

**PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LAMBETH COUNTY COURT:**

**RESPONSE FROM LAMBETH LAW CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE HOUSE  
LAW CENTRE AND SOUTHWARK LAW CENTRE**



SOUTHWARK  

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LAW CENTRE

## **SUMMARY**

We oppose the closure of Lambeth County Court (LCC) and the transfer of its work to Wandsworth County Court for the following reasons:

### **1. The proposal represents very poor value for money**

- LCC is rented at a peppercorn rent, the lease ends in 2024. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) can realise no capital from its sale and will lose the use of a purpose-built court for the next nine years.
- As the proposal includes the transfer of all staff and judiciary to the new court, there is likely to be a minimal saving in running costs.
- The proposal gives no indication of transfer costs but these are likely to be considerable. The transfer will have a knock-on effect to efficiency and this will result in greater overall costs.
- Because of the increase in travel times, there will be a substantial cost to other public bodies that use the court, most significantly those of the two local authorities – LB Lambeth and LB Southwark – who use the court extensively. It will also affect Housing Associations. Further, there will be an increase in costs to the Legal Aid fund for those tenants who are legally aided. Increased costs will threaten the survival of advice agencies.

### **2. The proposal will have a negative impact on efficiency**

- LCC is currently the most efficient of the London Courts. The proposal's claim that it is underutilised is based on flawed assumptions about the work of the court. The proposal gives no comparable figure for under-utilisation at Wandsworth.
- We have concerns that Wandsworth County Court will not be able to handle the near tripling of its workload.

### **3. The proposal will significantly undermine access to justice**

- The Ministry's proposal seriously underestimates the travel times to the new court. Many users of the court are on low incomes and use public transport to reach the court. They will be significantly disadvantaged under the proposal. Some may be unable to come to court or access its services. They will have greater difficulty in accessing advice, and the duty scheme will be imperilled. As a result, there will be more evictions and emergency applications will not be made. This will have catastrophic results for individuals and their families.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is issued in response to the Ministry's current consultation on reform to the court estate, 'Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal estate in England and Wales'.

This response concerns the proposal to close Lambeth County Court (LCC) and transfer its current workload to Wandsworth County Court (in East Putney). It is also proposed to close Hammersmith County Court (formerly West London County Court) and transfer all its work also to Wandsworth.

### **Who we are**

The response has been drafted by Lambeth Law Centre, Cambridge House Law Centre and Southwark Law Centre, with additional assistance from other local law firms in the legal aid sector.

We are regular and extensive users of LCC. We represent tenants at LCC. We also participate regularly in the County Court duty scheme. The overwhelming majority of our clients live in the area served by the court. We estimate that taken together we deal with 250-300 clients per year who have cases in the court.

In preparing this response we also conducted a questionnaire survey of court users (both claimants and defendants) over a six week period in August/September 2015. The results of this survey can be found in **Annex 2**.

### **Current business and jurisdiction of Lambeth County Court**

LCC covers a wide geographical area, encompassing 18 area postcodes (five of which are shared with other courts) including the whole of the London Borough of Southwark, a substantial portion of the London Borough of Lambeth and a small section of Lewisham). It serves a population of approximately 600,000 in an area of high deprivation. There is also a large amount of social housing. The court is situated towards its central northern apex with good transport links to most of the area it serves.

Lambeth County Court is the busiest housing court in England and Wales. According to figures obtained under a recent Freedom of Information request, during 2014-2015, the relative figures for the three courts under consideration were as follows:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HM Courts and Tribunals Service CaseMan system, Possession Claim Online and manual returns

	Claims	Possession Claims	Possession Orders
Lambeth County Court	6125	4818	3000
Hammersmith County Court	1879	1300	900
Wandsworth County Court	2864	2254	1586

On these figures, 78.6% of the cases brought in Lambeth are possession proceedings, meaning cases brought against tenants or mortgagors to take away their home from them. Of the approximately 100 possession claims issued each week, we estimate that about 65-75 are brought by social landlords – that is mainly the two local authorities, Lambeth and Southwark, but also other housing associations.<sup>2</sup> It is important to emphasise that it is a requirement that these kinds of claim should be heard in person. They cannot be decided on paper.

Our experience is that although under pressure like the rest of the court service, LCC is relatively efficient and compares well with other courts. Anecdotal feedback from the court’s busiest users (local authorities, housing associations, legal aid firms and Law Centres), many of whom will also work in other London county courts, supports the general opinion that Lambeth is one of the best run courts in London.

## RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

### Question 1: Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals.

We do not agree with the proposals.

The consultation refers to three key policy objectives which are:

- Value for money
- Enabling efficiency
- Access to justice

We do not believe that the proposals will achieve any of these objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> The London Borough of Southwark estimate that 40-50 cases brought by the council are heard weekly - see the council’s response to the consultation.

