB	308
	Embassy Ballroom, Cummersdale	OC	389
	Portable cabin, Carleton	OD	271
	Wreay Village Hall	OE	330
	6 Low Moor Avenue, Blackwell	OF	489
	Portable cabin, Black Lion, Durdar	OG	322
	Creighton Rugby Club	OH	987
Great Corby and Geltsdale	Watson Hall, Castle Carrock	PP1	283
	Helme Farm, Cumrew	PR1; PR2	104
Hayton	Cumwhitton Public Hall	PS	271
	Heads Nook Village Hall	PAB2	278
	Talkin Village Hall	PAC	121
	Great Corby Village Hall	PBB	368
	Downagate Community Centre	PBC	362
	Reading Room, Hayton	PAA	589
Irthing	Heads Nook Village Hall	PAB1	331
	Methodist Church Hall, Corby Hill	PAD	783
	Lees Hill School	PG1; PG2	176
	Roadhead Public Hall	PH2	37
	Cricket Pavilion, Lanercost	PO1; PO2	174
	Taylor Institute, Low Row	PW	256
	Methodist Church Hall, Gilsland	PX1; PX2; PX3	200
	Lacy Thompson Hall, Hallbankgate	PY1; PY2	557
Longtown and Rockcliffe	Walton Village Hall	PAX	240
	Longtown Community Centre	PE1- PE4	2290
	Moat Village Centre	PF1; PF2	168
	Former Conservatory Centre, Harker	PAG2	194
	Rockcliffe Community Centre	PAM	422
	Blackford School	PAY	328

Lyne	Roadhead Public Hall	PH1	344
	Hethersgill Parish Hall	PAE	330
	Fir Ends School, Smithfield	PAJ	299
	Nicholforest Hall	PAK	325
	Westfield House, Roweltown	PAS	142
	Stapleton Public Hall	PAW	196
Stanwix	Village Hall, Newtown, Irthington	PAF	564
Rural	Former Conservatory Centre, Harker	PAG1; PAG3	152
	The Four Oaks, Cargo	PAH	426
	Scaleby Village Hall	PAR	299
	Crosby Parish Hall	PAT1; PAT2	419
	Houghton Village Hall	PAU1; PAU2	1393
	Women's Institute Hall, Linstock	PAV	300
	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	PBK	150
Wetheral	Cotehill Village Hall	PAZ	490
	Cumwhinton Village Hall	PBA	366
	Parish Centre, Scotby	PBD	1111
	Memorial Hall, Warwick-on-Eden	PBE	201
	Wetheral Village Hall	PBF	1039
	Portable cabin, Aglionby	PBH	229
	Portable cabin, Cumrew Close	PBL	128
	Creighton Rugby Club	PBM	203

¹ Premises no longer available

MAP 1

MA

Church of the Nazarene

Belle Vue Primary School

Museum Public House

MB

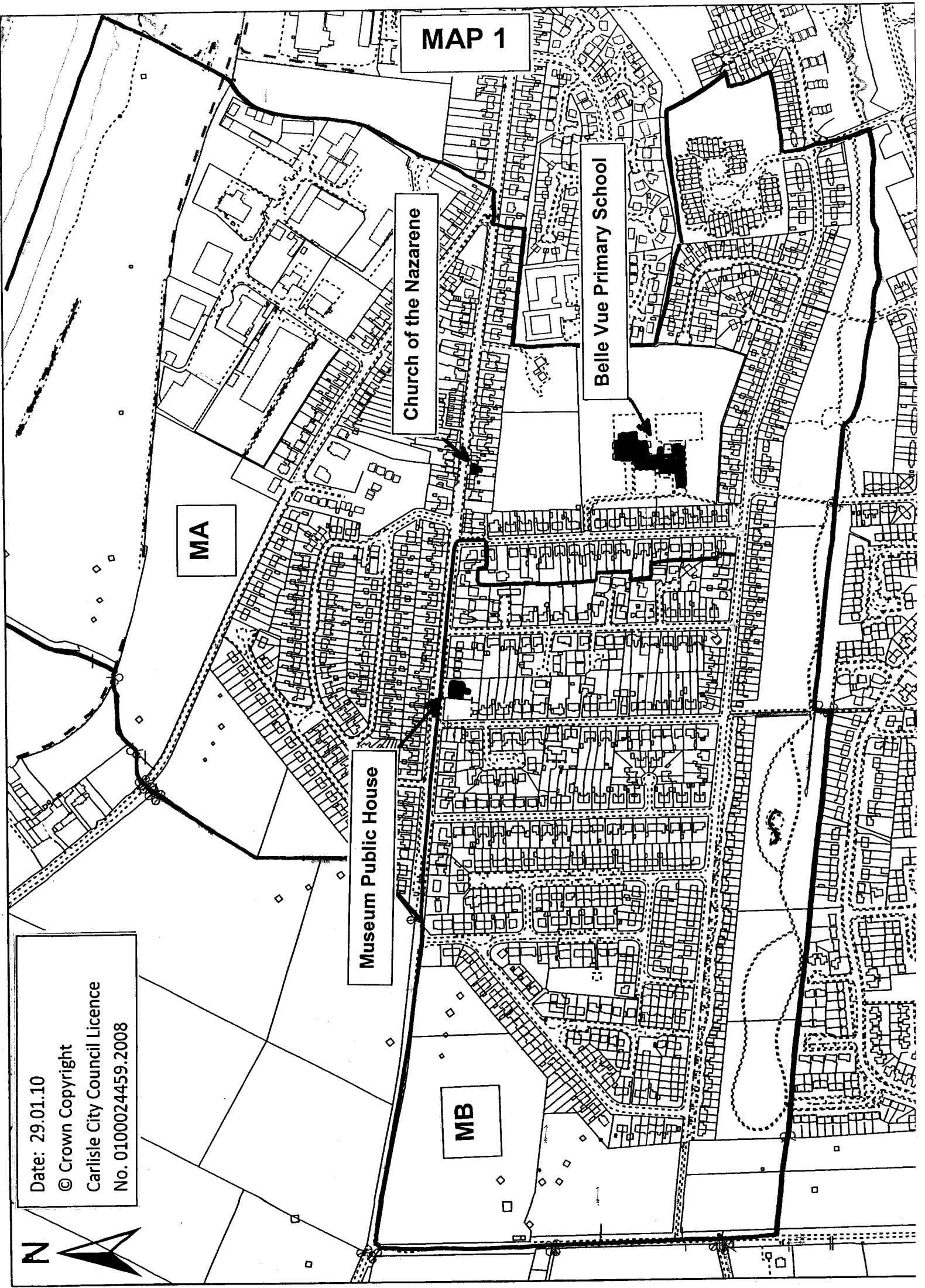
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MAP 2

