

Access to post offices in Leicestershire

Preliminary Report
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Produced by the Policy, Research and Information Team, Chief Executive's Department, Leicestershire County Council

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I. Introduction

Aims

To assess the impact of changes to the post office network within Leicestershire in response to the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland Area Plan proposals.

Objectives

The report will provide evidence to support Leicestershire County Council's response to the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland Area Plan Proposal document.

This can be split into the following objectives:

- To map access to post offices within Leicestershire prior to announcement of the network change programme.
- To map the proposed future provision and to examine the implications of the proposed changes to the post office network in Leicestershire.
- To consider the implications of the closure programme on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (to be added in the next draft)

Background

Traditionally, post offices were used to post a letter or a parcel, pay utility bills and collect benefits. The way people choose to access their money, pay bills or use Government services is changing and this has led to a transformation in the way post office services are accessed. Increased competition from alternative service providers has resulted in a reduction of post office use in both urban and rural areas. People are visiting post offices less and there is a need to modernise to reflect new technology, changing lifestyles and wider choice in how services are accessed.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), now known as Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform (BERR), published their Consultation document on the future of The Post Office Network in December 2006. The public consultation on the proposals for the network ran for 12 weeks from 14 December 2006 until 8 March 2007 and generated over 2,500 responses from individuals and from organisations and representative bodies at both local and national levels. The DTI published their 'Government response to public consultation' document on the future of the Post Office Network in 17 May 2007.

The Government has recognised the important social and economic role of post offices and they are determined to maintain a national network and will provide continuing support. Beyond 2001 there will be continued need for public support of the network.

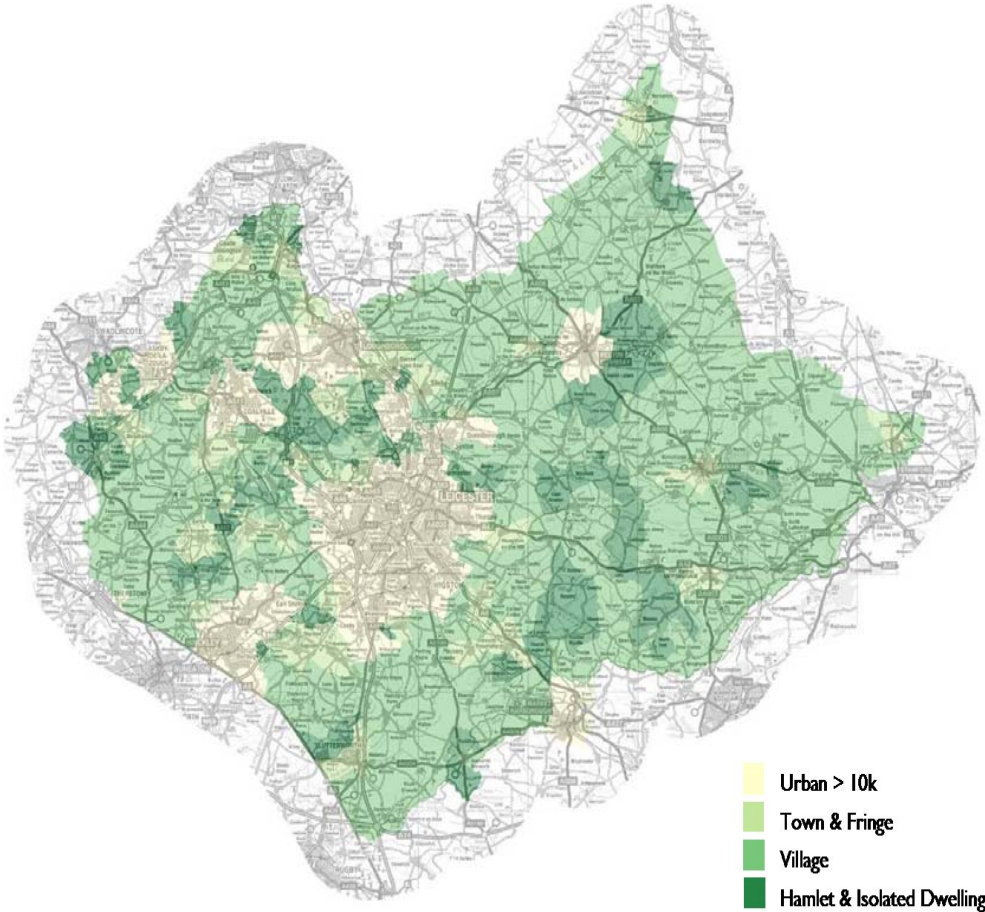
Post Office Ltd has now put in place a Network Change programme to implement the measures proposed by the Government in the Consultation document. The local public consultation on the Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland (Local Area Plan) opened on 20th November 2007 and the closing date for feedback is 10th January 2008.

