2014

Postal Voting

Your guide to efficient ballot pack
distribution and postal vote returns

Royal Mail

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1 About Royal Mail Postal Voting

The Royal Mail Postal Voting service is designed to help Returning Officers and Local Authorities to ensure the smooth and efficient running of Postal Voting campaigns.

When it comes to distributing your ballot packs and voters returning their postal votes, we offer a number of options allowing you to tailor the service to meet your exact needs: from having returned postal votes separated from your normal mail and delivered at specific times, to Mail Centre 'sweeps' on polling day.

Whichever options you choose:

- we will work closely with you to plan in your Postal Voting needs at an early stage;
- you will need to use a special return envelope design with distinctive purple flashes to help ensure a smooth-running process.
- you will also need to use the unique licences and return postcodes that we provide and pay a Postal Voting licence fee for each of your election campaigns (see page 20).

Find out more

You will find more information on all of the Postal Voting options in this guide or you can call your Postal Voting Consultant on: 08456 564998.

Use our campaign calculator

Your Postal Voting Consultant can provide you with a calculator to estimate the cost of your Postal Voting campaign.

2   Postal Voting Guide – Four stages for efficient planning

Below is an overview of the four stages involved in planning your Postal Voting campaign, including the key areas you need to discuss with us in partnership with your printer.

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The following pages give you all the detail you need on these stages, but do feel free to call us if you would prefer to talk through the process at any point.

3 Postal Voting at a glance

Here is an overview of all the options we offer as part of our Postal Voting service. You will find more detail on each of these in the following pages.

Standard Service

1. Your ballot packs are sent out to postal vote registrants.
2. Completed ballot papers, or postal votes, are sent back to you as part of your normal mail, with the option of delivery at a specific time.

If you require this service, you do not need the Postal Voting service described in this leaflet. Please speak to your Royal Mail Postal Voting Consultant for more information.

Postal Voting Service

The Postal Voting service offers a number of added-value options. You can select any combination of these to create your bespoke Postal Voting package:

Returns

- Returned postal votes can be pre-sorted; separated from your normal mail, saving you the time and manpower to sort the mail yourself.
- Returns can be delivered at an agreed time so you can plan your resources to deal with them.
- Returns can be further separated, for example, by ward and department.

Polling Day sweeps

- Polling Day sweeps are designed to capture any last-minute returns on polling day.
- We can carry out a sweep of the Mail Centre in your catchment area: any returns captured will be delivered to you or you can choose to collect them.
- We can also carry out a sweep of any Secondary Mail Centre within your catchment are: You will need to make arrangements to collect any of these returned postal votes yourself.

4 Distributing your ballot packs

If you would like to take advantage of any of our Postal Voting returns or Polling Day sweep options, simply follow our specific guidance on the design, production and printing of your ballot packs.

First, you will need to plan in your campaign with us in plenty of time. We will draw up a full plan detailing all your specific requirements and timescales.

You will then need to design and produce your ballot packs – specifically the return envelopes. This includes the following:

- Choosing which returns service to use: First Class Freepost Plus or Business Reply Plus.
- Using a slightly amended First Class Freepost Plus or Business Reply Plus envelope design, with purple flashes for identification purposes (see page 35).

- Using a number of unique licence numbers and postcodes allocated to you by Royal Mail and enabling us to pre-sort your returns into categories (if you select this option)' and deliver the postal vote returns to you.
- Providing us with a sample of your envelope designs so that we can check all elements have been included.
- You can find detailed guidance on how to design, produce and check your Postal Voting material starting on page 10.

Remember:

- All response items must be First Class and contain a licence barcode.
- Please advise recipients of Postal Voting ballot packs to return postal votes no later than two days before Polling Day.

5 Added-value returns options

Choose from the following to create your bespoke Postal Voting package.

Pre-sorted returns

Returned postal votes are delivered to you separated from your normal mail, or you can arrange to collect them yourself.

Pre-sorted and categorised returns

Postal votes are separated into categories specified by you, such as ward or department, or you can arrange to collect them yourself.

Timed delivery

Postal votes are delivered back to you at an agreed time with Royal Mail.

6 Added-value polling day sweep options

Choose from the following to create your bespoke Postal Voting package.

Primary Mail Centre sweep

On the evening of your polling day, a local Main (Primary) or neighbouring Secondary Mail Centre(s), as specified by you at planning stage is 'swept' for returned postal votes.

Delivery or collection

Postal votes captured in the sweep are delivered to you on Polling Day or you can collect them yourself.

Additional Mail Centre sweeps

If more than one Mail Centre is relevant to your election campaign, you can also access additional Secondary Mail Centre sweeps at an additional cost for this service. You will need to arrange for collection of these Postal Votes.

7 The right returns options for you

Use the following examples to help you create the right Postal Voting package for you.

A. You wish to have your returned postal votes separated from your day-to-day mail deliveries and further sorted into a number of different categories during the election campaign.

   Choose the pre-sorted and dedicated delivery option. You can discuss the number of licences you wish your returns to be pre-sorted into at the planning stage. Your returned postal votes will be delivered separate your day-to-day mail.

B. You wish to have your returned postal votes separated from your day-to-day mail deliveries during the election campaign and delivered at an agreed time with Royal Mail.

   Choose the timed delivery option. Your separated returns will be delivered in bulk at a time agreed with Royal Mail during the course of your election campaign.

C. You would like your returns pre-sorted but not delivered back to you.

   You have the option to **collect your pre-sorted returns** from your local Delivery Office or Mail Centre as advised.

D. You just require a sweep to take place in your Main (Primary) Mail Centre on Polling Day.

   Choose the Primary Mail Centre sweep option. You can either collect your returns or we can deliver them at a time agreed with Royal Mail.

E. You require sweeps to be conducted in neighbouring Mail Centres as well as your Primary Mail Centre.

   Choose the additional Mail Centre sweeps option. You will need to collect your returns from the Secondary Mail Centres on Polling Day. Secondary Mail Centres can be up to 40 miles from your Primary Mail Centre so please ensure sufficient travelling time is built into your collection plan.

For A, D and E, you will need to select one of your unique Response Plus licences and associated addresses.

For B and C (used on their own or with D and E) you will need to choose as many unique Response Plus licences and associated addresses as you require (one for each pre-sorted category).

Royal Mail will provide you with a number of unique Response Plus licence numbers and associated addresses at the planning stage.

8 Stage 1 – Tailoring the service and designing your envelopes

Selecting your options and setting up the contract

We suggest that you discuss the options outlined in this pack with your Royal Mail Postal Voting Consultant who will help you to select the most suitable options for you. Once you have selected your options, you'll be put in touch with your local Field Service Manager to discuss the process in more detail.

Your Postal Voting Consultant will continue to play an active role in setting up the contracts and providing any additional support and guidance you may need.