## **VALUE FOR MONEY**

We do not believe that the proposals will achieve value for money because its closure will:

- Produce no capital gain for the MoJ
- Increase direct costs to the MoJ without achieving overall savings
- Decrease efficiency
- Cause greater expenditure elsewhere to other publicly funded bodies

### **No capital gain**

One of the main aims of the proposals is stated to be the freeing-up for sale of underused court buildings with a view to reinvesting the proceeds of the sale in a future modernisation programme.<sup>3</sup> LCC is leased by the MoJ from the Duchy of Cornwall at a peppercorn rent of £200 per year. The lease runs until 2024. There is therefore no capital gain to be made by its closure. Instead, for the next nine years, the Ministry will lose the use of a purpose-built court, which it currently receives for a minimal rent.

It will gain nothing from the surrender of the lease. It may also be the case that the Duchy would be willing to renew the lease on favourable terms. The proposal does not indicate whether they have been approached.

### **Increase in costs to the Ministry of Justice**

#### *Running costs*

The proposal envisages the transfer of all the judiciary and all the staff from LCC (30 members) without reduction. The only savings therefore will be in running and support costs. The consultation states that operating costs for LCC in the year 2014/2015 were £286,000. The basis of this figure is unclear. It obviously does not include staff costs and (as noted above) rent is minimal. The suggestion is that these costs can be saved by the proposed transfer but no such assumption should be made without an explanation as to what this figure represents. Clarification has been

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<sup>3</sup> See Natalie Ceeney Law Society Gazette 23 September 2015 [http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/courts-to-move-from-physical-paradigm-new-hmcts-chief/5051159.article?utm\\_source=dispatch&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=GAZ240915](http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/courts-to-move-from-physical-paradigm-new-hmcts-chief/5051159.article?utm_source=dispatch&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GAZ240915)

sought through a Freedom of Information request but we have not yet received any details.<sup>4</sup>

### *Transfer costs*

Page 17/ Para 2 of the consultation states that “*enabling works would be required [at Wandsworth County Court] to accommodate the extra staff*”. No figure is put on the enabling works or the costs of the transfer of business from Lambeth to Wandsworth. We believe that when examined properly, such costs may actually put the MOJ to greater expense.<sup>5</sup>

### Increase in costs for other public bodies

The consultation acknowledges that the closure of LCC will lead to increased travel time to individuals and organisations but considers that the increase will be minimal. This analysis is seriously flawed. The MoJ appears to have significantly underestimated the increased travel times to the new court with worrying implications for access to justice. These are dealt with below.

In financial terms, there will be an increase in costs for local councils and other large landlords that will represent the court’s most frequent users. LCC is used heavily by neighbouring local authorities including most notably the London Boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, and Lewisham. The main council offices are within easy access of Kennington. These local authorities represent the court’s single busiest users.

The closure of LCC will represent a significant cost to these authorities, most obviously in relation to travel times and costs of travel for housing officers and housing benefit officers, as well as legal costs where cases involve instructed solicitors and barristers. This will have a further knock-on effect in terms of time spent in the office dealing with other issues of housing management. Any loss of housing management capacity may in turn only lead to more cases reaching court.

This view is supported by the London Borough of Southwark who have completed their own response to the consultation.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/information\\_regarding\\_the\\_propos\\_6](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/information_regarding_the_propos_6)

<sup>5</sup> This information has also been requested as per footnote 4 above.

Likewise the largest housing associations are heavy court users and will encounter similar issues in terms of officer travel expenses, solicitor/barrister costs and time out of the office. The following landlords all regularly have blocks of cases at LCC: Metropolitan Housing, Peabody, L&Q, Family Mosaic, and Hyde Housing. There are also many smaller housing associations and these will likewise encounter the same issues, possibly with an ever greater impact as they may only be attending for one or two cases at a time.

This additional public expense in terms of the costs to local authorities and housing association has not been properly factored into the proposal. It is our view that if there were any savings to the public purse these will be more than off-set by these additional costs elsewhere.

There will also be other costs arising out of a diminution in the efficiency of the court service and the potential increase in homelessness that may arise from these proposals. These are dealt with in detail below.

### **ENABLING EFFICIENCY**

We do not believe that these proposals will make the local county court system any more efficient.

#### *Utilisation of the court*

As organisations representing a large cross section of the cases that pass through LCC, we know that the court is extremely busy. We also know that in comparison to other courts LCC is competent and efficient. Access to the court office is better than at other local courts; the office is helpful and pro-active in engaging with parties in the management of cases. Claims are listed in a comparatively timely manner and trials once listed will go ahead – unlike some other courts where cases are often re-listed for later dates, or can be listed on a ‘floating list’ dependent on judicial availability on the day. The established judiciary at Lambeth share a strong knowledge of local issues and services – this is reflected in the general quality of judicial decision-making.

The consultation paper’s assertion that the court is only used for 39% of the time is misleading.

