

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

Report to:- Carlisle City Council

Date of Meeting:- 3rd March 2009

Agenda Item No:-

Public

Title:- REVIEW OF POLLING ARRANGEMENTS

Report of:- Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Report reference:- LDS 26/09

Summary:-

This Report presents the results of the annual review of polling arrangements and makes recommendations for changes to existing arrangements as appropriate.

Recommendation:-

(see over)

Contact Officer: David Mitchell

Ext: 7555

Recommendations:-

It is recommended to Council that

- (1) the polling arrangements for districts MA and MB remain unchanged (paragraph 17);
- (2) the polling arrangements in St. Aidan's ward be revised as follows (paragraph 20):

<u>Current Polling District</u>	<u>New Polling District</u>	<u>Polling Place</u>	
CA CB (eastern part)	CA	St. Aidan's Church Hall	
CB (western part)	CB	Greystone Community Centre	

- (3) the polling arrangements for district PAF remain unchanged (paragraph 21);
- (4) the polling arrangements for districts PAG1 and PAG3 remain unchanged (paragraph 22);
- (5) Belah Community Centre be designated as the polling place for district BD (paragraph 23);
- (6) (a) a new polling district designated LE be created in Yewdale ward south of Queensway and the polling place for this district be the Richard Rose Morton Academy;

(b) the polling place for district LD be a portable cabin sited on the paved area between Nairn Way and Egerton Grove.
(paragraph 26);
- (7) the locations of all other polling places remain unchanged (paragraph 15);
- (9) the Returning Officer be given authority, after consultation with relevant Ward Councillors and Portfolio Holder, to change polling place locations at elections in 2009 if the usual premises prove to be unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances (paragraph 27).

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 districts and polling places will be implemented at the forthcoming combined European Parliamentary and County Council elections on 4th June. (There are no annual City Council elections this year.)

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 portacabins, 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 is entitled to assistance from the Presiding Officer 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 the requirements 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. The following factors, however, have been taken into account at previous reviews:
- ◆ the convenience of the location within the polling district for the majority of electors
 - ◆ extent of parking provision
 - ◆ internal size and layout of the premises having regard to the number of voters allotted to the polling station(s)
 - ◆ lighting and heating
 - ◆ 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. While improvements in the type of unit hired will continue to be sought, continuity of supply 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 two particular areas are considered below (paragraphs 16 and 18).

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. Change is therefore only proposed where the current premises are no longer available or satisfactory or in response to representations in respect of particular buildings.
- 15 Suggested changes in Belle Vue, St. Aidans, Stanwix Rural, Stanwix Urban and Yewdale wards are discussed below. 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
Brampton
Burgh
Botcherby
Castle
Currock**

**Dalston
Denton Holme
Great Corby & Geltsdale
Harraby
Hayton
Irthing**

**Longtown & Rockcliffe
Lyne
Morton
Upperby
Wetheral**

BELLE VUE WARD

- 16 Belle Vue Infant School has been the designated polling place for over 2100 electors in districts MA and MB for many years (see map 1), although the adjacent Junior School has also been used instead. The schools amalgamated in September 2008 to create a new Primary School and the Headteacher has 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.
- 17 While it is recognised that closure for elections can be disruptive, the difficulty in the case of Belle Vue is identifying suitable alternative premises. It has been suggested that either the Church of the Nazarene or the Museum Public House, both on Moorhouse Road, could be used. The Church, however, 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 two polling stations.

It is therefore recommended that the polling arrangements for districts MA and MB remain unchanged.

