

# Great Gidding Post Office

## Arguments against the proposed closure



# **Great Gidding Post Office**

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Summary of Key Points.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background and overview of Great Gidding Post Office .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Post Office branch report .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>School.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Outreach.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Demographics .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Sawtry Post Office.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Transport.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Impact on Business.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Impact on Individuals .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Reprieved Post Offices.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3.....</b>	<b>24</b>

## **Summary of Key Points**

- There are numerous inaccuracies in the Branch Access Report for Great Gidding Post Office.
- A new £2.5m primary school is to be built in Great Gidding, less than 100 yards from Great Gidding Post Office. The school will have an increased capacity of 33%.
- The proposed Outreach service will be of little use and no adequate substitute for the village post office for many reasons, including:
  - no suitable location for an outreach vehicle
  - unsuitable opening hours
  - a lack of telecommunications in the area (no signal for electronic services).
- The locality is already a services deprived area based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, and the closure of the Post Office in Great Gidding will exacerbate an already poor situation.
- The closure of the Post Office goes against the Governments guidelines for closures, which suggests that" nationally 95% of inhabitants in rural areas should be within 3 miles of a post office."
- The proposed alternative branch at Sawtry is an unsuitable alternative to the Great Gidding Branch for many reasons including:
  - transportation problems getting to the branch,
  - heavy queues
  - inadequate parking which is potentially dangerous to motorists and pedestrians
- There is *no* bus service to the alternative post office branch in Sawtry and minimal public transport to anywhere else in the County.
- There will be a extremely detrimental impact on the individuals and businesses from the area that use the Great Gidding Post Office and Stores.
- Closing the Post Office would inevitably lead to the closure of the only shop in the immediate area.
- Many of the issues that we have raised with regard to the proposed closure of Great Gidding Post Office are identical with those faced by numerous other Post Offices which have since been reprieved

## **Background and overview of Great Gidding Post Office**

Great Gidding Post Office and Stores has served the parish of the Giddings and the surrounding villages for over a century. It provides key facilities for the village and many other villages within Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

When Mr and Mrs Patel re-opened the village shop 11 years ago, they also opened the Post Office originally on a part-time basis and gradually developed the service until it became a full-time facility 6 years ago.

## **Post Office branch report**

There are a number of inaccuracies in the Branch Access Report for Great Gidding Post Office.

- Alternative shop:

The Report states, under “additional retail”, there is a farm food/clothing retailer in the village. The business in question is an equine supplies shop, providing only animal feed and associated products. The Post Office Stores is the only source of generally provisions in the village.

- Average number of customers per week:

The “average number of customers, per week” is given as 100-199 customer sessions/transactions per week. This appears to be a considerable under-estimate.

A survey of customer activity in the post office was conducted during the week Monday 28th July to Saturday 2nd August 2008 (Appendix 1).

During this period, 334 customers used the post office counter, resulting in 389 transactions. This figure is more than three times the estimate given for the least active week on the Branch Access Report *despite* the fact that August is known to be the slowest month for Post Office business, given the number of customers on vacation and school closure.

- Average Age of Older Population

The values quoted in the Branch Report detail figures were obtained from the 2001 Census and the percentage of retired/ageing population in the Giddings appeared to us to be a significant under-estimate.

To establish if Branch Report figures were a correct representation of the Giddings, a demographics questionnaire was distributed to all houses in Great Gidding, Little Gidding and Steeple Gidding (see Demographics section).

The Branch Report gives the retired population as 16%.

The data obtained from the questionnaire demonstrated that 32.2% of the population who responded are over 60 and 15.5% over 70 (Figure 1). This means that almost one third of the population is retired or soon to retire.

This data does not take into account individuals who retired early or the demographics of out satellite villages. (For example, 50% of the population of Winwick and 20% of Hamerton are over 60).

Although a number of satellite villages make regular use of Great Gidding Post Office, the age range measured in the Branch Report is limited to a one-mile radius, thus ignoring these villages. Hence, although Winwick has an elderly population, this data is excluded from the Report

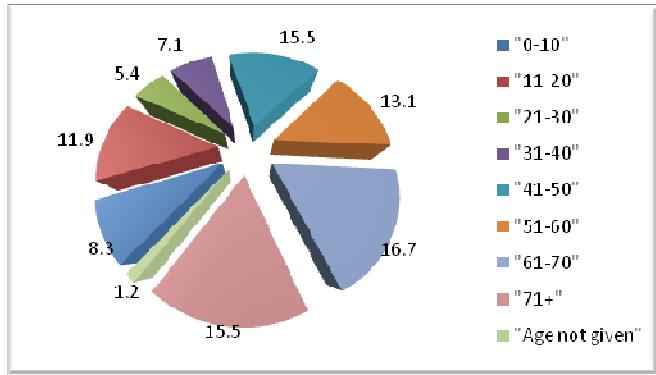


Figure 1: Chart of Age ranges for the Giddings as determined from survey conducted August 2008

- Outreach service:

An assumption has been made that the proposed Outreach service will be situated in the Village Hall Car Park. The Village Hall Amenities Committee who are responsible for this car park, have refused its use for an Outreach vehicle on the grounds of Health and Safety.

The report also states that the route from the post office to the proposed site of the Outreach service is “varied terrain”, actually the route is uphill for its entire length.

- Nearest Alternative Branch:

The alternative branch of Sawtry is actually 5.6 miles from Great Gidding (door to door), making a round trip of over 11 miles. This is in excess of the 5 miles stated in the Report. The distance to Sawtry from Winwick is 8 miles

It is extremely difficult to manoeuvre a wheelchair in Sawtry Post Office, due to the cramped nature of the premises and the amount of space taken up by display units

The Report states that there is “no direct bus service available” between Great Gidding and the alternative branch in Sawtry, indicating that an indirect service could be used. However the indirect route available on public transport renders it impossible to make the return journey on the same day!