The figure is based on the amount of time spent when judges are sitting. This constitutes only part of the court’s work. Four of the six court-rooms are judges’ chambers. The 39% fails to take account of ‘box-work’ i.e. the time a judge spends in chambers preparing and dealing with paperwork. This work is an integral part of case management. The calculation contained in the proposal may also have been made at a time when one of the four resident District Judges was seriously ill.

The consultation paper does not give a figure for utilisation of court space in Wandsworth so no comparison can be made. The information has been requested but has not yet been received.

Our every day experience of the court is that LCC is one of the busiest courts in operation, an observation supported by the figures on the numbers of possession cases (see above). LCC handles this caseload with a high level of competence. Overall our view of is that it is an extremely active local court, but one in which all sides, be they claimant or defendant, have confidence.

#### *Increase in workload for Wandsworth.*

The closure of the two courts will result in a 280% increase in the Wandsworth's workload. There is no detail given as to whether Wandsworth would be capable of handling the increase and the practicalities and costs of increasing the court's capacity almost threefold.

### **ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

We strongly take issue with the consultation paper's assertion that there will be no negative impact on access to justice. Increased travel times and expense will impact disproportionately on LCC users who are by and large tenants of social housing and as such by definition in a lower income bracket. Increased difficulties in access will lead to non-attendance at court and the loss of people's homes.

#### ***Travel times/expense***

The premise of the consultation paper and impact assessment is that "*access to justice will be maintained by ensuring that any court to be considered for closure is within a reasonable distance of a retained court by public transport*".

The consultation paper has seriously underestimated the effect on travel times because of flaws in its methodology and makes a number of assumptions about travel arrangements with which we take issue.

#### ***Failure to address time and expense***

Access to justice cannot be maintained purely by considering *distance*, as the proposal appears to suggest.

The key issue is whether users of the court earmarked for closure will be able to access the substituted court by public transport within a reasonable time and at reasonable cost.

What the proposal considers to be a relatively short distance, may still have a disproportionate impact on travel time and cost given London's complex transport system, much of which is designed to enable people to travel 'radially' to and from central London.

*Irrelevant form of transport considered*

The proposal states that the journey from Lambeth County Court to Wandsworth County Court takes 30 minutes by car. At the very least, this is an optimistic estimate based on our experience, but it is also of little relevance as most people who travel to court in London use public transport. Many do not own a car, roads are congested, and parking is problematic and expensive.

For most people – including, for example, tenants involved in possession cases – the most common form of transport will be walking or by bus, as this is generally cheaper than travelling by train or by tube.

Of our questionnaire respondents, fewer than 3% of users had travelled to the court by car.

*Incorrect starting point*

The proposal's assurance that "*any court to be considered for closure is within a reasonable distance of a retained court*", is a false starting-point. The issue is not the journey time (or indeed mode of transport) *from* LCC *to* Wandsworth County Court, but rather the journey for the proposed new journey for court users, from their home, or place of work.

Our research strongly suggests that the government's claim that the majority of the population will be unaffected by the proposed closures (and that 92% of the county court users will be unaffected nationally) is misplaced, certainly in the case of LCC.

The suggestion that the proposals to close LCC would not cause particularly large increases in travel times due to the existing public transport system (making it relatively easy to get to a different court) is not borne out by our research.

We have looked into the impact of travel times to the court from three postcodes within each of the postal codes currently served by LCC (**Annex 1**). This compares journeys to Wandsworth County Court as opposed to the current journey to LCC, and compares journey times by bus and based on the alternative fastest possible route.

Here are a few examples:

- A journey from SE1 5RB in Bermondsey that currently takes 44 minutes by bus to LCC, would take 1 hour 36 minutes to Wandsworth County Court
- A journey from SE15 6AX in Peckham that currently takes 39 minutes by bus to LCC, would take 1 hour 45 minutes to Wandsworth County Court
- A journey from SE16 2XH in Rotherhithe that currently takes 53 minutes by bus to LCC, would take 1 hour 49 minutes to Wandsworth County Court
- A journey from SE21 8HS that currently takes 40 minutes by bus to LCC, would take 1 hour 15 minutes to Wandsworth County Court

Our table sets out comparative journey times for 72 postcodes. Only 11 of the 72 journeys currently take more than one hour; the longest (SE26 5TQ) is 1 hr 24 minutes. In comparison (in the event of the court closing and travel to Wandsworth County Court) 60 of the 72 journeys would exceed one hour, the longest being 2 hours 1 minute (and no journey taking less than 40 minutes).

This is supported by the questionnaire results. Of current users 60% had taken less than 30 minutes to get to court, and a further 22% were able to get to LCC in under an hour. However, more than 51% of respondents estimated it would take them in excess of an hour to travel to Wandsworth County Court. (By comparison, only 4% of users had taken over one hour to get to LCC).

A table of the questionnaire results is attached at **Annex 2**.