Getting your ballot pack design right

For further information please see the detailed specification starting on page 12

The design and print of your ballot paper and distribution envelopes is down to you, but you will need to follow our strict guidelines for the design and print of your returns envelopes. Meeting the envelope specifications is crucial to ensuring maximum efficiency as your material passes through our sorting machinery. To avoid costs of reprinting if the specification is wrong, you will need to provide us with a PDF (containing a licence barcode) of your design and we also recommend that you provide us with a sample to test as part of our accreditation process.

The ballot paper envelope (A)

This is the envelope that holds the completed ballot paper, or postal vote, and is inserted into Envelope B before being returned in the post. You will need to:

- meet the specification exactly to make sure that it fits into Envelope B;
- ensure that the instructions to the electorate are clear on the envelope; and
- ensure that there is limited but identifiable Local Authority address information shown.

Our experience shows that some of the electorate mistakenly return postal votes in Envelope A without placing them in Envelope B. Wherever this is the case, we'll attempt to return the postal votes to you.

continued...

The postal returns envelope (B)

This is the envelope that holds Envelope A with the completed postal vote. It requires:

- unique election postcodes and licence numbers with licence barcodes, as allocated to you by Royal Mail;
- purple flashes; and
- identification of whether this is a Business Reply Plus or Freepost Plus service, to be chosen by you.

Voters often fail to check that the return address is visible on a window envelope so if you choose to use this type of envelope you will need to:

- either print the Local Authority name on the front, top centre of Envelope B;
- or print a return address that exactly matches the one provided to you by Royal Mail on the seal-flap.

Planning production and testing

To make sure all your suppliers are working towards the same goal, it is important to identify the key milestones in your Postal Voting campaign, including production and testing of material.

It can be useful to work backwards from the distribution date to ensure that you leave enough time for the essential tasks. Your Postal Voting Team/Consultant will work closely with you and your suppliers to agree dates and track progress.

9 Stage 2 – Producing your ballot packs

Establishing operational contacts and meeting requirements

It is important that you fully manage your designers and printers, and begin liaising with them as soon as possible. We will assist you in this to ensure the smooth running of your Postal Voting campaign. You will also need to establish:

* who your operation contact for print and production is; and
* how often you need to meet and who with.

Establishing the production schedule

The most important thing is to set a start and completion date for the design and print of your ballot packs. You can then consider:

* a timescale for providing and testing envelope samples; and
* allowance for slippage, including if your samples fail the testing.

Accrediting your envelope design

Envelope A

Envelope A is inserted into Envelope B so there is no need for it to be read by our machines, and therefore no need for formal accreditation. But we are more than happy to review your design for peace of mind – just email a PDF to your Special Events Manager (we will provide you with their contact details).

Remember to follow the guidance as to size, weight and labelling on page 25, and please see the note on Returning incorrectly posted Envelope A's on page 20.

Envelope B

There are two types of accreditation for Envelope B as follows:

Visual accreditation (MANDATORY)

You must provide your Postal Voting Consultant with a PDF   of Envelope B so that our central team can check it meets our specification (see page 17). We will notify you as to whether the design is accredited / approved and if not why it has failed accreditation.

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Physical accreditation
(Optional but highly recommended to avoid potential reprinting costs)

If you opt for this you will need to have **25 sample items for each postcode** printed by the same printer who will carry out the final printing. You will need to send these to your Special Events Manager. The total number you send depends on how many categories you are having your returns pre-sorted into: 10 categories = 10 postcodes = 25 x 10 = 250 sample items.

If you have agreed a date for physical accreditation on your schedule, the items will be tested within 48 hours (not including weekends). You will receive a written report detailing whether the design is accredited / approved and if not why it has failed accreditation.

Local Authorities and printers with multiple Business Response Plus licences all sharing the same generic envelope design just need to provide one set of 25 generic envelopes to Royal Mail and **must contain both a 12 alpha character licence number and a licence barcode.**

Getting your ballot packs ready for Royal Mail to collect

If you are using Royal Mail to distribute your ballot packs you will need to present them in the correct way, which depends on the Postal Voting options you have chosen. This affects the:

- method of bundling;
- container types; and
- container labelling.

Your Field Service Manager will give you all the advice you need in this area and let you know how to order containers, trays and labels.

Remember, if you are distributing to international electorates you will need to use the relevant Airmail letter rate.

10   Stage 3 - Using Royal Mail to distribute your ballot packs

Establishing your distribution plan

If you intend to use Royal Mail for distribution, you will need to use the local election planner from page 36 to schedule the collection of your ballot packs and key distribution dates to meet your Postal Voting campaign timescales. All parties need to continually review this plan to make sure your ballot packs are distributed quickly and efficiently.

Planning for Royal Mail to collect your ballot packs

You will need to discuss the timing of this with your Field Service Manager and printer to ensure we can meet your despatch dates. Things to consider include:

- confirmation of the collection address;
- agreement on the timing and number of collections with your printer;
- whether you wish to witness the handover from your printer to Royal Mail; and
- Notification of the above witnessing decision to all parties.

Exchanging contact names & numbers, including out of hours

The Local Authority, Royal Mail and print sites must exchange these to ensure that collections can be adjusted if timescales change,

especially at short notice, out of normal hours or where suppliers out of the local area are involved.

If your local Royal Mail contact is unavailable when you need them, you can call the Postal Voting helpline number: 08456 564998

Distributing ballot packs

Once we have collected your ballot packs we will distribute them in line with your distribution plan. You will also need to supply us with the correct posting documentation, including:

- a completed sales order for every mailing.
- a line listing and computer planning report depending on the posting option you choose.

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All of these are essential to allow Royal Mail to bill accurately. If you do not provide them it may delay your distribution. Your Field Service Manager can give you more details about all of this documentation.

Re-issuing ballot packs

If, during the course of an election, you need to re-issue ballot packs to your electorate, please talk to your Postal Voting Consultant about the options Royal Mail offers.

11 Stage 4 – Ensuring successful postal vote returns

Planning your returns early

It is essential to the smooth running of your Postal Voting campaign that you agree the following with your Field Service Manager and enter them onto your election planner or Postal Voting Consultant (see page 36):

- Your specific pre-sorted delivery requirements.
- Your specific collection or delivery requirements (see below).
- Polling Day sweep arrangements.

Please note: any ballot papers posted after Polling Day will be delivered along with your normal returns and billed accordingly.

Making delivery/collection arrangements

You will need to discuss and agree the following:

- Address for deliveries or collections.
- Timing of deliveries – at a specific time or just with your day- to-day mail.
- Timing of collections.
- Weekend delivery/collection arrangements, if required.
- Handover arrangements – provide the Postal Voting Team/ Consultant with contact details of the people who will be receiving the deliveries.

Identifying an expected pattern of returns

To help Royal Mail to ensure we have sufficient resource in our Mail Centres to process your returned postal votes, we will need to discuss with you, on an ongoing basis, the predicted volume and rate of returns. This will allow us to adapt quickly if the pattern of returns is different from initial expectations.

Returning incorrectly posted Envelope A's

Experience tells us that some people will forget to put Envelope A into Envelope B before returning it. Providing your printer has adhered to the Envelope A specification, we will try to return any Envelope A's that have been incorrectly posted, but will not be able to pre-sort these into wards.