With regards to opening hours: Sawtry closes for lunch, and has a half day on a Wednesday. Great Gidding is actually open at these periods, a total of 46 hours per week. The Report states that Great Gidding closes at lunchtime. This is not the case

## School

**QUESTION: Did Post Office Limited take the building of a new primary school in Great Gidding, less than 100 yards from the Great Gidding Post Office, into account when proposing this closure?**

- Cambridgeshire County Council has now committed to building a new £2.5m primary school in Great Gidding, less than 100 yards from Great Gidding Post Office. The school will have an increased capacity of 33%.
- The new school is to be built on land adjacent to Luddington Road and forms part of the Cambridgeshire County Council Integrated Plan 2008. The financial commitment of the County Council to building the school is shown in an appendix to the Plan, headed "Children and Young People's Services Budget Tables", and is detailed in the Primary Capital Budget Programme, Phase 1, on page 16 of the Budget table (Figure 2).

Scheme	Total Cost £'000	Prev. Years £'000	2008-09 £'000	2009-10 £'000	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	Later Years £'000
<b>Primary Schools - Modernisation/Extensions</b>								
Burrough Green - Replacement 120 Place School	2,675	4	225	880	1,430	136	-	-
Great Gidding - replacement 90 place PS	2,550	62	150	1,000	1,200	138	-	-

**Figure 2: Excerpt from Cambridgeshire County Council's Budget Tables (Primary Capital Budget Programme, Phase 1)**

- Planning permission is due to be applied for in September of this year. It is planned that work will then start in the autumn, with the school being ready for occupation in 2010. It will replace the existing Primary School in Main Street.
- Great Gidding Primary School has a high reputation and outstanding OFSTED report and pupils are already coming from outside the existing catchment area.
- Some families have moved to Great Gidding, specifically because of the school's excellent reputation.
- Parents, children and staff use the Post Office and shop on a daily basis. The school itself banks there, and does all its postal business through it.
- Postmaster Mr Patel and his wife are regular visitors to the school to talk about their role in the village, and the school has encouraged the children to include Great Gidding Post Office in a number of aspects of their studies.
- Mrs Hilary Westcott, Headteacher of the school for the past 8 years, who retired this month, points out that the school is an integral part of the community and often one of the few opportunities children get to have a personal shopping experience that is very different from the anonymous supermarket or town centre visit.

*"Great Gidding Post Office provides a very safe environment for the children, and is so important to the life of them and the community. We have always encouraged the children to see the Post Office and shop as an integral part of life and learning, and it is naturally included in work on local studies. The Post Office and shop is so special, and so important, and offers the children an experience and understanding that is getting harder and harder to find."*

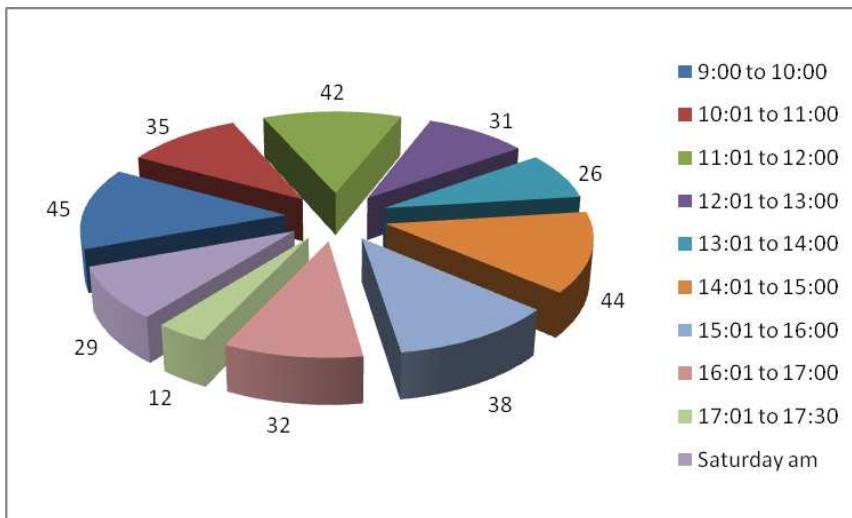
## **Outreach**

It is the opinion of the villagers of Great Gidding that the proposed Outreach service will be of little use and no adequate substitute for the village post office for the following reasons :-

1. There will be difficulty in finding a suitable parking position for the mobile van that will not cause congestion in the village.
  - The Main Street already becomes congested during week days with many cars parked in a long row outside the school.
  - The B660 running through the village can be busy at times with frequent speeding motorists despite the 30 mph speed limit.
  - Surrounding lanes leading off Main Street are too narrow and there is a general lack of footpaths/pavements around the village making an on-road site potentially dangerous for pedestrians.
2. It has been suggested by the Post Office that the grounds of the village hall could be used.
  - Pedestrian access to the village hall is problematic as the footpath sited along the left hand side of Main Street (looking north) is quite steep and presents some difficulty for the elderly.
  - It is on the other side to the entrance to the village hall which stands on a blind bend so oncoming traffic cannot see pedestrians.
  - On the village hall side there is no footpath and people walking out of the car park have to do so with considerable danger.
  - It should be noted that the footpath opposite the village hall has two steps and a large grassy drop onto the road making it difficult for people with limited mobility to cross the road.
- 2a. Within the grounds of the village hall there are further problems.
  - There is a need at all times to ensure that access to the house behind the village hall is not blocked. A large vehicle might well do that.
  - During the proposed times that the Outreach vehicle would visit, parents are continuously collecting or dropping off children to the play group, thus causing considerable congestion.
  - The proprietor of the play group feels that the presence of the Outreach vehicle would present some danger to the children.
  - People using the Outreach service from other villages would come by car thus adding to the congestion and the consequent risk to small children.

For these reasons the Village Hall Amenities Committee who are responsible for the village hall grounds, have refused their use for an Outreach vehicle, specifically on the grounds of Health and Safety.

