

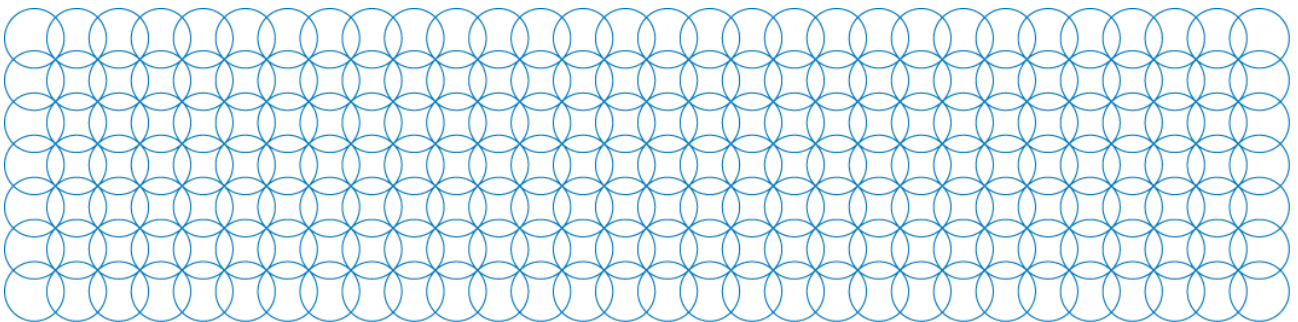


Ministry
of Justice

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

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015



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**Ministry
of Justice**

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the London 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 London 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:** For further information please use the “Enquiries” contact details above.
- Response paper:** A response to this consultation exercise is due to be published 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 London 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 London. 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 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. In the London region we have already established these facilities at Westminster Magistrates' Court and they have proved effective. 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. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

Sheila Proudlock

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

Introduction

This consultation for London 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 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 HMCTS 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 HMCTS 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

Having considered the estate in the London region against the principles set out in the 'Introduction' section, we recommend the closure of 10 courts and tribunals.

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

- Bow County Court
- Feltham Magistrates' Court
- Greenwich Magistrates' Court
- Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)
- Lambeth County Court
- Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre
- Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court
- Tottenham Magistrates' Court
- Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court
- Woolwich County Court

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.

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

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.

Bow County Court

Proposal

Bow County Court was purpose built in 1955 and is located on the fringes of Stratford town centre, an area of significant development in London. It is a two storey building with a modular annex and unsecured parking at the rear. The court has nine hearing rooms and is open five days per week.

It is proposed that Bow County Court close and the workload and hearings are transferred to Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court, which will require enabling works to increase the office space. Hearing and judicial room capacity is already available and it is a modern purpose built building in a good accessible location.

Accommodation

Bow County Court is not fit for purpose as a future operating court without investment and refurbishment. It is not Equality Act 2010 compliant as there is no lift to reach the upper level.

The Bow County Court building has limitations and does not comply fully with the minimum security requirements. There are temporary measures in place to rectify this, however this limits the type of civil and family work that can be listed and does not allow for other jurisdictions to use the courtrooms. Investment would be required to improve the facilities to allow this flexibility.

The roof needs to be replaced as well as the heating, cooling and electrical distribution systems. The boilers are inefficient and need to be replaced with an energy efficient system.

There are no separate areas for users, and upon request parties are directed by court staff to consultation rooms. Parties are required to leave the building at different times to avoid coming into contact with each other.

Public counter provision, by appointment only, would still be available at Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court.

Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court is a modern, purpose built building which does comply with the minimum security requirement. The building also has separate lifts to the upper floors for the staff, judiciary and users.

Workload

The court lists civil and family work from the surrounding area. All of the work and hearings would relocate to Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Bow County Court was utilised for approximately 47% of its capacity.

Location

Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court is approximately six miles from Bow County Court.

The travel links between the two courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. By public transport the journey time from Bow County Court to the nearest station to Clerkenwell and Shoreditch which is Barbican takes on average 30 minutes.

Barbican (zone 2) is served by London Underground (Circle and Metropolitan lines). The courthouse is approximately 10 minutes walk from the station. There are numerous bus routes which link into central and north/east London.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	68%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	32%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	21%	By Public Transport	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	78%		30-60min	83%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	14%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

Currently there are 35 members of staff at Bow County Court.

Other information

Bow County Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Bow County Court was approximately £357,000.