Planning a Polling Day sweep

Any sweeps you have planned in will take place at the agreed Mail Centre(s). Handover arrangements need to be carefully managed to make sure that delivery or collection happens before the poll closes.

You will need to provide your Field Service Manager with contact details of any staff collecting the sweep mail for security purposes, as the items will not be handed over without these in advance. Please also remember that if you have planned sweeps of any Secondary Mail Centre you will need to make arrangements to collect your returns. ID must be presented at time of collection.

12 Appendices

12.1 Return envelope specification

Correctly designed Postal Vote return envelopes are central to the successful running of the postal vote operation, allowing us to process your returns quickly and efficiently, and giving you a number of pre-sorting options, including the ability to have your returns separated by ward, department or other category of your choosing.

This specification details the key requirements for the design and print of envelopes A and B, including templates. We can issue electronic versions of the templates to you and your nominated printers if required.

Please remember, you will need to send an electronic sample of the Envelope B you intend to use to our Postal Voting Team at: postal.voting@royalmail.com

Important:

Throughout this specification references are made to the 'envelope'. While envelopes are preferred, one-piece mailers may be used as long as they meet additional requirements, and this specification should be read as applying to both forms of Postal Voting return.

Where a failure to meet the requirements of this specification prevents fully automated processing of the Postal Voting returns, we will be unable to separate your mail into different categories. Surcharges may be levied if the variances from the specification result in additional manual handling.

12.2　Sample checking

For complete confidence that your envelopes meet our specifications, we strongly recommend that you take advantage of our testing service for pre-production samples.

You may provide your samples for testing in a number of ways, depending on which level of checking you require. **Please note that at the very least you must send us a PDF to check:**

Format	Royal Mail Checks
Full pre-production pack samples 25 complete Postal Voting return packs produced using full production processes by the same printer you will be using for your whole campaign. For pre-sorting into wards, we require 25 samples for each ward. **Please Note: This is Royal Mail's preferred format.**	• Full checks of the complete pack, including automated processing trials.
Pre-production pack proof samples 25 complete Postal Voting return packs manufactured using proofing techniques rather than full production processes. For pre-sorting into wards, we require 25 samples for each ward.	• Full checks of the complete pack, including automated processing trials.
Pre-production proofs 25 cards or envelopes (minimum thickness 0.25mm) printed using proofing techniques. For pre-sorting into wards, we require 25 samples for each ward.	• Checks of the design layout • Automated processing trials. **Please note: These activities are limited to the print design, not the complete pack.**
Mandatory Electronic (PDF) Proofs A PDF file containing a full size image of the front of the Postal Voting return, including any variable information (address, licence number etc.). For pre-sorting into wards, an image is required for each ward showing the variable information relevant to that ward.	• Checks of the design layout • Automated processing trials. **Please note: These activities are limited to the print design, not the complete pack.**

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Local Authority responsibilities

You must ensure the following:

- Supplied proof packs accurately reflect the intended production product, including materials used.
- Any variations introduced by the proofing process do not materially impact the resulting samples.
- The resulting production packs are the same as the pre-production samples and that no variances have been introduced by moving from proof to production processes.
- All other elements of the pack, other than the print design, are compliant.

12.3   Size and weight

12.3.1   Aspect ratio

This is the relationship between the height and the length of the mail item. The length is always the longest edge of the mail item. Postal Voting returns must be rectangular and must have a minimum aspect ratio of 1:1.4 (height to length).

12.3.2   Height

Between 110mm and 165mm (while maintaining the required aspect ratio).

12.3.3   Length

Between 157mm and 240mm (while maintaining the required aspect ratio).

12.3.4   Thickness

0.25mm minimum (which must include all inserts), 5mm maximum.

12.3.5   Weight

100g maximum.
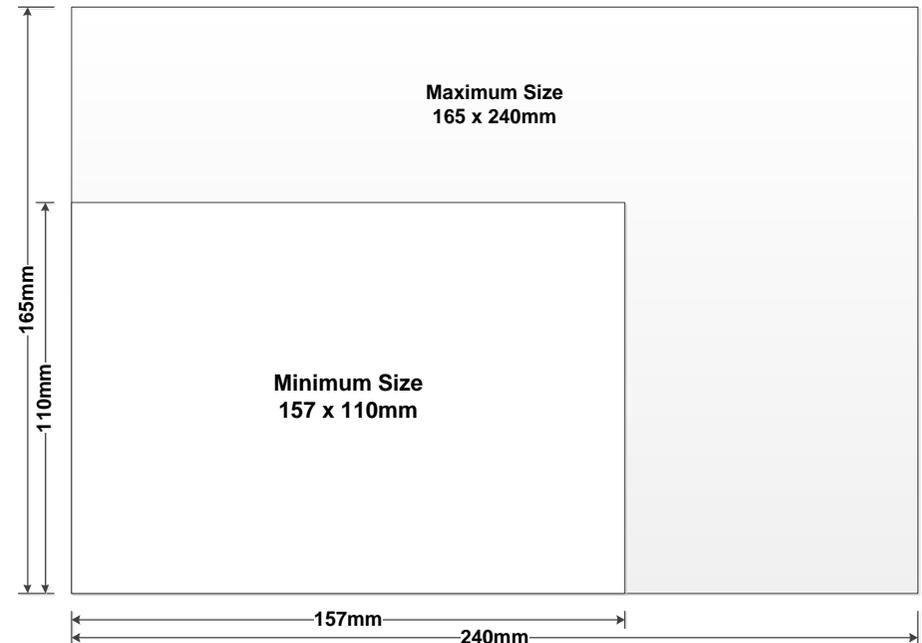
Figure 1 – Maximum and minimum envelope sizes (not to scale)

12.4   Product Options

You have two product options for Postal Voting returns:

Business Reply Plus

The corresponding licence number and barcode for each address is printed directly on the outer envelope. This product may be more appropriate if you wish to receive all your returns in one batch each day and no additional pre-sorting is required prior to delivery.
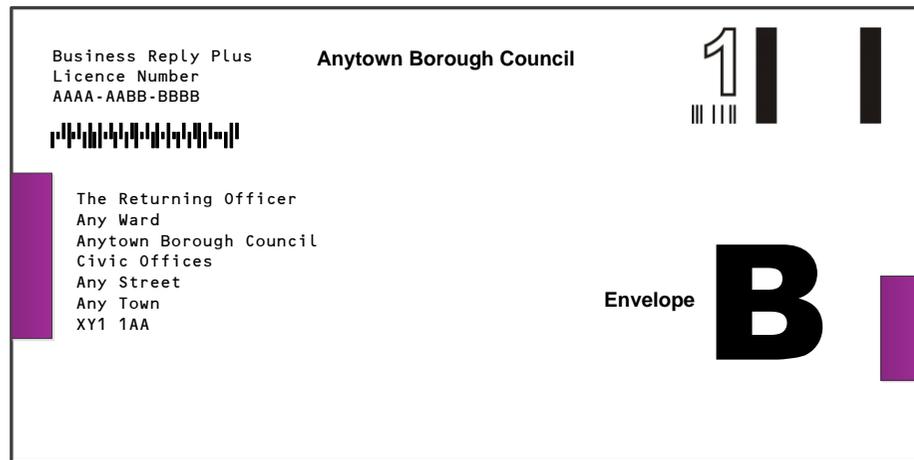