3. The proposed Outreach service would not be provided at convenient times.
  - There are several businesses operating from Great Gidding and surrounding villages. Generally they need to use post office services towards the end of the day when they have had a chance to deal with the daily post, usually delivered late morning.
  - For many who work away from the village, the middle of the day would not be suitable at all. See Figure 3



**Figure 3 Chart demonstrating the number of customers using Great Gidding Post Office over the times shown.**

- There is a telecommunications problem in Great Gidding with many unable to use their mobile phones as a result of poor signal strength. This is likely to be a problem for an Outreach vehicle since, as has happened in other locations, the poor signal will impede its ability to link up computer facilities to the outside world without the benefit of a landline.
- Outreach is only useful if it is reliable and permanent. There is no evidence of a commitment from the Post Office to its continuity, reliability or permanence. It is no substitute for a village Post Office
- It is unlikely that a limited Outreach service would attract the same level of custom that is enjoyed by the present post office with many customers being forced to use facilities elsewhere. Coupled with the telecommunications problem it is hard to envisage just how the Post Office Ltd could make any significant saving by closing Great Gidding Post Office.

# Demographics

## Deprivation

- The Office for National Statistics and the Department of Communities and Local Government are jointly responsible for the creation of the IMD, or Indices of Multiple Deprivation. These indices look at deprivation within population groups in small areas known as Lower Layer Super Output Areas. Each LLSOA receives a ranking compared with all the other LLSOAs in the country.  
The figures are considered highly accurate indicators of local deprivation.
- Our LLSOA is Huntingdonshire 004B, containing the villages of Great Gidding, Steeple Gidding, Little Gidding, Winwick, Coppingford, Upton and Hamerton. The Great Gidding Post Office Stores is the *only* post office and also the *only* shop in this LLSOA. According to IMD figures in 2007 we were ranked **no. 2318** out of **32,482** LLSOAs in the Barriers to Housing and Services score, where 1 is the most deprived and 32,482 the least.

In other words this community is already considered highly deprived in its access to services. The Office of National Statistics is unable to provide information as to how low our ranking will fall if our only local service disappears. However, we are already one of the most deprived areas in the country in this respect.

## Disproportionate impact

- Government guidelines for closures suggest that nationally 95% of inhabitants in rural areas should be within 3 miles of a post office.
- However the proposed post office closures in the post code region PE28 have fallen disproportionately heavily on the western part of Huntingdonshire, with the north western area – ours – particularly badly affected.
- Great Gidding is on the border of Cambridgeshire and, as a result of this, serves a number of communities in Northamptonshire, e.g. Luddington , Hemington and Thurning etc.
- This disproportionate impact is demonstrated in Figure 3. The overall data relating to this impact is given in Appendix 2.

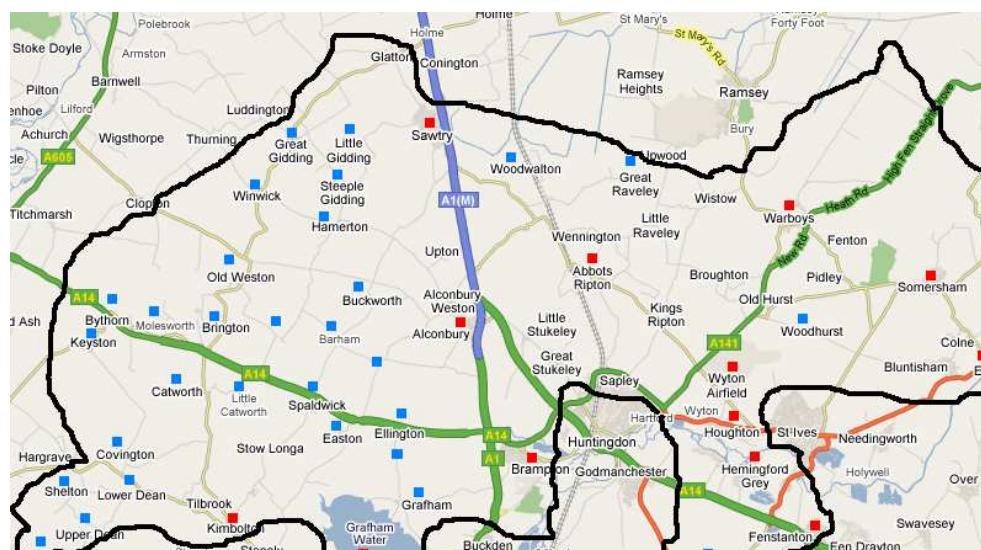


Figure 4: BLUE SQUARES show villages that will be greater than 3miles from a post office after the proposed closures take effect. RED SQUARES show post offices not under threat. Black line indicates border for post code region PE28.

## Sawtry Post Office

The proposed branch at Sawtry is an unsuitable alternative to the Great Gidding Branch.

- All the villages primarily affected by the proposed closure of the post office - Great Gidding, Winwick, Hamerton, Luddington – are more than three miles “as the crow flies”, and considerably more by road from Sawtry. This is inconsistent with the guidelines. Sown below are distances to Sawtry from just a few villages:
  - Great Gidding (5.60 miles)
  - Little Gidding (6.15 miles)
  - Steeple Gidding (4.12 miles)
  - Hamerton (4.44 miles)
  - Woodwalton (3.62 miles)
  - Winwick is over 7 miles to Sawtry and therefore makes Alconbury post office the closer alternative at 6.79miles (See Demographics section).
- Parking is a proven difficulty outside the Sawtry Post Office as the road is often congested, making life difficult both for passing motorists and those wishing to park, as well as for the residents of surrounding houses (see pictures; Figure 5).





