

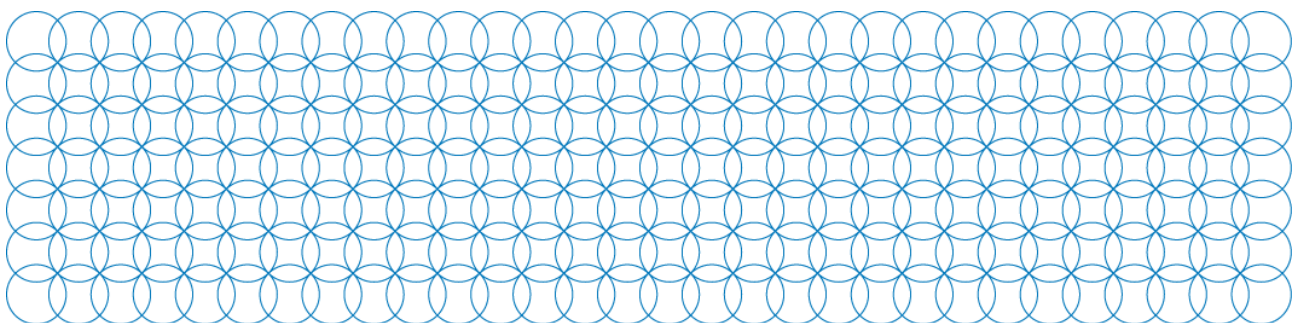


Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the Midlands region

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015



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Ministry
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Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the Midlands region

A consultation produced by the Ministry of Justice. It is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at www.gov.uk/moj

About this consultation

- To:** This consultation is aimed at court users, partners, judiciary, staff and other parties with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the Midlands region.
- Duration:** From 16/07/2015 to 08/10/2015
- Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to:** HMCTS Consultation
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- Additional ways to feed in your views:** If you cannot respond to this paper by means of e-mail or letter, please contact the Ministry of Justice using the details provided above.
- Response paper:** A response to this consultation exercise will be published in due course at: www.gov.uk/moj

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Foreword

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is committed to working with the judiciary to reform our services so they better meet the needs of the public in the modern age. Considerable investment will enable us to transform how justice is delivered, creating a modern, efficient service. Taking this opportunity, however, will require challenging decisions about the current system. One such decision relates to the courts and tribunals estate.

I am responsible for managing the operations of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in the Midlands region, and I have reviewed the court and tribunal estate against the estates principles set out in the national consultation. I have identified buildings where I believe our ability to deliver an efficient service has been compromised by poor facilities, where usage is low and where the building does not provide appropriate value for the public money spent on it.

I have carefully considered the impact of the proposed changes – both locally and across the Midlands region. This consultation is an opportunity for the public to use their knowledge of their local areas to review and help us with our proposals.

Of course, staff would be affected by these proposed changes. Although the impact will be limited, I will make sure this is managed properly. Any transition to new arrangements will take place in a fair and transparent manner in consultation with the Departmental Trade Union.

I understand that these proposals could result in some people having longer journeys to the courts and tribunals. I am committed to working with rural communities to provide alternative ways for the public to access the justice system. These could include the use of civic or other public buildings for occasional hearings, video links or telephone or paper hearings to avoid travel altogether. It is vital we understand the demand for alternative provision as we plan services for the future.

I am keen to hear people's views on the different ways they would like to interact with their courts and tribunals, particularly from those in rural communities. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

Lucy Garrod

**Delivery Director
HM Courts & Tribunals Service Midlands**

Introduction

This consultation for the Midlands is part of a national consultation on the future of the court and tribunal estate in England and Wales. The national consultation document provides important information about the reform of courts and tribunals and how we have decided which buildings to consult on. It also includes a full list of the courts and tribunals we are consulting on and our other plans to integrate courts into existing buildings within a local area.

You should make sure you read the national consultation document alongside this.

The national consultation sets out:

- the requirement for changes to the estate;
- the utilisation levels across the estate;
- the accompanying Impact Assessment; and
- implications for local justice areas and listing changes.

Responses to questions in both the national consultation and this consultation are welcome but need not be duplicated.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). It is responsible for the administration of the criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales¹ and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It operates as a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

In March 2014, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and the Senior President of Tribunals announced details of a programme of reform for the courts and tribunals. This will improve the court and tribunal estate, deliver greater use of technology, modernise practices and processes, and improve services for our users.

At the heart of this programme are the use of technology and the principle of proportionality. Straightforward, transactional matters (such as the administration of probate or pleading guilty and paying a fine) can be dealt with using digital technology to make the processes as straightforward as filing a tax return, or renewing car tax online. Straightforward cases do not necessarily need face to face hearings; judges will be able to reserve the full proceedings of a court hearing for the more sensitive or complex cases. Modern technology can be used not just to make the justice system more accessible but also to reduce the costs of the whole justice system by not requiring extensive transportation of prisoners for bail hearings, or the police to take full days off their priority work to sit in a court room.

¹ Some tribunals which are part of HMCTS in England are devolved to the Welsh Government in Wales.

Ahead of full implementation of the reform programme, we are seeking views on the closure of courts and tribunals which we believe do not meet our ideas of how best to deliver justice in the future.

Access to justice

We recognise that the public should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings at courts and tribunals. We also know, however, that in an increasingly digital age, the public expect to be able to engage with any service through a variety of channels, and many prefer to do that digitally. They do not always want or need to attend hearings in person. Delivering effective access to justice does not necessarily mean providing access to a building. This challenges the assumption that there needs to be a court or tribunal in every local area.

We already have well established alternative ways that users can access the justice system. There are examples of this: enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link, processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link, and users in some jurisdictions having cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or on papers, meaning that they do not need to attend a hearing in person at all. Where attendance at a hearing is needed other civic or public buildings could be used for hearings where security requirements are low.

These types of alternative provision could be particularly useful in rural communities and/or areas with limited public transport. We are very keen to hear views on alternative provision, for example video link in civic or other public buildings.

Deciding which courts to include in the proposals

In order to achieve a radical transformation of the justice system, any investment must be targeted and sequenced across all three key areas of ICT, estates and business processes to create the efficiencies that will allow HM Courts & Tribunals Service to modernise its current practices and to adopt more streamlined ways of working. We are therefore, as a first priority, addressing the current surplus capacity within the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate. This will enable us to use the remaining estate more intelligently and flexibly, to reduce our running costs, to focus our investment on improving the estate we need for the future and to increase the multifunctional court space – allowing different court and tribunal jurisdictions to share locations. The intention is that capital receipts from the sale of any surplus assets would be reinvested as part of the funding for the reform programme.

To ensure we deliver business effectively and meet our future strategic requirements, HM Courts & Tribunals Service has applied a set of principles against which the proposals in this consultation were developed.

The principles are:

Ensuring Access to Justice

- To ensure continued access to justice when assessing the impact of possible closures on both professional and lay court and tribunal users, taking into account journey times for users, the challenges of rural access and any mitigating action, including having facilities at local civic centres and other buildings to ensure local access, modern ICT and more flexible listing, when journeys will be significantly increased.

