



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

Proposal on the future of Lancaster Crown Court



This consultation begins on 21 May 2025

This consultation ends on 2 July 2025



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Tribunals Service

Proposal on the future of **Lancaster Crown Court**

A consultation produced by HM Courts & Tribunals Service,
part of the Ministry of Justice. It is also available at <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>

To:	Court users, judiciary, magistracy, staff, criminal justice agency practitioners and elected representatives and local authorities in Lancashire.
Duration:	21 May 2025 to 2 July 2025
Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to:	HMCTS Consultation, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Post point 6.22, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ Email: estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk
How to respond:	Please send your response by 2 July 2025 to: HMCTS Consultation, HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Post point 6.22, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ Email: estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk
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: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-on-the-future-of-lancaster-crown-court

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Foreword

HMCTS is consulting on the proposal to permanently close Lancaster Crown Court. This proposal is part of our ongoing work to review our estate to make sure that we continue to deliver access to justice, value for money and provide an efficient and effective service. .

Lancaster Crown Court resides within the Lancaster Castle complex and does not offer modern and flexible accommodation and has significant issues with security and accessibility. These issues cannot be resolved due to the listed status of the building and because the Castle complex operates as a tourist attraction. As a result, Lancaster Crown Court is currently closed and has not been utilised for either crime or civil hearings since 2019. We are proposing that Lancaster Crown Court is permanently closed and that crime hearings continue to be heard in Preston Crown Court, a modern and accessible building with capacity to accommodate any cases that could be heard in Lancaster. The journey times to Preston have been carefully considered, along with the overall impact on court users, judiciary, and staff. Lancaster Courthouse, which resides at a nearby location in Lancaster, will remain available for civil hearings.

We are seeking the views of local users, judiciary, staff, justice practitioners and elected representatives to better understand the impact that this proposal may have within Lancashire, and we welcome views on any other options you think we should consider.

I would urge all local court users and stakeholders to consider this proposal and respond to the consultation so that we can consider your views before making a final decision on the future of the court.

Jane Wignall

Delivery Director, HM Courts & Tribunals Service North West

Introduction

This paper sets out for consultation the proposal to permanently close Lancaster Crown Court. The permanent closure of the court would consolidate the Lancashire court estate and generate efficiencies through reduce operating costs. The consultation seeks the views of everyone with an interest in the work at this court.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office and will run for six weeks. Responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in or views on the subject.

We have taken the decision to not publish a separate Impact Assessment alongside this consultation document, as we are not currently considering any alternative options. If any alternative proposals are submitted in response to the consultation, we will consider whether an Impact Assessment is necessary to inform a final decision.



Background

In examining our court estate, we need to make decisions about how we maintain effective access to justice while determining the most appropriate and cost-effective locations for our courts and tribunals. We need the right courts and tribunals in the right places, with appropriate facilities and capacity.

The proposal to permanently close Lancaster Crown Court has been developed and assessed using our published HMCTS estate principles¹.

Court estate in Lancashire

This paper sets out the proposal to permanently close Lancaster Crown Court and surrender the lease.

The proposal is intended to consolidate the court estate in Lancashire, to improve efficiency and reduce operating costs. Our estates principles, together with the responses to this consultation, will guide our decision regarding the closure of the court and whether any further mitigations may be required.

The proposal to permanently close Lancaster Crown Court is based on the following:

- The court is not currently being used and prior to 2019 had a very low level of utilisation in both criminal and civil jurisdictions;
- The court is not safe to operate, meaning there is an unacceptable security risk to court users, the judiciary and HMCTS staff;
- Facilities at the court are unsuitable for many Crown Court cases and inaccessible to those with accessibility needs;
- The closure of the court would consolidate the court estate in Lancashire;
- Crime workloads can be accommodated at Preston Crown Court, Lancaster Courthouse, which resides at a nearby location in Lancaster will remain available for civil hearings;
- The closure of the site would allow for savings through reduced operational costs.

The following courts are located in Lancashire:

Crown Court centres:

Burnley Crown Court, Lancaster Crown Court (Lancaster Castle) and Preston Crown Court (located at Preston Combined Court and Sessions House, Preston)

Magistrates' courts:

Blackburn Magistrates' Court, Blackpool Magistrates' Court (new courthouse being developed), Burnley Magistrates' Court, Lancaster Magistrates' Court (located at Lancaster Courthouse) and Preston Magistrates' Court.

County courts

Blackpool County Court (new courthouse being developed) currently sitting at Fleetwood Magistrates' Court, Burnley County Court, Lancaster County Court (located at Lancaster Crown Court, Shire Hall), Lancaster County Court (located at Lancaster Courthouse), Preston County Court (located at Preston Combined Court).

¹ [Fit for the future: transforming the court and tribunal estate - Ministry of Justice - Citizen Space](#)

How we have decided courts to include in the proposals

The HMCTS estates principles guide our decision-making regarding the location, size and capabilities of our court and tribunal buildings. To ensure we maintain effective access to justice and deliver our business cost effectively and efficiently in the longer-term, we have applied these principles to develop the proposals in this consultation.

The principles are:

1. Ensuring access to justice for all

- Everyone who needs to access the court and tribunal estate should be able to do so.
- To ensure continued access to justice, journey times to court should be reasonable and we will consider carefully the likely impact on travel times for any proposal, while recognising that different users have different needs.
- In determining whether a journey is reasonable we will consider the ability of users to attend a hearing on time and return, by public transport, if necessary, to include consideration of the following points:
 - the length of journey both by car and public transport, with the expectation that the overwhelming majority of users would be able to leave home no earlier than 07:30 to attend their local court and return by 19:30 using public transport if necessary;
 - the difficulty of the journey including frequency of public transport and the number of changes required;
 - the cost of potential journeys;
 - the type of cases heard at the court or tribunal;
 - the opening hours of the court or tribunal;
 - the needs of vulnerable users; and
 - whether there are available mitigations to reduce the impact on users with longer journey times, if the numbers of such users are small.

