

Dear Sir,

Re: Proposals for Plaistow Post Office, West Sussex

The Parish Council is disappointed at the proposal to operate Plaistow Post Office as a Hosted Service. There is, however, acknowledgement of the effort by Post Office Counters to mitigate the impact on this reduction by offering the Hosted Service with much reduced opening hours for two days a week.

That said, however, the Parish Council would seriously urge Post Office Counters to re-consider the proposed hours of the Hosted Service and increase these to cover five mornings a week.

This is based on the following:-

(a) Availability of other local services

The nearest Post Office to Plaistow Post Office is Loxwood, which is 3.2 miles away by road.

Loxwood Post Office presents a number of difficulties for additional customers –

- (i) The actual access into the shop and Post Office is up a flight of concrete steps, thus precluding disabled access
- (ii) Once inside the shop, there are extremely narrow aisles, again precluding disabled access
- (iii) Car parking in the centre of Loxwood is often at a premium and there are a number of highway and traffic conflict issues in the village centre on the very busy B2133.
- (iv) There is no reasonable public transport facility to Loxwood. Whilst there is a daily morning service going through Loxwood, there is a four hour wait for the return journey, which is unacceptable.
- (v) There is no safe pedestrian access to Loxwood. All walking routes involve the majority of the journey being made on narrow and winding roads with no pavements. The walking time would be just over an hour.
- (vi) At a time when everyone is being encouraged to be aware of the effect of carbon emissions and climate change, Plaistow and Ifold Parish will be reduced to being ‘carbon naughty’ with increased car usage.

Chiddingfold Post Office is a distance, by road, of 5.3 miles. The Post Office there is on a narrow country lane, with existing parking issues. There is no public transport facility.

Wisborough Green Post Office is a distance, by road, of 5.6 miles. Again, there is no public transport facility and there are existing parking issues on the busy A272.

(b) Local Factors

- (i) It is considered that Post Office Counters has not taken into account residents who live in the Hamlets of Shillinglee and Durfold Wood and who will be even further disadvantaged by having to travel extra distances for services
- (ii) There is a high proportion of elderly people in all four settlements of the Parish – Durfold Wood, Ifold, Plaistow and Shillinglee, who consider the Post Office as not only being a service provider but as a social focal point.
- (iii) There is a high proportion of home businesses in the Parish. Whilst it is accepted that some may use online postal services, there are many who do not. The proposal would impact on those businesses.

(c) Plaistow Stores

The Parish Council considers that the proposed reduction in the current hours will, whichever way it is considered, undoubtedly have an impact on the viability of the Village Shop.

It is inevitable that customers who wish to use Post Office services and the shop will, on the days that the Post Office is not open, use facilities offered elsewhere.

It is accepted that the shop will be able to offer some Post Office services ‘over the counter’ but not all. Local residents have particular concerns regarding banking services and the return of parcels bought through Home Shopping services.

(d) Local employment

The proposal for Plaistow Post Office will see two people lose their jobs and their source of income. It will not be possible for these people to obtain local employment, in a Parish whose employment opportunities have already been decimated.

Overall, the Parish Council and local residents are at a loss to understand how Post Office Counters, despite their own economic problems, can go against established Government policy – the reduction in carbon emissions, the thrust to have people in work and the support of vibrant and sustainable rural communities.

For all the above reasons, the Parish Council would urge Post Office Counters, in the strongest possible terms, to reconsider their current proposal and offer Plaistow a Hosted Service for five mornings a week.

Yours faithfully,