Figure 5: Photographs from outside Sawtry Post Office, morning of Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

- The situation is further complicated by the existence of a bus stop just yards from the Post Office, given cause for concern as passengers alight.
- Sawtry residents have complained to the parish council, the county council and the police about the traffic difficulties in this “blackspot”. These complaints are based on the situation obtaining at present, i.e. **before** people from other villages are obliged to use Sawtry Post Office (see transport section).
- The Branch Access Report does not seem to allow for the possible expansion of Sawtry. The local development plan makes provision for sixty new houses, a private landowner is putting in another dozen, while another private company wants to build three hundred affordable homes. Obviously it is impossible to pin down the exact outcome of these growth propositions. What is clear is that some growth is inevitable, from both housing and business. For example, a new £6m, state-of-the-art plant in Sawtry is to be built for East Anglian Galvanizing in spring 2009 bringing an influx of workers.
- Sawtry Post Office is already busy and often has queues. The Great Gidding closure proposal will extend those queues in confined and crowded premises apparently **smaller** than those at Great Gidding, where the standard of customer service provided by the postmaster is widely respected.

## Transport

The proposal to close Great Gidding Post Office seems to bear little or no regard to the fact that this is a remote area with scant public transport provision.

- From Great Gidding ,Winwick, Hamerton, Little Gidding, Steeple Gidding, and Luddington, there is *no* bus service to the alternative post office branch in Sawtry.
- The only buses to run, are one per week to Oundle; one per week to Huntingdon on market day; and one per month to Peterborough.
- The village questionnaire previously referred to asked about villagers' use of buses. 67.6% of respondent households said they **never** used the buses for a variety of reasons including "insufficient time at the destinations before having to return", "infrequency of services" and "inconvenient travel times".
- Huntingdon is a 55minute bus journey from Great Gidding, arriving in Huntingdon at 10.40. The return service departs Huntingdon at 1230. Thus, in place of the present short walk to the Post Office, a Great Gidding resident would need to spend an entire morning visiting a post office via public transport.
- Elderly post office users who cannot drive for medical reasons or who do not own cars are severely disadvantaged. Already they have to get lifts from the outlying villages to and from Great Gidding. But, with closure, they will have to depend on transport to and from Sawtry, which, for the reasons given above, is a much bigger undertaking.
- An Outreach service would not satisfactorily resolve these issues.

## **Impact on Business**

**Question: Has Post Office Limited taken account of the number of businesses using Great Gidding's Post Office, which will face additional cost and loss of facilities as a result of closure?**

Number of affected businesses estimated to operate from:

Great Gidding (including Little and Steeple Gidding): 28\* minimum, very likely to be higher.

Hamerton : 16\*.

Winwick: 14\*.

\*In the late July/early August holiday period it was impossible to contact every person whose business might be affected

Other businesses from outlying villages, including Glatton and Luddington also use Great Gidding but we have not been able to estimate numbers.

**The use by these businesses of Great Gidding Post Office include:**

- Weighing and posting of letters and parcels
- Banking services
- Collecting parcels
- Large scale buying of stamps
- Obtaining advice on the most economic form of posting

During our week of monitoring customer visits to Great Gidding Post Office, we spoke to many of the businesses that use the services offered. These businesses accounted for 23% of all customers and 34% of all transactions. Many had the same reasons for why they do not wish to transact their business at Sawtry, nor use an Outreach service.

These included:

- Parking congestion and road safety at Sawtry: a severe concern to businesses who cannot afford to waste time and who may face security issues linked with deposits.
- Queuing within the Post Office. Many people indicated the Sawtry Post Office area was small and already under pressure to cope with existing numbers. Queuing is already often necessary and will only get worse with additional customers, particularly at peak times for business: e.g. after 3pm.
- Additional cost caused by need to travel to Sawtry: a return trip of over 10 miles. If a daily trip is needed, a small business will have to undertake an additional **2750 miles per year**. Approximately **130 man hours per business** would be required per annum to undertake a 30 minute round trip.
- Added burden to businesses already under EU and Government pressure to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Non-acceptance that the Outreach Service will be adequate or fit for purpose. Many businesses

locally require same-day turnaround of customer orders. Post is not delivered in Great Gidding until after 11am, and most businesses would need until at least 3pm to complete such order. The Outreach service would have closed long before this. At the moment, people can use the village Post Office until 4.30pm.

- Lack of local knowledge and advice: the existing Gidding Post Office knows its customers well, and is able to offer additional service and advice not available at a less local office.
- Restricted Opening hours: Sawtry closes for lunch, and has a half day on a Wednesday. Great Gidding is open at these periods, a service much appreciated by businesses and their staff. Businesses that need to transact on Wed afternoon, or at lunch time, will have to travel even further afield in the event of closure.

#### **Other considerations:**

We were surprised at the number of businesses that already exist in the Great Gidding area. As Government and Local Authority attempts to encourage improvements in the rural economy grow, there is additional opportunity for this to increase. Lack of postal facilities could be seen as a deterrent and a loss of commercial opportunity for the Post Office.

There is considerable anger among many people about the proposed closure, and a number of businesses who use Post Office services for their banking have indicated that they will transfer to a High Street bank rather than use Sawtry or Outreach.

### **THE HUMAN FACE OF BUSINESS**

Below are seven case histories of local businesses that will be affected by the closure. It would have been possible to highlight many more. All businesses we spoke to were willing to provide information. This is just a sample of the diversity of businesses who work from Great Gidding and surrounding villages.

#### **Case History 1: ABS Finance East.**

ABS Finance East is a business operating from Main Street Gidding which deals with insurance claims. They visit Great Gidding Post Office every day to deal with mail relating to their business. Quick turnover is important, and they are posting about 100 letters a week. They do not wish to have a franking machine, so buy all stamps at the post office. Many of their letters are large, and do not fit in the post box, so handing them in over the counter is necessary. This means that should Gidding close, they will have to go to Sawtry to post. They are very concerned at parking at Sawtry: they describe it as "appalling and dangerous". Such trips will also add extra cost that a small business can ill afford. Outreach is viewed as being unhelpful: The ABS daily post only arrives at around 11.30, and the Outreach service would be gone before the office has time to deal with issues arising in the post and mail out that same day.