Feltham Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Feltham Magistrates' Court opened in a converted dance hall in 1909; an annex to the rear of the building opened in the late 1950's to provide additional office space. The court is situated on a busy road close to Feltham High Street.

The courthouse is a hearing centre for the West London Local Justice Area, the administrative centre being at Willesden Magistrates' Court. As a result of a decision taken by the Judicial Business Group in 2013, the courthouse operates three out of the four courtrooms, four days per week hearing adult and youth criminal work.

The accommodation at Feltham is poor and does not comply with the Equality Act 2010. Significant investment would be required to bring the building up to the required standard.

It is proposed that Feltham Magistrates' Court is closed and the hearings are transferred to Hammersmith Magistrates' Court. Although some enabling work would be required to accommodate the additional hearings, this is a modern purpose-built courthouse which opened in 1996 and offers better facilities for users.

The closure of Hammersmith (formerly West London) County Court is a separate proposal within this consultation document, and it is linked to this proposal as the County Court is in the same building as Hammersmith Magistrates' Court and therefore its closure would provide additional courtroom capacity for the Feltham Magistrates' Court work.

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

The building standards at Feltham Magistrates' Court are low and significant investment would be required to bring it up to the required standard. All of the pipe work for the water and heating requires replacing as does the air conditioning system. The court has not been fully operational since 2013.

One courtroom was closed due to security concerns raised about access via a separate entrance at street level. The car park is exposed to the public and is not secured, causing concern for staff, judiciary and custodial van arrangements. There is a smaller annex building behind the main building with no direct internal link and staff are required to walk outside to gain access to the building which has office accommodation and storage. The custody facilities are in operation two days per week, and the cells are of a poor standard.

The public counter provision at Feltham is limited to the days that the building is open. A counter service is already available at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court, open five days per week.

There is limited seating in the waiting areas because of a lack of space. In addition there is limited space for the storage of documents in the main building.

The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and has had limited prior investment in relation to this aspect. It does have a stair lift which regularly breaks down and needs replacing.

Hammersmith Magistrates' Court has better facilities; the building is modern and is compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The main building is self-contained and the car park is secure and not exposed or accessible by the public.

Workload

The adult and youth court criminal work listed at Feltham is not borough specific but emanates mainly from the London Borough of Hounslow.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Feltham Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 45% of its capacity.

Location

Hammersmith Magistrates' Court is approximately 10 miles away from Feltham Magistrates' Court.

Travel links between the two courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 30 minutes and by public transport the journey time to Hammersmith is on average 40 minutes from Feltham.

Hammersmith (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District/Circle, Piccadilly), with links into Richmond, Hatton Cross, Hounslow and London Kings Cross. The courthouse located approximately five minutes walk from the station.

The courthouse is close to a bus hub with frequent buses serving the west of London with links to central London.

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	83%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	17%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	35%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	65%		30-60min	56%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	42%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are on average six staff and three legal advisers based onsite each day the building is open. There is a mixture of permanent staff and staff assigned from the main administration centre based at Willesden Magistrates' Court on a rota basis.

Other information

Feltham Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Feltham Magistrates' Court was approximately £230,000.

Greenwich Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Greenwich Magistrates' Court was built in 1908 and is a Grade II listed building. It is a hearing centre for the South East Local Justice Area, the administration centre being based at Bromley Magistrates' Court. The courthouse has three courtrooms and operates one courtroom two days per week hearing adult criminal trials. The current listing arrangement has been in operation since November 2014.

The work currently listed at Greenwich is not borough specific but emanates from all four boroughs (Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham) covered by the South East London Local Justice Area.

It is proposed that Greenwich Magistrates' Court is closed and the hearings are transferred to Bromley Magistrates' Court which could absorb the workload with some enabling works to accommodate the case files.

Accommodation

Greenwich Magistrates' Court is underused and the facilities for court users are poor. The building has very limited scope for improvements due to its Grade II listed status. It is in need of a considerable amount of investment to bring the accommodation to a reasonable standard. The boiler and water tanks need to be replaced as the systems are obsolete and difficult to maintain as most parts are now not available.

The facilities for court users are poor and the separation for victims and witnesses using the upper floor is a challenge as there are no lifts for users or staff within the building. The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

There is a lack of space for interview rooms and the Crown Prosecution Service and Witness Service accommodation is of a poor standard.