ST. AIDANS WARD

- 18 The polling place for the 1446 electors in polling district CB has been Norman Street School for many years (see map 2). Representations were received during the last review from the MP for Carlisle on behalf of a local resident that the polling station should be moved from the school so that it could remain open on election days and further representations have been received both from the resident concerned and the Headteacher on behalf of the governors. They consider that closure is detrimental to the 300 pupils in the school and take the view that Greystone Community Centre or St. Aidan's Church Hall, both of which are used as polling places already, could be used instead.
- 19 The convenience for the majority of electors in the area concerned is a major consideration when determining polling arrangements. If the electors who currently vote at the school were allocated to the polling stations at the Community Centre and the Church Hall instead, some electors would have further to go to the polling station but it is a matter of weighing their inconvenience against the impact of the closure of the school for one day. The ward is quite compact and if Norman Street school were no longer used, the distance to their new polling station would be no greater than for many electors in other wards of the City. Residents of the Brunton Avenue/Riverside Way part of the ward would actually be closer to a polling station if they were to vote at the Church Hall instead of the school.
- 20 On balance it is considered that the polling place could be relocated from Norman Street school. It is suggested that the eastern part of the current CB district

become part of district CA and the 600 electors concerned vote at St. Aidan's Church Hall (see Map 3). The number of electors allocated to the Church Hall would increase from nearly 1100 to nearly 1700. The remaining 840 electors in CB would remain as a separate polling district and vote at Greystone Community Centre. As there are currently over 1500 electors in district CD who vote at the Community Centre, it would be necessary to provide two polling stations in the building. In order that the use of Norman Street School as a polling station might be discontinued, **it is recommended that polling arrangements in St. Aidan's ward be revised as shown on map 3 as follows:**

<u>Current Polling District</u>	<u>New Polling District</u>	<u>Polling Place</u>	<u>Approx. Electorate</u>
CA CB (eastern part)	CA	St. Aidan's Church Hall	1700
CB (western part)	CB	Greystone Community Centre	840

STANWIX RURAL WARD

- 21 Residents of Laversdale in polling district PAF currently vote at the Public Hall, Newtown, Irthington which is the polling station for the village of Irthington and the majority of the 577 electors in Irthington parish – see map 4. (77 in the Newby East part of the parish vote at Crosby-on-Eden.) A ward Councillor has suggested that the hall in Laversdale could be used as a polling station for local electors. While the hall has satisfactory facilities, having been used as a polling station on one occasion when the premises at Newtown were not available, and would be more convenient for the 140 electors living in and around Laversdale, the distance to their current polling station is no greater than for many other electors in the rural part of the City. It is considered that the number of electors concerned does not justify a separate polling station in Laversdale and that the existing facilities are reasonable.

It is therefore recommended that the polling arrangements for district PAF remain unchanged.

- 22 The 118 electors in the Parkhouse and Crindledyke area (polling district PAG1) and 34 electors at Harker Park (polling district PAG3) vote at the offices of Carlisle Window Systems at Harker (the former Conservatory Centre), together with 200 electors from the Harker portion of Longtown and Rockcliffe ward (polling district PAG2) – see map 5. A ward Councillor has suggested that a polling station could be provided at Parkhouse. While this may benefit those living in that part of the ward, it is considered that there are insufficient electors to justify separate polling provision for them and that the current arrangement is more convenient for the majority of electors concerned than transferring the polling station from Harker to Parkhouse. The Parkhouse option, however, could be considered if the accommodation at Harker were to become unavailable.

It is recommended that the polling arrangements for districts PAG1 and PAG3 remain unchanged.

STANWIX URBAN WARD

- 23 Belah School has been the polling place for over 1000 electors in polling district BD for many years (see map 6) but is now closed. An alternative polling venue is therefore required and a ward Councillor is in favour of using Belah Community Centre on Briar Bank instead. The Centre is currently the polling place for nearly 800 electors in Belah ward (polling district AC) but is large enough to accommodate two polling stations. It has recently been refurbished and offers good facilities and parking. Although the school was more convenient for most electors, it is considered that the Centre is the best available alternative. The only other option would be a portable building, perhaps sited on Eden Street, but this is not recommended for the reasons given in paragraph 10 above. The situation could be reviewed if the school site were to be used for some community use in the long term.

It is recommended that Belah Community Centre be designated as the polling place for district BD.