Figure 2 – Business Reply Plus (not to scale)

Freepost Plus

The licence number and barcode is printed as part of the address and can be displayed through a window if required. This means that the outer envelope can be made standard with the variable information being printed on the insert or directly onto the outer envelope later in the production process. Freepost Plus is more suitable if you who wish your returns to be sorted into categories, such as ward or department.
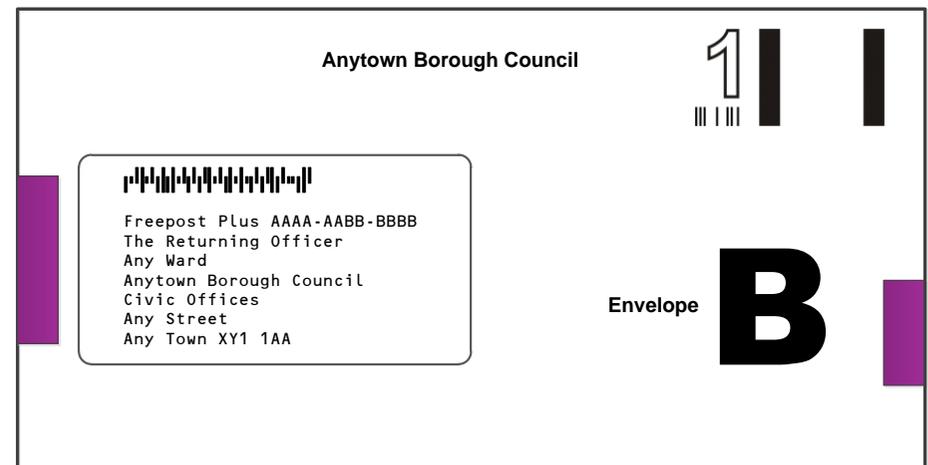

Figure 3 – Freepost Plus (not to scale)

Full details are provided in subsequent sections.

12.5   Address and licence block printing

The accuracy of the address and licence number and the way they are printed are critical to the successful processing of Postal Voting returns.

Royal Mail will supply the address and licence number that must be used on your returns. If you require pre-sorting into ward or department, we will supply a different address and corresponding licence number for each. The address and licence number printed on your returns must exactly match those supplied.

12.5.1   Address format

With the exception of the licence number and barcode being part of the Freepost address, the address format is identical for both Business Reply Plus and Freepost Plus style designs.

12.5.1.1   Address typography

- The address must be printed exactly as supplied with no changes or additions to any of the lines within the address block.
- The address must be the full and correct geographic address (including postcode) for the place to which the items will be delivered, as defined by the Postal Address File (PAF). With the exception of department information which must either: include

the PAF Department, in which case it must fully match that department held in PAF; or exclude the PAF Department.

- 'The Returning Officer' may be inserted above the first line of the address if required (for 'Freepost Plus' style designs 'The Returning Officer' would be inserted between the first line of the address and the licence number).
- The address must be printed in a landscape format, parallel with the longest edge.
- All lines of the address must be left justified.
- All lines of the address, except the postcode, should be printed in lower case characters with leading capitals.
- The postcode must be in capitals and printed as the last line of the address.
- All lines of the address must be printed at single line spacing.
- There must not be a blank line anywhere in the address block, including between the licence number (Freepost Plus) and the rest of the address, or between any other lines of the address.

12.5.1.2   Address placement

The address must be printed within the Address/Window Area as defined in section 12.10.5.

If you are using a window envelope there are additional requirements to ensure that no part of the address can move out of the window.

12.5.2 Licence block

12.5.2.1 Business Reply Plus style licence number

- The licence plate and barcode must be positioned in the top left corner of the item as defined in Section 12.10.2.
- The barcode must be printed beneath the licence plate.
- The licence plate and barcode must not be contained within a box.
- All words in the licence plate, with the exception of the licence number itself, must be printed using lower case characters with leading capitals.
- The licence number must be printed in all capitals.
- The three lines of the licence plate and the barcode must be left justified.
- There must be no spaces within the licence number.
- The licence plate must be printed as shown below using one of the fonts specified in 12.5.3 and substituting the relevant licence number:

```
Business Reply Plus
Licence Number
AAAA-AAAA-AAAA
```


12.5.2.2 Freepost Plus style designs

- The licence number must be positioned as the top line of the address, at the same line spacing as the rest of the address.
- The barcode must be printed above the licence number.
- There must not be a blank line between the licence number and the rest of the address.
- The licence number must be printed using an identical font, font size and character spacing to the rest of the address.
- The words 'Freepost Plus' must be printed using lower case characters with leading capitals.
- The licence number must be printed in all capitals.
- The barcode, licence number and the address must be left justified.
- There must be no spaces within the licence number.
- The licence number must be printed as shown below using one of the fonts specified in 12.5.3 and substituting the relevant licence number:


```
Freepost Plus AAAA-AAAA-AAAA
```

12.5.3   Address & licence number fonts

The address and licence number must always be printed in one of the following fonts:

`OCR B 12 point` (Recommended for maximum performance)

`Letter Gothic 12 point`

`Lucida Console 12 point`

- Never use a bold or other heavy variant of the font.
- Never use italics or underlining.
- All lines of the address (including ward name where required within the address) and licence number must be printed using the same font without any kerning, adjustment to the character spacing or any other characteristic of the font.
- The fonts for the licence and address block should be 12pt using 10 Characters per 25.4mm (CPI).

When printed correctly the characters form into vertical columns as demonstrated in diagram (2).

Spaces should be allocated the same room as a letter (2.54mm).

Please note: For Freepost Plus style design the address must be printed using an identical font size and character spacing to that used for the licence number.

The following quick checks can be used to ensure that the font has been printed correctly:

AAAA-AABB-BBBB
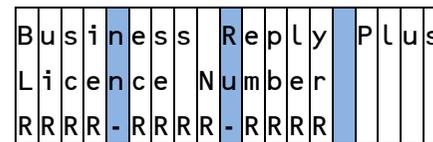
|←————35-36mm————→|

Figure 4 – Character Pitch

Figure 5 – Character Alignment

All of the recommended fonts are non-proportionally spaced. When printed correctly the characters form into vertical columns.

Please note: the same requirements apply within the address.

12.6   Window envelope requirements

12.6.1   Window material

The window material must have:

- a maximum gloss value of 150;

- window haze not exceeding 75%; and

- enough strength not to become creased or wrinkled in the process.

12.6.2   Window size and position

When using a window envelope, you must ensure that the address remains clearly visible in the window at all times. To achieve this, the size and position of the window must allow for:

- any possible movement of the insert within the outer envelope;

- any tolerances in the manufacture and printing of the insert and outer envelope; and

- the likely errors that voters may make when assembling the pack.