Bromley Magistrates' Court is fully compliant with health and safety regulations and has a better standard of accommodation and facilities. There are more consultation rooms, and large public areas for users to wait. The office accommodation for the Crown Prosecution Service and Witness Service is also of a much better standard.

The public counter provision at Greenwich Magistrates' Court is limited to the days that the building is open. A counter service is already available at Bromley Magistrates' Court, open five days per week.

Workload

Greenwich Magistrates' Court hears trial work from the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham. The interlocutory hearings for these cases are already heard at Bromley Magistrates' Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Greenwich Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 12% of its capacity.

Location

Bromley Magistrates' Court is located five miles away from Greenwich Magistrates' Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes and by public transport approximately one hour.

Bromley is served by three train stations with links to London Bridge, London Blackfriars, King Cross St Pancras and London Victoria. The courthouse is approximately 10 minutes walk from Bromley North (zone 5) and 15 minutes walk from Bromley South (zone 5). Shortlands station (zone 4) is approximately a 10 minute walk.

Bromley is served by a number of bus routes including direct buses to the court starting at Lewisham.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	94%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	6%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	49%	By Public Transport	0-30min	2%
	30-60min	51%		30-60min	92%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	6%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff Implications

There are no staff permanently based at Greenwich Magistrates' Court, staff are assigned into Greenwich from the main administration centre based at Bromley Magistrates' Court on a rota basis.

Other Information

Greenwich Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Greenwich Magistrates' Court was approximately £332,000.

Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)

Proposal

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court. The building was purpose built in 1996 and is adjacent to the Hammersmith flyover. The County Court hears civil and local authority possession work and has jurisdiction to deal with civil gang injunctions. However, there are only two hearing rooms assigned to civil work so the amount of civil work the court can list is limited.

It is proposed that Hammersmith County Court is closed and the workload and hearings are transferred to Wandsworth County Court to increase utilisation levels of the hearing rooms there. Enabling works would be required to accommodate the staff.

There would be no requirement to increase the number of courtrooms and the work will be heard in available capacity. Any gang injunction work required would continue to be heard at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court.

Accommodation

There are no significant issues in relation to the Equality Act 2010 at this courthouse as a result of previous investment, nor are there any security issues.

The building is a critical location for crime work. The two hearing rooms for civil work have limited scope for increasing courtroom usage.

The public counter provision is by appointment only would continue to be provided at Wandsworth County Court.

Wandsworth County Court has scope for investment to expand the administrative office space which is required to fit in the staff from Hammersmith County Court and Lambeth County Court (which is subject to a separate proposal within this consultation document).

Workload

The court lists civil work from the surrounding area. All work and hearings except for the gang injunction work would relocate to Wandsworth County Court.

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Hammersmith County Court was utilised for approximately 62% of its capacity.

Location

Wandsworth County Court is approximately six miles from Hammersmith County Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Hammersmith County Court takes on average 35 minutes to the nearest station to Wandsworth County which is Putney Bridge.

Putney Bridge (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District/Circle), with links into London Blackfriars, London Cannon Street, London Victoria. The court building is less than five minutes walk from the station.

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	99%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%
By Public Transport	0-30min	60%	By Public Transport	0-30min	27%
	30-60min	40%		30-60min	73%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

Currently there are 4 members of staff at Hammersmith County Court.

Other information

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court and is a freehold property. Hammersmith Magistrates' Court is not part of this consultation.

The 2014/15 operating cost at this venue in total was approximately £1.2m.

This relocation would provide capacity at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court to receive the work from Feltham Magistrates' Court should the decision be taken to close it.

Lambeth County Court

Proposal

Lambeth County Court was built in 1928 and since then has been the location for all civil and family matters for the local area. Lambeth County Court has six hearing rooms and is currently open five days per week.

This proposal seeks to use the courtroom capacity at Wandsworth County Court. It is proposed that Lambeth County Court close and the workload and hearings transfer to Wandsworth County Court. Enabling works would be required to accommodate the staff.

Accommodation

The accommodation is poor and not fit for purpose; it requires significant investment to enable the building to be improved up to the required standard. The lighting, air conditioning and all of the pipe work for heating and water needs to be replaced. The building has no scope for expansion as it is situated in a predominately residential area.

The public counter provision, by appointment only, would be provided at Wandsworth County Court.