- To take into account the needs of users and in particular, victims, witnesses and those who are vulnerable.
- To support the requirements of other agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service, Social Services, Police Forces and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

Delivering Value for Money

- To reduce the current and future cost of running the estate.
- To maximise the capital receipts from surplus estate for reinvestment in HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

Enabling Efficiency in the longer term

- To reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.
- To move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.
- To increase the ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the Civil, Family and Tribunal (CFT) jurisdictions.
- To move towards an estate that provides dedicated hearing centres, seeking opportunities to concentrate back office function where they can be carried out most efficiently.
- To improve the efficient use of the estate by seeking to improve whole system efficiency, taking advantage of modernised communication methods (wi-fi and video links) and adopting business processes to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- To increase the efficient use of the estate wherever possible irrespective of current administrative boundaries.

Responding to the consultation

We are keen to obtain views on the proposals to change the provision of court and tribunal estate and how we can make sure the public can still access the justice system. We have committed to consider each response. The responses will help us make sure that the courts and tribunals are based where the work is and that communities can access the justice system and that cases are heard in buildings with suitable facilities.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office. It will run for 12 weeks.

This consultation and the consultation stage Impact Assessment are also available at www.gov.uk/moj.

The proposals

This consultation proposes the closure of the following courts² and tribunals:

- Birmingham Youth Court
- Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court
- Buxton Magistrates' and County Court
- Corby Magistrates' Court
- Grantham Magistrates' Court
- Hinckley Magistrates' Court
- Kettering County Court
- Kettering Magistrates' Court
- Sandwell Magistrates' Court
- Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court
- Skegness Magistrates' Court
- Solihull Magistrates' Court
- Stafford Magistrates' Court
- Worksop Magistrates' Court

In addition, there are three integrations set out below.

Travel times

As part of our work to assess the impact of these proposals on the public, we have included information on the distance by road between the court proposed for closure and the court where the work would transfer. There are also details of public transport costs and journey times which are provided as a guide only and are subject to change. This information does not illustrate the potential impact on travel times for the public in the catchment area of the court. We have developed a model to analyse this.

² Reference in this document to magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and combined courts refers to buildings (a singular structure providing the physical hearing rooms for criminal, civil, family and tribunal cases) which house that activity in a particular location. Strictly, legislation provides that there is a single crown court, county court and family court.

The model analyses the current catchment area of the court and the population within it, calculated to the smallest geographical area available with current national statistics (known as a Lower Super Output Area or LSOA). The model then calculates the travel time from the centre of each LSOA to the current court separately by car and public transport and then calculates the proportion of the population who could travel to court in set time bands. The model then calculates new journey times based on the location of the court where the work would be heard should the court close. These travel times are displayed in a table format within each site proposal

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the Midlands, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

Integrations

To provide users with an overview of all proposed change to the estate, the consultation also includes information on where we plan to integrate courts within the same town or city. Local stakeholders will be notified of these changes when they take place.

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service moves work to allow jurisdictions to operate from fewer locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining local jurisdictions, with a limited impact on service provision. Integrations are managed by HM Courts & Tribunals Service operational leads as part of the normal running of the business. These have been identified using the principles set out in the 'Introduction.' The proposals for closures in the region should be considered in the context of these integrations.

In addition to the proposed closures in this consultation the following integrations will be taking place or are already underway in the Midlands region:

Chesterfield County Court to be integrated within Chesterfield Magistrates' Court (Chesterfield Justice Centre)

Chesterfield County Court co-located into the Chesterfield Magistrates' Court Building in Tapton Lane, Chesterfield in January this year. This has provided increased flexibility and improved utilisation of HM Courts and Tribunals estate. The co-location has had minimal impact on customers and was funded by the region. The building is now referred to as Chesterfield Justice Centre.

Chesterfield Tribunal (St Mary's Court) to be integrated within Chesterfield Magistrates' Court (Chesterfield Justice Centre)

Enabling works are currently underway at Chesterfield Justice Centre to facilitate the co-location of Chesterfield Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) later this year. The co-location will have minimal impact on customers as the buildings are very close to each other, and facilities at the Justice Centre are far better for all tribunal users than is the case in the current building. This will provide increased flexibility and improved utilisation of HM Courts & Tribunals estate by corralling resources into one justice centre.

Hereford County Court and Family to be integrated within Hereford Magistrates' Court

Hereford County Court and Family Court moved into Hereford Magistrates' Court at the end of March this year. The co-location has had minimal impact on court users and was funded by the region. This has provided increased flexibility and improved utilisation of HM Courts and Tribunals estate and will reduce ongoing running costs while maintaining local service to court users.

Telford County Court and Family Court to be integrated within Telford Magistrates' Court

The centralisation of workload and court hearings in one location in Telford would provide increased flexibility and allow improved utilisation of the court and tribunal estate. These changes will have minimal impact on customers as both court centres are of similar standard and are located next to each other.

Birmingham Youth Court

Proposal

It is proposed that Birmingham Youth Court is closed and its workload transferred to Birmingham Magistrates' Court. Some enabling works will be required to accommodate the level of youth facilities at Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

Combining all resources in one location would provide an improved efficient service to be delivered by Birmingham Magistrates' Court. This location will then be able to offer good quality accommodation and facilities for HM Court & Tribunals Service users with no additional travel.

During last year it was necessary to move Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) Tribunal hearings from Temple Court (upon expiry of lease) to Birmingham Youth Court. This is a temporary measure only and forms part of a wider Birmingham estates strategy.

Workload

The Judicial Leadership Group agreed a court schedule to take effect from 1 July 2011 to reduce the number of youth court sitting days from five to three. During the 2014/15 financial year, the court was used for approximately 35% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Birmingham Youth Court was purpose built in 1928 and has been extended on subsequent occasions. The court accommodates Pre Sentencing Reviews, remand hearings and youth trials. There are six courtrooms, none of which have secure docks. There is direct access from the custody area to three of the courtrooms (one on the ground floor, one on the first floor and one on the second floor).

There are three cells; two on the ground floor and one on the first floor (although the one on the first floor is considered to be a holding room). These are all in a poor condition and require refurbishment.

There is no van dock at Birmingham Youth Court; this results in cellular vehicles having to park on the road outside the custody area to collect and deliver defendants in custody. This exposes escort agency staff to the risk of injury from the prisoners and interference with prisoners by members of the public.

The building shares a fire escape route with an adjacent public house. If there is an incident in the public area and the building needs to be evacuated the Youth Offending Team based in the court need to go through the cells to get out of the building.

Defence solicitors often have clients listed to appear in both the adult court and youth court on the same day. This means that advocates frequently have to move between buildings causing inconvenience to the parties and delay to hearings.