Where applicable, mitigations may include (although not be restricted to) the following:

- Varying the start or end times of hearings, subject to judicial approval and where the case type was suitable (which could also include a change of location). This would provide an effective mitigation for those people whose earliest arrival at court was after 10:00, or who had to leave early;
- Provision of local video links; and
- Consideration of supplementary provision where this is appropriate to the nature of the case type/workload, and in agreement with the judiciary.
- To assess the impact of court closures on travel with evidence-based modelling and real-world examples of typical travel times and costs for those courts proposed for closure, drawing on local knowledge.
- To maintain and expand the presence of HMCTS in key strategic locations to meet the needs of a larger proportion of the population, while taking into account the needs of users and in particular, victims, witnesses and those who are vulnerable.
- Where it is used, supplementary provision, which involves the delivery of court and tribunal services outside of the fixed HMCTS estate, must be safe, secure, and accessible and also reflect the dignity and authority of the court. In exploring opportunities for using supplementary provision, intended to benefit court and tribunal users by increasing accessibility and flexibility, we will ensure that appropriate case types are heard in such venues.
- To understand and work closely with our stakeholders including other government agencies such as the CPS, social services, police forces, local authorities and Cafcass.

2. Delivering value for money

- Without compromising access to justice for all, to ensure we reduce the current and future cost of running the estate and invest appropriately in other routes to justice; to deliver value for money for the taxpayer and to reduce costs to the taxpayer of running the estate, working collaboratively with key partners across the public sector.
- To ensure that our buildings are in the best condition possible and can be maintained at an affordable cost.
- To focus our investment into those buildings that will best provide effective access to justice and best meet the needs of users.
- To recognise that under-used buildings represent a poor return on investment and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.
- To maximise the capital receipts from surplus estate for reinvestment in HMCTS.

3. Enabling efficiency in the longer term

- To move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business while also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.
- We will present proposals for changing the court and tribunal estate in the context of the impact of the changes delivered by the reform programme. This will be drawn from our experience as we test prototypes and assess initial roll outs.
- To increase the ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the civil, family and tribunal 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 invest in the modernisation of the estate by taking advantage of the latest communication methods (Wi-Fi and video links), greater use of online services and digital systems to support the delivery of justice.
- To improve the way we deliver day to day maintenance at our buildings through the use of building champions.
- To ensure that important historic buildings are properly protected and maintained.
- To ensure that our estate is as effective, efficient, and flexible as possible, irrespective of administrative boundaries and to focus on users of our services, including making improvements to support victims and witnesses, because of the critical role they play in the justice system.
- As changes are made across our estate, to use the Court and Tribunal Design Guide², to ensure that we maximise our investment across buildings and that our designs take us closer to meeting the requirements of modern court and tribunal buildings.
- To support our courts and tribunal centres by providing dedicated front of house staff who are knowledgeable, trained, and skilled to support members of the public and professional users. These staff members will be given continued training and skills in managing new technologies.

Lancashire criminal estate capacity

Workloads from the Lancaster area can be permanently relocated to Preston Crown Court, an arrangement that is already in place. While the provision and location of court buildings is a government function, the listing of court work is a judicial responsibility. If the court is permanently closed, we will engage with the relevant judicial bodies in Lancashire to confirm the distribution of work.

Lancashire civil estate capacity

Lancaster Courthouse, located on George Street in Lancaster, will remain available for civil hearings when needed. The site is approximately 0.6 miles from Lancaster Crown Court. Preston Combined Court is also available to accommodate civil hearings. These arrangements are already in place. While the provision and location of court buildings is a government function, the listing of court work is a judicial responsibility. If the court is permanently closed, we will engage with the relevant judicial bodies in Lancashire to confirm the distribution of work.

The proposal

This consultation proposes the permanent closure of Lancaster Crown Court.

The court is not currently in use and cases originating in the Lancaster area can be accommodated at Preston Crown Court and, where necessary, Sessions House, Preston. Lancaster Crown Court is an old Grade I listed building and there are significant operational issues regarding safety and security of court users, the quality of facilities and accessibility for all court users.

Lancaster Crown Court

Lancaster Crown Court is located within Lancaster Castle in the centre of the city. It is one of four crown courts in Lancashire, the others being located at Burnley, Preston Combined Court, and Preston Sessions House. There is one crown courtroom and a further hearing room in the Shire Hall, which was sometimes used for civil hearings. The work of the court is administered from Preston Crown Court.

The court is not currently used, and criminal cases that would have previously been heard there have been heard at Preston Crown Court (located at Preston Combined Court) since 2019. We are proposing that criminal cases would continue to be heard at Preston Crown Court.

In total, eleven courtrooms are available in Preston for crown court hearings. Given that the custodial facilities at Lancaster are not fit for purpose, the types of cases that can now be heard at the site would be limited to low level bail hearings where there is a very low risk of a custodial sentence. This does not allow for efficient listing.

The closure of Lancaster Crown court would reduce operating costs, enabling us to focus our resources towards venues that are more suited to the requirements of a modern court house. The proposed closure would impact a very small number of users.

Where necessary, and in agreement with the judiciary, civil work that had on occasion been heard at the Shire Hall at Lancaster Crown Court can be heard at nearby Lancaster Courthouse.

We have carefully considered the location to which hearings could relocate. If listing changes are required, this would be a matter for the Recorder of Preston to consider.

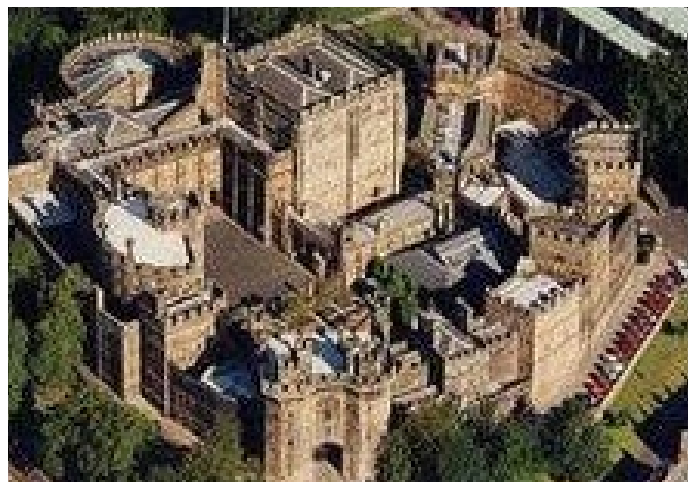
We would welcome views on:

- i) whether we should permanently close Lancaster Crown Court;
- ii) if we permanently close Lancaster Crown Court, should workloads continue to be heard at Preston; and
- iii) what other options you think might work.

