

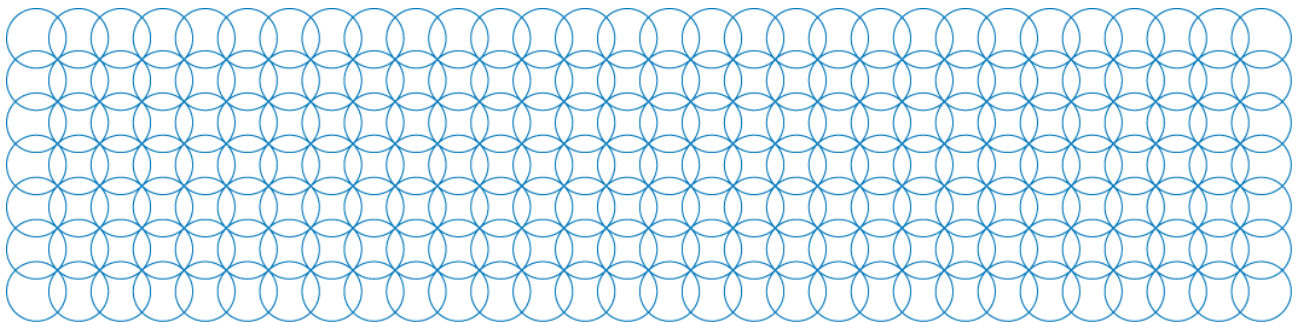


Ministry  
of Justice

# Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the South West region

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015







Ministry  
of Justice

## **Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the South West region**

**A consultation produced by the Ministry of Justice. It is also available at  
<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/>**

## About this consultation

- To:** The consultation is aimed at court users, magistracy, judiciary, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the South West region.
- Duration:** From 16/07/15 to 08/10/15
- Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to:** HMCTS Consultation  
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Fax: 0870 761 7768  
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- How to respond:** Please send your response by 08/10/15 to:
- HMCTS Consultation  
Ministry of Justice  
Post point 1.13  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ
- Fax: 0870 761 7768  
Email: [estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.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://consult.justice.gov.uk/>

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## **Foreword**

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to working with the judiciary to reform our services so they better meet the needs of the public in the modern age. Considerable investment will enable us to transform how justice is delivered, creating a modern, efficient service. Taking this opportunity, however, will require challenging decisions about the current system. One such decision relates to the courts and tribunals estate.

I am responsible for managing the operations of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in the South West region, and I have reviewed the court and tribunal estate against the estates principles set out in the national consultation. I have identified buildings where I believe our ability to deliver an efficient service has been compromised by poor facilities, where usage is low and where the building does not provide appropriate value for the public money spent on it.

I have carefully considered the impact of the proposed changes – both locally and across the South West. This consultation is an opportunity for the public to use their knowledge of their local areas to review and help us with our proposals.

Of course, staff would be affected by these proposed changes. Although the impact will be limited, I will make sure this is managed properly. Any transition to new arrangements will take place in a fair and transparent manner in consultation with the Departmental Trade Union.

I understand that these proposals could result in some people having longer journeys to the courts and tribunals. I am committed to working with rural communities to provide alternative ways for the public to access the justice system. These could include the use of civic or other public buildings for occasional hearings, video links or telephone or paper hearings to avoid travel altogether. It is vital we understand the demand for alternative provision as we plan services for the future.

I am keen to hear people's views on the different ways they would like to interact with their courts and tribunals, particularly from those in rural communities. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

**Sandra Aston**

**Delivery Director  
HM Courts & Tribunals Service South West**

## Introduction

This consultation for the South West is part of a national consultation on the future of the court and tribunal estate in England and Wales. The national consultation document provides important information about the reform of courts and tribunals and how we have decided which buildings to consult on. It also includes a full list of the courts and tribunals we are consulting on and our other plans to integrate courts into existing buildings within a local area.

**You should make sure you read the national consultation document alongside this.**

The national consultation sets out:

- the requirement for changes to the estate;
- the utilisation levels across the estate;
- the accompanying Impact Assessment; and
- implications for local justice areas and listing changes.

Responses to questions in both the national consultation and this consultation are welcome but need not be duplicated.

### HM Courts & Tribunals Service

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). It is responsible for the administration of the criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales<sup>1</sup> and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It operates as a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

In March 2014, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and the Senior President of Tribunals announced details of a programme of reform for the courts and tribunals. This will improve the court and tribunal estate, deliver greater use of technology, modernise practices and processes, and improve services for our users.

At the heart of this programme are the use of technology and the principle of proportionality. Straightforward, transactional matters (such as the administration of probate or pleading guilty and paying a fine) can be dealt with using digital technology to make the processes as straightforward as filing a tax return, or renewing car tax online. Straightforward cases do not necessarily need face to face hearings; judges will be able to reserve the full proceedings of a court hearing for the more sensitive or complex cases. Modern technology can be used not just to make the justice system more accessible but also to reduce the costs of the whole justice system by not requiring extensive transportation of prisoners for bail hearings, or the police to take full days off their priority work to sit in a court room.

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<sup>1</sup> Some tribunals which are part of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in England are devolved to the Welsh Government in Wales.



Ahead of full implementation of the reform programme, we are seeking views on the closure of courts and tribunals which we believe do not meet our ideas of how best to deliver justice in the future.

### **Access to justice**

We recognise that the public should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings at courts and tribunals. We also know, however, that in an increasingly digital age, the public expect to be able to engage with any service through a variety of channels, and many prefer to do that digitally. They do not always want or need to attend hearings in person. Delivering effective access to justice does not necessarily mean providing access to a building. This challenges the assumption that there needs to be a court or tribunal in every local area.

We already have well established alternative ways that users can access the justice system. There are examples of this: enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link, processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link, and users in some jurisdictions having cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or on papers, meaning that they do not need to attend a hearing in person at all. Where attendance at a hearing is needed other civic or public buildings could be used for hearings where security requirements are low.

These types of alternative provision could be particularly useful in rural communities and/or areas with limited public transport. We are very keen to hear views on alternative provision, for example video link in civic or other public buildings.

### **Deciding which courts to include in the proposals**

In order to achieve a radical transformation of the justice system, any investment must be targeted and sequenced across all three key areas of ICT, estates and business processes to create the efficiencies that will allow HM Courts & Tribunals Service to modernise its current practices and to adopt more streamlined ways of working. We are therefore, as a first priority, addressing the current surplus capacity within the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate. This will enable us to use the remaining estate more intelligently and flexibly, to reduce our running costs, to focus our investment on improving the estate we need for the future and to increase the multifunctional court space – allowing different court and tribunal jurisdictions to share locations. The intention is that capital receipts from the sale of any surplus assets would be reinvested as part of the funding for the reform programme.