Birmingham Magistrates' Court building contains 21 courtrooms of varying sizes over two floors. Four of the courtrooms have full security docks and five more have docks with direct cell access. Not all courtrooms are now in use and court 5 is regularly used by tribunals. The cells in the Birmingham Magistrates' Court are split into two locations with 19 cells in the main corridor and a further four cells in an area off the main corridor. The Birmingham

Magistrates' Court has a secure van dock; prisoners are brought in secure cell vans directly into the custody suite. Enabling works would be needed to fit a new curtain to an existing dock to make the courtroom appear less intimidating to young offenders. One existing large cell would need to be converted into two interview rooms and three existing interview rooms would be converted into two cells and a WC. This would facilitate the separation of adult and youth offenders.

Location

Birmingham Youth Court is situated on the corner of Steelhouse Lane and Newton Street opposite the Birmingham Magistrates' Court. The youth court entrance is approximately 200 metres from the magistrates' court entrance and there is, therefore, no travel impact to consider.

Staff implications

There are no HM Courts & Tribunal staff permanently based at Birmingham Youth Court.

There are seven Youth Offending staff based in the building and they would need to be relocated.

As a temporary measure some Social Security, Child Support (SSCS) Tribunal hearings have been relocated to Birmingham Youth Court. This will continue until a new location is available.

Other information

The Birmingham Youth Court building is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs of Birmingham Youth Court were approximately £245,000.

The building is not listed, but is in a conservation area.

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in Staffordshire, the others being located in Cannock, Stafford and Newcastle-under-Lyme (North Staffordshire Justice Centre). Criminal and private prosecution hearings for both youth and adult cases take place within the court building; this work utilises two courtrooms each day with a third one operating one day a week. The court is also used for family hearings; this work utilises one courtroom four times per week. There is no cell accommodation located within the court, however police cells are utilised in the adjacent police station. The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate facilities for defence witnesses. There are a number of access issues in parts of the building for people with disabilities, including in the main body of the court, the witness box and in the public seating areas in the courtrooms.

It is proposed that Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court should close and the workload be redistributed between Derby Magistrates' Court, Cannock Magistrates' Court and North Staffordshire Justice Centre, depending on the users' geographical location. There is sufficient capacity at all the receiving locations to absorb the workload without any enabling works.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court accommodates legal advisers and ushers; the support staff with responsibility for processing work from Burton-upon-Trent are currently located in Stafford. Should Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court close it would enable criminal and private cases to be relocated to other courts with better facilities within both Staffordshire and Derbyshire. This would provide a higher degree of flexibility as well as allowing improved utilisation of the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate.

The availability of other court buildings within a relatively short distance of Burton-upon-Trent offering good quality facilities would maintain access to justice for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Accommodation

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court is part Grade II listed, with the original building being built in 1910. An extension was built in 1991 to provide three courtrooms, two of which are multi-functional. It has a total of four courtrooms.

The facilities are outdated and HM Courts & Tribunals Service is dependent on the police authority for the provision of cell accommodation. On occasions this agreement has had to be withdrawn to enable cell refurbishment; once for several months. At this time custody cases were successfully relocated and dealt with at Cannock Magistrates' Court.

Facilities for staff and judiciary are considered adequate; there is a maintenance backlog with some redecoration required. There are some access issues in parts of the building for people with disabilities, including in the main body of the court, the witness box and in the public seating areas in the courtrooms.

The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate facilities for defence witnesses. There are video link facilities for intimidated and vulnerable witnesses

to give their evidence, along with a Prison to Court Video link (PCVL) from courtroom 2, which could be transferred to another building. The court has four interview rooms available for private consultation.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 51% of its capacity.

Location

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court is within walking distance from the town centre. Transportation is good with regular bus services to local towns and there is a railway station within walking distance of the court building.

Burton-upon-Trent to Cannock is 25 miles and the journey would take approximately 45 minutes by car; one hour 15 minutes by bus (with one change) and £6.10 for an all day bus pass; or an average of one hour 30 minutes by train costing £18.40 (Anytime Return).

Burton-upon-Trent to Derby is 12 miles and the journey would take approximately 25 minutes by car; 45 minutes by bus and £6.10 for an all day bus pass; or 15 minutes by train costing £7.30 (Anytime Return).

Burton-upon-Trent to Newcastle-under-Lyme is 35 miles and the journey would take approximately 50 minutes by car; two hours 30 minutes by bus (with two changes) and £6.10 for an all day bus pass; or an average of one hour 15 minutes by train costing £16.20 (Anytime Return).

The above timings and costings are indicative of journeys between court buildings but it would be the geographical location of the court user that would be taken into consideration when transferring the work.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	52%
	30-60min	11%		30-60min	39%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	9%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	21%
	60-120min	28%		60-120min	55%
	>120min	1%		>120min	13%
	no data	3%		no data	11%

Staff implications

There are five part time ushers and five legal advisors based at Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs for Burton-upon-Trent Magistrates' Court were approximately £196,000.

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court

Proposal

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court is located in one building. There are two other magistrates' courts and two county courts in Derbyshire located in Chesterfield and Derby.

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court has two courtrooms and no cells. General road traffic cases, pre-sentence reviews, short trials and occasionally youth, family and tribunal hearings are listed here, but the court is underused.

It is proposed that Buxton Magistrates' and County Court is closed and the workload transferred to Chesterfield Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court hearing centre, which is able to accommodate the workload without any enabling works.

The Buxton Magistrates' and County Court building has received a steady rate of investment for repairs over the years in order to maintain the building satisfactorily. The facilities, however, are sub-standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and court users.

The court building is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The two courtrooms are located on the first floor. Access to both of the courtrooms is via two flights of stairs. There is no public lift. Wheelchair users are only able to gain access to the courtrooms by using the magistrates' entrance at the rear of the building whereby assistance has to be provided in order to use the magistrates' lift.

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court is a leasehold building with two courtrooms and no cells. There is only one waiting room available so parties cannot be segregated. Vulnerable witnesses have to use a waiting room within the Citizens Advice Bureau / Witness Service building which is situated across the road from the court building. There are two consultation rooms within the courthouse, but the overall condition of these rooms is poor.

Should the court close it would result in the workload being moved to a larger court centre and would enable the court to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. Chesterfield Magistrates', County and Family Court is a modern Private Finance Initiative (PFI) purpose built court building, which opened in 2003 and offers excellent quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Accommodation

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court is a leasehold building with two courtrooms and no cells. In the event that a person is sentenced to imprisonment an arrangement is in place for the police to collect and take the individual to the local police station prior to removal to custody.

There is one waiting room available in the building, so the desired segregation of parties cannot be achieved within the courthouse. A vulnerable witness waiting room is available within the Citizens Advice Bureau Witness Service building which is situated outside the courthouse and across the road. This room is also used for video link cases. The cost of the use of this room to HM Courts & Tribunals Service is £1,625 per annum.

There are two consultation rooms within the courthouse, but the overall condition of these rooms is poor.

The receiving venue, Chesterfield Magistrates', County and Family Court, is fully compliant with health and safety regulations. It has excellent accommodation facilities and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Chesterfield Magistrates', County and Family Court has seven courtrooms. There are separate waiting areas for prosecution and defence witnesses. The building provides improved accommodation for our victim and witness support services, National Probation Service and Crown Prosecution Service colleagues, providing workstations and offices.