When considering responses to this consultation and making decisions regarding the future of this court, the Lord Chancellor will consider whether effective access to justice can be maintained, whether the closure offers value for money and whether it would enable the long-term efficiency. Only when these principles have been met, will a decision be made to permanently close a court.

Accommodation

Lancaster Crown Court



Lancaster Crown Court is located within a Grade I listed, 12th Century castle. The accommodation comprises of one crown courtroom and a hearing room in the Shire Hall which has in the past been used for civil hearings, two cells which have been decommissioned as they do not meet our current safety standards for custodial facilities, a judges' chamber, a juror room, one public consultation room, and a Witness Service room. There are no separate rooms for probation officers and defence advocates. Lancaster Crown Court is a leasehold site.

Lancashire County Council operate guided tours of the castle seven days a week between the hours of 10.00am and 15.45pm. Up to 11 tours take place a day at weekends, but less during weekdays in the winter. Each tour can accommodate up to forty people and include entry to the crown courtroom and the Shire Hall when the court is not sitting. There are also public events held at the castle such as music concerts which can take place during the day in the Shire Hall.

Security and Safety

There are a number of concerns relating to the security and safety for hearings held at Lancaster Crown Court, these are detailed below;

Cells

The two cells at the court do not meet minimum requirements and have been condemned. There is also no secure van dock and the restrictions resulting from the Grade I listed status of the site and the fact that the court is located within a popular tourist attraction, has restricted the overall viability of this site as a venue for custodial crown court hearings.



The entrance to Lancaster Crown Court and staircase

Security

The Castle's primary function is a tourist attraction, offering tours of the Castle building and grounds and this presents a range of identified security hazards and weaknesses. We have concluded that there were two key factors that are beyond our ability to control.

Due to the age and listed status of the building there are physical limitations that prevent us from implementing the necessary security measures.

There is uncontrolled access to the site which gives additional challenges to HMCTS security measures.

Our inability to implement effective security arrangements means that court users, judiciary and HMCTS staff would be put at risk.

Access to the Building

When the court had conducted hearings, judiciary, staff, jurors, witnesses, legal representatives, and members of the public attending a hearing enter via the same entrance. While specific arrangements can be made for vulnerable witnesses to enter via a separate entrance, HMCTS security standards require criminal courts to have separate secure entrances for staff and judiciary and a further separate secure entrance for jurors. At Lancaster Crown Court all persons attending court had arrived via the same entrance as those members of the public attending the tours (unless a vulnerable witness). This is an issue we are not able to rectify given the listed status of the building.

There are two flights of stairs from the ground floor to the crown courtroom and Shire Hall on the first floor.

There are no lift facilities, and it is not feasible to install lifts or stairlifts due to Grade 1 listed status. This makes the building inaccessible for disabled court users including defendants.

Lancaster Crown Court does not comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Preston Combined Court



Preston Crown Court is co-located with Preston County Court and the building is referred to as Preston Combined Court. It is a modern, fit for purpose building located in the centre of the city. It provides a good standard of accommodation for court users. Preston Combined Court is a freehold site.

The accommodation comprises of 9 crown courtrooms and 1 civil courtroom, as well as 4 District Judge hearing rooms, 10 Judges Chambers and 17 cells. The building provides accommodation for the Crown Prosecution Service, Probation teams, and provides a Robing Room, Defence Advocate Room and Liaison and Diversion Services. There are separate secure entrances and circulation routes for staff, judiciary, and witnesses. Catering facilities providing on-site refreshments for court users. A CCTV system is in operation and there is disabled access at the main entrance. A public lift is available to take court users to the second floor where the crown courtrooms are situated. There is also disabled access for defendants in custody.

Workload

During the last year that sittings took place, 2018/19, Lancaster Crown Court sat for a total of 68 hours out of a possible 2,415 hours. The court sat for a further 36.5 hours for County Court work. The workload hours represent an hourly utilisation of 4%. During this period 21 criminal trials were listed in Lancaster of which three went ahead. The remaining 18 criminal trials did not go ahead due to reasons such as the defendant changing their plea to guilty prior to the hearing.

During the 2018/19 financial year, Preston Combined Court sat for a total of 11,823 out of a possible 17,925 hours, representing an hourly utilisation of 66%. During 2023/24 financial year, noting Lancaster workloads have already been absorbed, Preston Combined sat for a total of 13,213 out of a possible 17,430 hours, representing an hourly utilisation of 76%.

During the 2018/19 financial year, Preston Law Courts (Sessions House) sat for a total of 3,830 out of a possible 6,080 available hours, representing an utilisation of 63%. During 2023/24 financial year, noting Lancaster workloads have already been absorbed, Preston Law Courts (Sessions House) sat for a total of 3,748 out of a possible 7,470 hours, representing an hourly utilisation of 50%.

Our capacity analysis has shown that there remains sufficient capacity at Preston Crown Court to absorb the small amount of work previously heard at Lancaster Crown Court. In line with our estates principles to deliver efficiency and achieve value for money for the taxpayer, it is an effective means of maximising our more capable and flexible facilities through continuing to move work to Preston Crown Court. Preston Crown Court already deals with all of the custody cases for Lancaster.

Due to the lack of suitable custodial facilities, the limited number of cases that could be listed at Lancaster Crown Court would result in inefficient listing, as often these cases do not go ahead on the day due to defendants pleading guilty prior to the hearing. It is not possible to mitigate for this by listing more cases than can be heard in one day as there is no flexibility to transfer cases to another courtroom/Judge. Crown Courts with more than one courtroom are able to list more efficiently to accommodate those cases that do not go ahead and make each courtroom as productive as possible.

Judiciary and staff

There are no staff or judiciary based at Lancaster Crown Court, staff and judiciary are permanently based at Preston Crown Court.

Operating costs

During the 2023/24 financial year, property costs relating to Lancaster Crown Court were approximately £211,000. This includes rents, rates, utilities, security, and service charges. The permanent closure of the court would enable us to focus our resources to existing courts that can provide a better standard of facilities and operational efficiency.