To ensure we deliver business effectively and meet our future strategic requirements, HM Courts & Tribunals Service has applied a set of principles against which the proposals in this consultation were developed.

The principles are:

#### **Ensuring Access to Justice**

- To ensure continued access to justice when assessing the impact of possible closures on both professional and lay court and tribunal users, taking into account journey times for users, the challenges of rural access and any mitigating action, including having facilities at local civic centres and other buildings to ensure local access, modern ICT and more flexible listing, when journeys will be significantly increased.

- To take into account the needs of users and in particular, victims, witnesses and those who are vulnerable.
- To support the requirements of other agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service, Social Services, Police Forces and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS).

### **Delivering Value for Money**

- To reduce the current and future cost of running the estate.
- To maximise the capital receipts from surplus estate for reinvestment in HM Courts & Tribunals Service.

### **Enabling Efficiency in the longer term**

- To reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.
- To move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.
- To increase the ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the Civil, Family and Tribunal (CFT) jurisdictions.
- To move towards an estate that provides dedicated hearing centres, seeking opportunities to concentrate back office function where they can be carried out most efficiently.
- To improve the efficient use of the estate by seeking to improve whole system efficiency, taking advantage of modernised communication methods (wi-fi and video links) and adopting business processes to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- To increase the efficient use of the estate wherever possible irrespective of current administrative boundaries.

### **Responding to the consultation**

We are keen to obtain views on the proposals to change the provision of court and tribunal estate and how we can make sure the public can still access the justice system. We have committed to consider each response. The responses will help us make sure that the courts and tribunals are based where the work is and that communities can access the justice system and that cases are heard in buildings with suitable facilities.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office. It will run for 12 weeks.

This consultation and the consultation stage Impact Assessment are also available at [www.gov.uk/moj](http://www.gov.uk/moj).

## The proposals

This consultation proposes the closure of the following courts<sup>2</sup> and tribunals:

- Barnstaple Crown Court
- Bath Magistrates' and County Court and Family Court or North Avon (Yate) Magistrates' Court
- Bournemouth Magistrates' Court
- Cheltenham Rivershill House Tribunal
- Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court
- Dorchester Crown Court
- Fareham Magistrates' Court
- Gloucester Magistrates' Court
- North Avon (Yate) Magistrates' Court or Bath Magistrates' and County Court and Family Court
- Stroud Magistrates' Court
- Torquay Magistrates' Court

In addition, there are eight integrations set out below.

### Travel times

As part of our work to assess the impact of these proposals on the public, we have included information on the distance by road between the court proposed for closure and the court where the work would transfer. There are also details of public transport costs and journey times which are provided as a guide only and are subject to change. This information does not illustrate the potential impact on travel times for the public in the catchment area of the court. We have developed a model to analyse this.

The model analyses the current catchment area of the court and the population within it, calculated to the smallest geographical area available with current national statistics (known as a Lower Super Output Area or LSOA). The model then calculates the travel time from the centre of each LSOA to the current court separately by car and public transport and then calculates the proportion of the population who could travel to court in

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<sup>2</sup> Reference in this document to magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and combined courts refers to buildings (a singular structure providing the physical hearing rooms for criminal, civil, family and tribunal cases) which house that activity in a particular location. Strictly, legislation provides that there is a single crown court, county court and family court.

set time bands. The model then calculates new journey times based on the location of the court where the work would be heard should the court close. These travel times are displayed in a table format within each site proposal

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the South West, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

## **Integrations**

To provide users with an overview of all proposed change to the estate, the consultation also includes information on where we plan to integrate courts within the same town or city. Local stakeholders will be notified of these changes when they take place.

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service moves work to allow jurisdictions to operate from fewer locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining local jurisdictions, with a limited impact on service provision. Integrations are managed by HM Courts & Tribunals Service operational leads as part of the normal running of the business. These have been identified using the principles set out in the 'Introduction.' The proposals for closures in the region should be considered in the context of these integrations.

In addition to the proposed closures in this consultation the following integrations will be taking place or are already underway in the South West region:

### **Aldershot and Farnham County Court to be integrated within Aldershot Magistrates' Court**

This integration is already underway and will move all magistrates', civil, family and tribunals work into a single building in Aldershot. The integration will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be minimal as all venues are situated in the centre of Aldershot.

### **Arcade Chambers (Aldershot Tribunal) to be integrated within Aldershot Magistrates' Court**

This integration is already underway and will move all magistrates', civil, family and tribunals work in to a single building in Aldershot. The integration will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be minimal as all venues are situated in the centre of Aldershot.

### **Plymouth St Catherine's House (Plymouth Tribunal) to be integrated within Plymouth Combined and Plymouth Magistrates' Court**

This integration will allow tribunals hearings to take place in more fit for purpose venues that have a permanent staff presence and good IT systems. It will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be low as all venues are situated in the centre of Plymouth.

**Southampton Western Range and Barrack Block to be integrated within Southampton Magistrates' Court**

This integration will ensure that tribunal hearings take place in a more modern fit for purpose building. It will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be low as both buildings are on the same site.

**Taunton Blackdown House (Taunton Tribunal) to be integrated within Taunton Deane Magistrates' Court**

This integration will allow tribunals hearings to take place in a secure court building venue that has a permanent staff presence and good IT systems. It will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be low as both venues are situated in the centre of Taunton.

**The Crescent Centre (Bristol Tribunal) to be integrated within Bristol Civil Justice Centre**

This integration is already underway and will allow tribunal hearings to take place in a more modern fit for purpose venue that has a permanent staff presence and good IT systems. It will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time. The impact on users will be low as both venues are situated in the centre of Bristol.

**Weymouth and Dorchester Combined Court offices to be integrated within Weymouth Magistrates' Court**

All county court staff and civil hearings have already been moved to Weymouth Magistrates' Court. This integration will move the remaining tribunal hearings to the magistrates' court, this will enable all work to be dealt with from a single location in Weymouth. The impact on users will be low as the buildings are located either side of a small car park.