YEWDAL

- 24 Following last year's review, the City Council agreed that Morton School (now the Richard Rose Morton Academy) should be the polling place for the 1400 electors in district LD instead of a portable cabin on the paved area between Nairn Way and Egerton Grove (see map 7). Representations had been received from a ward Councillor that as the new development at the Beeches off Wigton Road is some distance from Nairn Way, separate polling provision should be made for the electors concerned and the school offered much better facilities than the temporary station.
- 25 At the City Council elections in May 2008 the percentage turnout at the school was lower than it had been at Nairn Way at recent elections (having been the highest in the ward in 2006) and feedback from local members indicated that electors in the Whinnie House Road/Crosshill Drive part of the ward were deterred from voting at the school because of the distance to the polling station. The ward Councillors favour the reinstatement of the portable building at Nairn Way while also retaining the school as the polling place for the southern part of the district. In order to implement such an arrangement, a new polling district would be required and it is suggested that the area south of Queensway form this new district. Some 450 electors would transfer from LD to the new polling district.
- 26 Having regard to the decline in turnout and the fact that the area in question is geographically large, **it is recommended that**

- (a) a new polling district designated LE be created in Yewdale ward south of Queensway as shown on map 8 and the polling place for this district be the Richard Rose Morton Academy;
- (b) the polling place for district LD be a portable cabin sited on the paved area between Nairn Way and Egerton Grove.

OTHER POLLING PLACES

- 27 Polling stations are currently in process of being booked for the combined European Parliamentary and County Council elections in June and 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 Portfolio Holder, to change polling place locations at the elections in 2009 if the usual premises prove to be unavailable due unforeseen circumstances.**

Polling Places – Urban Wards

APPENDIX

WARD	POLLING PLACE	POLLING DISTRICT	ELECTORATE (December 2008)
Belah	Kingmoor Junior School	AA;AB	2048
	Belah Community Centre	AC	779
	Portable cabin, Etterby Road	AD	1092
	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	AE	970
Stanwix Urban	Portable cabin, Knowefield Avenue	BA; PBG	1220
	Stanwix Community Centre	BB; BC; PBJ	2335
	Belah School ¹	BD	1074
	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	PBN	158
St. Aidans	St. Aidan's Church Hall	CA	1081
	Norman Street School	CB	1447
	St. Cuthbert's Court, Myddleton St.	CC	509
	Greystone Community Centre	CD	1569
Botcherby	Botcherby Community Centre	DA	1407
	Botcherby Family Centre	DB	724
	Portable cabin, Cumrew Close	DC	781
	Harraby Community Centre	DD; DE	1762
Harraby	The Pinegrove Hotel, London Road	EA	1114
	Inglewood Infant School	EB	1107
	Harraby Catholic Club	EC	1133
	Portable cabin at former Harraby Methodist Church Hall	ED	1217
Upperby	Creighton Rugby Club	EE	256
	St. Margaret Mary's Social Club	FA	904
	CDC Building adj. Upperby School	FB	871
	St. John's Ambulance, Scalegate Rd.	FC	1054
Currock	Petteril Bank Community Centre	FD; FE	1346
	Currock Community Centre	GA	1094
	Bishop Harvey Goodwin School	GB	1416
	Currock Community Centre	GC	953
Denton Holme	St. Herbert's Church Hall	GD	1135
	Methodist Church Hall, Wigton Road	HA	344
	Denton Holme Community Centre	HB; HC	1951
	St. James Parish Centre	HD	857
Castle	Portable cabin, Longsowerby	HE	1205
	Portable cabin, Lorne Crescent	HF	423
	Newtown School	JA	906
	Ukrainian Club, Silloth Street	JB	773
Morton	Methodist Church Hall, Wigton Road	JC	1343
	1 Chatsworth Square	JD	744
	St. Cuthbert's Court, Myddleton St.	JE	527
	St. Luke's Church Hall	KA; KB	2168
Yewdale	St. Edmunds Chapel, Newlaithes Ave.	KC	1340
	Portable cabin, Borrowdale Road	KD	753
	Portable cabin, Scawfell Road	KE	575
	Yewdale Community Centre	LA; LB	2347

	Portable cabin, Richmond Green	LC	1171
	Richard Rose Morton Academy	LD	1410
Belle Vue	Belle Vue Primary School	MA; MB	2122
	Newtown School	MC	1094
	St. Bedes School	MD	702
	Portable cabin, Hawthorn Grove	ME	716