### ***Increased expense***

Travel to Wandsworth County Court will not only involve additional time but will involve additional expense. Many of the defendants in court proceedings will be tenants on very marginal incomes. Additional expense will therefore firstly deter defendants from reaching the court in the first place.

Secondly the majority of possession cases will concern arrears of rent and often such cases may turn on whether the payment of a few pounds per week has been met. Many tenants will be in low paid employment and extra time in court will reduce their capacity to earn. Any increase in travel costs (and travel time) will therefore directly impact on tenants' capacity to meet repayment terms and sustain their tenancies.

Equally it is the complexity of travel which will create difficulty, not just simple expense. From our research many of the journeys to Wandsworth will involve 2 or 3 and in some cases 4 buses. This will create greater difficulty for people with mobility

problems, or with health issues, and for carers of young children who may need to go to school or nursery before making the journey to court. From our questionnaire 28% of respondents have a health or disability issue that would affect their journey.

The responses to Q5 of the survey (see **Annex 3**) highlight a range of issues but a recurrent theme is that moving the court would impact most on those with health issues, the elderly, and those with childcare responsibilities.

The proposal will therefore have a detrimental impact on access to justice. For ordinary people, particularly those who are in receipt of a court summons for possession of their home, the key factor to ensure access to justice is being able to get to the court within a reasonable journey time and at an affordable cost. This proposal will undermine their ability to do this.

Accessing the court is vital for defendants given the type of case that the court deals with. All possession cases will deal with the right of the landlord to end a tenancy. Urgent cases (such as an application to stay a bailiff's warrant) may decide whether or not a family is evicted.

Emergency family law applications may involve child protection issues or cases involving domestic violence. Such cases will often involve the need to attend court at very short notice. Where a hearing is missed then this may have catastrophic results for individuals and their families.

**Question 2: will the proposals for the provision of court services have a direct impact on you. If yes, provide further details.**

The proposals will have a serious effect on our *clients* for the reasons set out above.

We believe that they will also have an adverse effect on the local advice sector.

The closure of LCC is likely to lead to increased legal aid costs, as journey times for many legal representatives will be considerably longer, and we fear that waiting times may be longer too. The government's impact assessment acknowledges increased legal aid costs in the context of closure of magistrates' courts, but appears to take no account of the likely increased costs of civil legal aid.

Law centres and advice agencies have already experienced significant reform to their legal aid funding, as well as other funding cuts, and this has already seen a considerable reduction in the availability of advice provision. Feedback from the judiciary is that the intervention of advice services, both at an early stage in proceedings and at court, can significantly reduce court costs: it can lead to early agreements and settlement and avoid the need for protracted proceedings or full trials.

Such services operate on very tight margins and the increased travel times will pose a further risk to their sustainability. For legal aid firms and law centres, where cases are carried out under public funding, the legal aid rates for hours spent travelling are very low: organisations makes a loss on the time spent on travelling and waiting. This reform will therefore further undermine their financial viability.

The concentration of so many cases in one centre may also affect the quality and availability of advice provision. Currently when a defendant receives a possession summons from LCC the court sends a list of advice agencies in the area. Local advice agencies and legal aid solicitors generally have a good relationship with the court. The risk of Defendants receiving no information, or wrong information about advice agencies will be greatly compounded by a merged court covering areas as far apart as Rotherhithe, West Norwood, Stockwell, Hammersmith, Kensington and Merton.

The current judiciary operating from LCC likewise hold a strong local knowledge of Lambeth and Southwark legal services, of local advice services, and of the neighbouring communities. There is familiarity with local processes and issues. This assists the court in making practical decisions and managing claims in a cost-effective manner. Such insight and expertise may be lost if the reformed court is made to cover such a wide area as proposed.

**Question 3: Are there other particular impacts on the proposals that HM Courts and Tribunals services should take into account when making a decision. Please provide details.**

Currently a duty possession scheme operates from LCC. This is a legal aid funded scheme providing advice and representation on the day to unrepresented defendants. This is managed by Lambeth Law Centre but draws on a local pool of advice centres and legal aid solicitor firms. The income generated from the duty scheme is marginal following cuts to legal aid provision and most firms report that they lose money given the waiting and travel costs involved: nevertheless the consensus amongst the local legal aid sector is that it is an essential service. Likewise, the feedback from the Judiciary at LCC is very positive: intervention on the day from the duty solicitor can help the court manage a case, and encourage parties to reach early agreements, and thereby save on further costs to the court and to claimants in the future.

The current scheme works well as it draws on the experience of a team of local advisers and lawyers that have generally good working relationships with the court and with the largest claimants. The scheme is well-used, reflecting the overall status of the court as one of the busiest in operation – 836 clients were given on-the-day assistance in the year 2014/15.

