

John Marsden
Chief Executive
North Yorkshire County Council
County Hall
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AD

Adrian Wales
Network Development Manager
c/o National Consultation Team
Post Office Ltd.
FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM

Dear Mr Wales,

NETWORK CHANGE PROGRAMME – AREA PLAN PROPOSAL FOR NORTH YORKSHIRE WITH YORKSHIRE EAST AND KEIGHLEY

This is the formal response from North Yorkshire County Council to the above Area Plan. It has been produced following consultation with members of the public; County, Parish and District Councillor representatives on the County Council's district-based Area Committees; and through a multi-agency forum of interested parties (County Council Members/Officers responsible for ensuring access to services, Age Concern, Help the Aged, Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire Rural Community Council and Better Government for Older People).

Our response is in two parts, firstly in relation to the generality of the proposals, and, secondly we have provided detailed comments in the document attached to this letter relating to individual proposals. A number of inaccuracies have been found in the Branch Access Reports relating to the North Yorkshire branches (chiefly to do with ease of access, level of terrain, ATM machines/additional products and frequency of bus services) and these can be found in the district sections of the attachment. This is an issue of great concern in North Yorkshire and I trust that you will take close account of the representations made below.

The County Council recognises the commercial need for a review of the Post Office network, however at the same time is concerned that the proposed closures in North Yorkshire - in the form of an outright closure or limited hours replacement outreach service - will have a severe impact on the most vulnerable in society. We are gravely concerned about the proposals as they would see a significant down-grading of the network across the county, hitting both our rural and urban communities. North Yorkshire County Council is constantly striving to tackle social exclusion, in particular social isolation through rural isolation and difficulties faced in accessing services. The Area Plan proposals conflict with these policy objectives.

The impact of closure or a reduced limited hours outreach service will be especially serious for older people both in remote communities and in urban areas where there are a number of issues involving access to alternative post offices. The lack of nearby parking at some of the alternative branches is a concern. North Yorkshire has an ageing population that is, and will continue to be, higher than the national average. It has significantly large tracts of hilly or steep terrain in comparison to most areas of the country, posing particular challenges for the elderly and disabled and those without access to a car. The Geographical Barriers Sub-domain in the Indices of Deprivation 2007 shows that vast swathes of North Yorkshire fall into the two highest bands.

The 1 mile radius used to calculate the population age profiles is in many instances misleading. In our county individual post offices often serve a wider area than this, particularly in rural areas and areas that already act as 'receiving branches' for neighbouring branches that have closed. Hence the proportion of retired people using a branch will be much higher than the figures listed in the Branch Access Reports. However, even the figures calculated on the percentage of retired people living within 1 mile of the branch show that most of the branches being proposed for closure are located in settlements with a retired population of well over 20% - the highest being 35%.

Due to the fact that many of our post offices serve a wide geographic area, surrounding villages will in many cases be further than three miles to the alternative branch if their nearest post office should close - and so will be outside the Government's access criteria.

The County Council does not feel that the likely impact on local economies has been taken into account in the Area Plan, particularly in those instances where a branch is connected to an adjoining business such as a shop. Branch closure will impact on the sustainability of the associated business. It will also detrimentally affect businesses that rely on their local post office network to deliver and receive parcels. Neighbouring shops are also likely to see a reduction in trade.

A number of branches being proposed for closure in North Yorkshire are profitable businesses. The central overheads apportioned to individual branches by Post Office Ltd. are outside the control of individual sub-postmasters. Consequently we feel that the Post Office should be looking at how it can reduce its own overheads rather than close branches.

Also of concern is that some branches on the closure list (chiefly in the Harrogate and Scarborough districts) already act as 'receiving branches' for branches that have closed in the past.

The issue of low footfall in some branches could be addressed through means other than closure/introduction of an outreach service – flexibility in the hours that the post office can open would encourage residents to use their post office (for example many residents would like to see evening opening hours

but currently postmasters cannot be paid for evening opening). This is particularly important where the post office is incorporated within the sole shop in a community.

