



Ministry
of Justice

Shailesh Vara MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

Peter Aldous MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11th February 2016

Dear Peter

HM COURTS & TRIBUNALS SERVICE ESTATE REFORM

I am today announcing the outcome of the consultation on the provision of courts and tribunals services in England and Wales.

As you know, the Government is committed to modernising justice, investing £700m over the next 4 years to update the court and tribunal estate, install modern IT systems and make the justice system more efficient. We want to reduce the need for people to travel to court, reserving face to face hearings for only the most sensitive or complex cases. Already, 750,000 debt claims are dealt with online each year; we want to extend online dispute resolution and case management as widely as possible.

To this end, the consultation put forward proposals to reduce surplus capacity in the courts estate by closing those buildings that are underused or that are simply unsuitable for the digital services we need to provide, reinvesting the proceeds in the provision of swifter and more efficient justice. We will have a more efficient Court & Tribunal service as a result.

I am very grateful to you for taking the time to provide your response to the consultation. Your comments were carefully considered by HMCTS alongside other consultation responses. For each proposal in the consultation, we have considered access to justice; value for money; and efficiency. I wanted to write to you personally to let you know about our decision concerning the following site in your constituency:

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court will close.

None of these decisions were taken lightly. All are based on thorough analysis of use, value and efficiency. The documents published today contain a summary of the responses received in the consultation and the decision for each building. In all, 64 sites will close as proposed and a further 22 will close but with changes to the original proposals, for instance the establishment of alternative local venues. Many of these were suggested by respondents and I am grateful to all those who engaged with the consultation to help us to reach the best solutions.

The consultation response, including regional responses, are available online at www.gov.uk/moj. Copies have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, in the Vote Office and in the Printed Paper Office.

Yours ever



SHAILESH VARA