Wandsworth County Court has scope for investment to expand the office space which is required to fit in the staff from Lambeth County Court and West London County Court (which is subject to a separate proposal within this consultation document).

Workload

Lambeth County Court lists civil and family work from the surrounding area.

During the 2014/15 financial year Lambeth County Court was utilised for approximately 39% of its capacity.

Location

Wandsworth County Court is approximately six miles from Lambeth County Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. By public transport the journey time from Lambeth County Court to the nearest station to Wandsworth County Court which is Putney Bridge takes on average 40 minutes

Putney Bridge (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District Line), with links into London Blackfriars, London Cannon Street, London Victoria. The courthouse is approximately five minutes walk from the station.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	68%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	32%
	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	5%
	30-60min	69%		30-60min	93%
	60-120min	2%		60-120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

Currently there are 30 members of staff at Lambeth County Court.

Other information

The tenure on Lambeth County Court is leasehold until 2024.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Lambeth County Court was approximately £286,000.

Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre

Proposal

Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre is a purpose built location hearing work from the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber, namely the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, the Care Standards Tribunal and Primary Health Lists. The centre has three hearing rooms with limited scope to accommodate other jurisdictional work as the centre does not comply fully with the minimum security requirement.

It is proposed that Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre close and the hearings transfer to available hearing room capacity based on the requirement of each tribunal at one of the other Central London Tribunals hearing centre locations.

Accommodation

The centre has three hearing rooms with limited accommodation and does not comply fully with the minimum security requirements. Relocating the hearings to other hearing centres would increase their hearing room usage. Generally the accommodation and facilities at the other Central London Tribunals sites are on par with those at Pocock Street.

There is no scope to expand the location as the centre is part of a multi occupancy building.

The lease on the property expires on the 21 March 2017. The intention is that this lease will not be renewed and the hearings will relocate into available hearing room capacity within other Central London Tribunals hearing centres which can offer a similar quality of accommodation, with a number of locations also having a higher standard of security.

Workload

Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre lists work from the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber, namely the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal, the Care Standards Tribunal and Primary Health Lists.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre was utilised for approximately 49% of its capacity.

Location

Geographically, all of the tribunals hearing centres within Central London are within a three mile radius of Pocock Street Tribunals Hearing Centre.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car between buildings the journey takes approximately 10 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Pocock Street takes approximately 30 minutes.

All of the stations nearest to the Central London Tribunals Hearing Centre locations are served by the London Underground, zone 1.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	58%	By Car	0-30min	50%
	30-60min	37%		30-60min	50%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	6%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	9%	By Public Transport	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	84%		30-60min	91%
	60-120min	2%		60-120min	6%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	6%		no data	0%

Staff implication

Currently there are 2 members of staff at Pocock Street Tribunals Hearing Centre.

Other information

The tenure on Pocock Street Tribunal is leasehold, which expires on the 21 March 2017.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre was approximately £434,000.

Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court was built in 1971. It is a four storey building with parking to the rear. It is situated close to Richmond town centre.

Following realignment of the criminal work within the South West London Local Justice Area, the courthouse has been a hearing centre for criminal work when required and a hearing centre for the First-tier Immigration and Asylum Chamber cases from IAA (Immigration and Asylum) Centre at Hatton Cross, but is underused. The Immigration and Asylum hearings at Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court are already administered and staffed by Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross.

It is proposed that Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court close and the hearings transfer to the Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross. This would require no enabling works.

The criminal work has already relocated to other courts within the South West London Local Justice Area.

Accommodation

The accommodation at Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court is poor and the building requires significant expenditure to bring it up to a standard that court and tribunal users expect. The custody suite has not been in use for a number of years and requires major investment and remodelling to improve the security levels and environment. Not all of the five courtrooms are linked to the custody suite.

There is substantial planned maintenance. The boilers are beyond their life and require replacing, as does the heating, cooling, CCTV, ventilation duct work and electrical distribution.

The building is partially compliant with the Equality Act 2010 in that there is a lift enabling public access from the ground to the first floor, where courtrooms are situated. However, the custody suite is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The accommodation at the Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross is of a much higher standard, some of the hearing rooms are linked to the custody suite and as immigration and asylum work is already heard at the hearing centre, relocating the same work will increase flexibility between the hearing rooms and is expected to improve hearing room usage.