12.6.3   Checking window size and position

To test your completed return, sharply tap the edge of the assembled item on a flat surface, checking that no part of the address has moved out of the window or that nothing else within the sealed return has moved in front of the address.

Repeat this test for each of the four edges of the envelope. If any of these tests result in any part of the address becoming obscured or moving to within less than 2mm of the edge of the window, you should revise your design.

12.6.4   Additional windows

You may include an additional window to allow further variable information to be included on the insert. If you do use a second window, you will need to ensure that:

- both windows are formed from a single sheet of film;
- the envelope material is firmly glued to the film, particularly in any areas between the windows where the envelope material may be subject to damage during processing operations;
- neither window interferes with the defined clear zones;
- the additional window may is not used for the Business Reply licence plate;
- neither window is closer than 15mm from any edge of the envelope; and
- the total window does not exceed 50% of the surface area of one side of the envelope

Please Note: as it is not possible to include requirements to cater for all potential envelope designs incorporating an additional window, any designs should be submitted to Royal Mail for approval.

12.7   Indicia / postal marking

All election returns must have a valid First Class marking which complies with the relevant design as shown below.
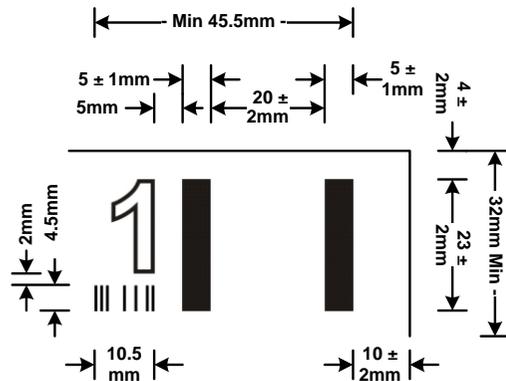

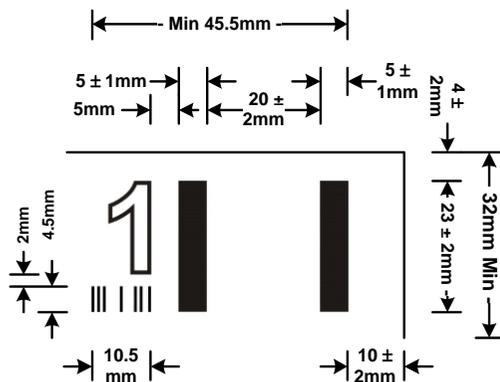Figure 6 – Business Reply 1st Class indicia dimensions (not to scale)

Figure 7 – Freepost 1st Class indicia dimensions (not to scale)

You must download the relevant design from: www.royalmail.com/responseplus

You must also ensure that it is printed parallel with the longest edge, without any modification or scaling, in the position shown in Section 12.10.

As the two postal marking designs are very similar – the only difference being the product finder code printed under the numeral – you will need to take great care to ensure that you use the correct one.

Size check

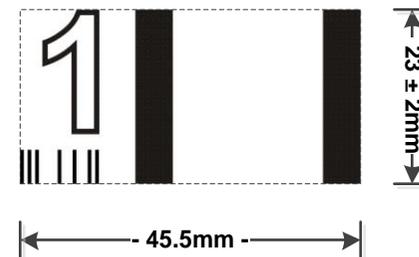When printed to scale the postal marking must fit inside a rectangle as shown below.

Figure 8 – indicia size check

12.8   Additional Printing

12.8.1   Postal Voting indicators

A purple block (colour – Pantone 254) must be printed on both left and right edges of the return Envelope B in the positions indicated in Section 12.10. (Purple flashes must not be applied to non Postal Voting licences.)

12.8.2   Envelope B indicators

The design of the Envelope B indicator is not specified. The design must ensure that it can be printed in the area indicated in Section 12.10 at a position, size and format that ensures it does not encroach on the clear zones. (Envelope B indicators must not be applied to non Postal Voting licences.)

12.8.3   Other text and graphics

While additional printed text and graphics are permissible, they must be kept to a minimum. Wherever possible any instructions to the voter for completing and returning their vote should be printed on the reverse of the envelope. Any additional text and graphics that are printed:

- must not infringe any of the four clear zones as detailed below; and
- must not be printed in a style that could be mistaken as an address.

No other address, including the original recipient's address, should appear anywhere on the outside, either front or back.

12.8.4   Clear zones

Clear zones are areas of the envelope that must be kept clear of any text or graphics. They are used by our machines to locate the address and licence number on the returns, as well as allowing Royal Mail to print and read codemarks during the processing of returns. There are four clear zones:

- in the bottom right corner, 18mm high and 130mm long;
- 60mm from the bottom edge, 10mm high and 100mm long;
- 5mm around the address in all directions; and
- 10mm above, to the left, and to the right, of the Business Reply licence block and 5mm below it.
- For 'Freepost Plus' style designs, the licence number forms part of the address block), and a 2mm clear zone is required around the barcode.

12.9   Materials and construction

12.9.1   Sealing

The Postal Voting return Envelopes must be securely sealed on all sides.

12.9.1.1   One-piece mailers

Envelopes are preferred but one-piece mailers may be used as long as they are securely sealed on all four sides.

Spot gluing (rather than continuous gluing) may be used if done as part of the original manufacture. If spot gluing is used, there must be a series of 'spots' at no greater than 25mm pitch. Each spot must be no less than 5mm diameter. Otherwise all requirements apply to one-piece mailers as they do to envelopes.

12.9.2   Flexibility

Postal Voting returns must be flexible enough to bend easily into an 'S' shape along the longest edge. They cannot contain inflexible things such as pens or thick card coupons.

12.9.3   Material

You must not use polythene, plastic, transparent materials or aperture envelopes.

12.9.3.1   Porosity

Between 300ml–800ml per minute.

12.9.3.2   Absorbency

15–35gsm of water in one minute.

12.9.3.3   Reflection

The background reflectivity of the material on which the address is printed must be at least 35% in the red region (600nm) when measured by a spectral reflectometer.

12.9.4   Print contrast ratio

The contrast ratio between the background and the address, indicia and licence plate must be at least 55%. The typeface must never be lighter than the background colour.

12.9.5   Paper colour

The best colours to use for the envelope are white, cream or light buff. The address, indicia and licence plate should be printed directly onto the envelope material. If a background colour is printed then it must ensure that the print contrast ratio can be maintained.

Dark colours, particularly red, must never be used.

Where a window envelope is used this paper colour requirement applies to the insert that is visible through the address window.

12.9.6   Opacity

The paper on which the address is printed must be more than 85% opaque to prevent any character on the reverse side showing through.

12.9.7   All-over or background printing

An all-over or other form of background printing is not recommended on Postal Voting returns. If it is used, all of the above requirements apply to the printed paper and not the base paper prior to printing.