2. Leicestershire context

Population of the parishes of Leicestershire

Map 1 shows rural-urban classification applied at individual census output area level across Leicestershire, based on 2001 Census population figures.

Map 1 : Distribution of the resident population of Leicestershire by rural parish



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Leicestershire County Council. LA100019271. Published 2005.

The map also highlights that population is more sparsely distributed in the south-east of the county, within Harborough District and Melton Borough. These areas have fewer urban centres (population > 10,000) compared to the north and east of the County.

Table 1: Urban / rural 2004 Leicestershire population

	Population	
	by Urban / rural area	% of Leicestershire population
Urban	425,401	68%
Town and Fringe	122,273	20%
Village and Hamlet	76,182	12%
Total	623,856	

Access to post offices in Leicestershire: Policy Context

Access to services is a priority within Leicestershire County Council's draft Sustainable Community Strategy (which was published for a 10 week consultation period on November 12th) and within the Leicestershire Rural Strategy.

The implications of this closure programme must be reviewed in the context of our commitment to maximise access to services for everyone living in Leicestershire.

An assessment of service provision within Leicestershire

This report considers all the changes which are proposed in the Local Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland. It also contains an analysis to determine the level of current and possible future service provision against the proposed national minimum access criteria, adopted to county level, and look into details of alternative service delivery in form of an outreach service.

The proposed national minimum access criteria for the national Post Office network to maintain a national network of post offices and, in particular, to protect vulnerable consumers in deprived urban, rural and remote areas are:

- 99% of the UK population to be within 3 miles and 90% of the population to be within 1 mile of their nearest post office outlet.
- 99% of the total population in deprived urban areas across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest post office outlet.

- 95% of the total urban population across the UK to be within 1 mile of their nearest post office outlet.
- 95% of the total rural population across the UK to be within 3 miles of their nearest post office outlet.

In addition for each individual postcode district:

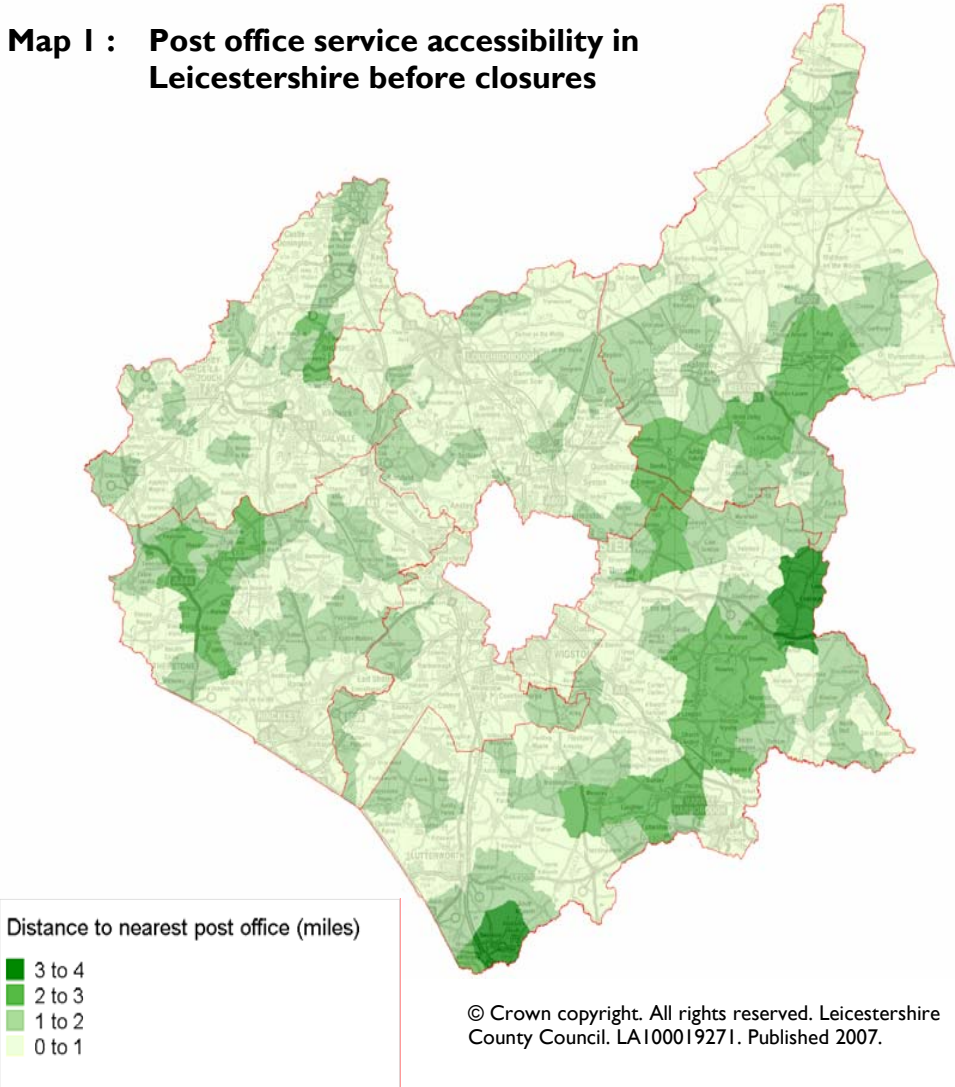
- 95% of the population of the postcode district to be within 6 miles of their nearest post office outlet.

Detailed consideration will be given to assess whether the Post Office Ltd have met their own access criteria within Leicestershire. This will be a key focus of the County Council's response to the network change proposals.