Workload

The criminal work has already relocated to other courts within the South West Local Justice Area, so no transfer of this work is required. The Immigration and Asylum hearings would transfer to the Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 65% of its capacity.

Location

Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court is approximately 6.5 miles from the Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 40 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Richmond takes, on average 60 minutes to Hatton Cross. Three bus routes pass Hatton Cross, from Richmond, Kingston and Northolt. Routes serve Feltham and Hatton Cross stations.

Hatton Cross is served by London Underground (Piccadilly line) to Hatton Cross (zone 5/6) and an overground train link from London Waterloo to Feltham train station (zone 6). The tribunal centre is a short bus ride or an approximately 20 minute walk from either.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	83%	By Car	0-30min	32%
	30-60min	17%		30-60min	68%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	14%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	68%		30-60min	28%
	60-120min	18%		60-120min	72%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court. Staff are assigned from the Immigration and Asylum Centre at Hatton Cross and from the wider West London Civil, Family and Tribunals jurisdiction.

Other information

The tenure on the Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court building is freehold, with a leasehold on the car park which expires in 3004.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court was approximately £203,000.

Tottenham Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Tottenham Magistrates' Court was built in 1937. It is a two storey detached property with a basement and additional office accommodation located within the roof. It is located in a predominately residential area. It is a hearing centre for the North London Local Justice Area; the main administration centre is at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court.

The court hears criminal trials and summary matters in a reduced capacity, operating two courts one day per week and three courts two days per week.

It is proposed that Tottenham Magistrates' Court is closed and the hearings are transferred to the main administration centre at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court. Enabling work would be required to upgrade a courtroom and the surrounding area on the ground floor.

Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court is the main administration centre for the North London Local Justice Area. It provides good quality accommodation and facilities for court users.

Accommodation

The building is not fit for purpose. Of the seven courtrooms; two were taken out of action in April 2013 due to security concerns. There are limitations on the type of cases that can be heard as there are only three secure docks. However they are not currently required as custody cases are heard at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court.

Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court is the main administration centre for the North London Local Justice Area. It provides good quality accommodation and facilities for court users.

The public counter provision at Tottenham is limited to the days that the building is open. A counter service is already available at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court, open five days per week.

The accommodation at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court is of a much higher standard. It is a large centre with better facilities for all staff, judges and users. The transfer of the hearings is expected to improve utilisation of the courtrooms.

Workload

The hearings currently listed at Tottenham Magistrates' Court are not borough specific but emanate from the London boroughs of Islington, Camden, Haringey and Enfield.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Tottenham Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 22% of its capacity

Location

Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court is located five miles away from Tottenham Magistrates' Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 15 minutes and by public transport the journey takes on average 30 minutes.

Highbury (zone 2) is served by one train station with London Underground and overground links to London Victoria, London Kings Cross St Pancras and local areas such as Finsbury Park and Walthamstow. The courthouse is less than five minutes walk from the station.

Highbury is served by a number of buses including direct buses to the court starting at Moorgate, London Bridge, Highgate, Friern Barnet and Chalk Farm.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	59%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	41%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	27%	By Public Transport	0-30min	8%
	30-60min	68%		30-60min	68%
	60-120min	5%		60-120min	24%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Tottenham Magistrates' Court. Staff are assigned into Tottenham from the main administration centre based at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court on a rota basis.

Other information

Tottenham Magistrates' Court is freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Tottenham Magistrates' Court was approximately £337,000.

The National Probation Service occupies a separate building on the plot of land, alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court was purpose built in 1973 by the former Greater London Council. The building is a detached two storey structure with a basement plant room and additional roof accommodation.

In 2010 as part of the Court Estate Reform Programme, the court was proposed for closure. The Lord Chancellor decided to retain the courthouse because of concerns expressed about the residual capacity of the magistrates' courts in East London. Factors that were referred to in the formal response to the consultation centred on the closure of Barking Magistrates' Court, the possible increase in workload arising from the Olympic Games and the consequent commercial and infrastructure expansion.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service were asked to carry out a review of the nature of the work undertaken at the courthouse, the frequency with which it was listed, with a view to it becoming a hearing centre only. This work was completed and Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court has been a hearing centre for the East London local justice area since January 2012.

The court has five courtrooms and is currently open three days per week, when two courts are in operation, hearing summary motoring and non-motoring trials. The summary motoring cases have a high percentage of non attendance with many cases heard in absence. The court users come from many different London boroughs across North, East and North East London.

