



Ministry  
of Justice

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

## EXTRACTS

Foreward

Introduction

The Proposals

Feltham Magistrates Court

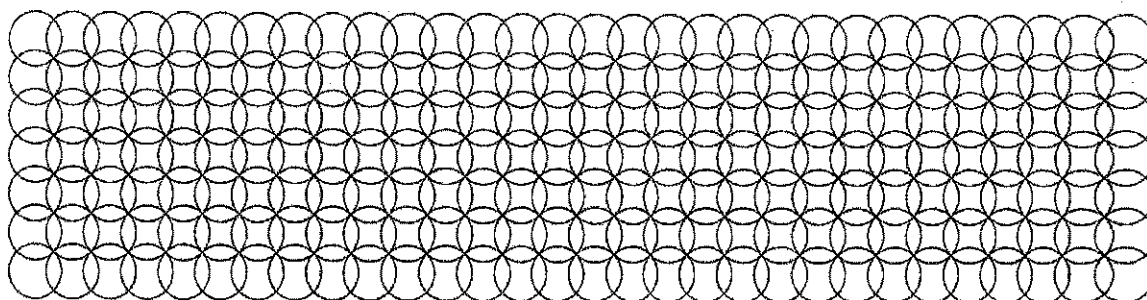
Hammersmith County Court

Lambeth County Court

Questionnaire

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015



## About this consultation

- To:** This consultation is aimed at court users, partners, judiciary, staff and other parties with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the London region.
- Duration:** From 16/07/2015 to 08/10/2015
- Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to:** HMCTS Consultation  
Ministry of Justice  
Post point 1.13  
102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ
- Tel: 0161 240 5021  
Fax: 0870 761 7768  
Email: [estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)
- How to respond:** 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/>

## Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The proposals	7
Questionnaire	30
About you	31
Contact details/How to respond	32
Impact Assessment	34
Consultation principles	35

---

## Foreword

HM Courts & 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 London 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 London. 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 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. In the London region we have already established these facilities at Westminster Magistrates' Court and they have proved effective. 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. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

**Sheila Proudlock**

**Delivery Director  
HM Courts & Tribunals Service London**

## Introduction

This consultation for London 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some tribunals which are part of HMCTS 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 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 HMCTS 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 HMCTS 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

Having considered the estate in the London region against the principles set out in the 'Introduction' section, we recommend the closure of 10 courts and tribunals.

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

- Bow County Court
- Feltham Magistrates' Court
- Greenwich Magistrates' Court
- Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)
- Lambeth County Court
- Pocock Street Tribunal Hearing Centre
- Richmond-upon-Thames Magistrates' Court
- Tottenham Magistrates' Court
- Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court
- Woolwich County Court

### 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 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

---

<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.



## **Feltham Magistrates' Court**

### **Proposal**

Feltham Magistrates' Court opened in a converted dance hall in 1909; an annex to the rear of the building opened in the late 1950's to provide additional office space. The court is situated on a busy road close to Feltham High Street.

The courthouse is a hearing centre for the West London Local Justice Area, the administrative centre being at Willesden Magistrates' Court. As a result of a decision taken by the Judicial Business Group in 2013, the courthouse operates three out of the four courtrooms, four days per week hearing adult and youth criminal work.

The accommodation at Feltham is poor and does not comply with the Equality Act 2010. Significant investment would be required to bring the building up to the required standard.

It is proposed that Feltham Magistrates' Court is closed and the hearings are transferred to Hammersmith Magistrates' Court. Although some enabling work would be required to accommodate the additional hearings, this is a modern purpose-built courthouse which opened in 1996 and offers better facilities for users.

The closure of Hammersmith (formerly West London) County Court is a separate proposal within this consultation document, and it is linked to this proposal as the County Court is in the same building as Hammersmith Magistrates' Court and therefore its closure would provide additional courtroom capacity for the Feltham Magistrates' Court work.

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 building standards at Feltham Magistrates' Court are low and significant investment would be required to bring it up to the required standard. All of the pipe work for the water and heating requires replacing as does the air conditioning system. The court has not been fully operational since 2013.

One courtroom was closed due to security concerns raised about access via a separate entrance at street level. The car park is exposed to the public and is not secured, causing concern for staff, judiciary and custodial van arrangements. There is a smaller annex building behind the main building with no direct internal link and staff are required to walk outside to gain access to the building which has office accommodation and storage. The custody facilities are in operation two days per week, and the cells are of a poor standard.

The public counter provision at Feltham is limited to the days that the building is open. A counter service is already available at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court, open five days per week.

There is limited seating in the waiting areas because of a lack of space. In addition there is limited space for the storage of documents in the main building.

The building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and has had limited prior investment in relation to this aspect. It does have a stair lift which regularly breaks down and needs replacing.

Hammersmith Magistrates' Court has better facilities; the building is modern and is compliant with the Equalities Act 2010. The main building is self-contained and the car park is secure and not exposed or accessible by the public.

### Workload

The adult and youth court criminal work listed at Feltham is not borough specific but emanates mainly from the London Borough of Hounslow.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Feltham Magistrates' Court was utilised for approximately 45% of its capacity.