**Yeovil County Court to be integrated within South Somerset and Mendip Magistrates' Court (Yeovil)**

All county court staff are already located in Yeovil Magistrates' Court. This integration will move the hearings that currently take place in the county court building into Yeovil Magistrates' Court. This will enable all work to be dealt with from a single location in Yeovil. The impact on users will be low as both buildings are located in the centre of Yeovil approximately 400 meters apart.

## Barnstaple Crown Court

### Proposal

Barnstaple Crown Court is one of three Crown Courts in Devon. It currently operates as a satellite venue of Exeter Crown Court and sits in a magistrates' courtroom at Barnstaple Magistrates' Court. There have been no Crown Court sittings at Barnstaple Crown Court during the last three financial years and there is no ongoing operational need to make use of the court on a regular basis.

The proposal is to close Barnstaple Crown Court and continue to manage the workload and hearings at Exeter Combined Court. All listing is already carried out from Exeter Combined Court. No hearings have actually taken place in Barnstaple Crown Court since early 2012. When Crown Court hearings did take place in Barnstaple, courtroom staff and judiciary travelled from Exeter as neither were permanently based in Barnstaple.

Permanently ceasing sittings at Barnstaple Crown Court and relocating the court business to Exeter Combined Court will have no detrimental impact on the waiting times for cases

Exeter Combined Court is a new purpose built court offering excellent facilities for all court users, staff and judiciary. There would be no enabling works required at Exeter Combined Court to accommodate the workload from Barnstaple Crown Court.

### Accommodation

Crown Court cases were heard in the magistrates' courtroom in a large civic centre tower block. There is no secure access for custody vehicles. The public areas are dated, but reasonable. The inadequate facilities for both court users and judiciary have resulted in no Crown Court sittings taking place in Barnstaple since early 2012.

No complaints have been received from court users since the cessation of sittings at Barnstaple Crown Court in 2012.

### Workload

The annual sitting levels at Barnstaple Crown Court for last five years have been extremely low and are set out below:

Financial Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Days Sat	33	19	0	0	0

Cases for Barnstaple Crown Court are already administered and heard at Exeter Crown Court and no sittings have taken place at Barnstaple since early 2012. There is no ongoing operational need to make use of the court on a regular basis.

### Location

Exeter Crown Court is 45 miles by car from Barnstaple. Public transport by bus is difficult however there is a regular rail service. Travel time by train is approximately one hour 15 minutes and the cost of a return ticket is approximately £10.00. Journey time by car is approximately one hour 15 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	69%	<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	0%
	<b>30-60min</b>	25%		<b>30-60min</b>	6%
	<b>60-120min</b>	6%		<b>60 - 120min</b>	94%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	0%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	18%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	0%
	<b>30-60min</b>	28%		<b>30-60min</b>	0%
	<b>60-120min</b>	35%		<b>60-120min</b>	9%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	9%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	81%
	<b>no data</b>	10%		<b>no data</b>	10%

### Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Barnstaple Crown Court.

### Other information

Barnstaple Crown Court sits in a magistrates' courtroom in Barnstaple Magistrates' Court. The courthouse at Barnstaple forms part of a leasehold building.

There were no operating costs for financial year 2014/15 for Barnstaple Crown Court.

## **Bath Magistrates' and County Court and Family Court (Magistrates)**

### **Proposal**

Bath Magistrates' Court is co-located with Bath County Court at Bath Law Courts, and is one of four magistrates' courts in Somerset. The court deals with criminal business in adult and youth cases. The jurisdiction of the court covers the city of Bath and the surrounding rural area.

The proposal is to close Bath Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Bristol Magistrates' Court.

This proposal is linked to the proposed closure of North Avon Magistrates' Court (also known as Yate Magistrates' Court) which is also contained within this consultation. The capacity at Bristol Magistrates' Court would only support the workload from either Bath Magistrates' Court or North Avon Magistrates' Court and the responses to the consultation will inform the decision on whether either of the two proposals are implemented.

Bristol Magistrates' Court is a modern purpose built 12 courtroom building situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The move to a significantly larger, modern building would provide better services for our users, enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

There would be no enabling works required at Bristol Magistrates' Court to accommodate the workload from Bath Magistrates' Court.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

### **Accommodation**

Bath Magistrates' Court was built in 1989 and is in a good state of repair. It has a total of five courtrooms of which four are magistrates' courtrooms.

The court has separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses. It also has video link facilities for use by witnesses giving evidence but it does not have a prison video link.

All courtrooms are without a fitted hearing loop system and have to get by with antiquated portable loop equipment. This can sometimes be incompatible with the more modern hearing aids worn by court users.

### **Workload**

Bath Magistrates' Court has four courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 992 days per year (at 248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 Bath Law Courts (Magistrates' and County) was utilised for approximately 46% of its current capacity.

Bath Magistrates' Court is currently the centralised road traffic court dealing with all minor motoring offences committed in Somerset, Bristol, and Avon.



## Location

Should Bath Magistrates' Court close rather than North Avon Magistrates' Court (Yate Magistrates' Court), the proposal is for all the work to be moved to Bristol Magistrates' Court. Bristol Magistrates' Court is located in the centre of Bristol and is 13 miles from Bath. There is a frequent bus and train service between Bath and Bristol. Travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus is approximately one hour. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £7.00. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	74%	<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	17%
	<b>30-60min</b>	26%		<b>30-60min</b>	68%
	<b>60-120min</b>	0%		<b>60 - 120min</b>	15%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	0%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	23%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	0%
	<b>30-60min</b>	30%		<b>30-60min</b>	17%
	<b>60-120min</b>	43%		<b>60-120min</b>	62%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	4%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	20%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	1%

## Staff implications

There are 17 staff based at Bath Magistrates' Court.

## Other information

Bath Law Courts is a freehold building and contains both the magistrates' court and county court. The building forms part of a wider Ministry of Justice (MoJ) site which also accommodates National Probation Service staff. It is however self contained within the wider MoJ site.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates') were approximately £453,000.

## **Bath Magistrates' and County Court and Family Court (County and Family)**

### **Proposal**

Bath County Court and Family Court is located in the same building as Bath Magistrates' Court at Bath Law Courts, and is one of four county courts in Somerset.

The proposal is to close Bath County Court and Family Court and transfer the workload to the Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre (CFJC).

Bristol CFJC is a modern purpose built court situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The move to a significantly larger, newer centre would enable more flexibility in the listing of cases, offer an improved service to court users and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

No enabling works would be required at Bristol CFJC to accommodate the workload from Bath County Court and Family Court.

