

October 5th 2008

Mr Mark Partington

Network Development Manager

National Consultation Team

Dear Mr Partington,

I wish to voice my considerable concern about the plans to close our Post Offices in Oldswinford (Hagley Road), Pedmore (Also Hagley Road) and Quarry Bank.

I have raised a petition of almost one thousand names against these closures. I will be depositing these names and addresses at your office tomorrow on the closing day of the consultation period.

My arguments against the closure of the Post Office on Quarry Bank High Street are as follows:

- If this PO is closed then the closest post office for most people in Quarry Bank would be in the Merry Hill Shopping Centre. However, to get from Quarry Bank to Merry Hill, people have to climb a steep hill and then cross an extremely busy six lane main road. This is a daunting task, extremely for older people, people with disabilities and parents with young children. This road should be treated in the same way as the Post Office has treated rivers, lakes and motorways as a barrier that it is very difficult for pedestrians to cross.
- Parking will be difficult at the PO in Merry Hill whereas there is usually short term parking available outside the current facility in Quarry Bank.
- Merry Hill Post Office already struggles to cope with the number of people needing to use it during busy times and it is hard to see it having the capacity to serve additional people if Quarry Bank and Silver End Post Offices are closed.
- Other alternatives suggested by the Post Office are beyond reasonable walking distance from most parts of Quarry Bank. To get to and from the post office in Saltwells Road would mean climbing up a very steep hill and there are no bus services from the top of Quarry Bank High Street to Saltwells Road.
- More than 28% of families in the ward that covers Quarry Bank do not have a car or van. This is significantly higher than in the rest of Dudley Borough and is also above the national average. This means that more people are reliant on

services being available within walking distance or accessible by public transport. If Quarry Bank post office is closed then many people will struggle to get to another post office.

- The demand for a post office in Quarry Bank is reflected in the number of transactions conducted there every week. Nearly 1,500 people use the post office in an average week; a level of business that compares well with similar small post offices.

My arguments against the closure of the Pedmore and Oldswinford Post Offices are as follows:

- If these two post offices are closed then a large number of people in Stourbridge will be left without a local post office, with their closest post office being over a mile away. This will cause a particular problem for older people, parents with young children and families without cars who will no longer have a post office within reasonable walking distance.
- The bus station in Stourbridge is on the outside of the Ring Road. For people to get a bus to Stourbridge High Street, they must either cross the busy Ring Road or use the underpass, which many people find intimidating even during the day.
- Both post offices are accessible to disabled people and have adequate parking outside. The same cannot be said of the alternatives being proposed. The post offices in Junction Road and The Queensway both currently have steps at the entrance, making access very difficult. The location of the Stourbridge High Street post office in an Indian take-away means that people wishing to use the post office at busy times have to battle past people queuing for their food. This is especially difficult for people in wheelchairs. Parking in Stourbridge High Street is also very difficult as on-road parking spaces are usually full, meaning that the only option is to use one of the multi-storey car parks. Do we really want to force people to pay for parking just so that they can pick up their pensions or weigh a letter?
- People wishing to take a bus from Oldswinford to the post office in Junction Road will be faced with a 400m climb up a steep hill to get back from the bus stop, whilst those wanting to get from Pedmore to Junction Road will find that there is no bus service at all. This will be especially difficult for older people and people with disabilities, especially if they are reliant on public transport as are many of them.
- The wards currently served by Pedmore and Oldswinford post offices have a significantly older population, and a higher proportion of retired people, than either the rest of Dudley Borough or the country as a whole. Because of this, these areas would be hit particularly hard by the loss of their post offices.

I urge you to reconsider these plans to close the Pedmore, Oldswinford and Quarry Bank Post Offices. I make that appeal particularly on behalf of the many older people and people with disabilities, and on behalf of the aforementioned petitioners, who depend on these vital services for all the reasons I have outlined above.

Yours faithfully,

Margot James

Conservative Party Candidate for Stourbridge