Insufficient information has been made available on the arrangements for the planned outreach services. It is not clear for instance what type of outreach is being proposed in most of the areas earmarked for this sort of provision; whether consideration has been given to the potential problem of there not being sufficient DDA compliant facilities in an area; or whether anyone would be willing to provide an outreach service. It is also not clear whether an existing post office would be considered as the location for an outreach service. Judged on the basis of the start-up costs of an outreach service and the safeguards that would need to be taken with regards to security it would make sense to use the existing branch infrastructure.

We would like to suggest that where outreach services are introduced, thorough local consultation is undertaken and that clear communication with resident populations ensures they understand the new service so that the customer base is not further diminished.

Outreach services need to be regular and reliable. Anecdotal evidence that we have received suggests that some villages being proposed for outreach in North Yorkshire may be provided with less than seven hours a week. Such limited provision would be unacceptable in view of the access problems that residents would be faced with at all other times - be it in terms of physical barriers, poor or non-existent public transport links to a neighbouring branch, and the sheer distance that they would have to travel to access Post Office services.

In addition we have a number of concerns specific to individual areas/post offices in North Yorkshire, which in summary relate to:-

- the lack of disabled access at some or all of the alternative/nearest branches to which customers will be expected to migrate and the absence of low floor/wheelchair access on bus routes travelling to alternative branches. In some cases bus services travelling to both the first and second alternative branches are not registered as providing this type of access. In other instances where the bus service to the first alternative branch is not registered as providing low floor/wheelchair access, bus services to the second alternative branches cannot be guaranteed.
- branch closures located in areas where there are no direct bus services to the first or second alternative branch.
- the pressure of additional custom leading to longer queues/transaction times at the Harrogate Crown Office with the closure of three branches within a mile of this office.

- the pressure of additional custom leading to longer queues/transaction times in Scarborough with two branches proposed for closure within a mile of the centre.
- the pressure of additional custom in a limited space at the Whitby branch hosted at the Co-op as a result of the proposed closures within a relatively small geographic radius, and in areas which already have severe accessibility problems for those without a car.
- the impact on the local economies where a branch is connected to a shop/village store or part of a larger shopping complex.
- branch closures in or near to areas proposed for housing development (chiefly Harrogate, Scarborough and our market towns). The District Councils have only recently identified their five year housing land supply of deliverable sites and we hope that the Post Office will investigate these in detail before carrying out branch closures in these areas.
- the relatively high number of outreach services planned for the Hambleton and Ryedale districts, with a lack of information provided on the arrangements being proposed.

The attached document provides further information on a branch by branch basis.

Finally, can I reiterate the overwhelming concern that has been expressed across the county area at the scale of the proposed closures. North Yorkshire is a largely rural area with a growing population with a proportionately higher concentration of older people within our communities. Post offices are one of a range of key services upon which communities depend. I would be grateful for your consideration of the issues raised in this response. If you require clarification of any issue then please do not hesitate to contact me. I will also be copying this response to Postwatch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'John Marsden', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

John Marsden
Chief Executive

1. CRAVEN

Terrain/Geography between branches/Road distance

Farnhill: The busy **A629** presents a physical barrier for vulnerable adults – the elderly and disabled. The majority of those using the existing post office do not have access to a car.

Ease of Access:

Farnhill: The Branch Access Report fails to mention that there is disabled access available at the side door to the Farnhill branch.

Giggleswick: Both the bus services to the first alternative branch (Settle) and second alternative branch (Austwick) are not registered as having low floor/wheelchair accessibility. The closure of the Giggleswick branch will therefore cause accessibility problems for older people and disabled people.

Alternative Branch/Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency

Farnhill: The Branch Access Report states that the first alternative branch (Crosshills) is 0.9 miles away and is served by Keighley & District No 66 bus at half-hourly intervals. However the 66 service does not travel into Farnhill or Kildwick. This would mean that the people of Farnhill would have to walk approximately 0.7 miles to get to the bus and would have to cross over two busy roads (A629 and Station Road). It is almost impossible for an elderly person/disabled person to cross over the busy A629, and there is no footpath.

The Access Report states that the location of the bus stop is within 750 yards of the Farnhill branch. However, this bus stop does not provide a bus to Crosshills.

The Branch Access report states that there are no direct bus services to the second alternative branch (Cononley). There are in fact no bus services at all to the second alternative branch.