Travel time analysis

Our analysis of travel times compares the current journey times to Lancaster Crown Court with the future journey times to Preston Combined Court. Journey times are calculated from towns and villages that have had - or which could have - work heard at Lancaster Crown Court. In line with our estates principles, we have selected 21 towns and villages and have demonstrated the complexity of journeys in each case.

To comply with our measure of a reasonable journey, we have sought to ensure arrival at the court by 9.30am for the outward journey, leaving home no earlier than 7.30am and to return home no later than 7.30pm for the return journey, having left court at 5.30pm. We have demonstrated the complexity of the journeys by showing the forms of transport required in each case.³

In each case the journey has been assumed to commence on a Wednesday outside of the Summer or other holiday periods. We have, in most cases selected the quickest journey, except where a slightly longer journey would be more straightforward.

Having considered travel time impacts based on this analysis, we consider that journey times to court will remain reasonable and that our principle that the overwhelming majority of users would be able to leave home no earlier than 07:30 to attend their local court and return by 19:30 using public transport, if necessary, will be met.

Cost of travel

The cost of travel in Lancashire using the local bus services is subject to a £3 journey cap for a single journey (from 1 January 2025). An all-day bus ticket was available for £6 as at 1 January 2025.

For train journeys between Preston and Lancaster, an advance ticket can cost from £4 one way, and an Anytime Day Return ticket is available from £11.20.










Outbound - Journey to Preston Combined Court by public transport

RAG assessment (outbound)

Green – Arrive on time by 9.30, allowing for pre-court activities.

Amber – Arrive by 10:00, time for pre-court activities limited.

Red – Cannot arrive by 10:00.

	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Bailrigg	8:15	Walk 0.2mi, Bus (42, 11mins), walk 9mins, Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	1hr 5 mins	
Blackpool	8:23	Train (BPN-PRE, 25mins), walk 0.6mi	9:03	40 mins	
Bolton Le Sands	8:20	Bus (555, 7mins), Train (CRN-PRE, 27mins) walk 0.6mi	9:20	1hr	
Carnforth	8:39	Train (CRN-PRE, 27mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	41 mins	
Chorley	8:41	Train (CHO-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:13	32 mins	
Cockerham	7:58	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (581, 15mins), walk 9mins, Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:12	1hr 14 mins	
Dunsop Bridge	7:40	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (11, 31mins), Bus (280, 56mins), walk 0.3mi	9:57	2hr 17 mins	
Fleetwood	7:41	Bus (400, 29mins), walk 7mins, Train (BPN-PRE, 25mins), walk 0.6mi	9:03	1hr 22 mins	
Galgate	7:43	Bus (41, 64mins), walk 0.2mi	8:51	1hr 8 mins	
Garstang	7:57	Bus (41, 50mins), walk 0.2mi	8:51	54 mins	

³ Journey times calculated using Google Maps. Other navigation systems may provide different results and travel time will vary subject to local traffic conditions.

	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Great Eccleston	8:14	Bus (74, 44mins), walk 0.2mi	9:03	47 mins	
Heysham	8:01	Walk 0.1m, Bus (2X, 30mins), walk 11mins, Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	1hr 19 mins	
High Bentham	7:44	Walk 0.9mi, Train (BNT-CRN, 21mins), Train (CRN-PRE, 27mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	1hr 36 mins	
Hornby	7:42	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (81S, 31mins), walk 11mins, Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:12	1hr 30 mins	
Inglewhite	7:59	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (678, 35mins), Bus (1, 35mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	1hr 21 mins	
Kirkham	8:42	Bus (61, 34mins), walk 0.2mi	9:21	39 mins	
Lancaster	8:51	Train (LAN-PRE, 15mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	29 mins	
Leyland	8:50	Train (LEY-PRE, 6mins), Bus (20, 2mins), walk 0.2mi	9:13	23 mins	
Lytham St. Annes	8:22	Bus (11B, 12mins), Bus (68, 38mins), walk 0.2mi	9:21	59 mins	
Melling	7:26	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (81S, 5mins), Train (WEN-CRN, 16mins), Train (CRN-PRE, 27mins), walk 0.6mi	9:25	1hr 59 mins	
Morecambe	8:22	Train (MRC-LAN, 12mins), Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:19	57 mins	
Pilling	7:47	Bus (567, 39mins), walk 9mins, Train (LAN-PRE, 18mins), walk 0.6mi	9:21	1hr 34 mins	
Poulton Le Fylde	8:31	Train (PLF-PRE, 17mins) walk 0.6mi	9:03	32 mins	
Silverdale	8:32	Train (SVD-PRE, 34mins), walk 0.6mi	9:20	48 mins	

Return - Journey *from* Preston Combined Court by public transport







RAG assessment (Return).

Green – Return by 19:30 on time, leaving no earlier than 17:30.

Amber – Return later than 19:30 (but before 20:30) or leaving no earlier than 17:30 (or between 16:30 and 17:30 to make last connection “LC”).

Red – Return later than 20:30 leaving no earlier than 17:30.

	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Bailrigg	17:42	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (41, 73mins), walk 0.2mi	19:02	1hr 20 mins	
Blackpool	17:47	Walk 0.6mi, Train (BPN-PRE, 25mins)	18:26	39 mins	
Bolton Le Sands	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins) walk 11mins, Bus (555, 14mins)	19:04	1hr 15 mins	
Carnforth	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins), Train (LAN-CRN, 10mins)	18:46	57 mins	
Chorley	17:34	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-CHO,13mins)	18:02	28 mins	
Cockerham	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins), walk 9mins, Bus (88, 29mins) walk 0.1 mi	19:12	1hr 23 mins	
Dunsop Bridge	17:10	Walk 0.3mi, Bus (280, 53mins), Bus (11, 32mins), walk 0.1mi	18:52	1hr 42 mins	
Fleetwood	17:47	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-BPN, 25mins), Tram (T1, 34mins) walk 1.0mi	19:35	1hr 48 mins	
Galgate	17:42	Walk 0.1m, Bus (41, 64mins)	18:50	1hr 8 mins	
Garstang	17:42	Walk 0.1m, Bus (41, 52mins)	18:38	56 mins	
Great Eccleston	18:04	Walk 0.2mi, Bus (74, 49mins)	18:59	55 mins	
Heysham	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins), walk 11mins, Bus (2X, 20mins), walk 0.1mi	18:55	1hr 6 mins	
High Bentham	19:41	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 14mins), Train (LAN-BNT,29mins),walk 0.9mi	21:18	1hr 37 mins	
Hornby	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins), walk 11mins, Bus (82, 35mins), walk 0.1mi	19:26	1hr 37 mins	
Inglewhite	15:42	Walk 0.1mi, Bus (41, 34mins), walk 22mins, Bus (995, 5mins), walk 0.1mi	17:10	1hr 28 mins	
Kirkham	17:34	Walk 0.2mi, Bus (75, 33mins)	18:13	39 mins	
Lancaster	17:39	Walk, 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins)	18:09	30 mins	