#### **Case History 2: Clearchannel**

Clearchannel is based in Great Gidding, and employs six people in the office, and controls another 35 mobile operators. They sell and service advertising space on billboards and bus shelters, and the Great Gidding office is responsible for the whole of East Anglia and Lincs. It uses Great Gidding Post Office for all of its mailing and often makes a daily visit to post information that needs to be delivered to their operatives the next day. Large letter postage and parcels are a regular requirement. They also buy all stamps there as they do not wish to have a franking machine. They need to post after 3pm. Therefore, they face a 10 mile round trip to Sawtry to do this. This is not a direction any of the staff travel in, so additional travel will be needed. Again, grave concern

expressed about the additional time required for parking and queuing. Outreach would not be suitable because of the need to post daily after 3pm. Staff also use the shopping facility for milk and food supplies.

#### **Case History 3: ArrestaPest**

ArrestaPest is a small business in Great Gidding, dealing in pest control. There are two office staff and two operators. All mailing and all banking services take place at Great Gidding on four days a week. They pay all bills, collect parcels; send parcels and do mail shots via Great Gidding. Their objections to Sawtry and Outreach services are the same as those already quoted. Parking at Sawtry, they indicate, is "a nightmare."

#### **Case History 4: Piggy Tales**

Piggy Tales is an internet book company, based in Glatton, who post around 20 to 30 books A DAY from Great Gidding Post Office. They also do all their banking there. Same-day posting is an ethos of their customer service. The use of Great Gidding fits with the needs of the owner, whose children attend Great Gidding school. Using Sawtry would add extra mileage, cost and inconvenience because of parking and queuing issues. She particularly values the advice she receives on the best method and cost of posting her books. She attempts to post books on the same day as the order is received, meaning visits to the post office after 3pm.

#### **Cast History 5: Hamerton Zoo**

Hamerton Zoo is based at Hamerton, and has 150 species of animal "from tortoise to tiger". They employ 8 people, and are open to the public from Easter to October. They use Great Gidding post office several times a week to bank their takings and pay bills. They value highly the ease and security of parking outside the door, and the lack of queuing. They do all their banking at Great Gidding and also use their mail services, including two or three mail shots a year of around 1000 letters a time. Using the cash services of Sawtry or Outreach is out of the question, the Zoo says: parking would be impossible for the former, and they are not prepared for the comfort and security issues they believe they would be faced with by the Outreach service. Instead, they will transfer all banking to outside the Post Office.

#### **Cast History 6: Parsley Kitchens**

Parsley Kitchens is a kitchen and domestic appliance fitting business with work all over East Anglia and elsewhere. This business is a regular user of Great Gidding PO and especially values the Alliance and Leicester link. A lot of invoicing and hard copying of outsize packages and envelopes is done through Great Gidding PO. The owner says he will not use Sawtry PO.

#### **Cast History 7: Alpha Television Ltd.**

Alpha Television Ltd. is the company of a freelance TV producer who works for all major networks. The producer frequently has to send irregular sized tapes and packages, often to addresses in the Middle East, the USA and Africa. For him the Great Gidding PO is swift, efficient and near. Like most people, the producer concerned works in the day and wants to send material, when required, in the afternoon. He was also made aware of the foreign currency facility by this survey and is interested in using it in future. The Outreach proposal is "hopeless" and he is not willing to "endure" Sawtry PO.

## Impact on individuals

The village store and post office serve Great Gidding and the surrounding villages of Little Gidding, Winwick, Hamerton and Luddington well and provide an essential service, evidenced by the repeat custom it receives.

- In addition to its role as a post office, the shop is the only supplier of food supplies and other domestic goods. It also:
  - Is an agent for a dry cleaning service
  - Delivers newspapers to all the surrounding villages
  - Supplies bottled gas (there is no mains gas in this area)
  - Acts as a collection point for prescriptions and medicines
  - Is a central contact/sales point for village events.
- Huntingdon District Council received a Beacon award for introducing Community Access Points in Huntingdonshire. The access points are community or public buildings where computers, colour printers and scanners have been installed for use free of charge. All the computers have broadband connection to the internet via the Cambridgeshire Community Network to allow individuals who do not have a computer to access a range of services, including:
  - Council and government information and services
  - Jobsearch and job application facilities
  - Online shopping
  - Online training courses
  - Write letters etc.

Great Gidding Post Office was the first outlet to be chosen as an Access Point and was widely featured in the local print and broadcast press as a result. The closure of the Post Office and likely subsequent closure of the shop, would mean the loss, also, of the Access point, leaving a large area of north west Huntingdonshire without a community access point (Figure 5).



Figure 6: Community Access Points in Huntingdonshire

- The village store relies on the post office business and without it would almost certainly become financially unsustainable leading to ultimate closure. For many in the villages this would be a real and serious problem. Even for all those who can travel it would still be a serious inconvenience and significant cost. It is already estimated that closure of the post office, even with the provision of an Outreach service, would cost the village approximately £15,000 in additional fuel costs with some 25 tonnes of carbon emission just travelling to Sawtry Post Office. Without a village shop at all these values would more than double.
- Great Gidding and its neighbours have an ageing population with a number of people who would be in real trouble without the shop. The shop does its best to cope with the requirements of individuals and provides a very obliging service which is much appreciated by the local populations.

We, in the village, believe the post office to be sustainable as our own indications show that it is well used.

We also believe that the proposed closure flies in the face of the House of Commons Select Committee for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform which stated in its February 2008 meeting

**"We believe that there should be a presumption against closing a post office where this is the last shop in the village, or in a deprived urban area."**

## Reprieved Post Offices

### Question: Does Great Gidding meet the criteria?

Many of the issues that we have raised with regard to the proposed closure of Great Gidding Post Office are identical with those faced by numerous other Post Offices which have since been reprieved (Appendix 3).