Bus services into Kildwick/Farnhill have been cut recently, with the withdrawal of Keighley & District's no. 68 service in 2007, leaving people without cars isolated.

Giggleswick: The Branch Access Report states that the bus service from this branch to Settle is hourly. However the bus service is in fact every two hours on Saturdays.

Additional Products:

Farnhill: The Branch Access Report states that no additional products are offered. However the Post Office in Farnhill has stated that it can offer all Post Office Services except Vehicle Licensing.

External Posting Facilities:

Farnhill: The Branch Access Report inaccurately states that there are no external posting facilities available in the vicinity. There are external Posting Facilities available in Farnhill, approximately 300 yards up the road and also adjacent to the former location of the post office on Newby Road.

2. HAMBLETON

Retail Type/Impact on local economy/Housing and commercial development

The **Linton on Ouse** Post Office is a busy branch serving Linton on Ouse and a number of surrounding villages and businesses. The branch also serves several hundred working personnel and their families at RAF Linton-on-Ouse. RAF personnel and their families in particular rely on the Linton-on-Ouse Post Office to send and collect parcels ('e-baying').

At a time that large numbers of our Armed Forces are being posted abroad to war-torn areas it is particularly disappointing that this branch is being considered for closure.

Linton Post Office is part of a general village store as is **Tollerton** Post Office. These branch closures will impact on the sustainability of the stores and could well lead to their closure.

Residents of surrounding villages also make use of the Linton on Ouse branch. The surrounding village of Shipton, which lost its post office recently, is proposed for new housing development in Hambleton District Council's Local Development Framework. Footfall for the Linton on Ouse Post Office is therefore likely to grow yet further.

As one of the main market towns in the Hambleton district, Easingwold has been earmarked for significant housing development. The relevance here is that the Easingwold branch will be relied upon by residents of Tollerton (and the surrounding villages that the Tollerton branch serves: Alne, Aldwark, Flawith, Youlton and Tholthorpe) as their main office branch. The same could be the case for residents of Linton on Ouse and surrounding villages (for residents seeking to avoid the toll bridge at Aldwark). There are already lengthy queues at the Easingwold branch.

The closure of the **Sowerby** Post Office, which is also contained within a shop, will add to the already lengthy queues at the Thirsk market place branch. Thirsk has also been earmarked for significant housing development by Hambleton District Council and so there will be a need for additional staffing capacity to be introduced at the Thirsk branch.

The Branch Access Report (Sowerby) states that the Thirsk branch has four counters. This is inaccurate as the Thirsk branch has three counters.

The replacement of the **Baldersby**, **Borrowby** and **Kirby Wiske** branches with outreaches will also mean that residents of these villages will rely upon the busy Thirsk branch to access Post Office services outside the hours of outreach. Coxwold Post Office branch will be closing permanently at the end of February 2008 and service users are expected to migrate to the Thirsk branch as well.

Outreach proposals for Linton on Ouse, Tollerton, Kirby Wiske, Baldersby, Borrowby and Carthorpe

There is a lack of clarity and detail about the limited hours outreach service proposed.

For the residents of **Linton on Ouse** and surrounding villages the barrier posed by a nearby (private) toll bridge at Aldwark will mean that residents will be faced with having to pay a two-way fee to travel every-time that they need to access the main adjoining post office branches (Great Ouseburn, Grafton and Green Hammerton). This will hit pensioners on fixed incomes particularly hard.

Alternative branches outside of outreach hours

The Helpberby Post Office branch is for sale and may not be sold as a going concern. This branch is 5.8 miles from Tollerton and classed as one of the 'nearest branches' for Tollerton on the Post Office's branch locator website. The possibility of the Helperby branch closing permanently could undermine the sustainability of the Post Office network in this area and place more pressure on the remaining branches in this part of the district, in particular Easingwold.

Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency/Disabled Access

Bus services are infrequent at best and at worst non-existent for the areas in Hambleton being proposed for a limited hours outreach service.

The very infrequent bus services from **Borrowby** and **Kirby Wiske** (to their nearest alternative branches outside outreach hours) are not registered as providing low floor/wheelchair access.