	Depart	Route	Arrive	Length	RAG
Leyland	17:34	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LEY, 5mins)	17:54	20 mins	
Lytham St. Annes	17:34	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-AFH, 25mins), walk 7mins, Bus (76, 1min)	18:31	57 mins	
Melling	17:27	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 15mins), walk 11mins, Bus (81, 53mins), walk 0.1mi	19:13	1hr 46 mins	
Morecambe	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins), Train (LAN-MRC, 11mins)	18:39	50 mins	
Pilling	17:47	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-PLF, 16mins), Bus (5C, 25mins), Bus (88,12mins)	19:08	1hr 21 mins	
Poulton Le Fylde	17:47	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-PLF, 16mins)	18:17	30 mins	
Silverdale	17:49	Walk 0.6mi, Train (PRE-LAN, 16mins, Train (LAN-SVD, 16mins)	18:52	1hr 3 mins	

The impact of this proposal

We have taken the decision to not publish a separate Impact Assessment alongside this consultation document, as we are not currently considering any alternative options. If any alternative proposals are submitted in response to the consultation, we will consider whether an Impact Assessment is necessary to inform a final decision.

An Equality Statement is provided at Annex A. Our initial assessment is that the proposal is not directly discriminatory within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010 as it applies equally to all persons affected by the changes included in this document. We do not consider that the proposal would result in people being treated less favourably because of any protected characteristic.

In terms of the possibility of indirect discrimination, HMCTS consider that the permanent closure of Lancaster Crown Court may put at a disadvantage those with the protected characteristics of age (those who are older and less able to travel), disability, pregnancy, or maternity because of difficulties to the extent that they need to travel further (some users may conversely travel shorter distances). However, HMCTS consider that this option is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim as explained in more detail in the Equality statement.

The Equality Statement will be updated following analysis of the responses to this consultation.

While there are no staff based at Lancaster Crown Court, we will work with the Departmental Trade Unions throughout the consultation period to understand any potential impacts on our staff, which will feed into the decision-making process. At the same time, our staff will also have the opportunity to put forward their views through the formal consultation process.

HMCTS complies fully with equality legislation and codes of practice.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper.

1. *Do you agree with the proposal to close Lancaster Crown Court?*
2. *Do you agree with the current arrangement for reallocating the work to Preston?*
3. *Are there other options for reallocating work that you think should be considered?*
4. *Do you think we have accurately assessed the impact on travel times?*
5. *Do you think that we have properly assessed the impact on vulnerable users?*
6. *Would these proposals have an impact that we have not identified?*
7. *Do you think we have correctly identified the range and extent of the equality impacts? Please supply any evidence to support your response.*
8. *Is there any other information or do you have any comments you would like to provide to inform our decision-making?*

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

Annex A – Equalities Statement

1. Equality impacts

- 1.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ("the EA") requires Ministers and the Department, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the EA.
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not).
 - c) Foster good relations between different groups (those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not).
- 1.2 Paying due regard needs to be considered against the nine protected characteristics under the EA – namely race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, age, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy, and maternity.
- 1.3 The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and its ministers have a legal duty to consider how proposed policies are likely to impact on the protected characteristics and take proportionate steps to mitigate or justify the adverse impacts and to advance the beneficial ones.

Direct discrimination

- 1.4 Our assessment is that the policy is not directly discriminatory within the meaning of the EA, as it applies equally to all persons affected by this proposal: we do not consider that the policy proposal would result in people being treated less favourably because of any protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

- 1.5 Amongst court users, some groups of people with protected characteristics, as explained below, are over-represented when compared to the local general population. However, even if it were established that in some cases (for example, the length of journey time to court) these effects constituted a particular disadvantage, we believe that implementation of the proposals represents a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aims of court efficiency.
- 1.6 Our approach has been to identify groups of people with protected characteristics living within defined areas of where the court is situated and compare them to the population of Lancashire and the national population (the 'court user data' section below details our approach). This allows us to identify whether any particular groups of people are likely to be disadvantaged by the proposals. Due to limitations in the available data on local HMCTS users, we have had to make the assumption that they are representative of court users.

Protected characteristics impacts

- 1.7 We have assessed the available data on the characteristics of age, disability, sex, race, and religion. Our current assessment is that whilst in Lancaster itself there is under-representation of older people (those aged 65+) and those with a disability, this is not the case for those areas for which Lancaster Crown Court is their nearest crown court venue. There is a slight over-representation of those aged 65+ in these catchment areas when compared with the Lancashire and national populations. The population living with a disability is very slightly higher in these areas also. A fuller analysis of this data is provided below in the 'court user data' section.
- 1.8 The evidence we hold is set out in tables 1 and 2. Together these show the nearest proxy data sets we currently have on the protected characteristics of users at the two courts being considered. We do not consider that the proposals would result in any particular disadvantage for people with the protected characteristics of sex, race or religion. Furthermore, we do not consider that the closure will have a greater impact on these groups when compared to the region's population as a whole. Nonetheless we will continue to assess the impacts of these proposals on affected groups who share protected characteristics, paying regard to any equality impacts identified in the responses to the consultation.

