

CBAU 8758



[REDACTED]

5 August 2017

[REDACTED]
Consultation Team
Post Office.

Dear [REDACTED]

St Leonards Post Office

Thank you for your letter of 28 July.

I went to the consultation session at the Royal Victoria Hotel on 3 August. The lady who was leading the session said that the St Leonards post office was 'no longer viable', but without explaining what she meant by this or giving any details. Did she mean that this particular post office is making a financial loss? Or perhaps that not enough people are using it?

I find both of these reasons difficult to understand, as every time I use it there are usually several other customers there and I often have to queue up before being served. As the Post Office apparently owns the building and therefore does not have to pay any rent, making a loss can't really be a valid reason.

I believe that [REDACTED] was at the session, but he didn't speak during the time I was there. I'm wondering why he is proposing to take over this particular post office, and how he was chosen. Was it his idea in the first place? Were there a lot of other applicants, and where was this proposal advertised? I didn't see any such advertisement in the local press. Someone should tell [REDACTED] that there is no need for yet another shop for newspapers and other goods - there are plenty of other such shops nearby.

I see that the Post Office leaflet describes these changes as 'modernisation', but there is nothing wrong with the St Leonards branch as it is. It is already 'modern' and providing a range of up-to-date services vital to the local community.

All the local people I've spoken to are against this proposal, and I hope that the Post Office will abandon this change and keep the St Leonards post office and its excellent services exactly as it is.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 August 2017 14:47
To: Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Subject: St Leonards crown post office

The closure of this post office is very sad. The street certainly does not need another newsagent, convenience store or similar.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 August 2017 10:10
To: Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Subject: Closure of branch 41820199

Hi

I do realise that the window has closed to share my views on this proposed closure. I have been away from home but was shocked to find out about this on my return.

I know from neighbours that the post office did not consult in my location (Wetherford Way) and I only found out about this proposal through an email from Bournville Trust. They are as I am, objecting to this move. Our post office is an essential part of our community and I would not be happy with your proposed new location ... too far away and not in a neighbourhood in which I would feel comfortable. I would then have to travel much further to use the services of the post office and would therefore reduce the amount of business for which I would use the post office e.g. savings, money withdrawal, purchase of stamps.

I trust you will reconsider.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 August 2017 14:34
To: postofficechanges@citizensadvice.org.uk
Cc: Amber Rudd MP <amber.rudd.mp@parliament.uk>; cllr.trevor.webb@eastsussex.gov.uk; cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk; Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Subject: Poor consultation and plans for sale of St Leonards Crown Post Office

Dear CAB consultant for PO changes, (cc-ed to my elected representatives, PO Ltd)

I hope that you will be aware that I have sent my comments about the plans for the Post Office to their email address:

comments@postoffice.co.uk

However, I want to make sure you know that the local community feel that the plans for the future of the Crown Post Office have been managed very badly and we think that there are valid reasons to ask for a judicial review. I am aware that the sub-Post Office in the Old Town was the subject of a judicial review 8 years ago which stopped the intended closure.

The community consultation in St Leonards has been managed very poorly for several reasons – including very poor publicity, and only a 6-day period to send in concerns after the (poorly advertised) User Forum on 3 August.

We also feel that very little was done to advertise the opportunity to take over the Post Office, and there was minimal engagement with Hastings Borough Council.

Was [REDACTED] the only person who expressed an interest in the business? [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Also, we are not convinced that a business plan which is reliant on selling newspapers, sweets and tobacco in a high street that already has multiple retail outlets selling newspapers, sweets and tobacco is viable.

We have been told (but with no figures to back it up) that the Post Office is currently running at a loss.

If that is true, how can a business plan reliant on replicating services already available be viable?

There has been no serious attempt to liaise with the community, OR our elected representatives (MP and Borough Council), by the Post Office.

A Crown Post Office is a community resource and we feel CAB need to take the community's concerns seriously.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 23 August 2017 19:33

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Amber Rudd MP <amber.rudd.mp@parliament.uk>; cllr.trevor.webb@eastsussex.gov.uk; cllr.peter.chowney@hastings.gov.uk; Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>; Richard Brown <richard.brown@citizensadvice.org.uk>; baupost CitA <baupost@citizensadvice.org.uk>

Subject: St Leonards On Sea Post Office

[REDACTED], this just needs to be saved for the file, - we need to ack it so please send over

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for taking the time to write to us to express your concerns with regard to the changes to St Leonards On Sea Post Office.

In our capacity as the independent statutory watchdog for post offices, the Post and Telecoms team at Citizens Advice has a statutory duty to monitor the number and location of post offices and work to ensure that the Post Office network meets the needs of consumers in terms of the quality of service, as well as changes to the number and location of branches. We also offer guidance to local representatives concerning Post Office Limited's transformation programmes. These programmes involve converting traditional sub post offices and Crown branches into new models to secure long term sustainability whilst at the same time maintaining the size of the network.