Workload

Court sessions are held daily at Buxton Magistrates' and County Court. Two court sessions are held on Monday morning, Monday afternoon, Wednesday morning and Wednesday afternoon. One court session is held on Tuesday morning, Tuesday afternoon, Thursday morning and Friday morning. One court session is held once per month on Thursday afternoon. One court session is held once per fortnight on Friday afternoon.

Cases heard include adult trials, sentencing, Guilty Anticipated Plea (GAP) hearings, Not Guilty Anticipated Plea (NGAP) hearings, private prosecutions, youth cases, road traffic police led prosecutions, family matters and occasional tribunal hearings.

Custody cases are not listed.

Buxton County Court sits on one day per month.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Buxton Magistrates' and County Court was utilised for approximately 27% of its capacity.

Location

Chesterfield Magistrates', County and Family Court is situated approximately 25 miles from Buxton Magistrates' and County Court.

The journey time by car is approximately 50 minutes. There is adequate local authority owned public car parking available opposite the court building.

The travel time by train between Buxton and Chesterfield takes approximately two hours and 15 minutes. The approximate cost of an Anytime Day Return is £32.30. Trains between Buxton and Chesterfield run at least hourly, and require one to two changes.

A bus service operates between Buxton and Chesterfield. The travel time by bus is, on average, one hour 20 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	73%	By Car	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	27%		30-60min	56%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	41%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	23%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	32%		60-120min	21%
	>120min	2%		>120min	73%
	no data	3%		no data	6%

Staff implications

There are eight members of staff permanently based at Buxton Magistrates' and County Court.

Other information

The tenure on Buxton Magistrates' and County Court is leasehold, which expires in 2130.

The 2014/2015 operating costs for Buxton Magistrates' Court were approximately £89,000.

No other agencies are based on site at the court building.

Buxton Magistrates' and County Court building is leased from Derbyshire County Council. It is located within a Derbyshire County Council owned building and as such it is not part of the Ministry of Justice estate, nor does it fall within the remit of the Derbyshire Private Finance Initiative PFI contract. The building was erected in 1880, and it is shared with the Buxton Museum and Art Gallery. Part of the building is unoccupied.

Corby Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Corby Magistrates' Court was built in 1958 and is one of four magistrates' courts in Northamptonshire; the others being Kettering, Wellingborough and Northampton. The court deals with criminal court business including the hearing of trials, breaches of orders and pre-sentence reviews. The building houses two courtrooms which are used twice a week.

It is proposed that Corby Magistrates' Court closes and the workload be transferred to Wellingborough Magistrates' Court. Only one of the two courtrooms at Corby has a secure dock, there is no secure van dock and all of the cells available are owned by the police authority. There is no separate facility for vulnerable victims and witnesses.

There are no staff permanently based at Corby. The current arrangements for staffing involve legal advisors travelling from Northampton on the days when hearings are conducted. Some enabling works at Wellingborough Magistrates' Court would be required (minor decoration and removals) to facilitate this move.

As part of the wider consultation for HM Courts & Tribunals Service reforms there is also a proposal to close Kettering Magistrates' Court and move the workload to Wellingborough Magistrates' Court. Details of this proposal can be found at page 24 of this document.

Should Corby Magistrates' Court close and the workload be transferred to Wellingborough Magistrates' Court, it would facilitate a more flexible approach to the listing of cases and help to meet customer and workflow demands more effectively and efficiently.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Accommodation

Corby Magistrates' Court houses two courtrooms, only one of which has a secure dock. The court has access to a total of 14 cells which are owned by the police authority and rarely used by the court following a recent change in listing practices; only one of the 14 cells has a secure link to the dock. The court has a dedicated witness room, however, there is no separate facility for vulnerable victims and witnesses. There is no secure van dock for defendants in custody and there is no separate access to the court building for defendants on bail, victims and witnesses.

Wellingborough Magistrates' Court has the benefit of four video link rooms and three courtrooms with nine cells, two of which have direct and secure access to the court.

Workload

Corby Magistrates' Court houses two courtrooms which are used on two days each week to hear criminal trials, pre-sentencing reviews and breaches of court orders. The court was used for approximately 33% of its capacity during the 2014/15 financial year.

Location

Corby Magistrates' Court is situated within the central business district of Corby. There are frequent bus services and trains between Wellingborough and Corby. The train journey takes

approximately 20 minutes and an Open Return Ticket costs £11.80 at the time of publishing. The distance between the court buildings is approximately 17 miles and the journey time is approximately 30 minutes by car. Buses run every 30 minutes and take approximately one hour 15 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	71%	By Car	0-30min	10%
	30-60min	29%		30-60min	84%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	7%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	29%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	14%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	45%		60-120min	60%
	>120min	5%		>120min	21%
	no data	7%		no data	8%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Corby Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Corby Magistrates' Court is a freehold property. The building is unoccupied save for the two days per week when the court sits.

The operating costs for Corby Magistrates' Court during 2014/15 were approximately £80,000.

Grantham Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Grantham Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts within Lincolnshire, the other three being Skegness, Boston and Lincoln. This court lists criminal and county court work for seven days out of ten each fortnight.

It is proposed that Grantham Magistrates' Court is closed and that the workload and resources be transferred to Lincoln Magistrates' Court and Lincoln County Court. No enabling works are required to facilitate this move.

Grantham Magistrates' Court building is split over two separate buildings. The main building houses three courtrooms across two floors. The second building is located at the side of the main building and houses a non secure courtroom and waiting facilities. Because of its separation and non secure status, it is only used once a fortnight for civil work. This means that additional security and ushers are needed to run this building on these days.

Should Grantham Magistrates' Court close it would provide increased listing flexibility and enable the receiving court to be more responsive with the throughput of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can then be delivered with courts being utilised efficiently.

Lincoln Magistrates' Court and Lincoln County Court both have excellent facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users and have the capacity to absorb the workload. These two sites operate the full range of hearings for both county and magistrates' courts, including crime, family, civil and tribunal sessions and the majority of the county's staff are based at the Lincoln courts.

Accommodation

Grantham Magistrates' Court building is split over two separate sites. The main building houses three courtrooms across two floors (two main courtrooms and a small courtroom used for small party civil or family work), facilities for the Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service and Witness Services. There are waiting rooms on both floors. There is an office space but no HM Courts & Tribunal Service staff are based at this site nor staff from other agencies. HM Courts & Tribunal Service staff travel to the court from other locations to operate the courts on sitting days.

The Lincoln Magistrates' Court and Lincoln County Court buildings offer improved accommodation and facilities; these include a total of nine courtrooms and two district judges' chambers. There are two tribunal hearing rooms, one of which is periodically used as a courtroom. Lincoln Magistrates' Court building houses a catering facility for the use of all parties. It is centrally located close to the bus and train stations in Lincoln.

Workload

Grantham Magistrates' Court is open on seven of every ten days on a fortnightly basis. Utilisation has decreased in recent years with several areas of work moving out of the court. During the 2014/15 financial year, the court was utilised for approximately 24% of its capacity.