These include the following branches as described in press releases from Post Office Ltd:

1. Kingston Road PO, Kingston upon Thames
  - **"there is no bus route to the nearest alternative branch"**
  - **"fragility of other businesses near the Kingston Road branch and believes they would be adversely affected if the Post Office® closed"**
2. Brackenborough Road, Louth, Bailgate, Lincoln, Hexthorpe, Doncaster
  - **"factors relating to geography, the availability of local transport and access to alternative branches, local demographics and the impact on local economies."**
  - **"severe pressure on the nearest alternative branch, Burton Road, in terms of its ability to cope with the increased numbers of customers."**
3. Goodworth Clatford, Hampshire
  - **"disproportionate number of closures were proposed."**
4. Attical branch, Northern Ireland
  - **"Post Office Limited recognises the need to retain access to Post Office services in this area and, taking all relevant factors into consideration, has decided that a mobile outreach service was not a feasible option. Post Office Limited will therefore not be proceeding with the proposed outreach service and Attical Post Office will remain in the network."**

All the above, plus those detailed in Appendix 3 have, as already stated, been reprieved as a result of criteria identical with those obtaining in Great Gidding.

By the application of the same criteria, Great Gidding is, in fact, in a much *worse* situation than many of those post offices which have been reprieved.

It stands to reason that, with the application of those same criteria to our situation, very serious consideration should be given by Post Office Limited to the retention of the existing Great Gidding Post Office

## Appendix 1

***Great Gidding Post Office Survey - Monday 28th July 2008 to Saturday 2nd August 2008***

<b>Total No Customer Episodes</b>	<b>334</b>	(Private - 256 Business - 78)
<b>Total No Transactions</b>	<b>389</b>	(Private - 291 Business - 98 )
<b>Transaction Types</b>		<b>Private</b> <b>Business</b>
Post Letter	33	18              15
Post Parcel	48	17              31
Pay Bill	31	21              10
Get Money or Pension	68	66              2
Buy Stamps whilst performing other Transaction	27	17              10
Buy Stamps Only	109	95              14
Buy Euro	5	5
Get Parcel	3	2              1
Other - Banking or Deposit	17	10              7
Other - Money Transfer	1	1
Other - Mobile Phone Top Up	13	13
Other - Premium Bond	1	0              1
Other - TV Licence	1	1
Other - Postal Order	1	1
Other - Other	31	24              7
 Total	 <b>389</b>	 <b>291</b> <b>98</b>

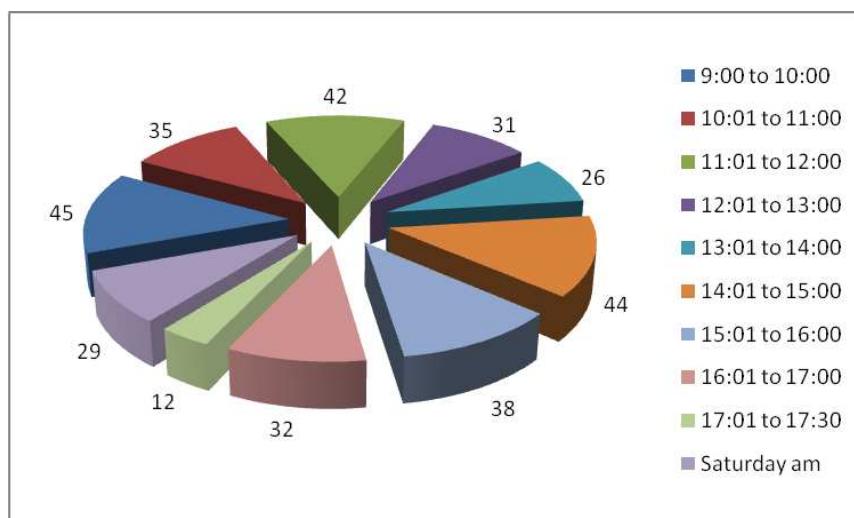
### **Where the customers came from**

Great Gidding  
 Little Gidding  
 Steeple Gidding  
 Hamerton  
 Winwick  
 Glatton  
 Luddington  
 Hemington  
 Old Weston  
 Molesworth  
 Bythorn  
 Thurning  
 Polebrook  
 Upton  
 Alconbury  
 Stilton  
 Paston

Kettering  
Lowestoft  
Other - Not Specified or Not Asked (mainly local)

**When they came (Customer Episodes)**

9:00 to 10:00	45
10:01 to 11:00	35
11:01 to 12:00	42
12:01 to 13:00	31
13:01 to 14:00	26
14:01 to 15:00	44
15:01 to 16:00	38
16:01 to 17:00	32
17:01 to 17:30	12
Saturday am	29



## Appendix 2

### VILLAGES IN POSTCODE AREA PE28

Villages underlined have post offices that are not under threat

Villages marked in blue are losing their post offices

Any distance over three miles is marked in red.

NB. Government guidelines for closures suggest that nationally 95% of inhabitants in rural areas should be within 3 miles of a post office.

Closures have fallen disproportionately heavily on the western part of Huntingdonshire, with the north western area – ours – particularly badly affected.

PE28 villages	Nearest Post Office if all closures go ahead	miles to nearest PO
Glatton	Sawtry	2.18 miles
<u>Great Gidding PE28 5NX</u>	Sawtry	<b>5.60 miles</b>
Little Gidding	Sawtry	<b>6.15 miles</b>
Steeple Gidding	Sawtry	<b>4.12 miles</b>
<u>Sawtry PE28 5UZ</u>	Has PO	Has PO
Winwick	Alconbury	<b>6.79 miles</b>
Coppingford	Sawtry	2.15 miles
Hamerton	Sawtry	<b>4.44 miles</b>
Upton	Alconbury	2.48 miles
Alconbury Weston	Alconbury	1.19 miles
Old Weston	Kimbolton	<b>7.11 miles</b>
Buckworth	Alconbury	<b>3.14 miles</b>
Brington	Kimbolton	<b>5.53 miles</b>
Molesworth	Thrapston	<b>5.75 miles</b>
Leighton Bromswold	Kimbolton	<b>7.26 miles</b>
Barham	Alconbury	<b>4.11 miles</b>
Woolley	Alconbury	<b>4.11 miles</b>
<u>Alconbury PE28 4DU</u>	Has PO	Has PO
Bythorn	Thrapston	<b>4.74 miles</b>
Keyston	Raunds	<b>4.14 miles</b>
<u>Catworth PE28 0PF</u>	Kimbolton	<b>3.91 miles</b>
Little Catworth	Kimbolton	<b>4.00 miles (e)</b>
Spaldwick	Kimbolton	<b>4.4 miles</b>
Stow Longa	Kimbolton	2.8 miles
Covington	Kimbolton	<b>3.85 miles</b>
Shelton	Kimbolton	<b>5.02 miles</b>
Lower Dean	Kimbolton	<b>3.26 miles</b>
Upper Dean	Kimbolton	<b>4.27 miles</b>
Tilbrook	Kimbolton	1.57 miles
<u>Kimbolton PE28 0HA</u>	Has PO	Has PO
Easton	Kimbolton	<b>4.63 miles</b>
Ellington	Brampton	<b>4.11 miles</b>
Ellington Thorpe	West Perry	<b>4.57 miles</b>