We question the future of the scheme if all local possession cases were transferred to Wandsworth. Many of the current advisers would no longer be able to provide representation given the additional time and costs involved in travel, which would further reduce its financial viability (which already operates at a loss for most firms). The administration involved in processing such large potential numbers of cases may not be workable. Without a duty scheme in operation the court will inevitably suffer greater pressure in terms of court time and resources. There will be a greater number of adjournments and postponed hearings. Opportunities to settle and agree cases at an early stage will be lost leading to protracted proceedings which will involve further expense for claimants, and place greater pressure on the court.

**Question 4. Our assessment of the likely impacts and supporting analysis is set out in the Impact Assessment accompanying this consultation. Do you have any comments on the evidence used or conclusions reached? Please provide any additional evidence that you believe could be helpful.**

Please see comments above regarding the calculation of travel times.

**Question 5. Are there alternatives to travelling to a physical building that would be a benefit to some users? These could include using technology to engage remotely or the use of other, civic or public buildings for hearings as demand requires. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.**

We would welcome the increased use of telephone hearings and video conferencing for procedural hearings where only lawyers need to be present. We do not think it appropriate for any hearings involving members of the public such as possession hearings or proceedings involving children or domestic violence where it is essential that the judge sees the client in person. Digital hearings would be even more inappropriate for the increasing number of unrepresented clients, many of whom do not have access to the appropriate technology.

**Question 6. Please provide any additional comments that you have.**

We would also invite the MOJ to consider alternative proposals that do not involve closing LCC such as the transfer of business from Woolwich County Court (where it is proposed that cases be transferred to Bromley County Court) either in part or in whole. LCC has the capacity to deal with the increased business and a transfer to Lambeth may mitigate the additional costs that existing Woolwich court users might incur. In many cases it is easier to get to LCC (next to a tube) than it is to get to Bromley (where the nearest train station - Bromley North - is not extensively served by local train networks).

In summary, we are extremely concerned that the proposals will close what is currently a highly competent local court, and will threaten further the overall efficiency of what is already an under-pressure court system. The problems in the court system are caused by lack of staff (including judiciary) not the number of court buildings, and we would ask you to bear in mind the example of Central London County Court the problems of which are well known.

There will be a significant negative impact on access to justice – individuals will encounter much greater difficulty reaching court and a greater number of hearings will be missed. The capacity of tenants to pay their rent and keep their homes will be undermined. Urgent applications will not be made in time or at all. In addition the wider public expense, notably in terms of the costs to local authorities, will not be offset with any real savings in terms of court resources.

We therefore urge you to reconsider these plans, and to reverse the proposal to close Lambeth County Court.

6 October 2015

## Annex 1: Journey times to Lambeth and Wandsworth County Courts

Location	Postcode	Travel time by bus to Lambeth County Court	Travel time by bus to Wandsworth County Court	Fastest travel time to Wandsworth County Court
<b>Bermondsey</b>	<b>SE1</b>	<b>38 mins</b>	<b>1hr 32 mins</b>	<b>59 mins</b>
	SE1 1EL	25 mins	1 hr 12 mins	52 mins
	SE1 5RB	44 mins	1hr 36 mins	1hr 3 mins
	SE1 8SJ	17 mins	1 hr 12 mins	35 mins
<b>Camberwell</b>	<b>SE5</b>	<b>35 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 14 mins</b>	<b>55 mins</b>
	SE5 0XJ	21 mins	1 hr 37 mins	1 hr 5 mins
	SE5 8GD	49 mins	1 hr 42 mins	1 hr 10 mins
	SE5 7HN	42 mins	1 hr 45 mins	1 hr 14 mins
<b>Lambeth</b>	<b>SE11</b>	<b>18 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 3 mins</b>	<b>46 mins</b>
	SE11 5TA	11 mins	1 hr 24 mins	51 mins
	SE11 6UF	6 mins	1 hr 27 mins	55 mins
	SE11 4SN	19 mins	1 hr 25 mins	1 hr 1 min
<b>Peckham</b>	<b>SE15</b>	<b>45 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 19 mins</b>	<b>54 mins</b>
	SE15 3DQ	1 hr 3 mins	2 hrs 1 mins	1 hr 25 mins
	SE15 2PY	51 mins	1 hr 55 mins	1 hr 7 mins
	SE15 6AX	39 mins	1 hr 45 mins	1 hr 18 mins
<b>Rotherhithe/ Surrey Docks</b>	<b>SE16</b>	<b>56 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 51 mins</b>	<b>51 mins</b>
	SE16 5NZ	57 mins	1 hr 50 mins	1 hr 6 mins
	SE16 2XH	53 mins	1 hr 49 mins	51 mins
	SE16 3JE	44 mins	1 hr 34 mins	1 hr 8 mins
<b>Elephant &amp; Castle</b>	<b>SE17</b>	<b>11 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 9 mins</b>	<b>48 mins</b>
	SE17 2RR	34 mins	1 hr 23 mins	1 hr 5 mins
	SE17 2HQ	34 mins	1 hr 23 mins	56 mins
	SE17 3SD	11 mins	1 hr 11 mins	49 mins
<b>Crystal Palace/ Upper Norwood</b>	<b>SE19</b>	<b>49 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 18 mins</b>	<b>58 mins</b>
	SE19 3HG	1 hr	1 hr 25 mins	53 mins
	SE19 1DW	58 mins	1 hr 30 mins	53 mins
	SE19 2JE	1 hr 6 mins	1 hr 40 mins	59 mins