Polling Places – Rural Wards

Ward	Polling Place	Polling District	Electorate (December 2008)
Brampton	Moot Hall, Brampton	PK	2233
	Brampton Community Centre	PKA	1218
	Milton Village Hall	PL	112
Burgh	Beaumont Parish Hall	NA	365
	Village Hall, Burgh-by-Sands	NB	628
	Thurstonfield Methodist Chapel	NC	354
	Village Hall, Great Orton	ND	356
Dalston	Victory Hall, Dalston	OA	1798
	Primrose Hall, Gaitsgill	OB	314
	Embassy Ballroom, Cummersdale	OC	386
	Portable cabin, Carleton	OD	257
	Wreay Village Hall	OE	321
	6 Low Moor Avenue, Blackwell	OF	472
	Portable cabin, Black Lion, Durdar	OG	333
	Creighton Rugby Club	OH	1010
	Watson Hall, Castle Carrock	PP1	287
	Helme Farm, Cumrew	PR1; PR2	99
Great Corby and Geltsdale	Cumwhitton Public Hall	PS	271
	Heads Nook Village Hall	PAB2	281
	Talkin Village Hall	PAC	125
	Great Corby Village Hall	PBB	368
	Downagate Community Centre	PBC	356
	Reading Room, Hayton	PAA	574
Hayton	Heads Nook Village Hall	PAB1	324
	Methodist Church Hall, Corby Hill	PAD	793
	Lees Hill School	PG1; PG2	177
Irthing	Roadhead Public Hall	PH2	39
	Cricket Pavilion, Lanercost	PO1; PO2	179
	Taylor Institute, Low Row	PW	252
	Methodist Church Hall, Gilsland	PX1; PX2; PX3	193
	Lacy Thompson Hall, Hallbankgate	PY1; PY2	560
	Walton Village Hall	PAX	233
	Longtown Community Centre	PE1- PE4	2295
Longtown and Rockcliffe	Moat Village Centre	PF1; PF2	169
	Former Conservatory Centre, Harker	PAG2	201
	Rockcliffe Community Centre	PAM	427
	Blackford School	PAY	320

Lyne	Roadhead Public Hall	PH1	343
	Hethersgill Parish Hall	PAE	322
	Fir Ends School, Smithfield	PAJ	299
	Nicholforest Hall	PAK	322
	Westfield House, Roweltown	PAS	144
	Stapleton Public Hall	PAW	183
Stanwix	Village Hall, Newtown, Irthington	PAF	577
Rural	Former Conservatory Centre, Harker	PAG1; PAG3	152
	The Four Oaks, Cargo	PAH	438
	Scaleby Village Hall	PAR	296
	Crosby Parish Hall	PAT1; PAT2	408
	Houghton Village Hall	PAU1; PAU2	1405
	Women's Institute Hall, Linstock	PAV	310
Wetheral	Portable cabin, east side Kingstown Rd	PBK	142
	Cotehill Village Hall	PAZ	512
	Cumwhinton Village Hall	PBA	368
	Parish Centre, Scotby	PBD	1108
	Memorial Hall, Warwick-on-Eden	PBE	198
	Wetheral Village Hall	PBF	1022
	Portable cabin, Aglionby	PBH	225
	Portable cabin, Cumrew Close	PBL	128
	Creighton Rugby Club	PBM	208