- 1.9 Although we do not currently have data on the protected characteristic of gender reassignment, and only limited data on sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership, we do not consider that the proposal is likely to result in any particular disadvantage for people with these protected characteristics when compared to the general population.
- 1.10 To supplement our evidence, in Table 3 we have provided published data from the Crime Survey for England & Wales (2021/22) which details the protected characteristics of those who were victims of personal crime. We acknowledge that this data does not necessarily correlate to all court users, however, it provides a helpful indication of a cross-section of the population likely to access criminal courts.
- 1.11 Our initial assessment noted the limitations in the available data to assess the extent of impacts on the remaining protected characteristics of sexual orientation, marriage, and civil partnership. The information provided in Table 3 allows us to identify the characteristics of those who were victims of crime in 2021/22, which includes sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. We are able to identify that those who are single are over-represented amongst victims of crime when compared with the general population (37% as opposed to 23%). We have been unable to identify data to allow an assessment of the impact on those with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment. Having considered the impact of the proposal on the groups for which limited data is available, we have not identified any indirect discrimination arising from the proposed closure.
- 1.12 We recognise that the need to travel further (either by car or by public transport) is likely to have greater impacts on older people and people with disabilities and pregnant women. Available data suggests that there is a slight over-representation of people with disabilities in the areas local to the court being considered for closure (a 1% difference which we do not consider constitutes a disproportionate amount). There is no available data to suggest that there are more pregnant women in the areas local to this court compared to the Lancashire population as a whole.
- 1.13 Whilst increased travel may have greater impacts for those groups, those impacts can be alleviated, to some degree, by some of the mitigating measures identified below. For example, the greater availability of online information and virtual court facilities may reduce the need to travel to courts.
- 1.14 Overall, we believe that the potential impact is proportionate having regard to the aim of the policy. The closure of the proposed court will impact a small number of users and the savings and efficiency achieved as a result of the closure will contribute to a better service overall for users. It remains important to make reasonable adjustments for people of disability to ensure appropriate support is given. These are explained in more detail below in the mitigations section.

Harassment and victimisation

- 1.15 We do not consider there to be a risk of harassment or victimisation as a result of the proposal.

Advancing equality of opportunity

- 1.16 Consideration has been given to how this proposal impacts on the duty to advance equality of opportunity by meeting the needs of court users who share a particular characteristic, where those needs are different from the need of those who do not share that characteristic. Reducing the reliance on buildings with poor facilities to take advantage of a more modernised estate with better communication methods will help to generate a positive impact on all users, especially people with disabilities.

Fostering good relations

- 1.17 Consideration has been given to this objective that indicates it is unlikely to be of relevance to the proposal.

Court user data

- 1.18 HMCTS collects certain information on users of individual courts, but this is not readily available for analysis, and not comprehensive for protected characteristics. We have instead assumed that court users are likely to be drawn from, and roughly representative of, the general population living a) in the vicinity of the court buildings, and b) resident in local areas where the courts are the closest venue of that jurisdiction.
- 1.19 This analysis has considered protected characteristics of populations at middle super output area (MSOA⁴) level as recorded in the 2021 Census, and age and sex as in mid-2022 population estimates (more recent data for religion, ethnicity and disability at this level is not available). The areas for which these courts are the closest venue have been calculated based on Google maps API travel times from the centroid of the MSA to the coordinates of the court postcode, where this is the shortest journey by public transport.
- 1.20 The proposals involve the closure of Lancaster Crown Court and the relocation of work to Preston Crown Court. Two MSAs have therefore been identified for an analysis of the populations living in the vicinity of the court buildings effected by the proposals. The demographic data we have obtained is provided below, in Table 1.

4 Middle Layer Super Output Areas are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. Middle Layer Super Output Areas are built from groups of contiguous Lower Layer Super Output Areas. The minimum population is 5000 and the mean is 8300.

Table 1: The protected characteristics of those impacted by the proposals (residents in areas of court locations)

		Population resident in MSOA of court location		Lancashire Population	England & Wales population
		Lancaster Crown Court the Castle	Preston Crown Court		
EPIMS		102469	102476		
MSOA		E02005234	E02005269		
Site closures		1	0		
Gender	Male	53%	53%	49%	49%
	Female	47%	47%	51%	51%
Age	0-15	9%	14%	18%	18%
	16-24	45%	23%	11%	11%
	25-39	21%	29%	18%	20%
	40-64	18%	26%	32%	32%
	65+	7%	8%	21%	19%
Disability	Disability	25%	26%	26%	24%
	No disability	75%	74%	74%	76%
Race	White British	69%	50%	86%	76%
	White other	9%	10%	3%	6%
	Mixed	4%	4%	1%	3%
	Asian	12%	27%	8%	9%
	Black	4%	5%	1%	4%
	Other	2%	4%	1%	2%
Religion	Christian	34%	33%	52%	46%
	Buddhist	1%	1%	0%	0%
	Hindu	1%	6%	0%	2%
	Jewish	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Muslim	5%	21%	2%	7%
	Sikh	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Other religion	1%	1%	1%	1%
	No religion	48%	31%	38%	37%
	Not stated	10%	7%	7%	6%

Note: Data is based on the population resident in the middle super output area (MSOA) in which the court is located. Disability, ethnicity, and religion as recorded in the 2021 Census. Age and gender as estimated in mid-2022 by ONS.

- 1.21** Residents of the two local areas in which these two city centre courts are located share similar demographics with each other. Potential court users living within the court areas are overwhelmingly young, working-age adults, with lower proportions of children and older adults (both aged 40-64 and 65+) than nationally or in the Lancashire area. Just 7% of the population living within the vicinity of Lancaster Crown Court are aged 65+ which suggests a limited impact on those who are older or less able to travel.
- 1.22** Likely related to both the age profile and the city centre location, other demographics differ from the wider area. Rates of living with a disability are similar to the national rates. In the case of Preston, a much larger proportion of the population comes from an ethnic minority background, with a particularly high proportion of those coming from an Asian background (27% compared with 8-9% both nationally and in Lancashire). The city therefore has a smaller White British population (50%) than the national population (76%) and a marked difference from the rest of Lancashire (88%). Lancaster has a small proportion identifying as from a non-White background (12% from an Asian background) whilst the White British cohort (69%) is also smaller than the general and county-wide population.
- 1.23** Lancaster has a higher proportion of people stating they have no religion (48%) whereas Preston has a lower proportion (31%) when compared to the general and county-wide population. Both cities have a markedly smaller proportion of

those identifying as Christian, with Preston having high proportions of members of the Hindu and Islamic faiths. We do not consider that those with the protected characteristics of age, race, gender or religion, or disability living in these MSOAs will be impacted by these proposals.