12.10   Printing dimensions

Printing dimensions for both Business Reply and Freepost Products are summarised below and detailed this section. As Postal Voting envelopes can vary in size the following critical dimensions are given from the relevant envelope corner.
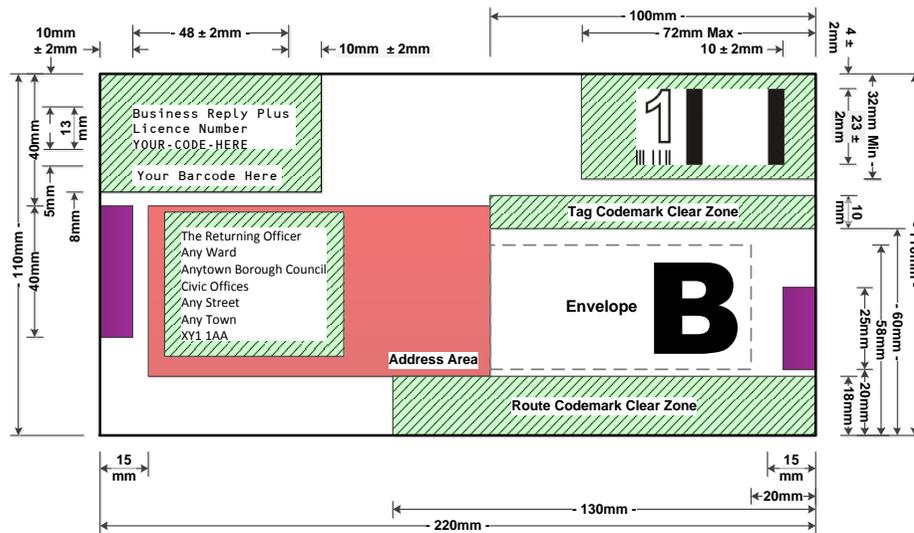

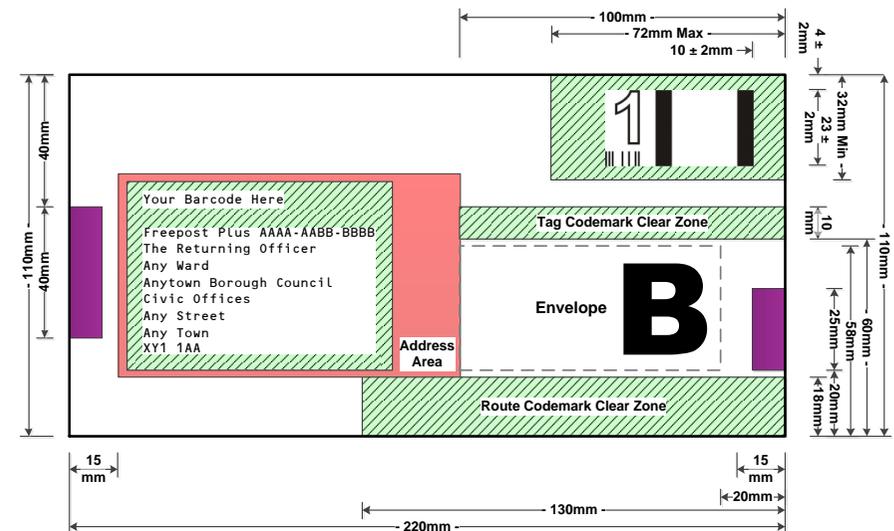Figure 9 – Business Reply Plus Dimensions (not to scale)

Figure 10 – Freepost Plus Dimensions (not to scale)

12.10.1 Indicia / postal marking position

This is dimensioned from the top right corner of the envelope.

Please note: the postal marking design must be downloaded from the Royal Mail website and printed without any modification or scaling. Please refer to Section 12.7.
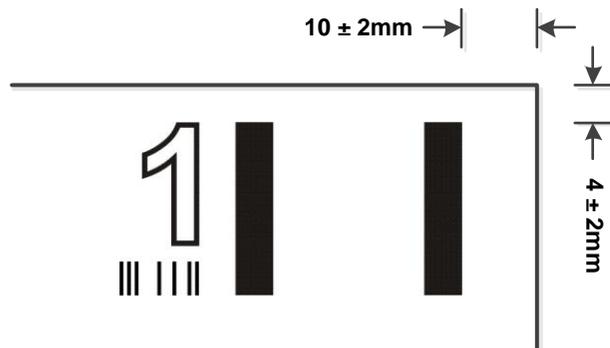

Figure 11 – Indicia clear zone (not to scale)

12.10.2 Licence block area

This is dimensioned from the top left corner of the envelope. The licence plate area dimensions only apply to the Business Reply Plus style design. The licence plate text must be printed within the licence plate area.
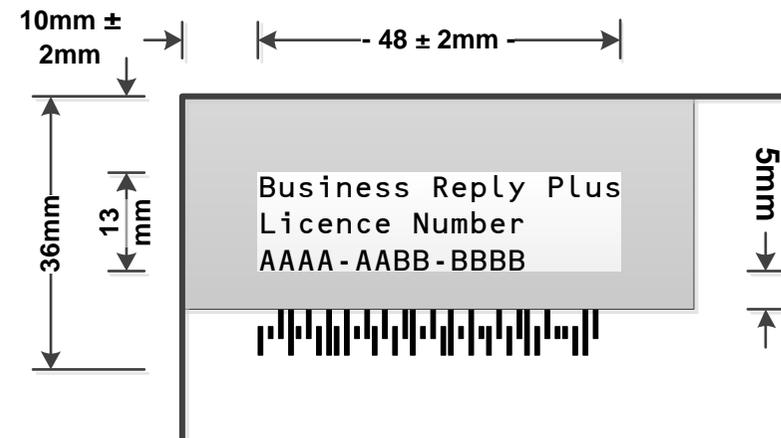

Figure 12 – Licence Block Area (not to scale)

12.10.3 Barcode Printing

A Barcode must be included on letter mail pieces.

You can generate your barcode by using our artwork generator tool, which is available from at www.royalmail.com/responseservices.

Your barcode must comply with the following requirements.

Barcode Properties

- Background Reflectance value of a minimum of 35% is required.
- The reflective difference between the mail piece background and the print reflectance must be a minimum of 30%.
- The barcode must be printed so that it contrasts with the background, typically black bars on a white background, Positive Contrast or Inverse Printing (barcode lighter than the Background) is not permitted.
- Print Contrast Ratio (PCR) of 40% is required.
- The edges of the barcode must be sharp and clearly defined.
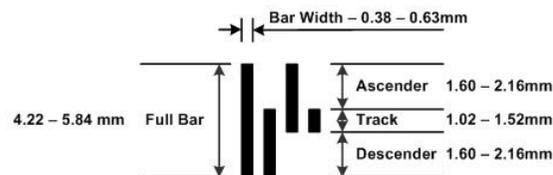
Barcode Size

Figure 13 – Licence barcode dimensions (not to scale)

- The barcode pitch must be 20 –24 bars per 25.4mm and must be equally spaced. The recommended bar dimensions are width – 0.54mm, ascender and descender height – 1.9mm, rack bar height – 1.3mm. The recommended pitch is 21.2 bars per inch (25.4mm).