The bus turn-around time for residents of **Tollerton** wishing to use Easingwold Post Office branch is relatively short. Anecdotal evidence that we have received shows that the already lengthy transaction times at the Easingwold branch means that bus service users wishing to return to Tollerton often miss their bus connection. When this arises they are faced with a two-hour wait for the next bus. There are no bus services from Tollerton to Huby (the nearest branch).

For residents of **Linton on Ouse** there are no public transport links to the neighbouring Post Office branches at Great Ouseburn, Grafton and Green Hammerton.

Ease of Access

For many of the villages being proposed for outreach in Hambleton [announced to date], the **A19** acts as a major barrier for residents without access to a car seeking access to Post Office services outside the hours/days being provided for outreach. The A19 for instance separates Tollerton from Huby (its nearest branch), with no footpaths en route.

Easingwold's Post Office does not have a disabled ramp and the cobbles in the Market Place (where the bus stop is located) poses a particular hazard for elderly and disabled people when alighting from the bus.

3. HARROGATE BOROUGH

Terrain/Geography between branches/Road distance/Parking

The **Cold Bath Road** branch is a busy and profitable branch.

The Branch Access report states that the terrain is 'hilly' between the Cold Bath Road and the Cambridge Road branch (first alternative branch). The terrain is in fact steep. Just opposite the Cold Bath Road branch is a complex of approximately 70 older persons' flats. There are also a number of residential care homes in the vicinity. Walking to the Cambridge Road branch will be out of the question for older and disabled people and people pushing wheelchairs. The alternative to walking would be to take a taxi – an expensive alternative to people on a fixed income.

The Cold Bath Road branch has good car parking facilities, unlike at the two named alternative branches.

Retail Type/Impact on local economy/Housing and commercial development

Cold Bath Road and **High Harrogate** Post Office branches underpin the success of a local shopping parade and provide services to local businesses and schools in a densely populated area with a strong community identity. The strong community identity has been evidenced by the number of signatories to petitions to 'save' these branches from closing.

Due to the recent branch closure of the Harlow Hill Post Office an increasing number of Post Office customers (residents and businesses) are reliant on the **Cold Bath Road** branch.

High Harrogate is the receiving branch for Knaresborough Road (closed 2003), and St. Winifred's and Woodlands (closed 2004) and King's Road (closed 2007).

North Bridge: A planning application has been submitted for a new business park in the nearby village of Hutton Conyers. Anecdotal evidence shows that the Barker Business Park occupants and businesses on the Ure Bank site and surrounding villages regularly make use of the North Bridge branch to post parcels.

Stockwell: This branch serves a large housing development nearby and further extensive local development is planned by Harrogate Borough Council in this area. The closure of the Stockwell branch would mean that there would be only two Post Office branches left to serve a current population of 15,000.

In drawing up its five year housing land supply of deliverable sites, Harrogate Borough Council has identified that approximately half of the sites aimed at supplying in the region of 390 additional dwellings each year throughout the district, will be located in Harrogate town. This will lead to an inevitable increase in demand on the local infrastructure in Harrogate town and services including those delivered through local Post Offices branches.

Alternative branches

The County Council is concerned about the service overload at the Harrogate Crown Office (Cambridge Road) with the closure of three branches within a mile of this office (**Cold Bath Road, High Harrogate and Leeds Road**). This will lead to longer queues and a poorer standard of service.

Added to this, a number of other nearby branches have closed recently as listed above and so for some customers, this will be the second time they have been affected by the withdrawal of facilities.

The Kings Road Post Office branch is for sale and will need to be provided at alternative premises, which means that there is a high risk that this branch may not be replaced.

We understand that although Oatlands Mount (the second alternative branch for **Cold Bath Road**) has disabled access into the shop, there are five steps up to the Post Office counter.

With regards to the proposed closure of the **North Bridge** branch there is no disabled access at the first alternative branch (Finkle Street). Disabled parking and access is readily available at North Bridge Post Office but there are steps at the Finkle Street branch and there are parking difficulties for users of the Finkle Street Branch. The experience of residents is that it is difficult to park nearby. The Finkle Street branch has lengthy queues and is already the receiving branch for the former Lead Lane post office.