Location	Postcode	Travel time by bus to Lambeth County Court	Travel time by bus to Wandsworth County Court	Fastest travel time to Wandsworth County Court
<b>Dulwich</b>	<b>SE21</b>	<b>47 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 17 mins</b>	<b>58 mins</b>
	SE21 7HR	55 mins	1 hr 31 mins	1 hr 4 mins
	SE21 8HS	40 mins	1 hr 15 mins	1 hr
	SE21 7EG	58 mins	1 hr 14 mins	1 hr 7 mins
<b>East Dulwich</b>	<b>SE22</b>	<b>59 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 19 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 9 mins</b>
	SE22 8HX	47 mins	1 hr 12 mins	1 hr 3 mins
	SE22 9AQ	56 mins	1 hr 11 mins	1 hr 9 mins
	SE22 9JL	53 mins	1 hr 21 mins	1 hr 10 mins
<b>Forrest Hill</b>	<b>SE23</b>	<b>1 hr 5 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 30 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 10 mins</b>
	SE23 3DS	1 hr	1 hr 25 mins	1 hr 9 mins
	SE23 1GA	1 hr 5 mins	1hr 45 mins	1 hr 16 mins
	SE23 2XW	1 hr 32 mins	2 hrs	1 hr 17 mins
<b>Herne Hill</b>	<b>SE24</b>	<b>39 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 1 min</b>	<b>51 mins</b>
	SE24 9PQ	45 mins	1 hr 8 mins	1 hr 5 mins
	SE24 9LY	38 mins	1 hr 2 mins	53 mins
	SE24 0BW	45 mins	1 hr 11 mins	1 hr 1 min
<b>Sydenham</b>	<b>SE26</b>	<b>1 hr 10 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 46 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 13 mins</b>
	SE26 4HZ	1 hr 18 mins	1 hr 52 mins	1 hr 13 mins
	SE26 6NA	1 hr 6 mins	1 hr 35 mins	1 hr 20 mins
	SE26 5TQ	1 hr 24 mins	1 hr 58 mins	1 hr 12 mins
<b>Tulse Hill/West Norwood</b>	<b>SE27</b>	<b>55 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 22 mins</b>	<b>1 hr 4 mins</b>
	SE27 0AA	47 mins	1 hr 11 mins	55 mins
	SE27 9SG	52 mins	1 hr 26 mins	58 mins
	SE27 0QB	59 mins	1 hr 23 mins	50 mins

Location	Postcode	Travel time by bus to Lambeth County Court	Travel time by bus to Wandsworth County Court	Fastest travel time to Wandsworth County Court
<b>Brixton</b>	<b>SW2</b>	20 mins	58 mins	51 mins
	SW2 1NA	27 mins	49 mins	49 mins
	SW2 2DU	40 mins	1 hr 4 mins	1 hr 4 mins
	SW2 4UZ	38 mins	57 mins	52 mins
<b>Clapham</b>	<b>SW4</b>	30 mins	40 mins	40 mins
	SW4 6QL	32 mins	57 mins	48 mins
	SW4 7NS	30 mins	48 mins	48 mins
	SW4 8ED	41 mins	50 mins	50 mins
<b>Nine Elms/South Lambeth</b>	<b>SW8</b>	37 mins	49 mins	38 mins
	SW8 1AF	23 mins	1 hr 4 mins	45 mins
	SW8 2UD	31 mins	55 mins	40 mins
	SW8 4JH	43 mins	54 mins	44 mins
<b>Stockwell</b>	<b>SW9</b>	30 mins	51 mins	47 mins
	SW9 0RP	20 mins	1 hr 2 mins	51 mins
	SW9 6AP	17 mins	59 mins	55 mins
	SW9 8TP	33 mins	1 hr 3 mins	59 mins
<b>Norbury/Streatham</b>	<b>SW16</b>	1 hr 5 mins	1hr 32 mins	1 hr 5 mins
	SW16 2JH	54 mins	1 hr 15 mins	56 mins
	SW16 6HX	48 mins	1 hr 17 mins	52 mins
	SW16 4LX	1 hr 14 mins	1 hr 34 mins	1 hr 5 mins

**Source:** *Transport for London*

**Note 1:** Travel time calculated in order to arrive at court for 10.15am on a Monday morning. Assuming no disabilities.