3. Service Accessibility

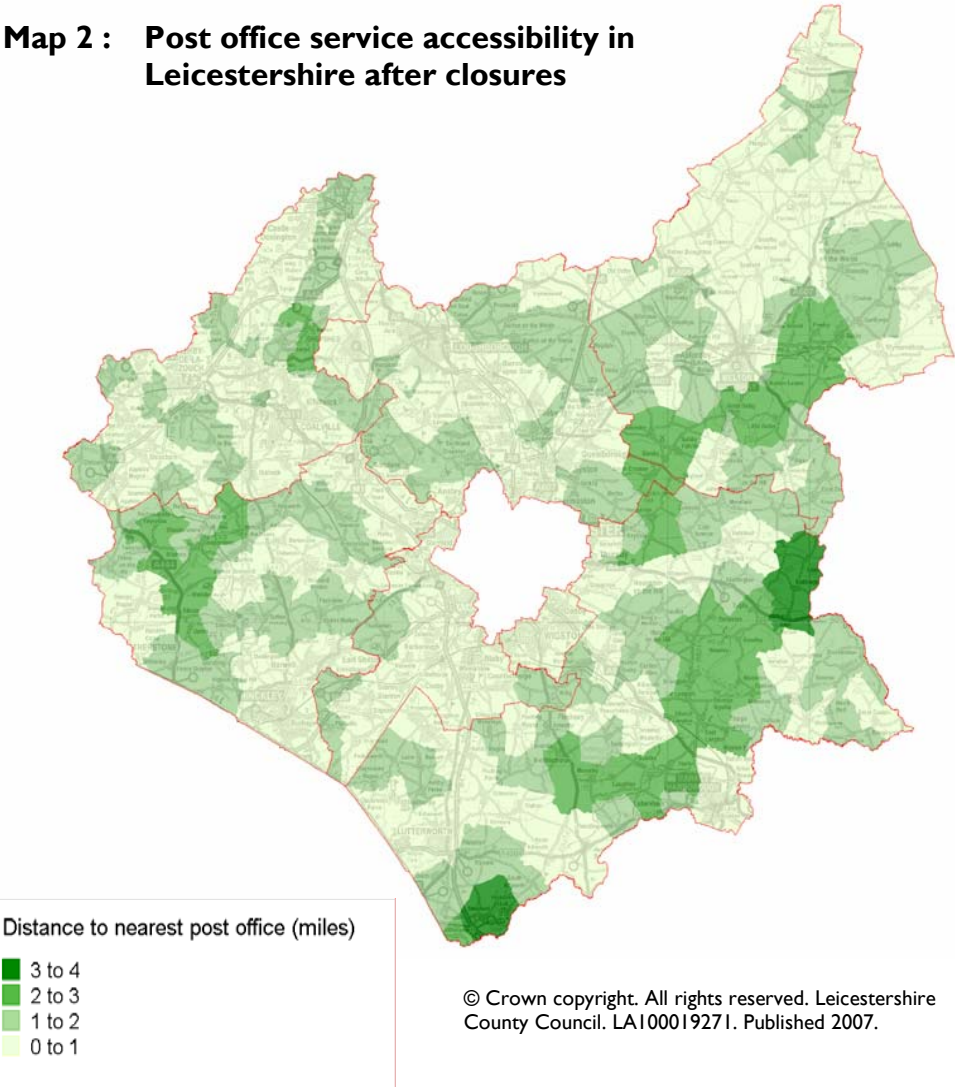
The post office data used within the following maps has been obtained from the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland, Area Plan, the East Midlands Area Plan (covering Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire), and from the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters.

