

MOST EASTERLY COMMUNITY GROUP



Email: mosteasterlycommunitygroup@gmail.com

Post: 62, High Street, Lowestoft, NR32 1JA

14th November, 2024

Dear ...,

It has been brought to our attention as a community group (MECG) that the High Street post office (the most easterly post office) is about to be moved away

While we intend to lodge our views before the consultation period ends on the 5th December, 2024 the community feel very strongly about it remaining where it is

We have held meeting and gathered views from our local community and would ask for your support .. please see below:

Most Easterly Community Group
Harry Grainger and Christine Newman
Co-Chairs

An individual is proposing that North Post Office in Lowestoft High Street is relocated to Tennyson Road. Post Office Ltd is carrying out a consultation, which closes on 5th December. We urge residents and local businesses to use this consultation to object to its re-location.

Post Office Ltd suggest the move will take place in Jan/Feb 2025.

Most Easterly Community Group has these observations:

- The Post Office Ltd letter does not tell the full story. It mentions a ‘temporary postmaster’. That temporary person has been there for 11 (eleven) years.
- The widow of the previous postmaster is happy to keep the service in the same place.
- We believe this is a route for the Post Office to change the terms of its contract. It is merely a cost-saving device, and other possible arrangements have not been explored at all with pertinent parties.

Evidence from the Post Office Ltd supporting a High Street Post Office:

- “The Post Office is an anchor for the high street”
- “For every two in five visits to a post office money is spent elsewhere in neighbouring shops and premises.” The new location, a bakery, is the only retail establishment in the whole of Tennyson Road, compared to the High Streets complement of 66 businesses. It’s hard to imagine any ‘anchoring’ happening there.
- “Visits to Post Office Branches attract visitors to the high street”
- “It provides greater convenience for consumers, by allowing them to do a greater proportion of their shopping in one place”
- “Our respondents valued the Post Office higher than their local library, corner shop or pub”.

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Evidence from the Labour Government

- “Labour back the great British high Street, that’s why we will make sure every community has access to high Street banking services”
- “Labour will put an end to boarded up premises and ghost high streets with our plans to bring back to the high street”
- “Labour has a plan to give your high street a bright future”.
Jonathan Reynolds, currently Government Business and Trade Minister.
- “Labour will look for ways to strengthen the Post Office network, **in consultation with sub-postmasters, trade unions and customers**, and support the development of new products, services and business models, such as banking hubs, that will help reinvigorate the high street. We will also ensure justice and compensation are delivered swiftly for those sub-postmasters shamefully affected by the Horizon IT scandal “Moving a post office which has been in the premises or immediate vicinity for at least 110 years does not help Labour’s aspirational promises.

The Post Office’s research and the Government’s aims therefore together provide ample evidence for the case against relocation.

Then there is the community knowledge evidence:

As we are constantly told, many high streets throughout the nation feel beleaguered, neglected and ignored. Lowestoft's Historic High Street is battling this perception.

As part of this battle, Most Easterly Community Group (MECG) has this to say.

- ●The North Heritage Action Zone highlighted the High Street and has invested many thousands into shop fronts and planning documents.
- ●The Old Town Hall is on course to become a destination site in the street – again, many thousands have been invested in it.
- ●Moving the post office goes directly against all LA aspirations and good intentions, and against all the planning documents, including the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.
- ●The Town Hall Project is currently doing a footfall survey. Current projections already indicate a marked increase over the next two years.
- ●Tennyson Road is not a normal pedestrian route to anywhere in particular – whereas the High Street is.
- ●The new location does have parking close by, but so does the High Street. And MECG believes that true footfall is needed, not just additional carbon increase from cars.
- ●The extant post office is a community hub. It provides a local service for local people. Its importance can only increase as the High Street emerges from years of stasis.
- ●It provides banking services, including and particularly for local businesses – we don’t believe the new one will do that

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The Consultation

- ● On 12 November 2024 the BBC reported that the Post Office intended to close many post office branches, to make the whole business viable. Closing a branch in a location that is steadily increasing its visibility and commercial life makes no sense whatsoever. However, we do wonder if, in fact, this serendipitous opportunity to reduce costs is not actually a part of the recently announced plan.
- ● We are not convinced that the proposal is not, in fact, a done deal. Post Office Ltd's transparency is still cloudy, we think. We wish to have an opportunity to follow the whole process – in effect, see the documents, see the comments, scrutinise the conclusions.

Actions

Write to Jess Asato MP for her support and ask her to directly intervene Write to the new franchisee

Alert everyone to the situation, via local press, TV, radio and social media.
Bring it to the attention of the Post Office Ltd Chair of the Board and the Chief Executive