**Note 2:** Full postcodes are selected with two on/near the periphery and one in/near the centre of the district.

**Court addresses:**

Wandsworth County Court: 76-78 Upper Richmond Rd, Putney, London SW15 2SU

Lambeth County Court: Court House, Cleaver St, London SE11 4DZ

## **Annex 2: Questionnaire response data**

**Q1) How long does your journey to Lambeth Court take and how did you travel?**

	<b>Result</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>0 - 30 mins</i>	<b>87</b>	<b>60.0</b>
<i>30 - 60 mins</i>	<b>32</b>	<b>22.1</b>
<i>60 - 120 mins</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<i>&gt;120 mins</i>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<i>Don't know/ No data entered</i>	<b>20</b>	<b>13.8</b>

	<b>Result</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Walking</i>	<b>26</b>	<b>17.9</b>
<i>Bus</i>	<b>56</b>	<b>38.6</b>
<i>Train/tube</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<i>Train/tube &amp; bus</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Car/taxi</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>2.8</b>
<i>No data entered</i>	<b>56</b>	<b>38.6</b>

**NOTE ON METHODOLOGY:** For the sake of comparison, the timing segments (0-30 mins, 30-60 mins, etc) used are the same as used in the government proposal. However, this makes it unclear where the cut-off point is - ie a better/clearer time segment would have been 0-29 mins, 30-59mins). For clarity, unless a respondent has indicated it takes over the amount, they have been registered in the lower bracket: eg – an entry of 30mins has gone into the 0-30 mins bracket, while an entry of '25-35 mins' would be entered in the 30-60 mins bracket.

**Q2)** How long, approximately, might it take you to travel to WANDSWORTH County Court, which is in East Putney, and how would you travel?

	<b>Result</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>0 - 30 mins</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<i>30 - 60 mins</i>	<b>31</b>	<b>21.4</b>
<i>60 - 120 mins</i>	<b>61</b>	<b>42.1</b>
<i>&gt;120 mins</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>9.0</b>
<i>Don't know/ No data entered</i>	<b>34</b>	<b>23.4</b>

	<b>Result</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Walking</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<i>Bus</i>	<b>36</b>	<b>24.8</b>
<i>Train/tube</i>	<b>12</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<i>Train/tube &amp; bus</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>6.9</b>
<i>Car/taxi</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<i>No data entered</i>	<b>80</b>	<b>55.2</b>

**NOTE ON METHODOLOGY:** For the sake of comparison, the timing segments (0-30 mins, 30-60 mins, etc) used are the same as used in the government proposal. However, this makes it unclear where the cut-off point is - ie a better/clearer time segment would have been 0-29 mins, 30-59mins). For clarity, unless a respondent has indicated it takes over the amount, they have been registered in the lower bracket: eg – an entry of 30mins has gone into the 0-30 mins bracket, while an entry of '25-35 mins' would be entered in the 30-60 mins bracket.

**Q3)** Do have any health or disability or other issues that might impact on your journey, or your ability to attend WANDSWORTH County Court?

	Yes	No	No data entered
<i>Result</i>	41	94	10
<i>%</i>	28.3	64.8	6.9

**Q4)** Do you agree with the proposal to close Lambeth County Court and transfer all its cases to WANDSWORTH County Court in East Putney?

	Yes	No	Not sure/ No response
<i>Result</i>	8	108	10
<i>%</i>	6.3	85.7	7.9

**NOTE:** Although, as might be expected, the majority of people indicated they did not agree with the government proposal, the true number is likely higher – in at least three instances the respondent’s comments suggested they had misread the question and were in fact not in favour.

**Annex 3: Responses to questionnaire Q5: Do you have any other comments about the proposal to close the court?**

“Taking away Lambeth Court would not only have a negative impact on people but also it would be expensive to travel.” – C

“Lambeth and Southwark are very local communities. I can’t imagine getting all the way to Wandsworth being easy or actually possible for many residents. It seems unhelpful and unreasonable to close the court and move it essentially to the other side of London. Another borough would create an ocean of extra red tape as well as a terrific inconvenience and frankly an impossibility to attend.” –Fred D

“For me, I think it is a liberty to close LCC. I would go further and ask why there is no support, i.e. no social worker or duty solicitor when you go to court. I mean, there is at crown/magistrates. You need further discussion on this issue.” – Dave T

“It is not good management [to transfer the caseload to Wandsworth]. The courts need to organise their internal operations to save costs – a) stop large organisations filing duplicate strike out; b) train your clerks properly – one clerk refused to process my application for an injunction on harassment + immediately informed the other party; c) judges sometimes create more court hearing resulting in more court time.” – Anon

“My comment is that it is easy for me to travel down to Lambeth Court, I feel less stress when coming down. They should take consideration about their decision towards our feelings.” – Monica U

“This [Lambeth] is best for me is only five minutes walk.” – Ubah A

“Lambeth Court is a really needed service to Southwark.” – Marcia B

“I feel is going to stressful for people to travel that far. Some walk down and may not have the money for travel that far.” –Maria K