### **Accommodation**

Bath County Court and Family Court was built in 1989 and is in a good state of repair. The building has a total of five courtrooms of which four are magistrates' courtrooms and one is the civil courtroom.

The civil courtroom does not have a fitted hearing loop system and currently uses antiquated portable loop equipment. This can sometimes be incompatible with the more modern hearing aids worn by court users.

Bristol CFJC is a modern purpose built court centre situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary.

### **Workload**

Bath County Court and Family Court has one civil courtroom and is capable of sitting up to 248 days per year. In the financial year 2014/15 Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates') was utilised for approximately 46% of its capacity.

Bath County Court and Family Court deals with civil money claims, housing possession cases, bankruptcy, District Registry, and contested hearings in divorce cases and family work.

### **Location**

The proposal is for all work that is currently dealt with at Bath County Court and Family Court to be moved to the Bristol CFJC which is located in the centre of Bristol and is 13 miles from Bath. There is a frequent bus and train service between Bath and Bristol. Travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus is approximately one hour. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £7.00. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	74%	<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	17%
	<b>30-60min</b>	26%		<b>30-60min</b>	68%
	<b>60-120min</b>	0%		<b>60 - 120min</b>	15%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	0%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	23%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	0%
	<b>30-60min</b>	30%		<b>30-60min</b>	17%
	<b>60-120min</b>	43%		<b>60-120min</b>	62%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	4%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	20%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	1%

### Staff implications

There are eight staff based at Bath County Court and Family Court.

### Other information

The Bath Law Courts building is freehold and contains both the magistrates' court and county court. The building forms part of a wider Ministry of Justice (MoJ) site which also accommodates National Probation Service staff. It is, however, self contained within the wider MoJ site.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates') were approximately £453,000.

## **Bournemouth Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court is one of three magistrates' courts in Dorset. The court deals with criminal business in adult and youth cases, and mainly serves the population of East Dorset.

The proposal is to close Bournemouth Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Poole Magistrates' Court.

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court is a Grade II listed building and the overall condition of the building is very poor and requires significant investment in both structure and infrastructure.

Poole Magistrates' Court is a more modern, purpose built court building which offers better facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The listing of cases would be more flexible and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

Some enabling works would be required at Poole Magistrates' Court to improve the current facilities and accommodate the work from Bournemouth Magistrates' Court.

### **Accommodation**

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court dates back to 1912 and extensions to the building were added in the 1960s. It has six courtrooms, two of which have secure docks and two are fitted with prison video links. It has large docks in two of the courtrooms for cases involving multiple defendants. There are video link facilities for use by witnesses giving evidence and there are also separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses.

The overall condition of the building is very poor and it requires significant investment in both structure and infrastructure. The heating, lighting and electrical systems are all old and in need of updating or replacing. On the external structure marble cladding has started to come away from the building and will need to be repaired and replaced. The facilities are sub standard and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users. The part of the building where defendants access the custody transport vehicles is not to the required standard and the cells are also in need of refurbishment.

The courtrooms are accessible for wheelchair users, but custody facilities are not. Certain courtrooms can only be accessed via a public area, which is a security risk for magistrates and staff. Likewise, the CCTV requires upgrading in the underground car park which is used by staff and judiciary but is also accessible by unauthorised members of the public.

The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Although some enabling work will be required at Poole Magistrates' Court, these are minor compared to the investment required to bring Bournemouth Magistrates' Court up to standard. Works at Poole will include improvements to the custody facilities, courtrooms and the installation of prison video link equipment. Additional hearing facilities within the building will need to be created for existing tribunals workload.

Poole Magistrates' Court already has two private waiting rooms for prosecution witnesses and main waiting areas for defence. In recent years the building has had significant capital investment to its infrastructure which included new windows at the front entrance and a

new roof above each of the courtrooms. The public waiting areas are significantly larger with much better use of natural light. The court has a large cell yard and vehicle dock making the movement of prisoners safer and easier to manage.

### Workload

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court has six courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 1,488 days per year (at 248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 52% of its capacity.

### Location

The proposal is for all work currently dealt with at Bournemouth Magistrates' Court to be moved to Poole Magistrates' Court which is situated six miles away. There are regular bus and train services between the two towns. The bus service is frequent with buses running every 15 minutes. Travel time by bus is approximately 20 minutes and travel by train takes approximately 15 minutes. The cost of a return rail ticket is approximately £4.00. There are bus stops located outside the courthouse at Poole and the train station is approximately 20 minutes walk.

Journey time by car is approximately 15 minutes and there is public parking available within walking distance of Poole Magistrates' Court.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	78%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	22%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	31%	By Public Transport	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	44%
	60-120min	21%		60-120min	50%
	>120min	0%		>120min	3%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

### Staff implications

There are 35 staff based at Bournemouth Magistrates' Court.

### **Other information**

Bournemouth Magistrates' Court is a freehold property and is attached to a vacant police station. The building is in a very poor condition and has been for a number of years, the backlog of maintenance is now at a significant level.

The Coroner for Bournemouth, Poole and the Dorset Eastern District occupies part of the building on a leasehold basis. The Coroner also has administrative staff on site and the Coroner's Court sits regularly. Consideration of the provision of facilities for the Coroner and administrative staff will be given should a decision be made to close the court.

The courthouse provides administration offices on site for the Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service and the Witness Service. Provision of facilities for these partner agencies will also be considered at Poole should a decision be made to close the court.

Poole Magistrates' Court also currently accommodates approximately 35 enforcement staff and a small team of National Offender Management Service staff.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Bournemouth Magistrates' Court were approximately £382,000.

## **Cheltenham - Rivershill House Tribunal**

### **Proposal**

Rivershill House is currently the only dedicated tribunals hearing venue in Gloucestershire. It mainly hears Social Security and Child Support Tribunals (SSCS) but is available to hear work for other tribunals. Rivershill House is a hearing venue and no staff are permanently based on site. Staff based in Gloucester are deployed to Rivershill House to support tribunal hearings.

The proposal is to close Rivershill House Tribunals hearing venue and move the tribunal hearings to Gloucester County Court.

Should Rivershill House close it would enable tribunal hearings to take place in a larger purpose built secure building. Gloucester County Court has good facilities including disabled access and a public counter.

Some enabling works would be required in Gloucester County Court to create a purpose built additional tribunal hearing room.

### **Accommodation**

There are two tribunals hearing rooms on the second floor of the multi purpose building. There are no staff or judiciary permanently based on site. The standard of the accommodation is poor. There is a security guard / receptionist on the ground floor but no searching of visitors is carried out. This is a security risk for tribunals users and also for staff and judiciary who are operating at a remote location.