¹ Premises no longer available

MAP 1

Church of the Nazarene

Belle Vue Primary School

MA

Museum Public House

MB

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MAP 2

CB

CA

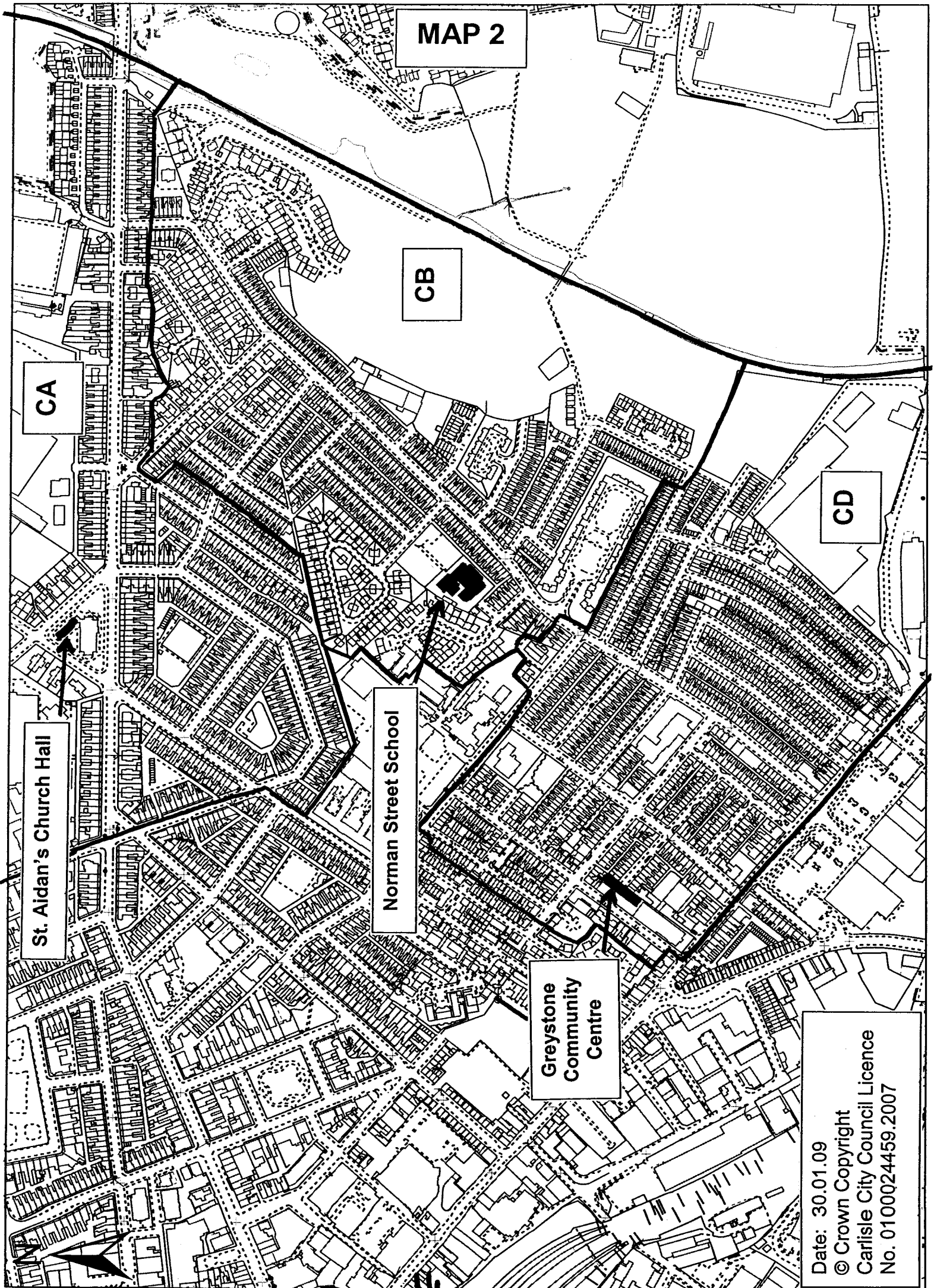
