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Dear Byron

I am writing to you to express my strong objections to your proposal to relocate the Main Shrewsbury Post Office from the current St Mary's Street premises, to the rear of the basement in the WH Smith store.

As a customer of yours, I am deeply concerned to hear about the closure of our post Office. You say that you are pleased with your franchise partnership with W H Smith and that this has been taken as a 'commercial' decision.. However there will be a number of very serious problems for your customers caused by this proposal.

1. The access to the proposed new branch will be very much worse than the current premises, particularly for the disabled, the elderly and others with mobility problems.

The current branch provides access direct from the street up a small ramp, it is highly visible and easily located. Your proposal replaces this instead with a branch on a basement level requiring the disabled and elderly to use a small inadequate customer lift, or to make a long confusing detour through the Darwin Shopping Centre to use their lifts. The location at the rear of the basement level of WH Smith will be difficult to locate for new customers, and whatever you call it, is a definite downgrading of the service.

Bearing in mind the fact that elderly and disabled customers form a substantial part of your customer base, how can it be a 'commercial' decision to replace the current easily accessed and thus well used premises with such an inferior replacement-unless you do not want their business?

2. Your proposed replacement design only has 8 serving points including a dual purpose foreign exchange/Giro business banking position. This is a reduction in the current provision, will result in longer queuing times and a worse service. For a main Post Office branch in an important centre such as Shrewsbury, your artist's impression of the replacement facility looks very much smaller in size compared to the current branch and is obviously a downgrading of the existing provision.

3. The Shrewsbury branch I understand makes a profit. I always find it well used and well run. I have seen no financial justification to downgrade it in the way you propose.

4. What guarantees can you give us that WH Smith will really continue to maintain staffing and service levels? When they have local staffing problems

the temptation will be there to take staff from the Post Office counter, are you really going to be able to watch them every day to guard against this? What control will you have over WH Smith's pricing policy for stationary, parcels and wrapping materials and other goods currently sold in the main branch? Surely the new operator will seek to recover their costs by pushing the prices up on these items to the disadvantage of your customers.

5. Shrewsbury is an important County town, regional centre and focal point for a wide area of the Marches and Mid Wales. Do you really think it is reasonable to replace the current branch with a downgraded, smaller substitute at the rear of a shop basement? Tourism in Shrewsbury is a very important part of the local economy, and visitors form an important part of your customer numbers. Is it sensible, let alone 'commercial', to expect them to search for the main Post Office at the rear of a shop basement? What sort of impression of the town will this proposal give them, in every serious European tourist destination you find a prominent, appropriately sized main Post Office –why are we to be downgraded to a back of the basement location?

6. Local Post Office staff appear to have been treated very badly over this proposal, reading about it in the local paper before management told them, being given almost no time to state their future employment preferences, and leaving those without transport very few options concerning relocation. Is this a proper way to treat hard working staff, who have worked loyally, many for a long period, for Royal Mail?

7. WH Smith is not the strongest British retail business. Its market share is under severe discounting pressure from supermarkets and internet operators for the sale of CDs, DVDs and books. Sales are failing, and following big losses in 2004 a £30M cost cutting programme is in progress. Is this a suitable partner to be entering into a franchise deal with? Or is the Shrewsbury proposal just another example of short sighted, short term management forcing a 'One size fits all' policy onto a location where it is wholly the wrong approach? Just because WH Smith sell stationery it does not make them the right operator for Shrewsbury's main Post Office. If our current branch is profitable why can't Post Office Ltd have the courage to back them and admit the franchising route is wrong for this size of town?

Around 5,000 customers of Shrewsbury main Post Office have already objected in writing to this proposal. They have done that because it is will produce a badly located, poorly accessed, undersized replacement that will offer worse customer service. This proposal is bad for customers, bad for Shrewsbury and will be bad for your own business. Please cancel this relocation and think again.

I look forward to your reply

Yours sincerely