12.10.4 Codemark clear zones

These are required to ensure that Royal Mail can clearly print and read special red barcodes used for processing the mail. Clear zones are dimensioned from the bottom right corner of the envelope. They apply to both Business Reply Plus and Freepost Plus style designs. These clear zones are in addition to any other specific clear zones defined elsewhere in this section.
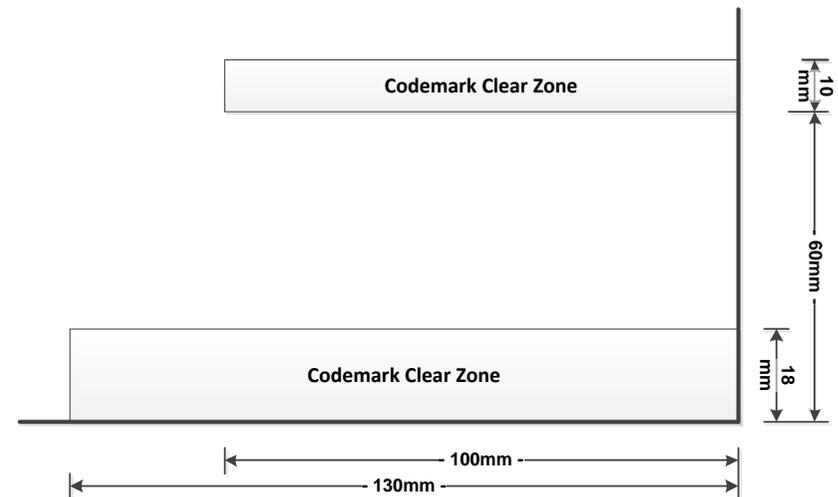

Figure 14 – Licence block Area (not to scale)

12.10.5　Address/window area and Postal Voting return indicators

The positioning of the address/window area and return indicators allow some flexibility.

12.10.5.1　Address block definition

The address block is defined as the rectangular area that can be drawn around the address, including the barcode and licence number for Freepost Plus style designs. It must be printed within the address/window area. Where multiple addresses are used within a mailing, the address block must be taken from the largest theoretical address, i.e. the longest address line and the maximum number of address lines, even when these do not occur in the same address.

Note: for window envelopes, the overall pack design must ensure that the address block (include the Freepost Plus licence and barcode) can never move outside the window area when correctly assembled.

Example: (Note: the dashed lines are for illustration purposes only and must not be printed).
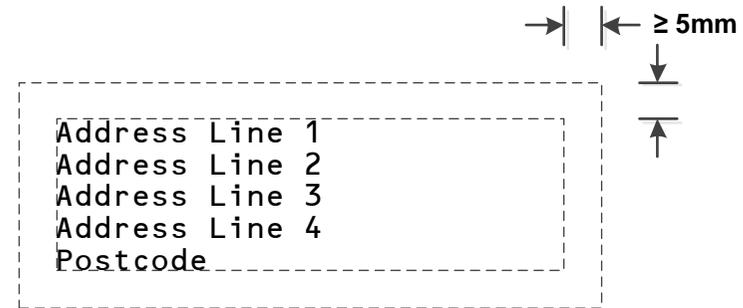
≥ 5mm

```
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Postcode
```

Figure 15 – Business Reply Plus Address block clear zone (not to scale)

≥ 2mm

```
Freepost Plus AAA-AABB-BBBB
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
Address Line 4
Postcode
```

≥ 5mm
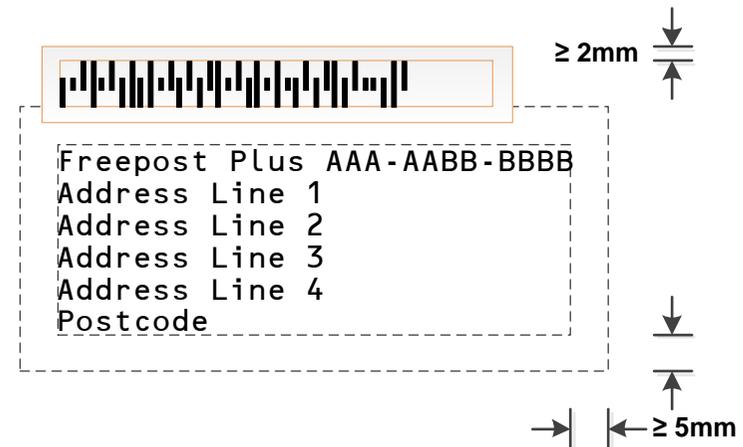
Figure 16 – Freepost Plus Address block clear zone (not to scale)

continued...

The address block includes the whole address and fits both the longest line and the maximum number of address lines.

The address block (including the licence number if Freepost Plus) must be surrounded by a 5mm clear zone. If Freepost Plus, a 2mm clear zone is required around the barcode. The address block (including the licence number and barcode if Freepost Plus) must be fully contained within the address/window area at all times, but the address clear zone may extend outside the address / window area.

- On non-window envelopes the address block may be printed right up to the edge of the address/window area.
- On window envelopes the address block must never be less than 2mm from any edge of the window, no matter where that may fall within the address/window area.

12.10.5.2   Address/window area position

The following diagram shows the recommended position for the address/window area with the resultant address/window area dimensions given for DL and C5 envelopes. It is strongly recommended that these are followed to ensure that the envelope meets the requirements.

These positions can be adjusted if required for other sized envelopes or to suit the overall layout of your Postal Voting returns pack. In doing so it is essential that these items do not interfere with any of the other clear zones on the envelope.

Please note: refer to Sections 12.6 and 12.7 for additional address block and window requirements.
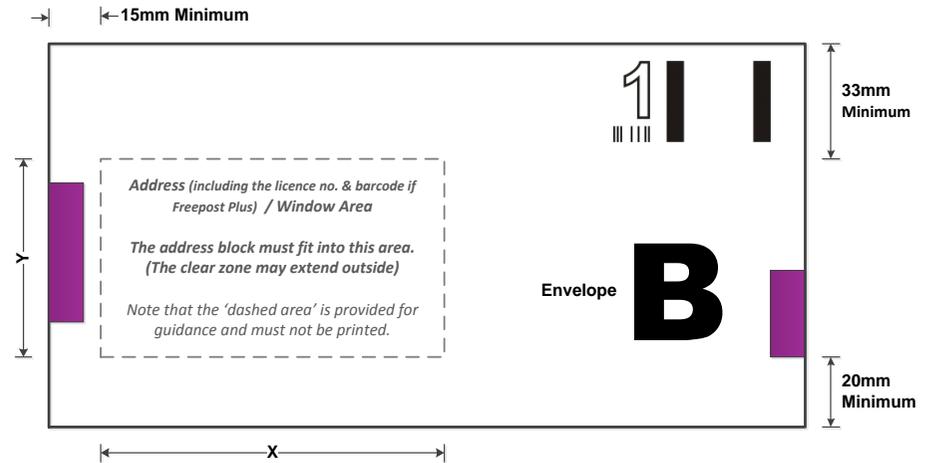

Figure 17 – Address / window area position (not to scale)

Recommended maximum address/window areas for DL and C5 envelopes when the bottom left corner of the address/window area is in the minimum position indicated in Figure 17 are as follows.