As you may be aware, Post Office Limited follows a Code of Practice on Public Consultation and Communication agreed with us which details how they will communicate local changes, ask for consumer and local representative views and give them due consideration. Post Office Limited also has an obligation to consult directly on each proposed branch change with certain stakeholders.

Citizens Advice scrutinises the feedback to each case and meets with Post Office Limited on a weekly basis to review them. In this instance, the public consultation ended on 9th August 2017 and we met to discuss the case on 17th August 2017. During this meeting we were able to voice our concerns and also hear any mitigating evidence. However, due to the nature of the case and ongoing engagement with local representatives it is still under review. My manager, [REDACTED], will be taking matters up on his return to work next week and he will be in touch with you again at that stage.

In the meantime, please be assured that we do take the community's concerns seriously. I have attached, for your reference, a copy of the original letter that Post Office Limited sent and a copy of the up to date Code of Practice.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[Citizens Advice](#)

Mobile: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 23 August 2017 22:28

To: Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>

Subject: Re: CBAU 8631 - St Leonards Post Office, TN37 6AA

Hello,

I'm afraid this is the exact same copied and pasted letter as everyone else is receiving within the St Leonards community.

It's not an answer to my specific questions.

I would like a reply to my questions please,

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 August 2017 10:01
To: Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Subject: Re: CBAU - 8635/8647 - St Leonards On Sea Post Office, TN37 6AA

Thank you for your response.

I would like to pick up on your comment;

"In addition, I hope you can understand that we cannot discuss financial arrangements with third parties and for this reason, I'm unable to comment any further on the financial terms of the proposed agreement."

I asked two simple questions. You answered the first one regarding State Aid.

The second was.

Is the Post Office following any of the Principles set out by the European Commission when it comes to best practices related specifically to the sale of this building and its freehold?

I believe the European Commission issues guide lines on the sale of all public assets ;

a. Sufficient publicity, "when it is repeatedly advertised over a reasonably long period (two months or more) in the national press, estate gazettes or other appropriate publications and through real estate agents addressing a broad range of potential buyers, so that it can come to the notice of all potential buyers. The intended sale of land and buildings, which in view of their high value or other features may attract investors operating on a Europe-wide or international scale, should be announced in publications which have a regular international circulation. Such offers should also be made known through agents addressing clients on a Europe-wide or international scale."

b. open and unconditional bidding procedure, comparable to an auction, accepting the best or only bid; or

c. an independent evaluation should be carried out by one or more independent asset valuers prior to the sale negotiations in order to establish the market value on the basis of generally accepted market indicators and valuation standards.

My questions were framed to understand if the Post Office had observed any of the above points related to the sale of this building and its freehold.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 30 August 2017 13:49
To: Comments <comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Subject: Re: CBAU - 8635/8647 - St Leonards On Sea Post Office, TN37 6AA

[REDACTED] please record and send over - thank you

Good Afternoon,

Please can you come back to me on the request information.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

On 2017-08-25 10:00, [REDACTED] wrote:

- > Thank you for your response.
- >
- > I would like to pick up on your comment;
- >
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- > financial arrangements with third parties and for this reason, I'm
- > unable to comment any further on the financial terms of the proposed
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- > international scale."
- >

> b. open and unconditional bidding procedure, comparable to an auction,
> accepting the best or only bid; or
>
> c. an independent evaluation should be carried out by one or more
> independent asset valuers prior to the sale negotiations in order to
> establish the market value on the basis of generally accepted market
> indicators and valuation standards.
>
> My questions were framed to understand if the Post Office had observed
> any of the above points related to the sale of this building and it's
> freehold.
>
>
> Regards,
>
> [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 September 2017 16:42
To: [REDACTED]; Comments
<comments@postoffice.co.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: St Leonards on Sea Post Office

Hi [REDACTED] & PO Ltd

Please be advised of the concerns below and consider them to be a formal complaint.

Thank you for your reply and for your clarification in respect of mediation.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

I spoke to [REDACTED] yesterday, [REDACTED] situated a few doors from the PO. She is clear that she was not advised of the consultation, nor were agencies representing those with disabilities in the community; no adverts were taken out in the local press and the leaflets were not made available in the PO at the start of the consultation period; the Ward Councillor was not notified personally and an ambiguous letter was received by the Borough Council but left members and officials believing that no consultation was imminent; the room hired for the event was entirely inadequate in that many people had to stand, including older people, and others were unable to get into the small, very hot room. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

For all these reasons it is clear that the Code of Practice has not been followed.