

Mr Mark Swales  
North East Region Delivery Director's Office  
HMCTS  
Level 5  
Leeds Magistrates' Court and Family Hearing Centre  
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Dear Mr Swales

Written Ministerial Response to the national HMCTS estates consultation.

In my response to the national consultation paper 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales', I made clear my opposition to the proposal to include Hartlepool Magistrates' Court as a site for closure. I am disappointed that the consultation process did not dissuade The Lord Chancellor from this course and the written ministerial statement issued on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 confirmed that Hartlepool Magistrates' Court is to close as proposed.

I am a strong supporter of community justice and believe that justice should be administered locally by magistrates drawn from the local community and equally important, seen to be done in the locality. I feel that this course of action is a backward step for Hartlepool, the wider Cleveland area and for the justice process. Those who suffer as victims of crime in Hartlepool will no longer have accessible and local justice but instead will be expected to travel to the only other Magistrates Court site in the county located in Middlesbrough.

Whilst I appreciate that the court estate needs to be modernised in the way in which justice is accessed and delivered, I am remain opposed to the closure of Hartlepool Magistrates Court and will now consider, together with partners, how to move this matter forward.

Yours etc  
Barry

cc. Shailesh Vara MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Courts and Legal Aid  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
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