

To: The Editor,

The campaign against the Post Office's plans to close Central Avenue Post Office in West Molesey (among others) has received a significant boost.

In response to earlier representations I have been informed by Postwatch, the independent consumer watchdog, that Postwatch South East has fundamentally objected to the proposal to close the Central Avenue branch. Furthermore, Postwatch South East have advised Post Office Limited that they will have no hesitation in escalating the case through the agreed process if the proposal is not withdrawn at this stage.

Molesey Residents Association has vigorously opposed the plans to close the Central Avenue Post Office from the outset. As soon as we learned of the proposals we distributed a special Newsletter warning the residents of West Molesey what was going on, and encouraging as many people as possible to respond to the consultation exercise. As part of our campaign we have also submitted detailed representations to Postwatch, the Post Office, and local MP Ian Taylor.

We believe the arguments against closing the busy and popular Central Avenue branch are overwhelming. In particular:

- The Post Office argue that there are suitable alternative sites at Walton Road, and in the Precinct. *And yet, as I have pointed out, the Precinct branch has closed pending redevelopment, and there can be no guarantee when a new branch will open there.* Molesey will then be left with just one branch over the Christmas period and beyond; and .
- The Post Office has indicated that around 95% of the population will be still live within one mile of the nearest post office following the closure programme. The percentage in Molesey South will be considerably less than this – even when the new branch opens in the Precinct; and
- The Post Office has said that it will not close any offices in what they call an “urban deprived area” where there is no other branch within half a mile. The Central Avenue Branch clearly falls within this category. Molesey South is ranked in the top 30 most deprived wards in Surrey (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2000); and it is also among the worst wards in the Jarman Index for Surrey, which measures the demand for primary health care services.

The response from Postwatch is very good news for the people of West Molesey, but we are aware that this is not the end of the story. We hope that the Post Office will now see sense, accept the very strong arguments which have been put forward, and which are now clearly accepted by Postwatch, and withdraw the proposal to close the Central Avenue branch. In the meantime, the campaign goes on.

Mike Axton

Molesey South Councillor