- 1.24 A broader view of the populations likely to be impacted by the closure considers those in areas where the court is currently the closest of that jurisdiction. Though it should be noted that the comparison here is limited given that Lancaster Crown Court is only able to hear a limited range of criminal hearings. Table 2 below provides a summary of the data obtained having reviewed the closest MSOAs, in line with the methodology outlined above.

Table 2: The protected characteristics of those impacted by the proposals (residents in local areas where the site is closest court venue of that jurisdiction by public transport)

		Population resident in MSOAs where nearest court of jurisdiction by public transport		Lancashire Population	England & Wales population
		Lancaster Crown Court the Castle	Preston Crown Court		
EPIMS		102469	102476		
No. MSOAs incl.		24	101		
Gender	Male	51%	51%	49%	49%
	Female	49%	49%	51%	51%
Age	0-15	16%	18%	18%	18%
	16-24	14%	9%	11%	11%
	25-39	17%	18%	18%	20%
	40-64	31%	33%	32%	32%
	65+	22%	22%	21%	19%
Disability	Disability	20%	21%	26%	24%
	No disability	80%	79%	74%	76%
Race	White British	89%	85%	86%	76%
	White other	5%	4%	3%	6%
	Mixed	1%	2%	1%	3%
	Asian	3%	7%	8%	9%
	Black	1%	1%	1%	4%
	Other	1%	1%	1%	2%
Religion	Christian	53%	55%	52%	46%
	Buddhist	1%	1%	0%	0%
	Hindu	1%	2%	0%	2%
	Jewish	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Muslim	1%	6%	2%	7%
	Sikh	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Other religion	1%	0%	0%	1%
	No religion	37%	31%	38%	37%
	Not stated	6%	5%	7%	6%

Note: Data is based on the population resident in the middle super output areas (MSOAs) for which the court is the nearest court by public transport journey time as estimated using analysis of travel times to courts. Disability, ethnicity, and religion as recorded in the 2021 Census. Age and gender as estimated in mid-2022 by ONS.

- 1.25** There is a difference in the age profile of the population living in areas closest to Lancaster Crown Court (as a jurisdiction). The proportion of those aged 65+ for the 24 MSOAs included shows that 22% of the population fall within this age bracket, compared to the Lancashire population of 21% and the national population of 19%. There is a slightly lower proportion of those with a disability (20% for the Lancaster MSOAs compared with 26% across the region and 24% nationally). We recognise that the higher age profile may mean some users who face difficulties travelling might have to take longer journeys should criminal cases relocate from Lancaster to Preston. However, we have set out a range of mitigations below which we feel will ensure access to justice is maintained.
- 1.26** Overall, the demographics of these areas seem broadly in line with little variance that might present disproportionate impact on any particular group. We do not feel therefore that the proposals are discriminatory, and any potential impact can be mitigated by measures such as later hearing start times and listing hearings at an alternative venue where appropriate.

Other data sources

- 1.27** To enhance our understanding of the potential impact on protected characteristics we have explored alternative sources of data that might help us understand the demographic makeup of potential court users and those that might interact with the justice system. Our data sources are limited, and we have been unable to identify a data source that would provide a comprehensive assessment. However, we have found data that provides an overview of protected characteristics.
- 1.28** The information provided below (Table 3) has been provided as an indication of potential users of criminal courts and is therefore applicable for our consideration of the proposals outlined in the consultation document. We provide an overview of our assessment of this data in paragraph 1.11.

Table 3: The protected characteristics of victims of personal crime (2021/22)⁵

Characteristics of adults who were victims of CSEW personal crime, 2021/22 CSEW			
	England and Wales	Adults aged 18 and over	
		Victims of Personal Crime (%)	General Population (%)
Age	18-24	12.7	9.9
	25-34	24.7	17.1
	35-44	20.4	16.5
	45-54	17.2	16.9
	55-64	13.7	16.2
	65-74	6.6	12.9
	75+	4.7	10.7
Disability/ Illness status	No disability/illness	74.1	80.1
	Disability/illness	25.9	19.9
Marital Status	Married/civil partnered	35.4	50.7
	Cohabiting	12.1	13.1
	Single	37.3	23.1
	Separated	3.7	1.5
	Divorced/Legally dissolved partnership	7.6	6
	Widowed	3.9	5.7
Ethnicity	White	82.7	87.7
	Mixed	2.5	1.6
	Asian or Asian	9.9	7.3
	Black or Black British	4.2	2.6
	Chinese or Other	0.6	0.8

⁵ Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics.

Characteristics of adults who were victims of CSEW personal crime, 2021/22 CSEW			
	England and Wales	Adults aged 18 and over	
Religion	No Religion	40.9	39.3
	Christian	50.6	52.7
	Muslim	6.1	4
	Hindu	0	1.8
	Other	0.6	0.7
Sex	Male	52.2	49
	Female	47.8	51
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual or straight	86.8	94
	Gay or lesbian	4.4	2
	Bisexual	5.9	3.2
	Other	2.9	0.8

Defendants, victims, and witnesses

1.29 The Ministry of Justice publications *Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System 2022*⁶ and *Women and the Criminal Justice System 2021*⁷ show the race and gender profile of defendants and those in the Criminal Justice system at a national level. They show that men and those from a Black ethnic group are over-represented amongst defendants in the criminal courts when compared to the general population from which they are drawn. Data for those sentenced in both the Crown and magistrates' courts in 2021 to 2022 confirm that:

- Males were more likely to be sentenced to immediate custody and to receive custodial sentences of six months or longer than females with a similar criminal history.
- Relative to the population, rates of sentencing for Black offenders over two times higher, and a third higher for mixed race offenders, relative to offenders from the White ethnic group; a trend mirrored in prosecutions.