Location

Grantham Magistrates' Court is located 30 miles away from Lincoln Magistrates' and County Courts. The journey by car takes approximately 50 minutes and there is a bus and train service to Lincoln serving the surrounding catchment areas, with travel costing a maximum of £14.60 for an anytime return ticket by train. The trains run hourly and the journey takes an average of one hour 15 minutes each way.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	4%
	30-60min	11%		30-60min	92%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	3%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	19%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	37%		30-60min	6%
	60-120min	33%		60-120min	78%
	>120min	9%		>120min	14%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

Staff implications

There is one member of HM Courts & Tribunal Service staff based at Grantham Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Grantham Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Grantham Magistrates' Court were approximately £237,000.

Hinckley Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Hinckley Magistrates' Court is one of three magistrates' courts within the Leicestershire and Rutland area, Leicester and Loughborough being the two other centres. This county is also served by Leicester Crown Court.

This consultation proposes to close Hinckley Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Leicester Magistrates' Court which was built in 1992. Minor enabling works would be required to accommodate storage of files.

Hinckley Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms and opens twice a week on Tuesday and Thursday, and utilisation is low. Workload has continued to decline in recent years despite the transfer of work from Coalville Magistrates' Court in July 2011.

Leicester Magistrates' Court has 10 courtrooms, with seven having direct links to cells and has sufficient capacity to absorb the workload from Hinckley Magistrates' Court.

Accommodation

Hinckley Magistrates' Court was built in 1999 and does not now meet the current requirement in provision for witnesses; the court does not offer separate access for vulnerable and intimidated victims or witnesses. Although there is a dedicated witness room the court does not have the separate facility of a dedicated vulnerable witness waiting room. The court has video link facilities.

The court has three courtrooms which are supported by five cells, two of which provide a direct link to a courtroom with a secure dock. The dock holds a maximum of three defendants.

The receiving court, Leicester Magistrates' Court, has 10 courtrooms with seven having direct links to cells; within the court there are 19 cells. 12 cells are designated male only, four are designated as female and youth cells only and three are undesignated toilet cells. There is a custody vehicle dock which is secure and unobserved by the public.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Hinckley Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 21% of its capacity.

Location

Hinckley is 14 miles from Leicester. The bus service is a direct route between Hinckley and Leicester which operates every 20 minutes with the journey taking approximately 50 minutes and an All Day bus ticket costs £6.20.

Hinckley railway station is on the Nuneaton to Leicester section of the Birmingham to Peterborough line and has regular services between Birmingham and Leicester via Narborough and Nuneaton. Trains between Hinckley and Leicester run every 21 minutes and cost £11.50 return. The journey time by train is approximately 20 minutes.

The road system between these locations is good and travel by car takes approximately 30 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	98%	By Car	0-30min	66%
	30-60min	2%		30-60min	34%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	54%	By Public Transport	0-30min	4%
	30-60min	24%		30-60min	51%
	60-120min	20%		60-120min	42%
	>120min	2%		>120min	3%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are three members of staff on site at Hinckley Magistrates' Court working reduced hours.

There are also 21 civilian enforcement officers based at the court who will be provided with alternative accommodation should the closure go ahead.

Other information

Hinckley Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The operating costs for the financial year 2014-15 at Hinckley Magistrates' Court were approximately £240,000.

Kettering County Court

Proposal

Kettering County Court is one of two county courts in Northamptonshire, the other being Northampton Combined Court.

It is proposed that Kettering County Court is closed and its workload transferred to Northampton Crown Court, County Court and Family Court hearing centre. Enabling works would be required to facilitate the workload from Kettering.

The current Kettering County Court building is not fit for purpose and would require major investment for the delivery of modern justice.

Should Kettering County Court close it would enable work to be moved to a larger, modern, purpose built court centre which offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users. This will also enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively.

Accommodation

Kettering County Court was built in 1930, and has two courtrooms. The court is split over two floors and does not provide lift access between floors. The ground floor is not on one level and has a number of small steps which creates difficulties for anyone with mobility issues. Currently, where persons attending are unable to use the stairs, the hearing has to take place in a small ground floor interview room.

There are two rooms for district judges but only one room is able to be used for hearings due to restricted access.

There is no separate public toilet; staff and public share the same facilities.

The court utilisation is low with only one hearing room being available for use this provides limited listing as only one judge can sit on any given day.

Northampton Crown Court, County Court and Family Court hearing centre is centrally located. The centre offers improved accommodation and facilities; these include a total of six courtrooms and four district judge chambers with ample consultation rooms. There is a lift which enables access to the upper floor for those with mobility issues. Enabling works would be required; these would include creating a multi-jurisdictional open plan office, an additional courtroom and a centralised storage facility.

Workload

The court building is open and staffed two days per week; normally Wednesday and Thursday for district judge hearings, the majority of which are rent and mortgage possessions. On those days the public counter is open on an appointment only basis. Utilisation levels at this court are low; during the 2014/15 financial year, it was used for 20% of its capacity.

All other civil hearings are heard at Northampton Crown Court, County Court, and Family Court hearing centre.

Location

Kettering County Court is situated in Kettering town centre. There is no public car park at the court. There is a municipal pay and display car park within a 10 minute walk at a cost of £3.00 for up to three hours or £6.00 for a full day.

Travel from Kettering to Northampton takes approximately 30 minutes by car, one hour by bus and two hours by train. Parking at Northampton is charged at £2.40 for up to three hours and £7.00 all day. A Day Return by bus costs £8.40 and a Day Return by train £22.80.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	84%	By Car	0-30min	31%
	30-60min	16%		30-60min	58%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	10%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	19%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	25%		60-120min	60%
	>120min	9%		>120min	22%
	no data	3%		no data	6%

Staff implications

There are no HM Courts & Tribunal Service staff or other agencies based at Kettering County Court.

Other information

Kettering County Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Kettering County Court were approximately £104,000.

Kettering Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Kettering Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in Northamptonshire; the others are located in Corby, Northampton and Wellingborough. The court deals with adult and youth criminal court business and Tribunal matters.

It is proposed that Kettering Magistrates' Court closes and the workload be transferred to Wellingborough Magistrates' Court, where some enabling works would be required to move furniture and for redecoration.

Should Kettering Magistrates' Court close the consolidation of workload and resources into one court will enable the court to be more responsive and flexible to workflow demands. The throughput and listing of cases will improve which in turn will deliver enhanced customer service and improved courtroom utilisation.

As part of the wider consultation for HM Courts & Tribunals Service reforms there is also a proposal to close Corby Magistrates' Court and transfer the work to Wellingborough Magistrates' Court, creating a central point of access to justice for the area. Details of this proposal can be found at page 15 of this document.

Wellingborough Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals users. Wellingborough Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms and nine cells, two of which have a direct link to the courtroom. Workload from Kettering Magistrates' Court would easily be accommodated at this site.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Accommodation

Kettering Magistrates' Court was built in 1967. The building has two courtrooms; both have a secure dock and access to five cells which are owned by the police authority. The building has two dedicated witness waiting rooms, however, this facility is not suitable for vulnerable victims and witnesses. There is no separate access to the court building for victims and witnesses and no secure van dock for defendants in custody.