### Location

Hammersmith Magistrates' Court is approximately 10 miles away from Feltham Magistrates' Court.

Travel links between the two courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 30 minutes and by public transport the journey time to Hammersmith is on average 40 minutes from Feltham.

Hammersmith (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District/Circle, Piccadilly), with links into Richmond, Hatton Cross, Hounslow and London Kings Cross. The courthouse located approximately five minutes walk from the station.

The courthouse is close to a bus hub with frequent buses serving the west of London with links to central London.

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	83%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	17%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	35%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	65%		30-60min	56%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	42%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%

**Staff implications**

There are on average six staff and three legal advisers based onsite each day the building is open. There is a mixture of permanent staff and staff assigned from the main administration centre based at Willesden Magistrates' Court on a rota basis.

**Other information**

Feltham Magistrates' Court is a freehold property.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Feltham Magistrates' Court was approximately £230,000.

## **Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court)**

### **Proposal**

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court. The building was purpose built in 1996 and is adjacent to the Hammersmith flyover. The County Court hears civil and local authority possession work and has jurisdiction to deal with civil gang injunctions. However, there are only two hearing rooms assigned to civil work so the amount of civil work the court can list is limited.

It is proposed that Hammersmith County Court is closed and the workload and hearings are transferred to Wandsworth County Court to increase utilisation levels of the hearing rooms there. Enabling works would be required to accommodate the staff.

There would be no requirement to increase the number of courtrooms and the work will be heard in available capacity. Any gang injunction work required would continue to be heard at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court.

### **Accommodation**

There are no significant issues in relation to the Equality Act 2010 at this courthouse as a result of previous investment, nor are there any security issues.

The building is a critical location for crime work. The two hearing rooms for civil work have limited scope for increasing courtroom usage.

The public counter provision is by appointment only would continue to be provided at Wandsworth County Court.

Wandsworth County Court has scope for investment to expand the administrative office space which is required to fit in the staff from Hammersmith County Court and Lambeth County Court (which is subject to a separate proposal within this consultation document).

### **Workload**

The court lists civil work from the surrounding area. All work and hearings except for the gang injunction work would relocate to Wandsworth County Court.

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year, Hammersmith County Court was utilised for approximately 62% of its capacity.

### **Location**

Wandsworth County Court is approximately six miles from Hammersmith County Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes and by public transport the journey time from Hammersmith County Court takes on average 35 minutes to the nearest station to Wandsworth County which is Putney Bridge.

Putney Bridge (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District/Circle), with links into London Blackfriars, London Cannon Street, London Victoria. The court building is less than five minutes walk from the station.

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	99%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%
By Public Transport	0-30min	60%	By Public Transport	0-30min	27%
	30-60min	40%		30-60min	73%
	60-120min	0%		60-120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

### Staff implications

Currently there are 4 members of staff at Hammersmith County Court.

### Other information

Hammersmith County Court is co-located within Hammersmith Magistrates' Court and is a freehold property. Hammersmith Magistrates' Court is not part of this consultation.

The 2014/15 operating cost at this venue in total was approximately £1.2m.

This relocation would provide capacity at Hammersmith Magistrates' Court to receive the work from Feltham Magistrates' Court should the decision be taken to close it.

## **Lambeth County Court**

### **Proposal**

Lambeth County Court was built in 1928 and since then has been the location for all civil and family matters for the local area. Lambeth County Court has six hearing rooms and is currently open five days per week.

This proposal seeks to use the courtroom capacity at Wandsworth County Court. It is proposed that Lambeth County Court close and the workload and hearings transfer to Wandsworth County Court. Enabling works would be required to accommodate the staff.

### **Accommodation**

The accommodation is poor and not fit for purpose; it requires significant investment to enable the building to be improved up the required standard. The lighting, air conditioning and all of the pipe work for heating and water needs to be replaced. The building has no scope for expansion as it is situated in a predominately residential area.

The public counter provision, by appointment only, would be provided at Wandsworth County Court.

Wandsworth County Court has scope for investment to expand the office space which is required to fit in the staff from Lambeth County Court and West London County Court (which is subject to a separate proposal within this consultation document).

### **Workload**

Lambeth County Court lists civil and family work from the surrounding area.

During the 2014/15 financial year Lambeth County Court was utilised for approximately 39% of its capacity.

### **Location**

Wandsworth County Court is approximately six miles from Lambeth County Court.

Travel links between the courthouses are good. By car the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. By public transport the journey time from Lambeth County Court to the nearest station to Wandsworth County Court which is Putney Bridge takes on average 40 minutes

Putney Bridge (zone 2) is served by London Underground (District Line), with links into London Blackfriars, London Cannon Street, London Victoria. The courthouse is approximately five minutes walk from the station.

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

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	68%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	32%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	28%	By Public Transport	0-30min	5%
	30-60min	69%		30-60min	93%
	60-120min	2%		60-120min	2%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

#### Staff implications

Currently there are 30 members of staff at Lambeth County Court.

#### Other information

The tenure on Lambeth County Court is leasehold until 2024.

The 2014/15 operating cost for Lambeth County Court was approximately £286,000.

## **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.

---



---



---



---

## 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

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published 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.