The hearing rooms are located on the second floor and access is available via a lift. Should the lift not be operational, there is no evacuation route for wheelchair users or those with accessibility issues. As this is predominantly a SSCS hearing venue access for users with disabilities is essential.

Gloucester County Court is a modern building with excellent facilities including access for tribunal users with disabilities.

### **Workload**

Rivershill House has two hearing rooms and is capable of sitting up to 496 days per year (at 248 days per hearing room). In the financial year 2014/15, Rivershill House was utilised for approximately 21% of its capacity.

It should also be noted that approximately 65% of the cases currently heard at Rivershill House actually originate from Gloucester.

### **Location**

The proposal is for all hearings to be moved to Gloucester County Court which is situated nine miles from Cheltenham. Public transport links between Cheltenham and Gloucester are good. There is a frequent train and bus service. Travel time by train is approximately 15 minutes and costs approximately £5.00 for a return. Travel time by bus is approximately 40 minutes. Travel time by car to Cheltenham is approximately 20 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	0-30min	42%	<b>By Car</b>	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	56%		30-60min	56%
	60-120min	2%		60 - 120min	13%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	31%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	0-30min	11%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	19%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	32%		60-120min	18%
	>120min	34%		>120min	48%
	no data	4%		no data	34%

### Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Rivershill House.

### Other information

Rivershill House is a leasehold building.

The 2014/2015 operating costs for Rivershill House were approximately £126,000.



## **Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court (Magistrates' Court)**

### **Proposal**

Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court accommodates the Chippenham Magistrates' Court which is one of three magistrates' courts in Wiltshire. The magistrates' court deals with criminal court business in adult and youth courts. The court is also a hearing venue for the Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) Tribunal and is co-located with Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court.

The proposal is to close Chippenham Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Swindon Magistrates' Court.

Should Chippenham Magistrates' Court close all magistrates' work and SSCS tribunal hearings for North Wiltshire would be conducted at a single location enabling more flexibility in the listing of cases and better use of staff and judicial time.

Swindon Magistrates' Court has a new purpose built tribunal hearing room and no further enabling work would be required to accommodate the workload from Chippenham Magistrates' Court.

### **Accommodation**

The building was constructed in the 1990s and is in a good condition throughout. There are no security or health and safety issues.

The courthouse provides administration offices on site for the Crown Prosecution Service, National Probation Service and the Witness Service. Provision of facilities for these partner agencies will also be considered should a decision be made to close the court. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Swindon Magistrates' Court is a larger purpose built magistrates' court situated in the centre of Swindon. The majority of criminal work in the county of Wiltshire originates from the borough of Swindon; the court is therefore well situated to deal with this work. It has excellent transport links, paid public parking is available and court users are able to use the town centre facilities. The facilities at Swindon Magistrates' Court include interview rooms for private consultations, disabled toilet facilities, baby changing facilities and hearing loops.

### **Workload**

Chippenham Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 744 days per year (248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 Chippenham Law Courts (County, Family, Tribunals and Magistrates') were utilised for approximately 40% of their capacity. All weekend remand courts for North Wiltshire already sit at Swindon Magistrates' Court.

### **Location**

The proposal is to move all work currently dealt with at Chippenham Magistrates' Court to Swindon Magistrates' Court which is situated 22 miles away. Rail links are particularly good as both Swindon and Chippenham are on the London line. Travel by rail takes

approximately 20 minutes and travel by bus is approximately 1 hour 15 minutes. The cost of a return rail ticket is approximately £10.00. Travel by car takes approximately 40 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	94%	By Car	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	6%		30-60min	96%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	6%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	45%		30-60min	22%
	60-120min	42%		60-120min	66%
	>120min	6%		>120min	11%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

### Staff implications

There are seven staff based at Chippenham Magistrates' Court.

### Other information

Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs of Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court were approximately £289,000.

## **Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court (Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court)**

### **Proposal**

Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court also accommodates Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court, one of three county courts in Wiltshire. It deals with civil money claims, housing possessions and contested hearings in divorce cases.

The proposal is to close Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court, move the civil and family workload to Swindon Combined Court.

Should the Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court close, it would enable all civil and family workload for North Wiltshire to be dealt with in one venue. The move to a larger centre will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow better use of staff and judicial time.

Some enabling works would be required in Swindon Combined Court to accommodate the workload from Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court.

The facilities at Swindon Combined Court include interview rooms for private consultations, disabled toilet facilities, baby changing facilities and hearing loop systems. Proposed enabling works at Swindon Combined Court will create two new purpose built hearing rooms. The new facilities would enable Swindon Combined Court to deal with all civil and family work arising from North Wiltshire.

### **Workload**

Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court has one civil courtroom and is capable of sitting up to 248 days per year. In the financial year 2014/15 Chippenham Law Courts (County, Family, Tribunals and Magistrates') was utilised for approximately 40% of its capacity.

### **Accommodation**

The building was constructed in the 1990s and is in good condition throughout. There are no security, or health and safety issues.

The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Swindon Combined Court is a larger purpose built court building situated in the centre of Swindon. It has excellent transport links, paid public parking is available and court users are able to use the town centre facilities. The facilities at Swindon Combined Court include interview rooms for private consultations, disabled toilet facilities, baby changing facilities and hearing loops. The additional hearing rooms will also provide new fit for purpose family hearing facilities.

### **Location**

The proposal is to move all work that is currently dealt with at Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court to Swindon Combined Court situated 22 miles away. Rail links are particularly good as both Swindon and Chippenham are on the

London line. Travel by rail is approximately 20 minutes and travel by bus is approximately 1 hour 15 minutes. The cost of a return rail ticket is approximately £10.00. Travel by car is approximately 40 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	87%	<b>By Car</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	2%
	<b>30-60min</b>	13%		<b>30-60min</b>	96%
	<b>60-120min</b>	0%		<b>60 - 120min</b>	2%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	0%
	<b>no data</b>	0%		<b>no data</b>	0%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	6%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	<b>0-30min</b>	0%
	<b>30-60min</b>	42%		<b>30-60min</b>	20%
	<b>60-120min</b>	39%		<b>60-120min</b>	62%
	<b>&gt;120min</b>	11%		<b>&gt;120min</b>	16%
	<b>no data</b>	3%		<b>no data</b>	1%

### Staff implications

There are ten staff based at Chippenham and Trowbridge County Court and Family Court.

