

HMRC's office closure programme is about to be r...

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The [Harwich and Manningtree Standard](#) is not a usual source here, but a news report it covered seems highly pertinent in the light of the National Audit Office commentary on the preparedness, or otherwise, of the UK for a no deal Brexit. As they note:

Concerns have been raised about Harwich's HM Revenue and Customs office being turned into houses while there are still uncertainties about the impact Brexit will have on ports.

Garry Calver, Harwich councillor, said: "We expressed great concern from the very beginning at the closure and sale of Harwich's Customs House before it was known what the impact Brexit may have on the port.

"It's clear now that these concerns were justified and there is great worry at how our port will be affected in a no deal situation."

The customs house was scrapped as part of a major overhaul of the service which will see the eventual closure of all HM Revenue and Customs offices in the East of England.

Work will be transferred to one super site in Stratford, east London, with the South-East also being served by a centre in Croydon.

Harwich is one of the ports that will supposedly take more traffic if Dover becomes blocked after Brexit. It's Customs House has, however, been closed and [sold](#) as part of the HMRC rationalisation plan to which I objected for years. So now a crisis in the port will be managed from Stratford in east London, or Croydon in south London. It doesn't take a moment to work out how well that will go.

I argued throughout this whole closure programme that tax is not some remote, technical exercise but is instead a front line issue where government and people need to interact where people are. I think we are just about to find out how right that argument was.