CD

St. Aidan's Church Hall

Norman Street School

Greystone
Community
Centre

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MAP 3

Proposed area
to transfer to
polling district
CA

CB

CD

CA

St. Aidan's Church Hall

Norman Street School

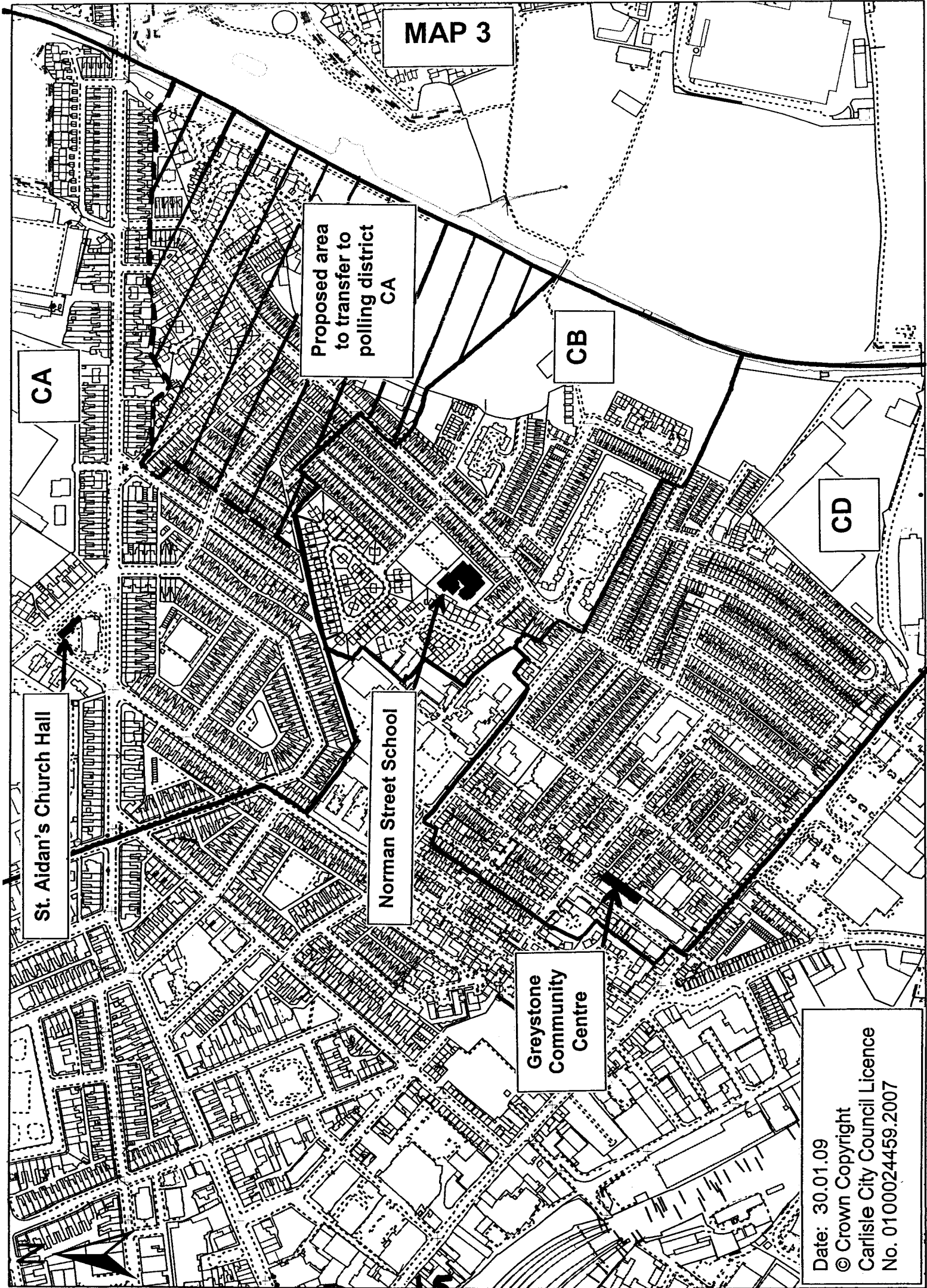
Greystone
Community
Centre

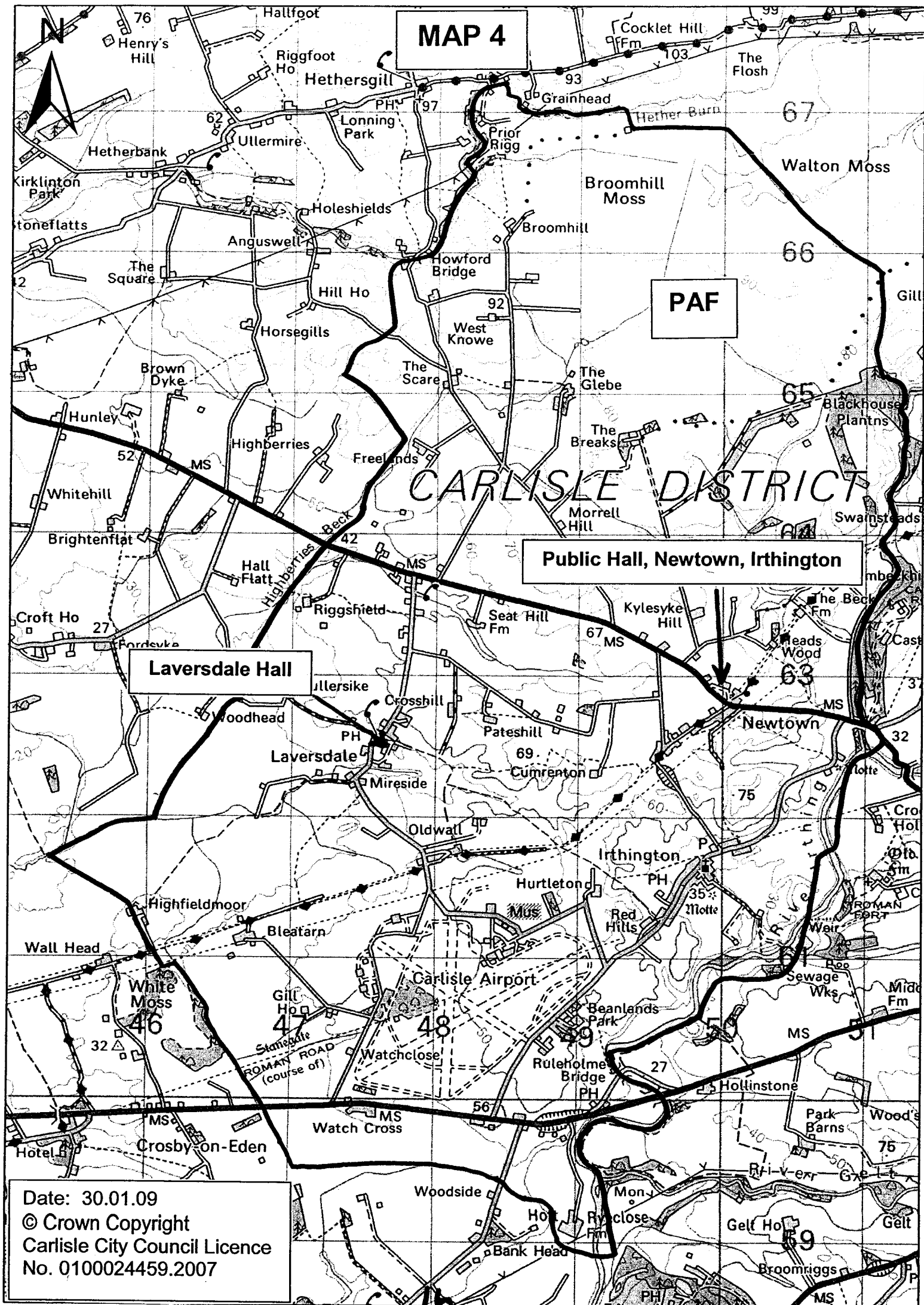
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MAP 4