### Other information

Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Chippenham Magistrates' Court, Civil Court and Family Court were approximately £289,000.

## **Dorchester Crown Court**

### **Proposal**

Dorchester Crown Court is one of two Crown Courts in Dorset. It is a one courtroom centre and its listing is currently administered from Bournemouth Combined Court.

The proposal is to close Dorchester Crown Court and transfer the workload to Bournemouth Combined Court.

Should Dorchester Crown Court close it would enable the work to be moved to a larger more modern court centre where the facilities are of an excellent standard for all court users, staff and judiciary. The move would allow more flexibility in the listing of cases and enable more efficient and effective use of staff and judicial time.

The accommodation and facilities at Dorchester Crown Court are poor and there are security risks. The building has limited access for wheelchair users.

Bournemouth Combined Court is a modern, purpose built court centre containing five Crown Court courtrooms. No enabling works would be required to accommodate the workload from Dorchester Crown Court.

### **Accommodation**

Dorchester Crown Court is located within a building owned by Dorset County Council that was built in the 1950s.

The jurors' retiring room is separate from the main court area and is located on the opposite side of the building which requires jurors to cross a public waiting area for people visiting the council offices and the court. This poses security risks to staff and jurors.

There are cells with access to the courtroom and there is also a secure dock. There is limited access for wheelchair users as they are unable to enter either the court or the jury deliberating room. The judicial areas are of a reasonable standard however the public areas are inadequate.

The court has a secure dock and a prison video link. The court dock is large and capable of hearing cases involving multiple defendants. The court also has video link facilities for use by witnesses giving evidence and there are separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses.

The Crown Court is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Bournemouth Combined Court is a modern court centre on the outskirts of Bournemouth. It offers excellent modern facilities for court users, good custody access, secure courtrooms, free public parking, on site catering and much better facilities for jurors.

### **Workload**

Dorchester Crown Court has one courtroom which is available for 248 days per year. In the financial year 2014/15, Dorchester Crown Court was utilised for approximately 67% of its capacity.

## Location

The proposal is to move all work from Dorchester Crown Court to Bournemouth Combined Court which is situated 32 miles away. The road links between Dorchester and Bournemouth are good with travel time by car taking approximately 50 minutes. Dorchester and Bournemouth are linked by rail which offers a regular service during the week. Journey time by rail is approximately 45 minutes with a return fare costing approximately £12.00. The bus journey between Dorchester and Bournemouth takes approximately one hour.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
<b>By Car</b>	0-30min	43%	<b>By Car</b>	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	56%		30-60min	57%
	60-120min	1%		60 - 120min	43%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
<b>By Public Transport</b>	0-30min	9%	<b>By Public Transport</b>	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	21%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	39%		60-120min	14%
	>120min	22%		>120min	73%
	no data	9%		no data	13%

## Staff implications

There are three staff based at Dorchester Crown Court.

## Other information

The property is leasehold.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Dorchester Crown Court were approximately £319,000.

## **Fareham Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Fareham Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts in Hampshire. The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts. Fareham Magistrates' Court is a hearing only venue and no staff are permanently based on site.

The proposal is to close Fareham Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Portsmouth Magistrates' Court.

Should Fareham Magistrates' Court close it would enable all magistrates' court work for South and South East Hampshire to be dealt with in one venue. The move to a larger court centre would enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient and effective use of staff and judicial time. The service to court users would not be compromised and the facilities available in Portsmouth, including a public counter, are an improvement on those currently available in Fareham. The listing and administration of all cases heard in Fareham already takes place from Portsmouth Magistrates' Court.

Fareham Magistrates' Court was constructed in 1994 and the condition is generally poor. Portsmouth Magistrates' Court is in significantly better condition and offers improved facilities for court users.

Some enabling works would be required in Portsmouth Magistrates' Court to ensure facilities are suitable for youth court hearings.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

### **Accommodation**

The court has a total of four courtrooms; two standard formal magistrates' courts and two informal youth/family courts. The court has seven cells all of which are operational. There is no prison video link.

Fareham Magistrates' Court was constructed in 1994 and the condition is generally poor. The court is not fully compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The roof requires significant investment due to persistent leaks. Disabled access for the public is reliant on a lift that directly accesses the magistrates' area. The heating system is old and unreliable and in the last financial year it failed, resulting in Fareham Magistrates' Court having to temporarily close and all its work moved to Portsmouth Magistrates' Court while temporary repairs were carried out.

The judicial areas are of a reasonable standard however the public areas require refurbishment. Health and safety issues centre on the leaks in the roof and unreliable building infrastructure.

Portsmouth Magistrates' Court is a much larger site situated in the centre of Portsmouth. The building is in significantly better condition and offers improved facilities for court users. The enabling works would provide a completely self contained youth court facility that would be able to hear all custody and non custody cases for South and South East Hampshire.

## Workload

Fareham Magistrates' Court has four courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 992 days per year (248 days per courtroom). In 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 43% of its capacity.

## Location

The proposal is to move all hearings from Fareham Magistrates' Court to Portsmouth Magistrates' Court which is located nine miles away. There are good public transport links between the two locations. Travel by train takes approximately 30 minutes and a return fare costs approximately £6.00. By bus the travel time is approximately 40 minutes. Travel time by car takes approximately 15 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	95%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	5%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	44%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	36%		30-60min	38%
	60-120min	18%		60-120min	58%
	>120min	0%		>120min	1%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

## Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Fareham Magistrates' Court.

## Other information

Fareham Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The Fareham courthouse is also used as a venue for magistrates' training events. If the decision was made to close the court these training events would be accommodated at other venues in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Fareham Magistrates' Court were approximately £280,000.



## **Gloucester Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Gloucester Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in Gloucestershire (although there are three courts within the Local Justice Area, the fourth court, North Avon, is a separate Local Justice Area within the county). The court deals with criminal court business in adult and youth courts as well as family hearings. Gloucester Magistrates' Court is a hearing only venue and no staff are permanently based on site.

The proposal is to close Gloucester Magistrates' Court and transfer the hearings to Cheltenham Magistrates' Court.

Should Gloucester Magistrates' Court close it will enable all magistrates' hearings for Gloucester and Cheltenham to take place in a single venue at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court. Centralising the magistrates' hearings in Cheltenham will enable more flexibility in the listing of cases, and the concentration of resources into a single location will enable more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

Some enabling works would be required at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court to improve access to the building.