1.30 There is no comprehensive source of data on the protected characteristics of victims and witnesses who may appear in the criminal courts. However, the *Crime Survey for England and Wales (2021/22)*⁸ shows that the following groups of people are over-represented as victims of personal crime when compared to the general population:

- Single people (37% of all victims, compared to 23% of the general population).
- Those from BAME backgrounds (17.2% of all victims, compared to 12.3% of the general population).
- Those with disability (25.9% of all victims, compared to 19.9% of the general population).

1.31 While groups of people sharing particular protected characteristics may be over-represented amongst victims, we are unable to quantify whether such over-representation equates to victims and witnesses who use the criminal courts. The data in Table 2 has been provided as a means of an assessment of impacts, while remaining live to the limitations of this as a proxy.

Other Impacted Groups

1.32 Other groups potentially impacted by the proposed closure include the judiciary and legal professionals. Statistics from the Judicial Office show that males, those of White ethnicity and those aged 50 years and older are over-represented within the judiciary compared to the general population. The practising bar and practising solicitors are more diverse, though men remain over-represented in both professions.

1.33 With regards to other HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff, equality assessments will be carried out by HR at the Business Unit level and the impact on protected characteristics will be fully assessed once the impact on individuals has been understood. We will engage with staff at the implementation stage to carefully assess any equalities issues and work through possible mitigations. As no staff or judges are permanently based at Lancaster Crown Court, we do not consider that there will be impacts arising from these proposals.

⁶ [Ethnicity and the Criminal Justice System 2022 - GOV.UK](#)

⁷ [Women and the Criminal Justice System 2021 - GOV.UK](#)

⁸ [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

Mitigations

1.34 We recognise that as courts close, we need to continue to modernise and improve the way we deliver front line services and to make the most of technological advancements and efficiencies. We also need to continue to provide reasonable adjustments for court users to ensure access to justice is maintained. There are a number of mitigations that we are either considering (or are already in place) that will help to minimise the impact of court closures on court users. The list below provides examples that although may not be of direct relevance to criminal hearings such as those heard at Lancaster Crown Court, they are of wider benefit to HMCTS and in doing improve access to justice as a whole. These mitigations include the following:

- a) All guidance material, together with information about processes, are made available online through Gov.uk and the Justice website. This would include: the location, directions to and available facilities of the relevant court or tribunal, guidance on mediation, how to make a claim, how to appeal, and how to make a complaint. In addition, these websites provide useful links and signposts users to related websites such as: Resolution, National Family Mediation, Community Legal Advice, Citizens Advice, Consumer Direct, Ofcom and Ofgem amongst others. Public information is reviewed regularly.
- b) Provision of business and contact centres for some services (e.g. County Court Money Claims Centre) mean that services can be accessed by post and phone until the hearing (if a hearing is required).
- c) Online services, such as Money Claims Online and Possession Claims Online allow online access to services up to the hearing stage (if required).
- d) Alternative Dispute Resolution is promoted where appropriate, which reduces reliance on court hearings.
- e) Reasonable disability adjustments are undertaken in courts in accordance with the existing reasonable disability adjustments policy. Guidance is available to all staff, along with a central advice point, and has recently been updated with training due to be rolled out to staff during this year. Examples of adjustments relevant to this decision included:
 - identification of blue badge parking near the receiving court for those with mobility difficulties.
 - use of the staff car park where necessary for disabled users; and consideration of an alternative venue where access is problematic.
- f) Video links for criminal courts are used as follows:
 - prison to court video links allow defendants to appear from custody in magistrates' courts.
 - additional video links are within the court to allow vulnerable witnesses to give evidence without facing the defendant; and
 - the court will always decide whether it is appropriate to conduct a hearing in a certain way, and the parties will also be able to make representations. In making its decision the court should consider whether any parties or witnesses have a disability (e.g. visually or hearing impaired) or are vulnerable and would benefit from face-to-face contact to be able to effectively participate in the case.
- g) Assisted Digital provision will support the digital access needs of individuals who are currently not able to easily engage with online services to ensure reasonable adjustments are made.
- h) Facilities and provisions at the remaining sites can include disabled access, hearing enhancement facilities, baby changing facilities and video conferencing and prison link facilities. The exact facilities available at a court site can be found on our website: <https://courttribunalfinder.service.gov.uk/search/>. If appropriate facilities are not available arrangements can be made by contacting the court to determine reasonable adjustments that might be made, including, where necessary, use of an alternative venue.

Conclusions

- 1.35 We acknowledge that the closure of Lancaster Crown Court would mean longer journey times for some users, had the court been operational. These journey times will be reasonable based on our stated measure of what constitutes a reasonable journey. It is important to also note that attending a criminal court is typically a rare event for most people and the volume of cases involved in these proposals is very small. However, we acknowledge that there will be some users who will find longer journey times problematic. As we do currently, specific access issues will be taken into account at the point of listing a hearing – for example providing a later start time or finish time if required.
- 1.36 Although increased journeys have the potential to impact some people with protected characteristics, the impact is expected to be limited and justified in the context of the aim of the policy. The mitigations set out above will continue to ensure access to justice is maintained. Many of the services traditionally accessed by face-to-face visits to court are being offered online. Some court hearings can also be conducted via telephone or video link and court users are being offered local alternatives to court hearings (mediation). All of these measures are reducing the need to travel to court buildings to access court services.
- 1.37 For those people who still need to attend court, reasonable disability adjustments are offered and other measures such as later court hearing start times will help to minimise impacts for those with transport difficulties.
- 1.38 In the long-term, the savings generating from the closure will contribute towards funding and improving court and tribunal services. Overall, we consider that the decision to close Lancaster Crown Court and the likely resulting impacts considered above represent a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aim of a modernised, efficient court and tribunal service.
- 1.39 We have asked an equalities question in the consultation and will be using any new evidence from consultation responses to update the Equality Statement once the consultation has closed.

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 2 July 2025 to:

**HMCTS Consultation
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Property Directorate
Post Point 6.22**

**102 Petty France
London SW1H 9AJ**

Email: estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact HM Courts & Tribunals Service 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:

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>.

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from estatesconsultation@justice.gov.uk.

Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published shortly after the consultation closes. The response paper will be available on-line at <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>.

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 2018 (DPA), the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 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.

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.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>



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