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court is being proposed for closure again as the court is underutilised, the concerns raised in 2010 about the lack of residual capacity have not been realised. It is proposed that the hearings are transferred to Stratford Magistrates' Court. Enabling works would be required to accommodate the hearings; a ground floor area would be reconfigured to create an additional courtroom.

The accommodation at Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court is poor and significant investment would be required to bring the accommodation up to a satisfactory standard.

The accommodation at Stratford Magistrates' Court is of a higher standard, the public waiting area is vast, with a number of consultation rooms for users. The office accommodation is of better quality and the courtrooms are modern. The transfer of the hearings is expected to increase the usage and flexibility of the courtrooms.

Accommodation

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court has five courtrooms, four are standard formal courtrooms and there is also one informal courtroom.

The roof needs to be replaced as it leaks in places; investment is also needed in the heating, cooling and electrical distribution systems. The custody facilities have not been needed for a number of years and along with other parts of the building are in need of major refurbishment.

The public counter provision is limited at Waltham Forest to the days that the building is open. A counter service is already available at Stratford Magistrates' Court, open five days per week.

Workload

The hearings currently listed at Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court are not borough specific but emanate from North, East and North East London.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court was utilised approximately 32% of its capacity.

Location

Stratford Magistrates' Court is approximately seven miles from Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 25 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Waltham Forest takes on average 35 minutes to Stratford.

Stratford (zone 3) is served by London Underground (Jubilee and Central lines), DLR and London Overground with links to London Liverpool Street. The courthouse is approximately five minutes walk from the station.

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	97%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	3%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	43%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	55%		30-60min	76%
	60-120min	1%		60-120min	24%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	1%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court, Staff are assigned to Waltham Forest from the administration centre based at Thames Magistrates' Court on a rota basis.

Other information

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court is freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court was approximately £355,000.

The National Probation Service occupies a large part of the building and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Woolwich County Court

Proposal

Woolwich County Court was purpose built in 1935 and is located on the fringes of Woolwich town centre. It is a two storey building with no onsite parking facilities. It is a purpose built location with three hearing rooms. The courthouse hears a mix of civil work and is open five days per week.

The court is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010, and significant investment would be required to install a lift to the upper floor. There is no scope to increase the number of hearing rooms or office space without major investment and increasing the plot of land.

It is proposed that Woolwich County Court close and the workload and hearings are transferred to Bromley County Court. Some enabling work would be required to allow for relocation of case files.

Accommodation

There are three hearing rooms with limited access for users as there is no public lift to the upper floor.

There is an annex located outside the main court building which houses a filing room and a small office space. This part of the building is under a lease which expires on the 24 March 2016. The intention is that this lease will not be renewed.

The court does not comply fully with the minimum security requirement, as there is no separate entrance for the judiciary and staff, who enter the building through the main public door.

The air handling units are at the end of their life and need to be replaced, as do the boilers and the cooling system.

The accommodation at Bromley County Court is of a higher standard with better facilities for staff and judiciary, including a separate entrance, and users have a number of consultation rooms at their disposal. The transfer of the hearings is expected to increase the usage and flexibility of the courtrooms, although some enabling work would be required to accommodate the relocation of case files.

The public counter provision is by appointment only and would continue to be provided at Bromley County Court.

Workload

Woolwich County Court lists civil work from the surrounding area.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Woolwich County Court was utilised for approximately 40% of its capacity.

Location

Bromley County Court is approximately eight miles from Woolwich County Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 35 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Woolwich takes on average one hour and 10 minutes to Bromley.

Bromley is served by three train stations with links to London Bridge, London Blackfriars, King Cross St Pancras and London Victoria. The courthouse is approximately 10 minutes walk from Bromley North (zone 5) and 15 minutes walk from Bromley South (zone 5). Shortlands station (zone 4) is an approximate 10 minute walk.

Bromley is served by a number of bus routes including direct buses to the court starting at Lewisham.

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	33%
	30-60min	12%		30-60min	67%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	20%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	69%		30-60min	33%
	60-120min	9%		60-120min	67%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	3%		no data	0%

Staff implications

Currently there are 11 members of staff at Woolwich County Court.

Other information

The tenure on Woolwich County Court is freehold, with leasehold on the annex which expires in March 2016 which will not be renewed.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Woolwich County Court was approximately £163,000.

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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