	X	Y
DL (220mm x 110mm)	100mm	57mm
C5 (229mm x 162mm)	109mm	70mm

12.10.5.3   Postal Voting return indicators

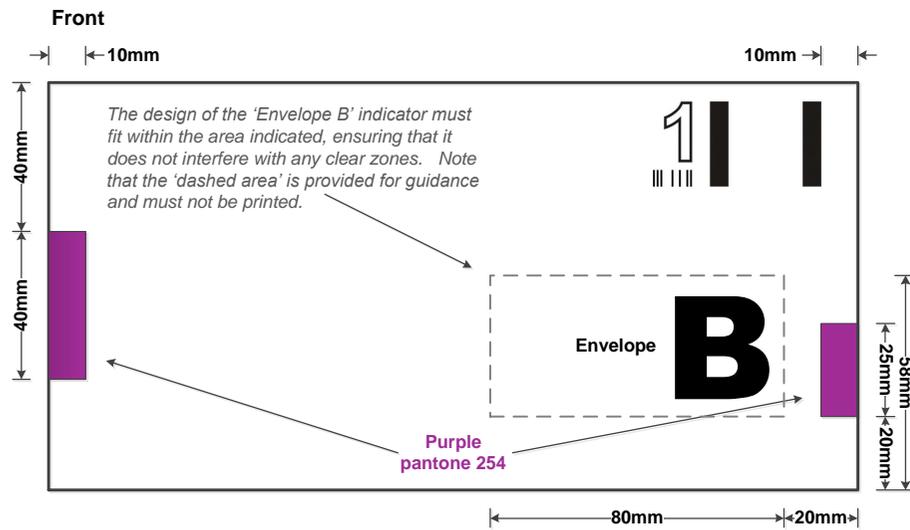The positions for the postal Voting return and 'Envelope B' indicators are shown below:

Front

> The design of the 'Envelope B' indicator must fit within the area indicated, ensuring that it does not interfere with any clear zones.   Note that the 'dashed area' is provided for guidance and must not be printed.

10mm

10mm

40mm

40mm

1

Envelope **B**

58mm
25mm
20mm

Purple pantone 254

80mm   20mm

Figure 18 – Postal Voting return indicators – Front (not to scale)

Back

40mm

40mm

Purple pantone 254

25mm

20 mm

10mm

10mm
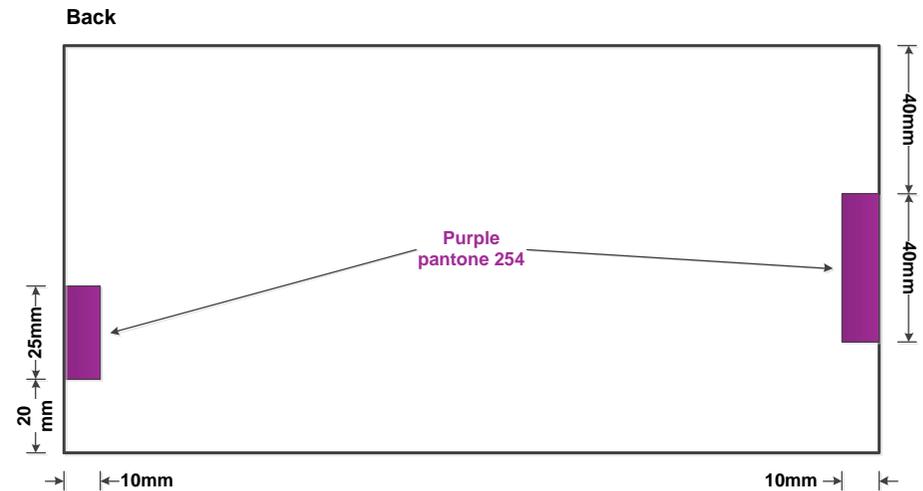
Figure 19 – Postal Voting return indicators – Back (not to scale)

13   Your essential Postal Voting Planner

Local Authority postal addresses
e.g.: Anytown Borough, Council, Council Office, Anytown PV16 1ZZ

Local Authority contact details
e.g.: John Smith, 01444 824333, jsmith@anytown.gov.uk

Field Service Manager contact details
e.g.: Jane Lewis, 07730 736817, jlewis@royalmail.com

Other Royal Mail contact details

Name of Printing Contractor (if applicable)
e.g.: Anytown Printers, The Print House, Anytown, PV12 2AA

Print contractor contact details
e.g.: Sam, 07890 659163

Actual location of print site
(i.e., where collections will take place)

Other supplier details

Other information

OUTWARD SERVICE – BALLOT PACKS

Number of ballot packs posted
e.g.: 30,000

Service selection
e.g.: Walksort 2

Posting date
e.g.: 10th May

Postage paid impression number
e.g.: Anytown 10

Contact for collections
e.g.: Field Service Manager at Regional Distribution Centre

OUTWARD SERVICE – BALLOT PACKS

Equipment required
e.g.: Bags and cages supplied by Regional Distribution Centre

Collection details
Collected by Regional Distribution Centre and dock transfer to mail centre

Local authority postcodes
e.g.: PV1 – 23 DX12 & 15

Will local authority witness handover to Royal Mail?
e.g.: Yes, at print site

RETURN SERVICE – POSTAL VOTES

Is Ward Sort required?
yes/no

Ward list submitted?
yes/no

Postcode allocated?
yes/no

Licence numbers allocated?
yes/no

Have all envelopes been checked by Royal Mail?
yes/no e.g.: yes – all samples successfully tested

RETURN SERVICE – POSTAL VOTES

Estimated response rate
e.g.: 75%

Equipment needed
e.g.: Trays

Is a timed delivery required?
e.g.: Yes, Mon-Fri 08:30

Is Saturday delivery required?
e.g.: N/A – no delivery required

ELECTION DAY SWEEP

Primary mail centre
e.g.: Anytime mail centre

Details of relief collection (if required)
e.g.: council to pick up at 7:00pm

Details of final collection or delivery
e.g.: delivery to council at 9:30pm

Council contact details (primary mail centre)
e.g.: John Smith. 07830 073478

Royal Mail contact details (primary mail centre)
e.g.: Jane Lewis, 07830 073478

ELECTION DAY SWEEP

Secondary mail centres
e.g.: Greendale mail centre

Time of collection
e.g.: Collect at 9:45pm

Council contact details (secondary mail centre)
e.g.: Joe Bloggs, 07880 934776

Royal Mail contact details (secondary mail centre)
e.g.: Pauline Day, 08450 213245

14   Here to help

Royal Mail can arrange for alternative formats of this booklet to be sent to you:

- Large print
- Braille
- Audio CD
- Audio Cassette

For your free copy, please call Customer Services on 0845 656 4998

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Or visit our website www.royalmail.com which has been designed with all of our customers in mind.

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Call 08457 950 950

Visit www.royalmail.com/contactus to email us