Wellingborough Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals users. It has three courtrooms and nine cells, two of which have a direct link to the courtroom. There is a secure van dock for defendants in custody.

Workload

Kettering Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms and sits on four days per week. During 2014/15 it had an approximate utilisation level of 64%.

Location

Wellingborough Magistrates' Court is situated eight miles away from Kettering Magistrates' Court.

The journey time by a car is approximately 20 minutes.

The travel time by train from Kettering to Wellingborough takes approximately 10 minutes, and costs £3.30 each way.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	98%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	2%		30-60min	100%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	66%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	2%
	60-120min	6%		60-120min	86%
	>120min	0%		>120min	12%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff or other agencies based at Kettering Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Kettering Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Kettering Magistrates' Court were approximately £82,000.

The closure of Kettering Magistrates' Court formed part of the Courts Estates Rationalisation Programme in 2010. It was proposed that Kettering Magistrates' Court be closed, and that the workload be transferred to Corby and Wellingborough Magistrates' Courts. The decision was made to retain Kettering Magistrates' Court due to concerns that Corby and Wellingborough Magistrates' Court; whose utilisation at that time was 70.5% and 85.9% respectively, did not have the capacity to absorb the workload. Daventry and Towcester Magistrates' Courts were closed and Kettering Magistrates' Court was retained. Since then workload has continued to reduce. Wellingborough Magistrates' Court now has the capacity to absorb the workload from Kettering.

Sandwell Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Sandwell Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in the Black Country; the others being at Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts. It has five courtrooms but utilisation levels are low.

It is proposed that Sandwell Magistrates' Court is closed and its workload is primarily transferred to Walsall Magistrates' Court, which would be able to accommodate the additional work within its current building. However, dependant on the geographical location of the customers, some work would move to Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court or Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

Should Sandwell Magistrates' Court close it would result in the majority of the workload being moved to a court centre of similar size allowing the court to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases. This would meet customer and workflow demands more effectively and improve court utilisation and efficiency. Walsall Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Court & Tribunals Service users. Currently there are individual administrative teams at Sandwell Magistrates' Court and Walsall Magistrates' Court. The teams operate independently to deliver the service within their own court. The combining of all available resources into one site will enable HM Courts & Tribunals Service to improve performance and productivity while maximising use of accommodation.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Accommodation

Sandwell Magistrates' Court was purpose built in 1989 and is in a conservation area. Sandwell Magistrates' Court has five courts. Three of the courtrooms have secure docks and there is direct access from the custody area to all courts. There are eight cells, three of which can accommodate category A prisoners.

Walsall Magistrates' Court was built in 1974 and has six courts and 10 cells. In all other respects the two buildings are of equally good standard, however, both courts are underused – during the 2013/14 financial year, Walsall Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 57% of its capacity leaving enough capacity to easily absorb the work from Sandwell Magistrates' Court.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Sandwell Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 47% of its capacity.

Location

Sandwell Magistrates' Court is situated approximately 10 miles from Walsall Magistrates' Court. There are frequent train and bus services. The travel time by train is approximately 50 minutes or it is a bus journey of approximately 55 minutes each way.

The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	100%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	41%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	75%
	60-120min	11%		60-120min	23%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 16 administrative, four legal, and one legal admin support staff based at Sandwell Magistrates' Court.

There are some National Probation Service staff based in the building; the Black Country Enforcement staff use the car park facilities only.

Other Information

Sandwell Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs of Sandwell Magistrates' Court were approximately £407,000.

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court is one of two magistrates' courts within Shropshire, the other being Telford Magistrates' Court. The court lists and hears criminal adult, civil and tribunal work. Criminal adult work is listed twice a week occupying two courts. Civil and family work is listed two days a week and tribunal work four days a week.

It is proposed that Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court close and the workload be transferred to Telford Magistrates' Court. Some enabling works will be required at Telford to accommodate the judiciary and workload from Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court.

Should Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court close, it would enable the movement of work to Telford Magistrates' Court which would provide increased flexibility with the throughput and listing of cases and improve courtroom utilisation, which is currently low. It would also increase the ability to respond to workflow demands which would result in an improved service to court and tribunal users.

Telford Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities which will be further improved through the proposed enabling works. There are also excellent transport links between Shrewsbury and Telford.

Accommodation

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court has a total of four courtrooms and 13 cells, all of which are operational.

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court was built in 1994. Facilities are in good condition for both staff and magistrates. The court has separate waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but no separate facilities for defence witnesses. Two courtrooms have a secure dock, one has video link facilities and the remaining courtrooms are both multi-functional rooms. There are video link facilities for intimidated and vulnerable witnesses to give their evidence. The court has five interview rooms available for private consultation. The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Telford Magistrates Court has six courtrooms and 15 cells; four of which have easy access or direct links to the courtrooms. The enabling works will make sure that the hearings and workload from Shrewsbury Magistrates can be accommodated. The building is in good condition and there are no issues in relation to the building fabric or health and safety.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 28% of its capacity.

Location

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court is situated on the perimeter of the county town and is a short distance from the town centre. Transportation is good with regular bus services to local towns and a mainline station. There is a local bus service from Shrewsbury town centre to Telford with an average journey time of approximately 40 minutes which costs £5.50 for a return journey. The journey by train is 20 minutes and costs £5.50 for a return journey.

The journey time by a car is approximately 20 minutes from Shrewsbury to Telford, and there is local authority parking available.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	61%	By Car	0-30min	47%
	30-60min	39%		30-60min	52%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	20%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	30%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	39%		60-120min	71%
	>120min	6%		>120min	10%
	no data	4%		no data	7%

Staffing implications

There are three staff based at Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court; the legal advisors having already moved to Telford Magistrates' Court last year.

Other information

Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The operating costs for Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court during 2014/15 were approximately £287,000.

Should Shrewsbury Magistrates' Court close, HM Courts & Tribunals Service will complete enabling works at the building and convert it into a Crown Court; with two courtrooms, one multi functional hearing room, cells and wheelchair lift. The current Crown Court building in Shrewsbury is no longer fit for purpose and the lease expires in September 2016. Facilities on site do not provide separate accommodation or entrance for vulnerable victim and witness and it does not provide separate defence and prosecution waiting rooms. To prevent witness interference, access is often through the Crown Court administration offices. There is no separate entrance for defendants in custody who alight the custody vehicle and are then escorted on foot through an area within the Shirehall which is shared with Shropshire County Council .The courtrooms are of a poor standard and the roof leaks during periods of heavy rainfall.

Skegness Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Skegness Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in Lincolnshire, the others being Lincoln, Boston and Grantham. The court deals with adult and youth criminal court business.

It is proposed that Skegness Magistrates' Court close and the workload and resources are transferred to Boston Magistrates' Court and Boston County Court and Family Court hearing centre. No enabling works would be required to facilitate this move.

Courtroom utilisation at Skegness is low with two out of the three available courtrooms being used twice per week on a two week rolling cycle. The combining of all available resources will enable a more responsive and flexible service with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can then be delivered with all available courtrooms being utilised more efficiently and effectively. The court centre at Boston offers good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service customers.

