



## Introduction

The Council will refer to this assessment in examining planning applications for the closure of commercial community facilities. A community facility can generally be defined as any facility which is essential, either because it is one of a limited number of facilities of that nature in a settlement or is fundamental to the quality and convenience of everyday life in a settlement. The assessment therefore applies to village shops, post-offices, public houses, and other commercial facilities where they are deemed to be essential in a local context. A list of questions which planning officers may ask applicants to assist the Council in determining the viability of a business is set out below.

The aim of the assessment is to enable the Council to judge whether an applicant has taken sufficient steps to try and make a facility viable and in turn whether there are grounds to believe that the facility is either viable or that further actions would be sufficient to make the facility viable. If it is felt that a facility is, or has the potential to be economically viable, this may be used as grounds for refusal of an application for change of use.

### 1 Assessing trade potential

#### a) Population density

What is the catchment area of the facility?

Approximately how many adults live within a one-mile radius?

Approximately how many adults live within a ten-mile radius?

Are there any developments planned for the area?

#### b) Visitor potential

Is the facility in a well-visited/popular location?

Is tourism encouraged in this area?

Has the facility been well maintained?

Has the facility been advertised locally? If so, where?

##### In the case of a public house:

Has the pub ever been included in any tourist guide? If so, which one(s)?

Does the pub act as a focus for community activities, e.g. sport and social clubs and village meetings?

#### c) Competition

How many of this type of facility are there within a one-mile radius?

How many of this type of facility are there within a five-mile radius?

Could the product range be extended to cater for other needs, e.g. groceries or stationery?

##### In the case of a public house:

Bearing in mind that people like a choice, does the pub, by its character, location and design, potentially cater for different groups of people from those of its nearest competitor?

If no, could the pub be developed to cater for different groups?

#### d) Flexibility of the site

Does the site have unused rooms or outbuildings that could be brought into use?

Is the site large enough to allow for building extensions?

Have planning applications ever been submitted to extend/develop the facility?

##### In the case of a public house:

If planning consent was not available for building work, is any adjoining land suitable for any other use, e.g. boules, children's play area?

#### e) Parking

Is there access to appropriate numbers of car parking spaces?

If no, is there any scope for expansion?

#### f) Multiple use

What is the extent of community facilities in the local area?

If the facility is the sole remaining facility of its kind within the area, is there scope for the facility to combine its function, for example, with bed & breakfast or self-catering?

## 2 Competition case studies

Are there any successful facilities in neighbouring areas of similar population density?

If so, what factors are contributing to their success?

## 3 The business at present

(In cases where the business use has ceased, these questions apply to the last use.)

Is the business run by a freeholder or leaseholder?

Does the owner/management have local support?

Has the facility been run well in the past? Is there any evidence to support this?

Has the focus of the facility changed recently?

Are there any unusual circumstances relating to local authority business/rates/taxes?

##### In the case of a public house:

Is the pub taking advantage of the income opportunities offered by serving food?

How many times a day is food served? How many times a week?

If the pub has catering facilities is the maximum use being made of them?

Has the rent/repair policy of the owner undermined the viability of the pub?



#### 4 The sale

Where and how often/for how long has the facility been advertised for sale?

Has the facility been offered for sale as a going concern?

Has the facility been offered at a reasonably competitive price? If yes, how many offers have been received?

Have any valuations been carried out?

Has the facility been closed for any length of time?

Does the sale price of the facility, as a business, reflect its recent trading?

#### 5 Advice

Has professional business advice been sought and if so what steps have been taken as a result of that advice?

If applicable, has the Rural Shops Alliance or Post Office Network been contacted? See contact details below.

Have the Council, parish or town council and the local community been contacted to explore any sources of support for the business that may be available?

#### Contacts

**Rural Shops Alliance**, The Little Keep, Bridport Road, Dorchester, DT1 1SQ. Tel: 01305 259383  
[www.rural-shops-alliance.co.uk](http://www.rural-shops-alliance.co.uk)

**Post Officer Rural Transfer Advisor**, Post Office Ltd, Network House, The Quadrant, Aztec West, Bristol, BS32 4QX.



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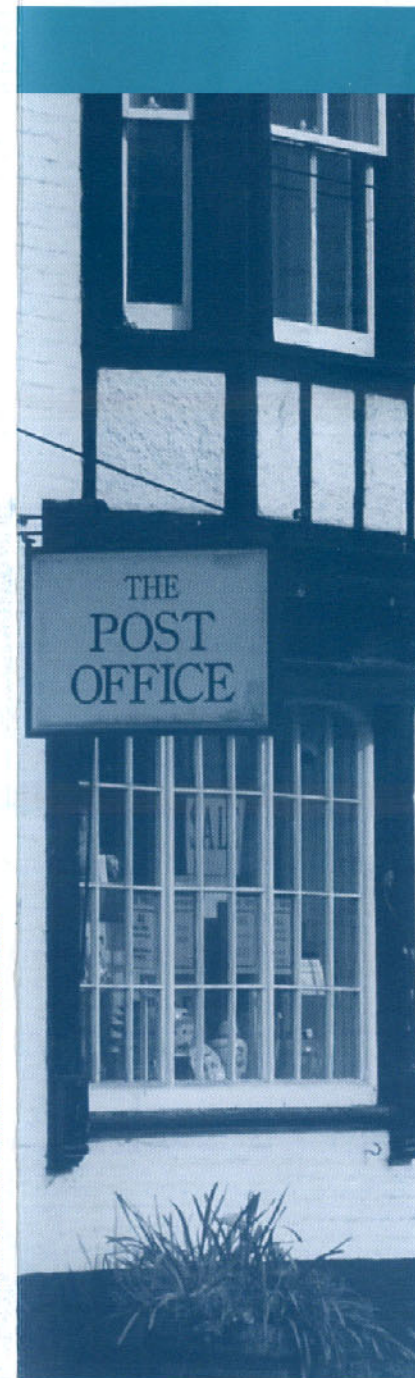
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## Community Facilities Viability Assessment



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