

Jeremy Chan
Principal Case officer
Competition Market Authority

26 October 2026

Sent to: jeremy.chan@cma.gov.uk

Dear Jeremy

FORMAL MOTION OF OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE CO-OPERATIVE STORE IN WESTBOURNE, WEST SUSSEX

Motion

Westbourne Parish Council hereby records its **strongest possible objection to the proposed closure of the Co-operative convenience store in Westbourne** and calls upon the Co-operative Group and the Competition and Marketing Authority to suspend any closure decision immediately while all reasonable alternatives are fully explored in consultation with the Parish Council, local residents and neighbouring businesses.

The Council considers that the loss of the village's only convenience store and Post Office would cause significant and potentially irreversible harm to the wellbeing of residents, the economic vitality of the village and the long-term sustainability of this rural community.

Grounds for objection

1. Loss of the village's only convenience store

The Co-op is the only convenience store and Post Office serving a village of approximately 2,300 residents, plus those from neighbouring rural communities of Stoughton and Compton. Its closure would remove an essential local service and leave residents without a convenient source of everyday groceries and household necessities.

This is not simply the loss of a commercial premises. It is the removal of a vital part of the village's infrastructure, upon which residents depend for their day-to-day needs.

2. No public transport and no realistic alternatives for many residents

Westbourne has no public transport service available to provide residents with a practical alternative for accessing shops elsewhere. The closure would therefore impose a disproportionate burden on those who cannot drive or have limited access to private transport.

The Council considers it unacceptable that residents should be left without reasonable access to essential shopping facilities because of the withdrawal of the village's only convenience store.

3. Serious consequences for elderly and vulnerable residents

The Council is particularly concerned about the impact on older residents, people with disabilities, those with limited mobility and people living alone.

The proposed closure has already caused distress among residents. A woman in her eighties has contacted her local District Councillor expressing genuine concern that she may no longer be able to remain living in Westbourne because she cannot travel to alternative shops. Many more have contacted this Parish Council with similar concerns.

The Council considers it deeply troubling that residents who have spent many years contributing to village life should be placed in a position where the loss of a local shop threatens their independence, dignity and ability to remain in their own homes.

The closure risks increasing social isolation, dependence on others and pressure on families, neighbours and community support services.

4. Damage to neighbouring independent businesses

The Co-op is an important anchor for Westbourne's local retail economy. Other village shops and businesses benefit from the footfall it generates, with customers often visiting several establishments during the same trip.

Its closure could significantly reduce visitor numbers, undermine the trading viability of neighbouring businesses and contribute to a wider decline in the village centre.

The Council is concerned that the loss of the Co-op could initiate a damaging chain reaction of reduced footfall, declining business revenues and further closures, weakening the economic foundations of the village.

5. Threat to the long-term sustainability of Westbourne

A sustainable rural community requires accessible essential services, a viable local economy and the ability of residents of all ages to live independently.

Removing the village's only convenience store, in the absence of public transport, would force those able to travel to make additional journeys to obtain basic provisions, potentially increasing car dependency, transport costs and emissions. Those unable to travel would face an even greater loss of access to essential goods.

The Council considers that the proposed closure is fundamentally at odds with the objectives of sustainable communities, social inclusion, reduced car dependency and the maintenance of viable rural settlements.

Westbourne must not be allowed to become a village where residents are expected to live without reasonable access to the everyday services necessary for a decent quality of life.

6. Inconsistency with the Co-operative movement's founding principles

The Co-operative movement was founded on principles of mutual support, collective benefit and service to people and communities.

The Council questions how the withdrawal of the only convenience store from a village of approximately 2,000 people, with no public transport and a significant number of residents dependent upon local access to groceries, can be reconciled with the Co-op's founding ethos of being made by the people, for the people.

While the Council recognises that commercial organisations must consider their financial position, it believes that the wider social and economic consequences of this decision must be given serious and meaningful consideration.

A purely commercial assessment that fails to account for the consequences for vulnerable residents and the wider village community would be wholly inadequate.

7. Failure to explore all reasonable alternatives

The Council does not accept that closure should be treated as inevitable until the Co-operative Group has demonstrated that all reasonable alternatives have been thoroughly examined.

That the Competition and Marketing Authority has got it wrong and failed to take into consideration the impact on a rural village and the residents

Possible options could include revised opening hours, changes to staffing or operating arrangements, a different retail model, partnership arrangements or other practical measures to retain the essential convenience store and Post Office in the village.

The Council calls for meaningful engagement with the community before any final decision is implemented.

Resolutions

Westbourne Parish Council therefore resolves:

1. **To formally and unequivocally oppose the proposed closure** of the Co-operative store and loss of the Post Office in Westbourne and to record its strongest objection to the loss of this essential village service.
2. **To demand an immediate suspension of the closure process** by the Co-operative Group and Competition and Marketing Authority until a full and

meaningful review of the social, economic and environmental consequences has been undertaken and all reasonable alternatives have been explored.

3. **To request an urgent meeting** with the Co-operative Group's senior management, including the Group Chief Executive's office and the management responsible for Food Retail, to discuss the proposed closure and identify a viable way forward. To insist a representative of the Competition and Marketing Authority attend the meeting to explain their rationale in their decision making process.
4. **To demand a full assessment of the community impact**, including the consequences for elderly and vulnerable residents, people without access to private transport, neighbouring independent businesses and the long-term viability of Westbourne as a sustainable rural community.
5. **To call upon the Co-operative Group and CMA to work constructively with the Parish Council, local councillors, residents and business representatives** to investigate every reasonable option for retaining the store or securing an equivalent accessible local grocery and Post Office provision.
6. **To request written clarification of the reasons for the proposed closure**, including the basis for the decision, the alternatives considered and the measures, if any, proposed to mitigate its effects on the community.
7. **To write formally to the Co-operative Group's senior leadership and Board**, enclosing this resolution and requesting a written response within 21 days.
8. **To notify the relevant local district and county councillors, the local Member of Parliament and other appropriate public bodies** of the Council's objection and request their support in securing a satisfactory outcome.
9. **To investigate appropriate further avenues of representation**, seeking guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority or any other relevant bodies where matters fall within their respective remits.
10. **To publicise the Council's position to residents** and invite evidence of the likely effects of the closure, ensuring that the experiences of older, vulnerable and less mobile residents are properly represented.
11. **To request that no irreversible steps be taken towards closure** while discussions and the exploration of alternatives remain ongoing.
12. **To continue pursuing all reasonable avenues available to the Parish Council** to protect access to essential local shopping facilities and safeguard the wellbeing, independence and future sustainability of Westbourne.

Statement of principle

Westbourne Parish Council believes that the loss of the village's only convenience store and Post Office would be a serious blow to the community, disproportionately

harming those least able to adapt, and potentially undermining the viability of other local businesses.

The Council does not consider it acceptable that a village of approximately 2,300 people, without public transport, should be left without a local convenience store before every reasonable alternative has been explored.

The Co-operative Group is urged to recognise its wider responsibilities to the community it serves and to work with local representatives to find a sustainable solution.

Westbourne is a living community, not simply a trading location. Its residents deserve to retain access to the essential services that enable them to live independently, support one another and sustain village life.

Westbourne Parish Council therefore calls upon the Co-operative Group and CMA to reconsider its proposal, suspend the closure process and engage urgently and constructively with the community to secure the future of this vital local service.

Proposed by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Resolution outcome: Carried / Not carried

Votes for: _____ **Votes against:** _____ **Abstentions:** _____

Yours sincerely



Cllr Nigel Ricketts
Chairman of Westbourne Parish Council

cc.

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