The first alternative branch for **Killinghall** is Ripley. However the Ripley branch does not have disabled access; it can only be accessed by a steep flight of steps. In light of this, local residents are requesting that an outreach service be provided in Killinghall to enable the less mobile members of the community to obtain easy access to Post Office services. Whilst it is acknowledged that the distance between Killinghall and Ripley is within the Government's accessibility distance criteria and so not eligible for outreach, capacity issues will need to be rectified at the Ripley branch, including disabled access, to ensure that it is able to serve a far higher customer base than it does at present.

For the residents of **Kirby Malzeard** and surrounding villages, wishing to access Post Office services outside the limited hours outreach service, the nearest Post Offices will be Ripon and Masham. There is no disabled access at either branch; both have several steps up to their entrances.

Outside the limited hours of outreach the residents of **Baldersby**, will rely upon the busy Thirsk branch to access Post Office services. Thirsk has been earmarked for significant housing development by Hambleton District Council and so there will be a need for additional staffing capacity to be introduced at the Thirsk branch. In addition a number of other proposed and actual branch closures in the Thirsk area will add to the already lengthy queues at the Thirsk branch (Sowerby, Borrowby, Kirby Wiske and Coxwold).

Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency

The Branch Access Reports acknowledge that there are no direct bus services between **High Harrogate** and its first alternative branch (Cambridge Road) or between **Cold Bath Road** and its first alternative branch (Cambridge Road) or between **Leeds Road** and its first alternative branch (Oatlands Mount) and its second alternative branch (Cambridge Road). This is concerning.

For the residents of **Kirby Malzeard** and surrounding villages, wishing to access Post Office services outside the limited hours outreach service there is only a limited bus service travelling to Ripon, which sets off in the early morning and does not return until late afternoon. The bus service is not registered as providing low floor/wheelchair access.

The second alternative branch for **Killinghall** is 40a Crab Lane. However, as acknowledged in the Branch Access report, there is no direct bus route to this branch from Killinghall.

Parking at branch

Both **Cold Bath Road** and **High Harrogate** have adequate free parking nearby.

Proximity to ATM

High Harrogate: The Branch Access Report inaccurately states that this branch does not have an ATM.

4. RYEDALE

Outreach proposals for Weaverthorpe, Sherburn, West Heslerton, Allerston, Foxholes, Terrington, Huttons Ambo, Slingsby, Hawnby and Nunnington

The high number of proposed branch closures in this district to be replaced with limited hours outreach services will mean that vast areas of this district will be left with no access to Post Office services for the majority of the week, affecting both businesses and residents.

Due to the very rural nature of this district, the existing post office branches being affected serve many surrounding villages over a large geographical area. Several already act as 'receiving branches' for branches that have closed in recent years. To take one example, Slingsby's branch is a receiving office for Hovingham, Amotherby, Stonegrave and Swinton.

We have received insufficient information on the type of outreach proposals being proposed from Post Office Ltd. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a limited hours mobile service is being proposed for some areas. A mobile service will be viewed as a poor substitute with vulnerable individuals having to wait outside in all weathers for the facility to arrive. The severe gradients surrounding Hawnby for instance will mean that the mobile facility will be unable to access the village during bad weather, particularly in the winter months when the roads are sometimes impassable in this area. The same principal applies to those areas proposed for outreach located in the Howardian Hills - Terrington in particular.

Retail Type/Impact on local economy/Housing and commercial development

Of concern is that most of the branches being proposed for limited hours outreach are part of the general village store (**Weaverthorpe, Sherburn, West Heslerton, Hawnby, Terrington, Huttons Ambo, Slingsby and Hawnby**). These branch closures will impact on the sustainability of the stores and could well lead to their closure. For instance the sub-postmasters at the Hawnby Post Office estimate that they will lose 50% of the footfall coming into the shop, making the shop no longer viable.

Sherburn and **Slingsby** are identified in Ryedale District Council's emerging Core Strategy as "service villages", where residential development will be permitted. The criteria for establishing service villages are that they contain a shop and a school and have a reasonable public transport links to a town for work and leisure purposes. In both of these villages, the Post Office offers shop services and therefore qualifying criteria for service village status. Clearly the revisions to post office services may have an impact on the viability of these shops and may therefore undermine or prejudice this "foundation" level of the district's settlement hierarchy.