Map 1 : Post office service accessibility in Leicestershire before closures

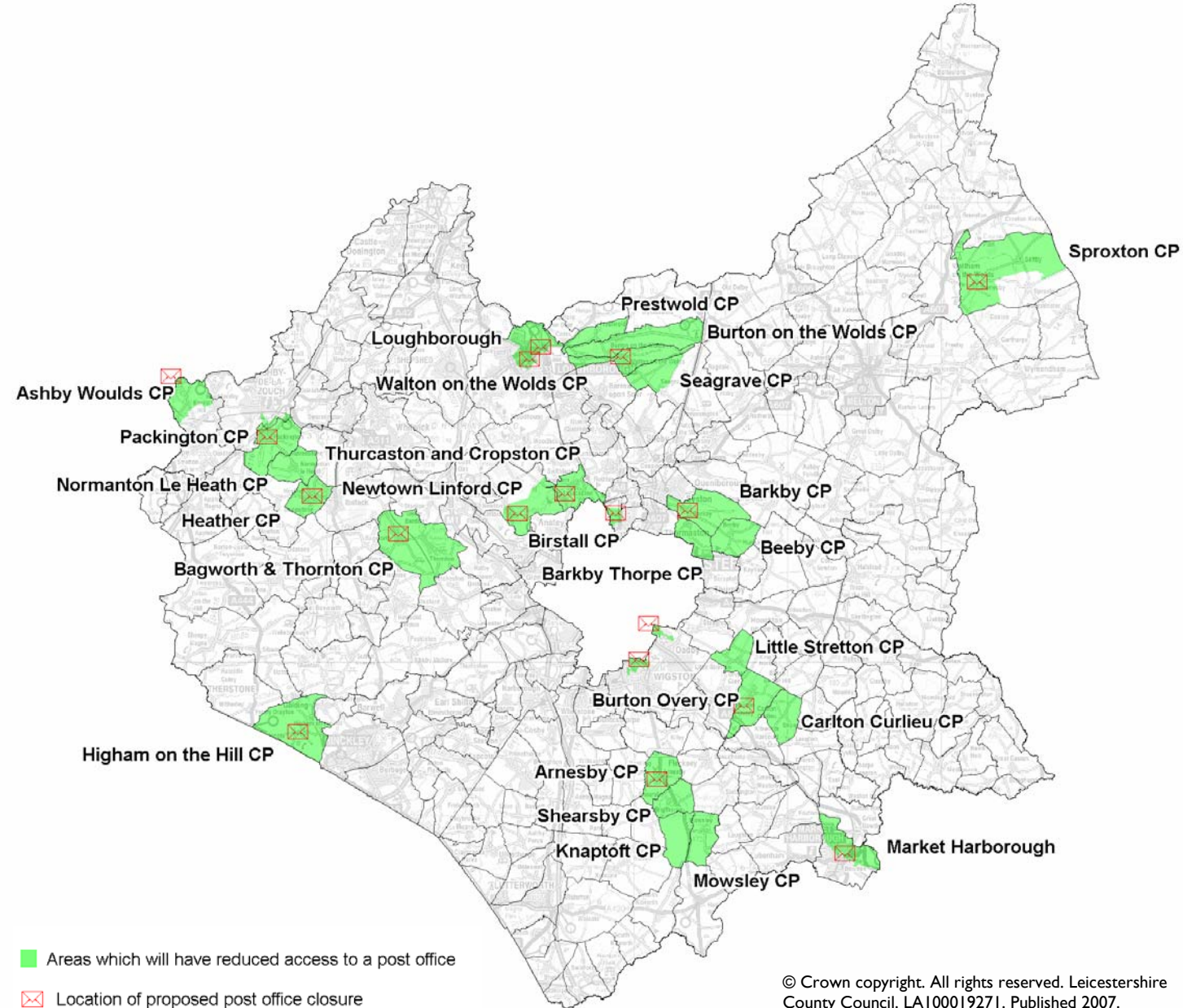


Using Census 2001 data at Output Area level the straight line distance from each Output Area within Leicestershire was calculated to the nearest post office. Maps have been produced to demonstrate the impact of the Post Office network change programme.

Map 2 : Post office service accessibility in Leicestershire after closures



Map 3 : Impact of post office closures within Leicestershire



Drawing upon Maps 1 and 2, Map 3 highlights the impact of the network change programme within Leicestershire. The map shows that there are over 20 parishes (or part parishes) within Leicestershire where the straight-line distance to the nearest post office will increase as part of the proposed closure programme.

The map identifies those post offices which have been proposed for closure. These include Church Gresley and Normanton on Soar which were proposed as part of the East Midlands Area Plan and will impact access within Ashby Woulds and near Loughborough respectively.

The full list of proposed closures are listed within Appendix I.

4. Future Provision

Local Area Plan Proposals

In order to deliver the changes set out in the 'Government response to public consultation' document, UK has been divided into 47 areas. For each of these areas Post Office Ltd will develop a local area plan proposal ("Area Plan Proposal") which will set out the changes that it proposes to make within it.

Full details of the Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland are available on the Post Office Limited's website www.postoffice.co.uk.

When developing the Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland, Post Office Ltd analysed a number of factors. These included the proximity of the post offices proposed for closure to other nearby branches, the number of customers currently using a particular branch, the size and ability of nearby outlets to absorb extra customers, and the commercial implications of any decision for Post Office Ltd.

According to the area plan, obstacles such as rivers, mountains and valleys, motorways and sea crossings to islands have been also taken into account. In addition, the availability of public transport, local demographics and the impact on local economies have all been considered.

The Government allows six weeks consultation on each local area plan proposal. In this section we look into details of the most relevant area plan proposals.

Local Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland

The recently published Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland includes proposed changes for individual post offices.