PAF

CARLISLE DISTRICT

Public Hall, Newtown, Irthington

Laversdale Hall

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MAP 5

PAG3

STANWIX RURAL WARD

Carlisle Window Systems

PAG2

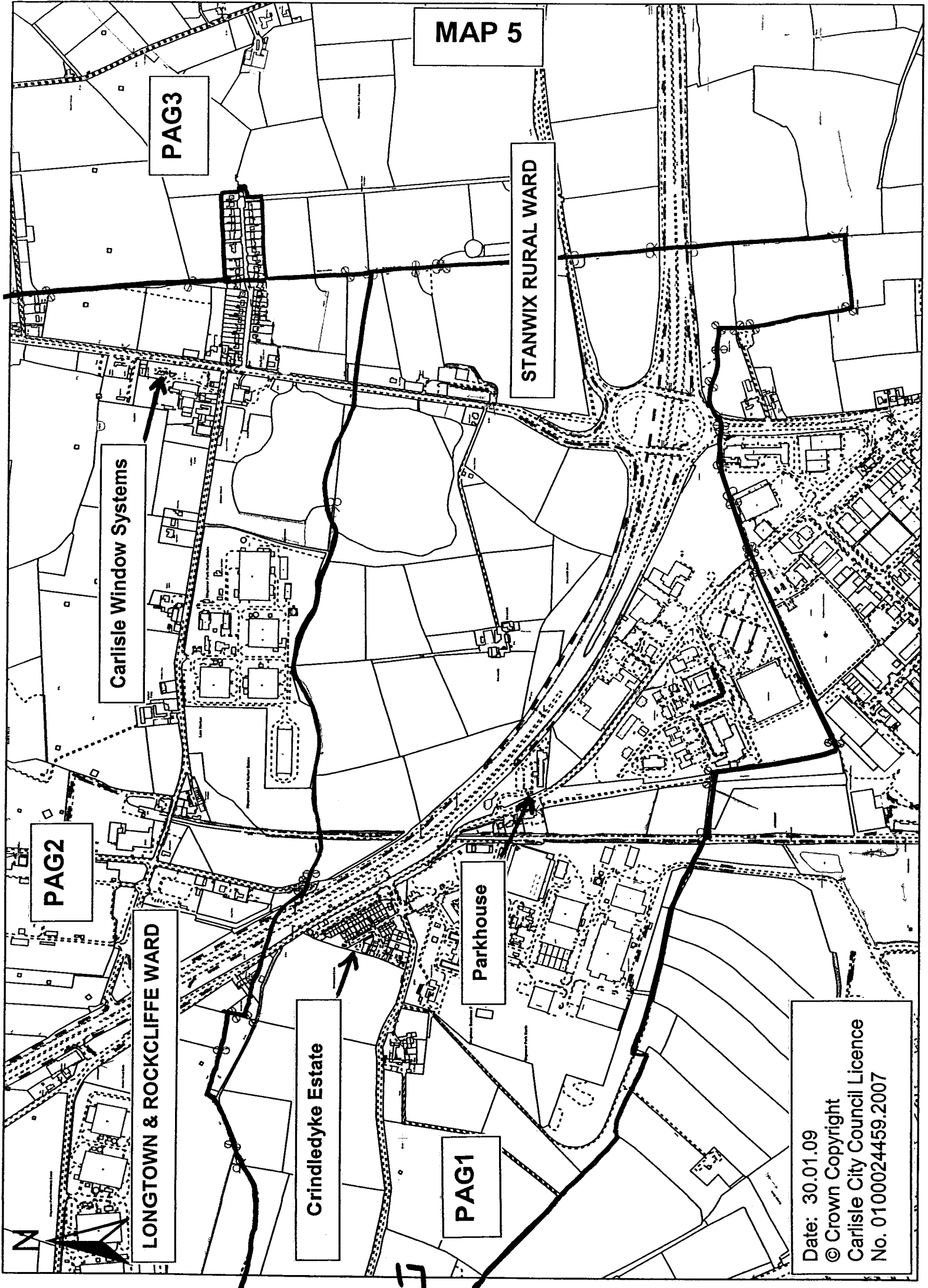
LONGTOWN & ROCKCLIFFE WARD

Crindledyke Estate

Parkhouse

PAG1

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MAP 6

Belah Community Centre

BELAH WARD

AC

Former Belah School

BD

STANWIX URBAN WARD

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MAP 7

Mobile polling station site

LD

Richard Rose Morton Academy

The Beeches

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MAP 8

Mobile polling station site

LD

Proposed polling district LE

Richard Rose Morton Academy

The Beeches

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