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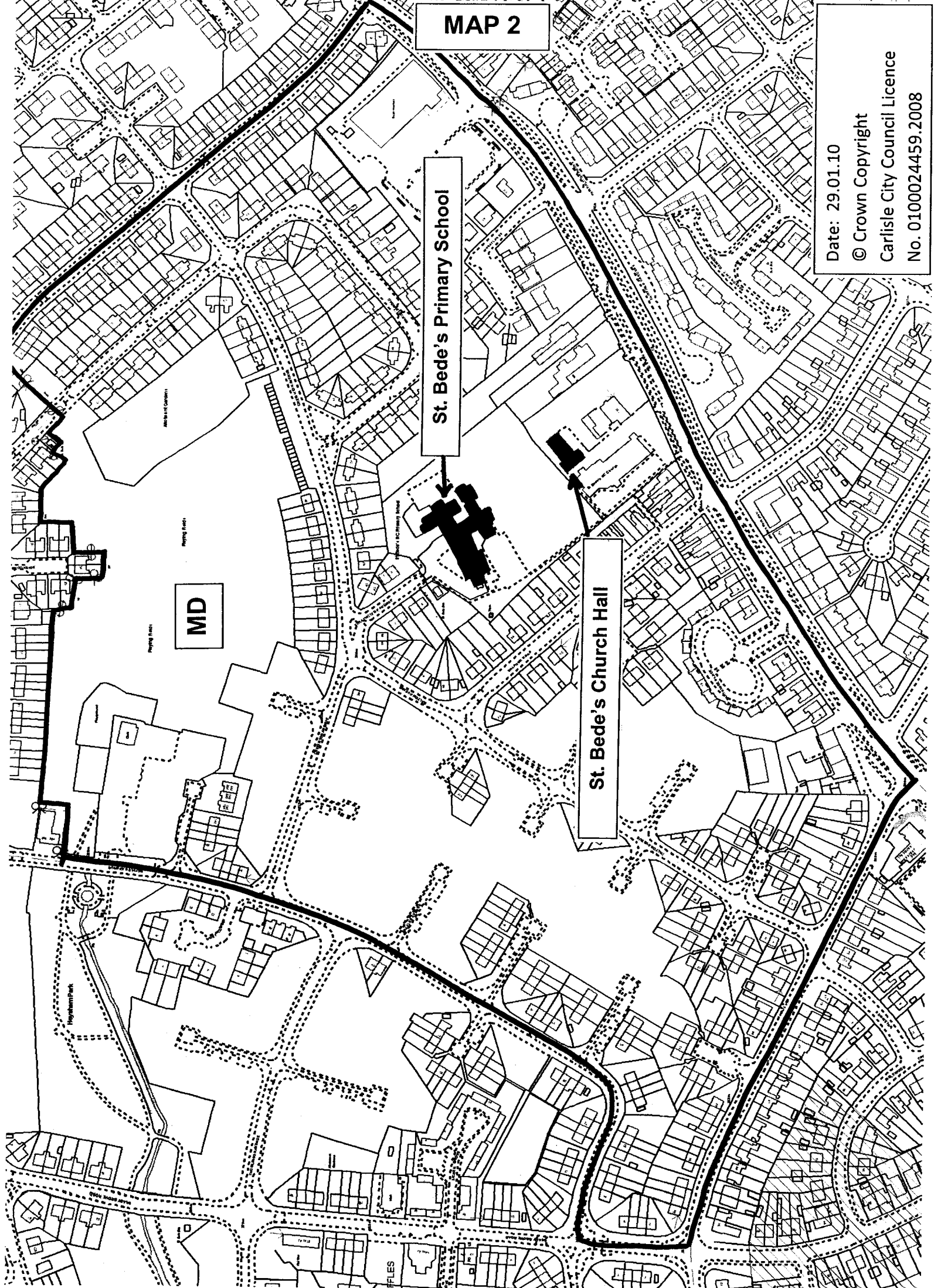
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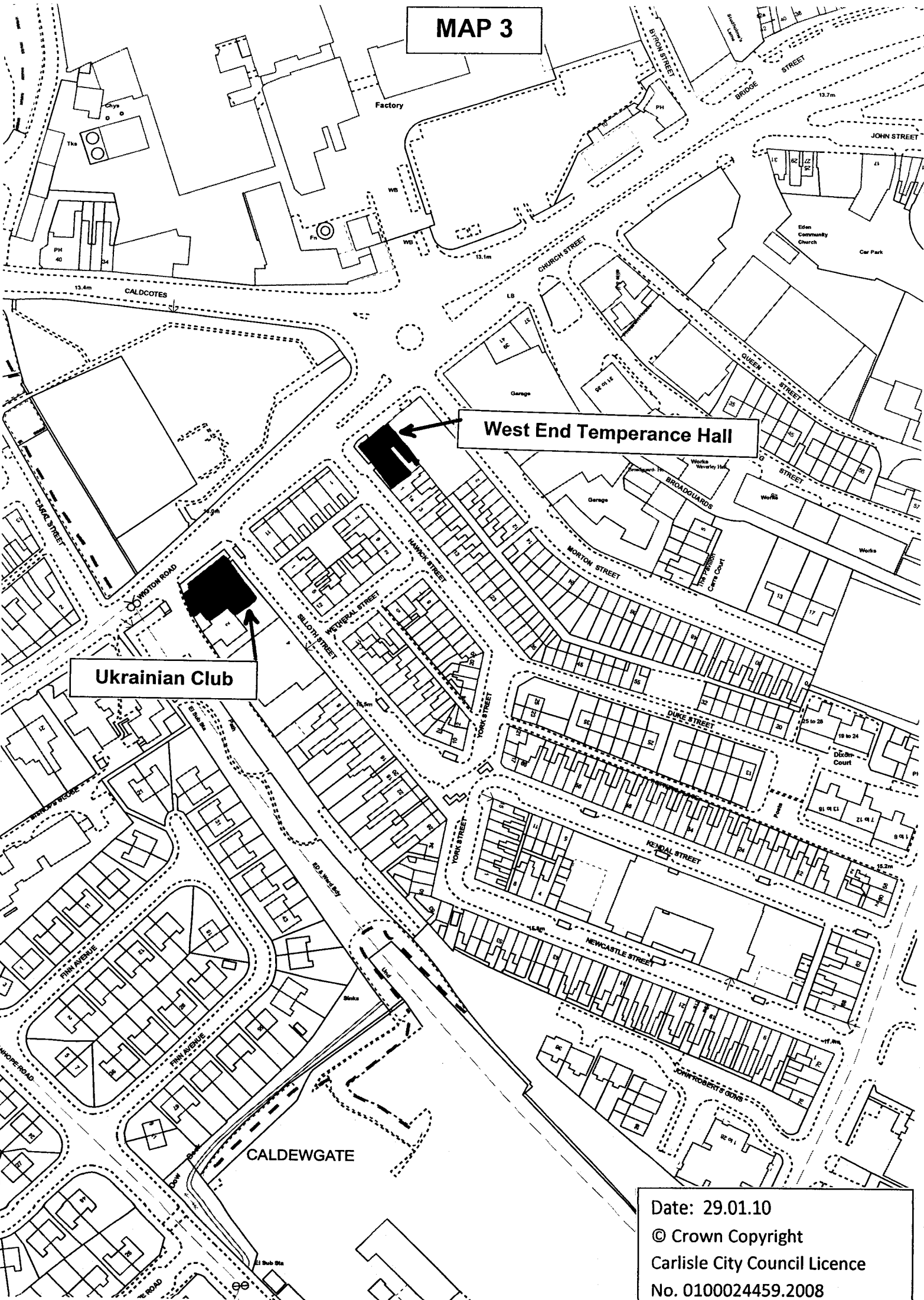
St. Bede's Primary School

St. Bede's Church Hall

MD



MAP 3



Factory

MAP 3

JOHN STREET

Eden Community Church

Car Park

CALDCOTES

West End Temperance Hall

Ukrainian Club

CALDEWEGATE

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MAP 4

Cumbria Deaf Association

1 Chatsworth Square

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