The proposed future network in the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland area comprises:

- 126 branches in urban towns and cities,
- 192 branches in rural areas.

In this section, we only considered those post offices are located in Leicestershire or close proximity to the border of Leicestershire.

The Post Office Ltd is proposing to:

- retain 133 Post office branches across Leicestershire,
- close 16 existing branches,
- close other five branches but establish five outreach service points, which could use innovative ways to continue to provide Post Office services in some areas where the existing branch is proposed for closure.

The full list of the post office branches proposed for closure in the area of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland can be found in Appendix I.

Local Area Plan Proposal for Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire

These are the proposed closure that affects Leicestershire:

- *Church Gresley (Derbyshire)*

This post office is positioned between offices within Swadlincote and Castle Gresley which are proposed to be retained. Residents within Church Gresley will therefore use either of these post offices. Church Gresley is the nearest post office for residents living within Albert Village within Leicestershire. Albert village residents' most accessible post office will either be Woodville or Moira.

- *Normanton-On-Soar (Nottinghamshire)*

Proposed closure does not have a direct impact on Leicestershire residents

Proposed closures in Leicestershire

The Leicestershire closures are listed below by districts:

Charnwood

Barkby
Birstall Kingsgate
Cropston
Loughborough – Ashby Road
Loughborough – Ratcliffe Road
Newton Linford
Walton le Wolds

Harborough

Arnesby
Burton Overy
Market Harborough – Connaught Road

Hinckley and Bosworth

Bagworth
Higham on the Hill

Melton

Stonesby

North West Leicestershire

Heather
Packington

Oadby and Wigston

Wigston Fields

Proposed outreach services in Leicestershire

This section considers the list of the post office branches proposed for outreach in Leicestershire.

The Government consultation says that it intends, “to provide support for Post Office Ltd to open new outreach locations to provide access to services for small remote communities by building on the success of the pilot trials including mobile post offices and post offices hosted in other locations such as village halls, community centres or pubs.” It has given a commitment to supply a further 500 outreach sites nationally, as part of the restructuring of the network.

The Post Office have identified four outreach options:

- **Hosted** – a full service offered by the subpostmaster of a nearby post office at a host site such as a shop, church or village hall
- **Partner** – a basic service being provided by another retailer alongside their core business (e.g. a petrol station or pub) overseen by the subpostmaster who provides the products required
- **Home service** – a limited service offered on-line or via telephone with the subpostmaster arranging delivery in person to the home or a delivery point
- **Mobile** – a full service offered by a mobile post office visiting a number of locations at set times on a regular basis

Within Leicestershire, Post Office Ltd is proposing to close five branches on a permanent basis and to mitigate the impact of the proposed closure they are propose to put in place an outreach service.

Two out of five post office branches proposed for hosted outreach services are:

- *Somerby Branch:*

The proposed hosted service would be operated from the existing location, offering the same range of services and facilities and for 8 hours a week.

- *Tilton on the Hill Branch:*

The proposed hosted service would be operated from the existing location, offering the same range of services and facilities and for 10 hours a week.

Regarding the other three post office branches the type of service and the location of the service point has not been confirmed, However, the proposed outreach hours are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| • Wymeswold | 14 hours a week |
| • Buckminster | 9 hours a week |
| • Old Dalby | 9 hours a week |

A hosted or a partner service would be a suitable option for these villages, although a partner service is subject to an appointed local partner (e.g. pub landlord) who is willing to transact certain post office products and services from his/her own premises.

5. Next steps

The results of this report will be used to support the Leicestershire County Council response to the Post Office Limited's Local Area Plan Proposal for Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland.

Specifically this report will be used to,

- identify priority geographical areas in need of greatest support
- identify suggestions on proposed outreach services including type of outreach service, opening hours, location.
- consider the best possible type of outreach service and its location for those branches are proposed as an outreach branch.
- assess grant applications submitted for support through the Rural Services Programme led by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership

In the second draft further work will be undertaken to consider the impact of the proposed network changes in more detail. Specific attention will be given to those areas, identified within this report, where residents will have to travel further to access a post office. Consideration will also be given to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Data which will be considered in more detail will include car ownership, the elderly population, indices of multiple deprivation and public and community transport provision.