“They should not close it.” – Stitim F

“It will make it difficult travelling, it is ideal to have a court within Lambeth borough.” – Amosa A

“It would be easier to have a Lambeth county court in Lambeth than to travel.” – Ayan A

“Personally it is a bad idea [to close LCC] for families with young children & travel costs incurred travelling to court.” – (name unclear)

“We need a court within reasonable travel for the disabled, sick and elderly.” – Graham Charters

“Please don’t close it.” – Salah A

“Yes I know that it would save money in the long run but if you go ahead with this it will put more pressure on people working and everything will slow down [for] example the quickness in the level of the care, they will have more cases which could affect the [unfinished].” – Anon

“Not easy for me to travel to Wandsworth County Court.” – Buburatuy A

“It doesn’t make sense.” – Anon

“I wish it [LCC] stays open as it is easy access for me.” – Linda B

“It would be so far and hard to get there [to Wandsworth]. I think people should be able to access the county court easier.” – Serife B

“All courts should remain open in order to provide the service and allow access for people in the local vicinity.” – Anon

“The journey to the court take longer and may delay appt time.” – Amal A

“It should not go ahead.” – Anon

“[The] proposal to close the court is a very harsh & unfair to the locals, and people that have been coming here for a long time.” – Abu Bakar C

“We need county court in Lambeth[h].” – Anon

“Services like the Lambeth court provides should be easily accessible by its citizens, especially the elderly. The proposal to close the court is going to cause stress and hardship to many.” – Anon

“It is in good location for Lambeth/Southwark residents.” – Linneth T

“It will be an inconvenience to senior citizens and young parents.” – Anon

“People in Lambeth will suffer due to poor public transport – petrol/public transport is more expensive. [LCC] should be kept open.” – Samuel O

“Keep [LCC] open as is central.”- Omocara M

“Many cases in the local area which requires this court, as oppose to Putney.” – Anon

“The court is normally very busy with possession cases so for the clients it may be difficult to travel.” – Ross B

“I am against it. I don’t think it is a good idea many people will be affected.” – Anon

“The closure will cause a lot of inconvenience to many of us who use this court and this court should [be] spared.” – CM

“I hope they come to their senses and try to see peoples’ views.” – RN

“Keep as it is.” – (name unclear)

“They should think long hard before they close it.” – RG

“Why do we all have to travel for unknown area?”- Anon

“It does not make no cost saving by closing these essential services but instead it is to deprive the service user.” – Hassan

“Some people won’t afford travel expense to go [to Wandsworth]. What about people who have children to drop and collect at school. They would have to find child care, which is very expensive.” – Diana DB

“It will cost a lot of stress for individuals.” – Sandra B

“Cost/time of travel/support worker may not be able to travel due to time/commitments/struggles with family i.e. childcare commitments.” – Stevie B

“Every borough to have their county court for their residents and that existing shouldn’t be close because it will be inconvenience.” – Israfeel K

“I think it will be a very big injustice to us in Lambeth.” – Anon

“If it close difficult to travel to Wandsworth Court.” – Anon

“I think the court should be left in Lambeth.” –Maria U

“It will not be good for us [if LCC closes].” – Sylvester V

“It will make life difficult to [have to] travel for over 2hrs.” – (name unclear)

“I wish not close.” – Amina A

“The government should think before closing the court about those people who do have a disability. It’s thoughtless.” – Eileen S

“My comment is to appeal to the government to stop its proposal, otherwise more troubles will follow that will cost government more than it would save as a result for the closure.” - Kareem AA

“Wandsworth County Court is far from Southwark, with the queues of transportation and traffic.” – Anon

“[This] service is required. [It] should remain open.” – Anon

“Serious error of judgement. Lambeth needs to stay open.” – Sabrina K

“It would put a lot of strain on Wandsworth CC and take too long to get a hearing date for the amount of cases from various associations and councils.” – Anon

“I find the court [LCC] efficiently run and well manned.” – Martin B

“Wandsworth is not big enough to deal with the volume of work from Lambeth. Are they building more court rooms? Wandsworth court office is already slow. Dreadful service will get worse.” – Tim B

“Don't close it.” – Charlene B

“Please don't close the court down as this would cause undue hardship to locals if they need to access the courts.” – V

“Well it's been there since my family moved to Lambeth in '59. It would be a shame for it to close.” – Clinton M

“The proposal to close the court removes justice from the community.” – Amosi O

“Lambeth should stay in Lambeth.” – Joel N

“It's a fairly centralised location, so [many] buses route connections.” – Joy S

“Why would a very busy court in a high population area be closed? Ridiculous!” – Dawn SK

“It would be wrong. It shouldn't happen.” – Anna H

“For us living in the area it is better for us to have a court that is not hard to locate.” – Anon