Terrington narrowly missed "service village" allocation, and may in future be "upgraded" should a public transport service be extended there from Sheriff Hutton.

Norton, twinned with Malton, is the district's Principal Town, as identified in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and emerging Core Strategy, and as such will act as the focus for the majority of development in the district. Ryedale District Council's 2006 Retail Capacity Study identified Norton as: "the least healthy of the (district's) centres, and the centre which is most in danger of experiencing decline"; stating: "the Norton centre has the potential to provide a valuable top-up shopping role". Norton's Post Office is specifically identified in the study as a beneficial "higher order" service in relation to other convenience and comparison stores. The recently installed cash point installed at the Post Office is the only 24 hour and free ATM in Norton. Ryedale District Council has recently approved, subject to resolution of flood risk issues, a planning application for a mixed-use development of 13 residential units and a 3200 square foot retail expansion of the town's commercial limits. The closure of this Post Office branch and loss of ATM facilities would have a detrimental impact on the already weakened retail centre, which is of strategic importance in terms of Ryedale's development over the coming 15 years and beyond.

Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency/Disabled Access

Typically bus services in this very rural area are very infrequent and in the case of **Hawnby** non-existent.

'Wait over' times for buses travelling to and from Malton can vary from a few minutes to three to four hours; neither very convenient for people wishing to simply undertake a Post Office transaction.

The bus services travelling from **Huttons Ambo**, **Nunnington** and **Weaverthorpe** are not registered as providing low floor/wheelchair access. The bus service for Weaverthorpe to Malton and Foxholes to Malton is a Post Bus. If the Weaverthorpe and Foxholes branches close it is especially important that the Post Bus service continues to run.

Ease of access at alternative branch (outside the hours of outreach)/Parking

The Branch Access Report states that the first and second alternative branch for **Wass** is Coxwold. However we have received confirmation that the Coxwold Post Office branch will close permanently in February 2008.

For the residents of **Slingsby**, **Huttons Ambo**, **Norton** and **Terrington** the Malton branch will be the nearest alternative post office by public transport or car. The residents of **Foxholes** and **Weaverthorpe** are also likely to gravitate towards this branch. We have received reports that waiting times at the Malton branch of 15 to 20 minutes are commonplace now and will inevitably become worse. Even at present the car park next to the Malton Post Office is often full and there is limited disabled parking access in the Market Square. We have also received reports that the Malton Post Office is not suitable for wheelchair access.

Terrain/Geography between branches/Road distance

The residents of **Hawnby** will face a 13 mile round trip to Helmsley. Whilst as the crow flies the nearest alternative branch is at Kepwick (five miles). However the most direct route is a broken road which negotiates severe gradients and a number of gates and pot holes. Roads surrounding Hawnby comprise 1 in 4 gradients and in the winter are impassable on occasions.

The branches located in the **Howardian Hills** are also located in areas of hilly terrain - Terrington, in particular – and so the same types of issues apply.

The busy **A64** presents a physical barrier for vulnerable adults – the elderly and disabled - and those without access to a car - for residents of **Huttons Ambo** and **West Heselton** when attempting to travel to the Malton branch.

5. SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH

Terrain/Geography between branches/Road distance

The Whitby area is facing five proposed closures within a relatively small geographic radius and in areas which already have severe accessibility problems, especially for those without a car. This is particularly the case for residents of **Fylingthorpe, Ruswarp and Sandsend**.

The terrain is hilly and buses run only hourly to the alternative branches from Fylingthorpe.

For Ruswarp the distance to the alternative branch is almost two miles, of hilly, steep terrain and for the vast majority of customers walking to the alternative branches is not a feasible option.

The Branch Access Report for Sandsend states that the terrain between Sandsend and Lythe: "is sloping between the branches." This is inaccurate as the journey between branches involves negotiating Lythe Bank, which has a severe gradient (1 in 4 in places). Taking into account the distance between branches (over a mile) and the terrain, for the vast majority of customers it is unfeasible to walk to either of the alternative branches.

The terrain is also hilly between the **Helredale** and **West Cliff** Post Office branches and their respective alternative branches, making it also unlikely for vulnerable adults and people using pushchairs to be able to walk to the alternative branches.