Appendix I: List of Post offices proposed for closure in the Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland Area Plan

Branch Name	Town/City	Postcode	Constituency
Arnesby	Leicester	LE8 5UT	Blaby
Higham On The Hill	Nuneaton	CV13 6AH	Bosworth
Bagworth	Leicestershire	LE67 1BH	Bosworth
Barkby	Barkby	LE7 3QG	Charnwood
Cropston	Leicester	LE7 7HD	Charnwood
Kingsgate (formerly know	Leicester	LE4 3HD	Charnwood
Newtown Linford	Leicester	LE6 0HB	Charnwood
Collyweston	Stamford	PE9 3PW	Corby
Occupation Road	Corby	NN17 1ED	Corby
Stanion	Kettering	NN14 1DF	Corby
Burghley Drive	Corby	NN18 8EB	Corby
Old Stratford	Milton Keynes	MK19 6AN	Daventry
Badby	Nr Daventry	NN11 3AF	Daventry
Harlestone	Northampton	NN7 4EH	Daventry
Staverton	Daventry	NN11 6JL	Daventry
Chacombe	Banbury	OX17 2JR	Daventry
Newnham	Daventry	NN11 3HB	Daventry
Church Stowe	Northampton	NN7 4SG	Daventry
Burton Overy	Leicester	LE8 9DP	Harborough
Connaught Road	Market Harborough	LE16 7NG	Harborough
Wigston Fields	Leicester	LE18 1JW	Harborough
Grafton Underwood	Kettering	NN14 3AA	Kettering
Hawthorn Road	Kettering	NN15 7JJ	Kettering
Weekley	Kettering	NN16 9UN	Kettering
Stoke Albany	Market Harborough	LE16 8QA	Kettering
Gipsy Lane	Leicester	LE4 6RD	Leicester East
Willow Brook Road	Leicester	LE5 0DE	Leicester East
Walnut Street	Leicester	LE2 7LA	Leicester South
Francis Street	Leicester	LE2 2BE	Leicester South
Guthridge Crescent	Leicester	LE3 1JL	Leicester West
Henley Road	Leicester	LE3 9RF	Leicester West
Ashby Road	Loughborough	LE11 3AA	Loughborough
Ratcliffe Road	Loughborough	LE11 1JX	Loughborough
Walton Le Wolds	Loughborough	LE12 8HT	Loughborough
Packington	Ashby-De-La-Zouch	LE65 1WH	North West Leics
Heather	Coalville	LE67 2QP	North West Leics
Boothville	Northampton	NN3 6JE	Northampton North

Branch Name	Town/City	Postcode	Constituency
Broadmead Avenue	Northampton	NN3 2RA	Northampton North
Queens Park	Northampton	NN2 7BT	Northampton North
Lumbertubs	Northampton	NN3 8NQ	Northampton North
Gloucester Avenue	Northampton	NN4 8QF	Northampton North
Milton Malsor	Northampton	NN7 3AS	Northampton South
Regent Square	Northampton	NN1 3DS	Northampton South
High Street	Northampton	NN3 3JW	Northampton South
Exton	Oakham	LE15 8AZ	Rutland and Melton
Whissendine	Oakham	LE15 7ES	Rutland and Melton
Stonesby	Melton Mowbray	LE14 4PT	Rutland and Melton
Great Doddington	Wellingborough	NN29 7TH	Wellingborough
Alexandra Road	Wellingborough	NN8 1EE	Wellingborough
Little Harrowden	Wellingborough	NN9 5BB	Wellingborough
Little Irchester	Wellingborough	NN8 2DY	Wellingborough
Swinburne Road	Wellingborough	NN8 3RW	Wellingborough