Graham	West Perry	3.53 miles
<b><u>Brampton PE28 4TG</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Little Stukeley	Alconbury	2.92 miles
<b><u>Great Stukeley PE28 4AL</u></b>	Huntingdon	2.4 miles
Alconbury Hill	Alconbury	not on multimap
<b><u>RAF Alconbury PE28 4DE</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Woodwalton	Sawtry	<b>3.62 miles</b>
Church End	Alconbury /Sawtry	not on multimap
Great Raveley	Abbots Ripton	<b>3.65 miles</b>
Little Raveley	Abbots Ripton	2.86 miles
Wennington	Abbots Ripton	1.16 miles
<b><u>Abbots Ripton PE28 2PA</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Wistow	Warboys	2.31 miles
Broughton	Warboys	2.78miles
Kings Ripton	Abbots Ripton	2.49 miles
<b><u>Warboys PE28 2RH</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Fenton	Warboys	1.15 miles
Pidley	Warboys	2.12 miles
<b><u>Somersham PE28 3EH</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Old Hurst	Warboys	1.99 miles
Woodhurst	Warboys	<b>3.80 miles</b>
Bluntisham	Somersham	2.43 miles
Colne	Somersham	1.76 miles
<b><u>Earith PE28 3PP</u></b>	Somersham	2.85 miles
<b><u>Hemingford Grey PE28 9BJ</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Hemingford Abbots	Hemmingford Grey	1.12 miles,
<b><u>Houghton PE28 2AX</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
<b><u>Fenstanton PE28 9LH</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
Hilton	Hemingford Grey	<b>3.71 miles</b>
<b><u>RAF Wyton PE28 2DR</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
<b><u>West Perry PE28 0DR</u></b>	Has PO	Has PO
East Perry	West Perry	Very close

## **Appendix 3**

### ***Post Offices Reprieved- further information***

Brackenborough Road : Feedback received during consultation indicated concerns in relation to the distance to the alternative branches, the geography of the area, and the availability of car parking facilities at the alternative branches. Some customers expressed concern about whether the alternative branches would be able to cope with extra customers and concern was raised about local public transport services. In addition, a considerable number of new houses are currently being built in both the Brackenborough Road area and in Louth itself.

New Hexthorpe :During the local public consultation period, feedback was received about plans for a new housing development, the deprived nature of the community and lack of alternative cash facilities in the area.

#### East Essex And Suffolk Post Office

The main concerns raised to us during the local public consultation, concerning the Honeycroft Lawford branch related the fact that the branch is next door to a sheltered housing development for the elderly. Post Office Ltd has re-examined the case for the closure of this branch and has taken into consideration points such as terrain, public transport facilities and the large numbers of elderly and infirm people in the surrounding area.

In relation to Warley Road (Hill) branch, customers made us aware that the branch was situated in Warley Hill, not Warley Road as stated on our consultation materials. We were also advised that the alternative branch at Brentwood is not along level terrain and that there is inadequate parking and poor bus services to the alternative branches. Respondents also raised concern that our proposals would increase congestion in the town centre. We have carefully re-examined this proposal taking into account the journey to the nearest branch, the terrain, as well as the ability of the alternative branches to cope with the additional footfall.

#### Kent Post Office

Two branches originally proposed for closure - Cliff's End in Ramsgate and Hawkhurst - will now remain open following a review of the issues raised during consultation and of factors relating to geography, the availability of local transport and access to alternative branches, local demographics and the impact on local economics.

At Cliff's End, having taken into account local feedback, Post Office Ltd was concerned that alternative branches were not sufficiently easy to reach and that the viability of the branch's retail business, which provided a critical service for the community, would be threatened. In Hawkhurst, further review during consultation demonstrated the difficulties that customers would face reaching an alternative branch further from the main shopping area of the village.

#### North Yorkshire, Yorkshire East And Keighley

One branch originally proposed for closure - Cold Bath Road Post Office - will now remain open, following a review of the issues raised during consultation and of factors relating to geography, the availability of local transport and access to alternative branches, local demographics and the impact on local economies.

Customers were concerned about the distance to other branches, a perceived lack of public transport and the ability of alternative branches to cope with the increase in business.

#### Highlands Of Scotland Area

One branch originally proposed for closure - Pulteneytown in Wick - will now remain open following a review of the issues raised during consultation. These issues related to local demographics. Post Office Ltd was concerned that the closure would severely disadvantage vulnerable groups in the area and that alternative branches were not sufficiently easy to reach. There are no proposals for any further closures in the Highlands area plan.

#### Lancashire And Fylde With Southport

One branch originally proposed for closure - Warton Street Post Office - will now remain open, following a review of the issues raised during consultation and of factors relating to the impact on the nearest alternative branch and additional information relating to development activity and regeneration plans for the area.

It was also stated that the alternative branches were situated far away with expensive and limited public transport links.