As part of the wider consultation for HM Courts & Tribunals Service there is also a proposal to close Grantham Magistrates' Court, where the receiving court would be Lincoln Magistrates' Court.

Accommodation

The court was built in 1979 and has a total of three courtrooms, only one of which has a secure dock. The court has two cells which have easy or direct access to the courtroom and HM Courts & Tribunals Service has the use of a further 14 cells belonging to the police authority. Skegness Magistrates' Court has a dedicated witness room, however, this facility is not suitable for vulnerable victims and witnesses and there is no separate access to the courthouse for victims and witnesses.

Boston Magistrates' Court and Boston County Court and Family Court hearing centre has two courtrooms and one district judge hearing room. It has seven cells, one of which has easy and direct access to the courtroom. The building has a secure custody vehicle dock and the route from the custody vehicle to the custody suite is secure and unobserved by the public.

Workload

Skegness Magistrates' Court works on a two week rolling cycle where two out of three courtrooms are utilised on two out of five working days per week. During the 2014/15 financial year, the court was used at approximately 20% of its capacity.

Location

Skegness Magistrates' Court is situated approximately 25 miles away from Boston Magistrates' Court. The journey time by a car is approximately 40 minutes.

The travel time by train from Skegness to Boston takes approximately 40 minutes and an Anytime Day Return ticket costs £10.40.

A bus service operates between Skegness and Boston. The approximate travel time by bus is one hour 10 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	52%	By Car	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	43%		30-60min	54%
	60-120min	5%		60 - 120min	45%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	27%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	19%		30-60min	3%
	60-120min	34%		60-120min	43%
	>120min	21%		>120min	44%
	no data	0%		no data	11%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Skegness Magistrates' Court and staff travel from either Boston Magistrates' Court and Boston County Court and Family Court hearing centre or Lincoln Magistrates' Courts when required.

Other information

Skegness Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Skegness Magistrates' Court were approximately £198,000.

Solihull Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Solihull Magistrates' Court building is no longer used by HM Courts & Tribunals Service. Following a public consultation in 2013, due to the drop in workload, low utilisation and the benefits gained by the centralisation of listing, all magistrates' work was consolidated into Birmingham Magistrates' Court and no work has been heard at Solihull Magistrates' Court since January last year.

It is now proposed that Solihull Magistrates' Court formally close and the work remain at Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

Accommodation

The court building has a total of six courtrooms and 15 cells. There are five formal courtrooms and one multi functional courtroom. Each formal courtroom has a maximum dock capacity of two defendants and two of the courtrooms have a secure dock facility. The court has no van dock which made the management and listing of custodial cases difficult when the court was operational.

The court building has limited facilities for victims and witnesses in that there are no separate waiting facilities for prosecution and defence witnesses. There have been no issues raised or complaints made since HM Courts & Tribunal Service has ceased to list at Solihull Magistrates' Court.

Birmingham Magistrates' Court building contains 21 courtrooms of varying sizes over two floors. Four of the courtrooms have full security docks and five more have docks with direct cell access. Not all courtrooms are now in use and court 5 is regularly used by tribunals. The cells in Birmingham Magistrates' Court are split into two locations with 19 cells in the main corridor and a further four cells in an area off the main corridor. Birmingham Magistrates' Court has a secure van dock and prisoners are brought in secure cell vans directly into the custody suite.

Workload

Solihull Magistrates' Court is no longer being used by HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

Location

The borough of Solihull is bordered by the M6 and the M40 and split by the M42 representing good transport links between Solihull and Birmingham – this being a distance of approximately 20 miles or 30 minutes driving time.

Public transport via train runs on average five times an hour the journey time taking approximately 25 minutes with a daytime return fare cost of £5.50. Alternatively public transport by bus runs every five minutes with an adult fare being £2.20 with an average time of approximately 35 minutes per journey.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	98%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	2%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	28%	By Public Transport	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	68%		30-60min	91%
	60-120min	4%		60-120min	7%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff based at Solihull Magistrates' Court.

The court currently houses a number of National Probation Service officers who are not HM Courts & Tribunal Service staff.

Other information

Due to a decrease in workload, a public consultation was published in July 2013 which proposed criminal workload ceased to be listed at Solihull Magistrates' Court. Upon consideration of all responses received to this consultation, the criminal workload previously heard at Solihull Magistrates' Court was transferred to Birmingham Magistrates' Court.

The building is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs for Solihull Magistrates' Court were approximately £247,000.

Stafford Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Stafford Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts based in Staffordshire, the other three being located in Burton-upon-Trent, Cannock and Newcastle-under-Lyme.

There are no cell facilities at Stafford Magistrates' Court. Therefore HM Courts & Tribunals Service is unable to list any custodial criminal adult or youth work at this site.

It is proposed that Stafford Magistrates' Court closes and hearings moved to North Staffordshire Justice Centre (Newcastle-under-Lyme) or Cannock Magistrates' Court, and the administrative workload and staff be relocated to Stafford Combined Court where some enabling work would be required to accommodate staff and storage.

The movement of work will provide increased flexibility and efficiency and allow improved utilisation of the court and tribunal estate. The impact on court users will be low as a high proportion of the work contained within Stafford Magistrates' Court does not require defendants to attend court.

The availability of other court buildings within a short distance of Stafford will make sure good quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users are available.

Accommodation

Stafford Magistrates' Court was built in 1981. The court has a total of four courtrooms but does not have any cell accommodation.

The facilities are out dated and the non-availability of cells limits the use of the building. Prison to Court Video Link equipment (PCVL) is not available at this site. There are some access issues at the court for people with disabilities including the witness box and in the public seating areas in courtrooms.

The court provides waiting facilities for prosecution witnesses but there are no separate facilities for defence witnesses. There is a video link facility for intimidated and vulnerable witness to give their evidence on site but this system does not link to other courts and offices. The court has four interview rooms available for private consultation.

The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Stafford Combined Court offers greater benefits and facilities; these include a total of five courtrooms and two District Judge Chambers, and ample consultation rooms. There are nine cells, four of which have either easy access or direct links to the courtrooms. There is a lift which enables access to the upper floor for those with mobility issues. The court is centrally located and is close to the bus and train stations.

The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

North Staffordshire Justice Centre (Newcastle-under-Lyme) underwent extensive refurbishment in 2012 including the provision of lift access for prisoners with mobility issues. It has seven courtrooms, four of which have PVCL available and there are secure links to the cells. There are 12 operational cells, four of which are reserved for female and youth offenders. This court is equipped to take category A prisoners.

There are separate prosecution, defence and witness waiting rooms. This building has disabled access and toilet facilities. There would be no enabling costs at this site.

Cannock Magistrates' Court building was constructed in 1999 and has three courtrooms, comprising of two standard formal courtrooms with secure docks and secure links to the custody area; the third is an informal family courtroom. There are eight cells in total and prison video link facilities are available. This court can also accommodate category A prisoners. This building has disabled access and toilet facilities. There would be no enabling costs at this site.