All magistrates' work for the Gloucestershire Local Justice Area (LJA) is currently heard at three locations: Gloucester Magistrates' Court, Stroud Magistrates' Court and Cheltenham Magistrates' Court. All three venues are currently under utilised. A significant issue in Gloucestershire is access to custody facilities; Cheltenham Magistrates' Court is the only court in the Gloucestershire LJA with access to cell facilities for custody cases. The ability to operate from fewer locations where the full range of magistrates' work can be dealt with will ensure the best possible use is made of available court time.

### **Accommodation**

Gloucester Magistrates' Court was built in 1960. It is attached to a police station but no longer has access to the police cells. All custody cases are therefore heard at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court which has the only cell capacity in the Gloucester LJA. The design of the building is not ideal and does not allow for the easy separation of opposing parties. This can cause considerable distress for some court users.

The court has a total of four courtrooms; three standard formal magistrates' courts and one informal magistrates' court. All court staff are based in administrative offices at Twyver House which is a few minutes walking distance from the courthouse.

Facilities provided for court users are generally below standard. The court is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Workload**

Gloucester Magistrates' Court has four courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 992 days per year (248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 16% of its capacity.

No custody cases are heard at Gloucester because of the lack of cell facilities and there is no prison video link. Custody work is already dealt with at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court.

## Location

The proposal is to move all hearings from Gloucester Magistrates' Court to Cheltenham Magistrates' Court which is situated nine miles away. Public transport links between Gloucester and Cheltenham are good. There is a frequent train and bus service. Travel time by train is approximately 15 minutes and costs approximately £5.00 return. Travel time by bus is approximately 40 minutes. Travel time by car to Cheltenham is approximately 20 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	88%	By Car	0-30min	71%
	30-60min	12%		30-60min	28%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	28%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	59%		30-60min	32%
	60-120min	11%		60-120min	48%
	>120min	2%		>120min	19%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

## Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based in Gloucester Magistrates' Court.

## Other information

The building is leasehold and is attached to the Gloucester police station but no longer has access to the police cells. The building is located in the centre of a local regeneration area.

The 2014/15 operating costs for Gloucester Magistrates' Court were approximately £195,000.

## **North Avon Magistrates' Court (also known as Yate Magistrates' Court)**

### **Proposal**

North Avon Magistrates' Court, which is also known as Yate Magistrates' Court, is one of four magistrates' courts in the county of Gloucestershire (although is within its own Local Justice Area). The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts. Its jurisdiction covers part of the mainly residential/urban area of Bristol but to the north it is largely rural.

The proposal is to close North Avon Magistrates' Court and transfer the workload to Bristol Magistrates' Court.

This proposal is linked to the proposed closure of Bath Magistrates' Court referred to at page eleven of this consultation document. The capacity at Bristol Magistrates' Court would only support the workload from either Bath Magistrates' Court or North Avon Magistrates' and the responses to this consultation will inform the decision on whether either of the two proposals are implemented.

Bristol Magistrates' Court is a modern purpose built 12 courtroom building situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The move to a significantly larger, modern building would provide better services for our users, enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

There would be no enabling works required at Bristol Magistrates' Court to accommodate the workload from North Avon Magistrates' Court.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

### **Accommodation**

North Avon Magistrates' Court was built in 1982. The building is generally in reasonable condition but significant investment is required for the heating and lighting systems which are old and unreliable. The building has good security. There is disabled access and the public areas are in good condition. The judicial areas are average and there are no health and safety issues.

The court has a total of five courtrooms. Three standard formal magistrates' courtrooms and two informal family/youth courtrooms. The court has 12 custody cells which are all operational.

The building has eight waiting rooms available for private consultation. One courtroom has video link facilities for witnesses to give their evidence. There is no prison video link. The court has an infrared hearing loop system installed. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

### **Workload**

North Avon Magistrates' Court has five courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 1,240 days per year (at 248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 28% of its capacity.

## Location

The proposal is that all work currently dealt with at North Avon Magistrates' Court is moved to Bristol Magistrates' Court which is located 11 miles away. There are good public transport links between Yate and Bristol. Travel by train takes approximately 30 minutes and a return ticket costs approximately £5.00. Travel by bus takes approximately 40 minutes. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	86%
	30-60min	11%		30-60min	14%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	41%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	23%		30-60min	39%
	60-120min	27%		60-120min	51%
	>120min	7%		>120min	6%
	no data	2%		no data	3%

## Staff implications

There are 13 staff based at North Avon Magistrates' Court.

## Other information

North Avon Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/2015 operating costs of North Avon Magistrates' Court were approximately £286,000.

## **Stroud Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Stroud Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in Gloucestershire (although there are three courts within the Local Justice Area, the fourth court, North Avon, is a separate Local Justice Area within the county). The court deals with criminal court business in the adult courts. Stroud Magistrates' Court is a hearing only venue and no staff are permanently based on site.

The proposal is to close Stroud Magistrates' Court and move the hearings to Cheltenham Magistrates' Court.

Should Stroud Magistrates' Court close it will enable all magistrates' court hearings for Stroud and Cheltenham to take place in a single venue at Cheltenham Magistrates' Court. Centralising the magistrates' hearings in Cheltenham will allow more flexibility in the listing of cases and the concentration of resources into a single location will enable more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

All magistrates' work for the Gloucestershire Local Justice Area (LJA) is currently heard at three locations: Gloucester Magistrates' Court, Stroud Magistrates' Court and Cheltenham Magistrates' Court. All three venues are currently under utilised. A significant issue in Gloucestershire is access to custody facilities; Cheltenham Magistrates' Court is the only court in the Gloucestershire LJA with access to cell facilities for custody cases. The ability to operate from fewer locations where the full range of magistrates' work can be dealt with will ensure the best possible use is made of available court time.

Some minor enabling works will be necessary at Cheltenham Magistrates' Courts to improve access and facilities.

### **Accommodation**

Stroud Magistrates' Court was built in 1960. The building is in a poor state of repair and requires a significant amount of maintenance work. There are currently issues with both the heating and cooling systems in the building, both of which will require significant expenditure to bring them to an acceptable operating level.

Stroud Magistrates' Court has two magistrates' courtrooms but there are no custody cells. The court does have the only prison video link facilities in Gloucestershire, which would need to be relocated to Cheltenham. There are no separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses.

### **Workload**

Stroud Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 496 days per year (248 days per courtroom). In 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 32% of its capacity.