#### London Post Office ®Branches

Seven branches originally proposed for closure -Kenyon Street Post Office®, 58 Kenyon Street, Fulham SW6 6LB; Kingston Road Post Office®, 104 Kingston Road, Wimbledon SW19 1LX; Lambeth Walk Post Office®, 34 Vauxhall Street SE11 5LG; Page Green Post Office®, 87 Broad Lane, South Tottenham N15 4DW; Shepherds Bush Road Post Office®, 146 Shepherds Bush Road, Hammersmith W6 7PB; Starch Green Post Office®, 7 Kings Parade, Askew Road W12 9BA; Walton Road Post Office®, 96 Warrior Square, Walton Road, E12 5RT; - will now remain open following a review of the issues raised during consultation.

The river Thames to the south west of Kenyon Street Post Office® would act as a natural barrier for some customers traveling to some of the other branches within a mile radius distance and Post Office Ltd recognises the two nearest alternative branches have steps into the premises, making access difficult for customers with limited mobility. Whilst there are bus services to the suggested nearest Post Office® branches, the location of bus stops are a prohibitive distance for people with limited mobility. In the light of these and all other factors Post Office Ltd has reviewed its proposals and Kenyon Street Post Office® branch will remain in the network.

The main concern raised about the Kingston Road Post Office ® branch was that the elderly, many of whom live in sheltered housing nearby, would be unable to reach other branches. Post Office Ltd is aware that that there is no bus route to the nearest alternative branch and although there is a bus service to the second nearest alternative Post Office® branch the location of the bus stop closest to Kingston Road Post Office® is a prohibitive distance for anyone with limited mobility and the route is hilly for pedestrians. Post Office Ltd also became aware of the fragility of other businesses near the Kingston Road branch and believes they would be adversely affected if the Post Office® closed. Taking these and all other relevant factors into account, Post Office Ltd has decided not to proceed with the closure of this branch.

The significant level of sheltered housing and a residential and business regeneration project as well as lack of a direct bus route to the nearest alternative Post Office® branch, led Post Office Ltd to

reconsider its proposal for Lambeth Walk Post Office® branch. Taking these and all other relevant factors into consideration, Post Office Ltd has decided to retain Lambeth Walk Post Office® in its network.

Post Office Ltd was made aware of the high level of sheltered and temporary accommodation in the area surrounding the Page Green Post Office® branch, as well as the planned housing development in the Tottenham Hale area which will include up to 6,000 residential units. Taking these and all other relevant factors into consideration Post Office Ltd has decided to retain Page Green Post Office® branch in its network.

Taking into account other branches that are planned to be closed in the area near Shepherds Bush Road Post Office® branch, Post Office Ltd does not believe that it would be able to offer customer reasonable access to its services in the future if it went ahead with this closure. Taking all relevant factors into account, including the location of accommodation for people with special needs, the sheltered housing units nearby and the planned new business developments in Hammersmith, Post Office Ltd has decided to keep this branch in its network.

During the public consultation Post Office Ltd was made aware of planned new residential developments, including units specifically for people with special needs, near Starch Green Post Office® branch. Pocklington Lodge for visually impaired people is very close to Starch Green Post Office and residents would face difficulties in reaching any other branch. Taking into account other planned Post Office® closures in the vicinity Post Office Ltd believes these customers would be seriously disadvantaged if the Starch Green Post Office® closed and, taking this and all relevant factors into account, has decided to retain this branch.

Post Office Ltd received more details about existing sheltered accommodation and the large-scale £150 million regeneration project in the area near the Walton Road branch. The regeneration included the refurbishment of existing properties and the construction of new social housing accommodation. Taking into account other planned Post Office® branch closures in the area, Post Office Ltd believes that customers in this community would no longer have reasonable access to Post Office services if the Walton branch closed as the route to other branches is across busy roads in two different directions. Taking these and all other relevant factors into account, Post Office Ltd has decided to retain Walton Road Post Office® in its network.

#### Cumbria

One branch originally proposed for closure - Botcherby Post Office on Wood Street - will now remain open, following a review of the issues raised during consultation- relating to the potential impact on the community and the routes and public transport available to the alternative branches. The needs of more vulnerable customers were also taken into account.

#### Northern Ireland

Four branches originally proposed for closure - Parkhall Post Office, Unit 1, Parkhall Shopping Centre, Queen's Road, Antrim BT41 1AJ, Strathroy Post Office, 1a-3a Meelmore Drive, Strathroy, Omagh BT79 7XJ, The Throne Post Office, The Throne Centre, Whitewell Road, Newtownabbey BT36 7EX, and Attical Post Office, 2 Attical Bog Road, Kilkeel, Newry BT34 4HT, which was originally proposed for replacement by an outreach service, - will now remain open following a review of the issues raised during public consultation.

During the local public consultation, Post Office Limited was informed of significant evidence of local regeneration with regard to both Parkhall and Strathroy Post Office branches and taking this, and all

other factors into consideration, Post Office Limited has decided to retain both branches in its network.

The proposal to close The Throne Post Office was dependent on the reopening of a branch at the Abbey Centre. Post Office Limited has been unable to confirm this reopening and, taking this and all other factors into consideration, has decided not to proceed with the closure of The Throne branch.

With regard to the Attical branch, Post Office Limited recognises the need to retain access to Post Office services in this area and, taking all relevant factors into consideration, has decided that a mobile outreach service was not a feasible option. Post Office Limited will therefore not be proceeding with the proposed outreach service and Attical Post Office will remain in the network.

#### West Yorkshire

Two branches originally proposed for closure - Hardwick Road Post Office on Maple Drive, Pontefract, and Savile Town Post Office on Warren Street, Dewsbury - will now remain open, following a review of the issues raised during consultation.

With regard to Hardwick Road branch, respondents were concerned about public transport to, and parking at, alternative branches as well as the routes to those branches which were said to be hilly and potentially hazardous for customers on foot.

Respondents about Savile Town branch had concerns relating to the potential impact on the community and the limited parking at alternative branches. In both cases, the needs of more vulnerable customers were also taken into account.