



Mr James Heappey MP - Member of Parliament for Wells

18 July 2016

Dear Mr Heappey

Wedmore Post Office®
6 The Borough Mall, The Borough, Wedmore, BS28 4EB

Proposed move to new premises & branch modernisation

I'm writing further to my letter dated 31 March 2016 to update you about our proposal, subject to consultation to move the above Post Office to new premises located at Wedmore Village Stores, 2 Church Street, Wedmore, BS28 4AB.

The local public consultation period ended on 17 May 2016, during which we received a large amount of feedback from customers and local representatives. Although the majority of feedback including a petition did not support the proposed move from the current location, we firmly believe that the proposed new location is suitable and would help secure a viable Post Office service for our customers in Wedmore for the longer term.

However the current situation is that the proposed new operator has decided not to progress their application to operate the branch at this time and the branch will therefore continue to operate from the current location for the time being. The branch will now be re-advertised inviting suitable retailers in Wedmore to express interest in this vacancy.

While the proposed new operator has decided not to progress, I believe given the interest that our proposal has generated, that it is appropriate to explain in part why we believe that the relocation would have created a sustainable Post Office solution for local customers.

Throughout the consultation period we welcomed the opportunity to listen to customer concerns and to explain the reason for the proposed change, including at a widely attended public meeting, organised by the local MP. We also met with Citizens Advice, the statutory consumer watchdog. Respondents commented on a range of issues, including parking and traffic issues, access into the store and the availability of space and privacy inside. We also received some feedback in support of the move. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to let us have their views.

Customer feedback supported that many respondents already use the Village Stores for part of their retail needs. It is approximately 130 metres from the current site along well maintained pavements with a level entrance and wide doorway. I appreciate this distance may have inconvenienced some of our customers had we moved at this time, however in situations such as this there will always be some customers who are more inconvenienced whilst equally, for some customers the proposed site may be closer and more convenient than at present.

When looking at service provision in an area, we do consider the needs of our customers and although the availability of parking spaces and traffic issues are outside the direct control of the Post Office, this was reviewed. There is parking outside the Village Stores for 5-6 cars with a designated disabled bay in close vicinity and further roadside parking in the nearby area. Additionally, there is the village car park, which has capacity for 48 cars and is approximately a five minute walk from the village stores.

Furthermore in our discussions with new operators we include the need for them to make sure there is an appropriate level of privacy for customers at the Post Office serving points. These include issues like queue layout and the provision of appropriate signage asking customers to stand back from the counter whilst they are waiting for service. Security is important to us, as with any other branch in our network there are strict guidelines and measures put in place to safeguard customers, staff and the cash and stock entrusted to the operator's care. Similarly we insist on and work with our operators on branch layout to ensure sufficient space for customers to move around and access Post Office services with ease. Staff are trained to handle Post Office transactions and this includes compliance with Data Protection & Mail Handling.

Offering longer opening hours has proved to be very popular with customers of modernised branches through this programme. Opening times of the Post Office become more aligned to the opening times of the host business and for many customers this added flexibility to use our services sometimes over seven days a week at times that suit them better is proving to be very welcome. We already have a large number of branches operating in this way and feedback from operators and customers has been very positive. For example, we know that access to Free Cash withdrawals from Partner Banks at Post Office serving points in the evenings and over the weekend is very popular.

Our proposal to move Wedmore Post Office was part of our wider modernisation and investment plans to provide a network that is sustainable and more effectively meets customer needs. Our past experience shows that a branch operated alongside a successful retail offer complements the Post Office business and helps to improve long-term viability and customer accessibility.

With this in mind, at the outset we have fully engaged with the existing Postmaster at Wedmore and discussed the options available to him. As a result he informed us that in his case he believes the Post Office Local proposal will affect the long term viability of his business. He understands though that Post Office Limited needs to find a partner that can provide a sustainable Post Office business for the benefit of all Post Office customers and residents in Wedmore. Now the proposed new operator has decided not to progress their application to operate the branch at this time, Post Office Ltd will begin again a search for an alternative retailer who can provide that sustainability for the future.

In line with our Code of Practice, any future proposal to relocate Wedmore Post Office would be subject to a further 6-week period of local public consultation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal.


Yours sincerely



Will Russell
Regional Network Manager

How to contact us:

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 Customer Helpline: 03457 22 33 44
Textphone: 03457 22 33 55

 FREEPOST Your Comments

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