### **Location**

The proposal is for all magistrates' hearings currently dealt with at Stroud to be moved to Cheltenham Magistrates Court situated 14 miles away. There are frequent train and bus services between Stroud and Cheltenham. Travel time by train is approximately 40

minutes and a return ticket is approximately £6.00. Travel time by bus is approximately 45 minutes. Travel time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	64%	By Car	0-30min	12%
	30-60min	27%		30-60min	86%
	60-120min	9%		60 - 120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	20%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	40%		30-60min	9%
	60-120min	27%		60-120min	70%
	>120min	10%		>120min	18%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

### Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Stroud Magistrates' Court.

### Other information

Stroud Magistrates' Court formed part of a previous consultation for closure in 2010. Having considered the responses, the Lord Chancellor decided at that time the court should remain open. One of the significant factors in the decision to retain Stroud was the cell capacity available at the time from the police station located next to the court. This cell capacity is no longer available as the cost of leasing from the police is prohibitive.

The lack of cell capacity combined with low utilisation and significant backlog of maintenance has led to Stroud Magistrates' Court being included in these proposals.

The building is leasehold.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Stroud Magistrates' Court were approximately £132,000.

## **Torquay Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Torquay Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts in Devon. The court deals with criminal court business in the adult and youth courts.

The proposal is to close Torquay Magistrates' Court and divide the workload between Plymouth Magistrates' Court and Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court. Custody cases and multi defendant cases would go to Plymouth, other business including hearings would be divided between both sites.

Should Torquay Magistrates' Court close it would enable the custody and multi defendant work to be permanently moved to Plymouth Magistrates' Court which is a larger court centre with better facilities. The listing of cases could be more flexible at a larger site and it would allow more efficient and effective use of staff and judicial time.

All listing of magistrates' work for Torquay Magistrates' Court already takes place from Plymouth Magistrates' Court. The majority of staff who administer the magistrates' court business and support the court hearings at Torquay Magistrates' Court are located in the offices of the Torquay and Newton Abbot County Court which is situated a few miles away on the outskirts of Torquay.

No enabling works would be required at Plymouth Magistrates' Court to accommodate the workload from Torquay. Some enabling work may be required at Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court if custody facilities were required.

Plymouth Magistrates' Court offers good quality facilities for HM Courts and Tribunals Service users.

Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court will offer the same level of facilities as Torquay Magistrates' Court except for custody facilities, but in a more modern building. The ability to retain non custodial magistrates' work in Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court will ensure a proportion of magistrates' workload is dealt with locally.

### **Accommodation**

Torquay Magistrates' Court has two standard formal magistrates' courtrooms and eight operational cells.

The court was built in the 1930s and had an extension added in the 1970s. The condition is generally poor and investment is required to bring it up to a reasonable standard.

The defendant delivery van dock is too small to accommodate the delivery vans so if custody cases are heard prisoners disembark from the vans in the street, which creates a security risk. Both courtrooms are accessible to wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility but there are no custody facilities for defendants with mobility difficulties.

The public areas are poor and there is limited scope for separation of prosecution and defence witnesses. The judicial areas require refurbishment and magistrates are required to use the same corridor as the prisoners to exit the courtroom. Significant investment is required to bring the custody suite up to standard.

There is a small reception area but no administrative staff are based on site and there are no public counter facilities.

### Workload

Torquay Magistrates' Court has two courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 496 days per year (248 days per courtroom). In 2014/15 the court was utilised for approximately 62% of its capacity.

All weekend remand courts for Torquay in 2014/15 were dealt with at Plymouth Magistrates' Court.

### Location

The proposal is to move all magistrates' hearings currently dealt with at Torquay Magistrates' Court to Plymouth Magistrates' Court and Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court. Torquay Magistrates' Court is 34 miles from Plymouth Magistrates' Court and seven miles from Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court. There are frequent bus and train services between both Torquay and Plymouth and Torquay and Newton Abbot.

Torquay to Plymouth is approximately one hour 15 minutes by train with a return ticket costing approximately £12.00. Travel by bus takes approximately one hour 50 minutes.

Torquay to Newton Abbot is approximately ten minutes by train with a return ticket costing £4.00. Travel by bus takes approximately 30 minutes. Journey time by car is approximately 50 minutes to Plymouth and 15 minutes to Newton Abbot.

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

Travel time to Newton Abbot Magistrates' Court:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	87%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	13%		30-60min	98%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	35%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	38%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	20%		60-120min	48%
	>120min	6%		>120min	52%
	no data	1%		no data	0%



Travel time to Plymouth Magistrates' Court:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	83%	By Car	0-30min	58%
	30-60min	16%		30-60min	41%
	60-120min	1%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	37%	By Public Transport	0-30min	26%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	34%
	60-120min	12%		60-120min	24%
	>120min	0%		>120min	14%
	no data	3%		no data	2%

**Staff implications**

There are three staff permanently based at Torquay Magistrates' Court.

**Other information**

Torquay Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Torquay Magistrates' Court were approximately £106,000.

## **Questionnaire**

We would welcome responses to the following questions.

**Question 1. Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals?**

**Question 2. Will the proposals for the provision of court and tribunal services have a direct impact on you? If yes, please provide further details.**

**Question 3. Are there other particular impacts of the proposals that HM Courts & Tribunals Service should take into account when making a decision? Please provide details.**

**Question 4. Our assessment of the likely impacts and supporting analysis is set out in the Impact Assessment accompanying this consultation. Do you have any comments on the evidence used or conclusions reached? Please provide any additional evidence that you believe could be helpful.**

**Question 5. Are there alternatives to travelling to a physical building that would be a benefit to some users? These could include using technology to engage remotely or the use of other, civic or public buildings for hearings as demand requires. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.**

**Question 6. Please provide any additional comments that you have.**

**Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.**

## About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

<b>Full name</b>	
<b>Job title</b> or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Company name/organisation</b> (if applicable):	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Postcode</b>	
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.

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## Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 8 October 2015 to:

**HMCTS Consultation  
Ministry of Justice  
Post point 1.13  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ**

**Fax: 0870 761 7768**

**Email: [estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)**

### Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Justice at the above address.

### Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at [www.gov.uk/moj](http://www.gov.uk/moj)

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from the Ministry of Justice (please see details above).

### Publication of response

The response to this consultation exercise will be available on-line at [www.gov.uk/moj](http://www.gov.uk/moj).

### Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

### Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Ministry.

The Ministry will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

## **Impact Assessment**

Impact Assessment for proposals likely to affect businesses, charities, voluntary sector or the public sector – see guidance on: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-assessment-template-for-government-policies>)

## **Consultation principles**

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

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







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