Workload

The majority of the work undertaken at Stafford Magistrates' Court is private prosecutions and police led prosecutions such as motoring offences. One out of the four courtrooms is used on a Wednesday and Thursday each week, the court is used for family hearings on an occasional basis.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Stafford Magistrates' Court was used at approximately 16% of its capacity.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	94%	By Car	0-30min	90%
	30-60min	6%		30-60min	10%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	48%	By Public Transport	0-30min	50%
	30-60min	39%		30-60min	38%
	60-120min	8%		60-120min	3%
	>120min	3%		>120min	7%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Location

Stafford Magistrates' Court is situated in Stafford town centre. Transportation is good with regular bus services to local towns and there is a mainline station. There is a local bus service from Stafford town centre to Cannock approximately 10 miles away and Newcastle approximately 15 miles away with an average journey time of approximately 35 minutes (adult fare £3.00) and 50 minutes respectively (adult fare is £3.90).

The journey time by car is approximately 25 minutes to Cannock and 35 minutes to Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Travel by train between Stafford and Cannock takes approximately one hour at a cost of £6.40 off peak or £12.30 peak time for a return journey.

The above timings and costings are indicative of journeys between court buildings but it would be the geographical location of the court user or court case that would be taken into consideration when transferring the work.

Staff implications

Staffordshire Magistrates' Court currently accommodates both the Staffordshire Administrative Team and legal advisers, a total of 48 members of staff. The administrative work within the court includes the preparation of cases and resulting for Burton-upon-Trent, Cannock, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford courts.

Suitable alternative accommodation for the affected staff has been identified within Stafford Combined Court; this would necessitate the need for some enabling works within the Crown Court building.

Other information

Stafford Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Stafford Magistrates' Court were approximately £213,000.

Worksop Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Worksop Magistrates' Court is one of three magistrates' courts in Nottinghamshire, the others being in Mansfield and Nottingham.

It is proposed that Worksop Magistrates' Court is closed and its workload moved to Mansfield Magistrates' Court and County Court ('Mansfield Courthouse') which could accommodate the workload without any enabling works.

Worksop Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms and three cells which are linked to the police station. The cells are not fit for purpose and cannot be used. Utilisation at this court is low, the court sits once a week as well as the first Friday of each month. The court building has received a steady rate of investment for repairs over the years in order to maintain the building but the facilities remain inadequate.

Mansfield Courthouse is a modern purpose built court which opened in 1996. It offers excellent quality facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service customers. Should the court close it would result in the combining of workload and resources into one larger court centre. This would allow the court to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases. HM Courts & Tribunals Service would then adapt to workflow demands more effectively and improve customer service. An improved, more efficient service can be delivered with the court being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

Accommodation

Worksop Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms. The court building has three cells which are linked to the police station. The cells are not fit for purpose and cannot be used. The court building has received a steady rate of investment for repairs over the years in order to maintain the building but the facilities remain inadequate.

Further investment is required in order to make sure that the air conditioning system is replaced as it is not fit for purpose and not compliant with current legislation. As such the air conditioning equipment will either need replacing in its entirety, or an alternative modern refrigerant sourced. Both options will require financial investment.

The district judges' room has suffered from severe water damage which has rendered it unusable without extensive repair work being undertaken.

The court building is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. Although wheelchair users are able to access the building they are unable to access the courtrooms located on the first floor. Access to both of the courtrooms is via a flight of stairs. A stair lift has been installed, however this does not provide satisfactory access for wheelchair users.

There is one waiting room available in the building, and the desired segregation of parties can only be achieved if one of the consultation rooms is used as a waiting area. There is no secure car parking for staff and judiciary.

The receiving venue, Mansfield Courthouse, is fully compliant with health and safety regulations. It has excellent accommodation facilities and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Mansfield Courthouse has eight courtrooms and 24 cells. There are separate waiting areas for prosecution and defence witnesses. The building provides improved accommodation for our victims and witnesses, National Probation Service and Crown Prosecution Service colleagues, providing workstations and offices. There is adequate car parking available adjacent to the building in a public car park which is owned and managed by HM Courts & Tribunal Service.

Workload

Court sessions are held at Worksop Magistrates’ Court on the each Thursday and the first Friday of every month. All custodial matters are listed and heard at Mansfield Courthouse because the cell facilities at Worksop are not fit for purpose. This means that Worksop Magistrates’ Court is only able to hear cases of non-imprisonable offences instituted by non-police led prosecutors such as television licensing cases and on occasion civil matters.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Worksop Magistrates’ Court was utilised at approximately 34% of its capacity.

Location

Mansfield Courthouse is situated approximately 14 miles away from Worksop Magistrates’ Court. The journey time by a car is approximately 30 minutes.

There is a direct train service between Worksop and Mansfield. The travel time by train takes approximately 30 minutes. The approximate cost of an Anytime Day Return is £6.90. Trains between Worksop to Mansfield run hourly.

A bus service operates between Worksop and Mansfield. The minimum travel time by bus is approximately 40 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	88%	By Car	0-30min	19%
	30-60min	12%		30-60min	72%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	10%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	34%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	10%
	60-120min	24%		60-120min	69%
	>120min	4%		>120min	21%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Worksop Magistrates’ Court.

Other information

Worksop Magistrates' Court building is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Worksop Magistrates' Court were approximately £145,000.

The closure of Worksop Magistrates' Court formed part of the Courts Estates Rationalisation Programme in 2010. It was proposed that Worksop and Retford Magistrates' Courts both close, and that the combined workload be transferred to Mansfield Magistrates' Court. The combined utilisation of Retford and Worksop Magistrates' Courts at that time was 78%, against the aim of 80% utilisation and was considered almost full capacity. The decision was made to retain Worksop due to concerns that Mansfield Magistrates' Court did not have the capacity to absorb the combined workload from both Worksop and Retford. Since then workload has continued to reduce. The court sits one day per week and one afternoon on the first Friday of each month and utilisation is low. Mansfield Courthouse now has the capacity to absorb the workload from Worksop.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions.

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals?

Question 2. Will the proposals for the provision of court and tribunal services have a direct impact on you? If yes, please provide further details.

Question 3: Are there other particular impacts of the proposals that HM Courts & Tribunals Service should take into account when making a decision? Please provide details.

Question 4. Our assessment of the likely impacts and supporting analysis is set out in the Impact Assessment accompanying this consultation. Do you have any comments on the evidence used or conclusions reached? Please provide any additional evidence that you believe could be helpful.

Question 5. Are there alternatives to travelling to a physical building that would be a benefit to some users? These could include using technology to engage remotely or the use of other, civic or public buildings for hearings as demand requires. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.

Question 6: Please provide any additional comments that you have.

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 8 October 2015 to:

**HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
Post point 1.13
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ**

Fax: 0870 761 7768

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Justice at the above address.

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at www.gov.uk/moj

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from the Ministry of Justice (please see details above).

Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published at www.gov.uk/moj

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality

disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Ministry.

The Ministry will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Impact Assessment

Impact Assessment for proposals likely to affect businesses, charities, voluntary sector or the public sector – see guidance on: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-assessment-template-for-government-policies>)

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Consultation-Principles.pdf>

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