Consequently, the minimum access criteria give a misleading picture for the above in terms of the accessibility of the 'alternative branches' cited in the Branch Access Reports.

Retail Type/Impact on local economy/Housing and commercial development

All of the post offices proposed for closure within the Borough are provided within the context of a larger business (general store etc). The closure of the Post Office branches risk undermining the sustainability of the associated businesses. For instance the post office trade accounts for 60% of the business of the village store at Ruswarp where the Post Office branch is located. Vulnerable adults without access to a car may be faced with having no access to services if the village shops/stores etc. in Fylingthorpe, Ruswarp and Sandsend are forced to close.

The first phase of the Sands development, which will comprise 250 houses in total, will be built later this year. **North Marine Road** is the nearest Post Office branch to this development.

Ease of Access

Fylingthorpe: The Branch Access report is inaccurate as there are no steps leading to the Post Office. The present owners have recently installed a wider shop door and sloping entrance ramp for disabled customers.

Population/Tourism

The 2001 Census population figures do not take into account the high levels of all-year round tourism in the Borough and the demand that this has on services especially in the peak season. This would apply to varying degrees to all the post offices recommended for closure but would be particularly significant for **Fylingthorpe, North Marine Road, Sandsend** and **West Cliff**, which are all located in particularly busy tourist areas.

All of these areas have a high percentage of elderly residents and in Fylingthorpe there is a small estate of old peoples' bungalows whose occupants rely on the Post Office branch/shop there for their essential services.

Alternative branches

The residents of **Ruswarp, Helredale** and **Westcliff** will be reliant on the Co-op store in Whitby (Endeavor Wharf) as the first alternative branch. The limited space available in the store gives rise to concerns about the capacity of its branch to cope with the increased trade.

There are also concerns about the "domino" effect of branch closures within central Scarborough due to previous closures in the same locality. Branches in Dean Road, Manor Road and Newlands Drive have closed and the two additional branches proposed for closure within a mile of the centre (**Victoria Road** and **North Marine Road**) will further reduce access to post office services.

For **North Marine Road** Aberdeen Walk is listed as the alternative branch. Serious concerns have been raised at public meetings about the existing queues and length of time people have to wait at this busy, main post office. North Marine Road is a busy branch at all times of the year and the Sands development will increase the local population within its catchment area. The branch is used by business users as it is easy to park directly outside; such users will be inconvenienced by the relative inaccessibility of the alternative branches.

Victoria Road: This post office services other businesses in the area who will be inconvenienced by the relative inaccessibility of the alternative branches.

Helredale: This is a busy post office and the only post office facility serving the community of east Whitby. It is a mile from the alternative branch and as mentioned previously is also in an area of hilly terrain, making access on foot unlikely for most customers.

Deprivation

The post offices in **West Cliff, Helredale, Victoria Road** and **North Marine Road** are located in areas with significant multiple deprivation. Many people living in these wards are already disadvantaged in terms of financial and social exclusion. Indeed, several of the super output areas within these wards feature in the top 20% nationally most deprived (as defined by the IMD 2004).

Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency/Disabled access

Of concern is the fact that the bus services from **Ruswarp, West Cliff, Sandsend, Helredale, Fylingthorpe** are not registered as providing low floors/wheelchair access to their first alternative branch. In the case of Helredale the bus service to the second alternative branch is not registered as providing low floors/wheelchair access. For Ruswarp, West Cliff, Sandsend and Fylingthorpe bus services to their respective second alternative branches cannot be guaranteed.

North Marine Road: The listed bus route from North Marine Road to Aberdeen Road is incorrect. Arriva does not run a 3A service within Scarborough. As acknowledged in the Branch Access report there is no direct bus service to the second alternative branch (Falsgrave Road).

Victoria Road: As acknowledged in the Branch Access report there are no direct bus routes to either the first or second alternative branches.

Sandsend: The Branch Access Report for Sandsend is inaccurate in terms of bus service frequency. Arriva's bus service from Sansend to Lythe runs hourly during the day, not every 20 minutes as stated.

West Cliff: As acknowledged in the Branch Access Report there is no direct bus route to the first alternative branch. The terrain is hilly, leaving little option for people unable to walk the distance to travel by car.

Fylingthorpe: Anecdotal evidence has shown that in the summer months it is sometimes not possible to embark on the bus at this stop to travel to the alternative branch. This is because the bus is full by the time it reaches Fylingthorpe. In the winter months the bus service sometimes does not run due to bad weather and the challenging geography of the area.

Parking at branch

North Marine Road: It is not possible to park outside the Aberdeen walk branch. The Branch Access Report states "limited" parking is available within 220 yards of the branch. However this assumes that a space is readily available in the closest location. In reality customers may have to park much further away especially during the busy summer months. For those customers who find it difficult to walk (and stand) the absence of parking combined with the public transport issues raises serious concerns about the accessibility of the alternative branches.

Victoria Road: There is no parking available outside the first alternative branch (Falsgrave Road). The nearest available parking as stated in the access report is 55 yards. Falsgrave Road area is a busy local shopping area and this assumes that parking is available at the nearest alternative but in reality customers may have to park much further away. For customers wishing to access Aberdeen Walk (second alternative) the same issues about the absence of parking and the excessive waiting times would apply.

Ruswarp: There is a pay and display car park close to the Co-op store (first alternative), although finding a space in this busy car park, particularly in the summer months can be difficult.

Helredale: As above, finding a space in the car park serving the Co-op store can be difficult, especially in the busy summer months.

West Cliff:

Again, as above finding a space in the car park serving the co-op store (first alternative) can be difficult, especially in the busy summer months.

Fylingthorpe

The outer areas of the catchment area for this post office are in excess of one mile from the first alternative post office.

6. SELBY

Retail/Impact on local economy/Housing development

Flaxley Road serves a large housing estate and is a busy post office. The branch is part of a parade of shops supporting a deprived community. The branch closure would risk the viability of these neighbouring businesses.

The **Hill Top** branch serves a nearby business estate.

In drawing up its LDF core strategy, Selby District Council has identified that Selby town, Barlby Bridge and Brayton will be the main areas for housing development. Tadcaster has also been identified for housing expansion. These developments will undoubtedly place added pressure on the Micklegate branch (first alternative branch for Flaxley Road) and the Westgate branch (first alternative branch for Hill Top).

Deprivation/Population profile

Flaxley Road is located in the vicinity of a deprived area in the top 20% nationally most deprived (as defined by the IMD 2004). This branch serves a high proportion of unemployed and long-term sick living on means-tested benefits with no access to bank accounts – making the Post Office a lifeline in this regard. Flaxley Road also has above national average numbers of retired and elderly persons.

The Hill Top branch is also located in an area of above national average numbers of retired and elderly persons.

Alternative Branch/Parking

Flaxley Road: Flaxley Road has roadside parking directly outside the branch. The pay and display car park near to the first alternative branch (Micklegate) is often full on Monday's due to the market. The Micklegate branch already has lengthy queues/transaction times.

Hill Top: The Westgate branch (first alternative branch) already has lengthy queues/transaction times.

Ease of access

Flaxley Road: The Micklegate branch (first alternative branch) has poor access for wheelchairs due to the sharp right hand turn to second (inner) door.

Routes to the Micklegate branch from Flaxley Road are poor. Several junctions, roundabouts have to be crossed. Pavements tend to be narrow and so are not wide enough for wheelchairs, mobile scooters, double buggies etc. This is likely to mean that many people would have to either walk in the road or walk considerably further to follow a safe route.

Anecdotal evidence shows that a number of elderly people living in the Flaxley Road area have their pension collected by more able-bodied

neighbours using the Flaxley Road branch. These same neighbours may be unwilling to walk into town to the Micklegate branch.

Bus Operating Company/Bus Route Number/Bus Service Frequency

As acknowledged in your Branch Access report the bus service from **Flaxley Road** to the Micklegate branch does not provide disabled access.

Also off concern is that both the **Birkin** and **Ryther** branches have no bus services to the alternative branches. The distance from Birkin Post Office to the first alternative branch is over two miles and the distance from Ryther to the first alternative branch is just under two miles – neither distances can be considered to be reasonable walking distances for most people.