



ANNE THOMPSON

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Dear Richard,

FAO: NatWest Bank

First, let me thank you for your courtesy in informing me of the plan to close the NatWest branch in Tilehurst. As the local representative, I have been deeply concerned over the last year as both Lloyds Bank and the Nationwide Building Society closed their Tilehurst branches.

In January, I know that residents were delighted to see that NatWest did not intend to shut down in Tilehurst. So sadly, the latest decision has come as a bitter blow. The closure of Tilehurst's NatWest will create a banking desert in Berkshire between Thatcham and Reading town centre, over 13 miles away. This will have a chilling effect on local communities, on residents and on independent businesses.

Local people, including my fellow councillors, are deeply concerned that the closure of the branch will impact disabled and older residents most severely. I appreciate that, with the help you're offering, some of these residents will be able to move to online or telephone banking, but some will not. Those unable to make the switch over to virtual banking are those residents who rely on in-person services and are most likely to find it difficult, if not impossible, to travel into the centre of Reading for their banking.

I also wanted to highlight that users of NatWest in the Oracle in Reading town centre are regularly asked to attend in-person meetings in the Tilehurst branch because the Oracle has insufficient meeting space and opening hours. The problems caused by this closure are likely to reach much further than the residents of Tilehurst.

My fellow councillors and I have already been inundated with messages from local residents and business people to express their alarm. Of course, being unable to deposit cash and collect change, in addition to the loss of footfall following closure of the bank, is a cause of uncertainty and apprehension for those who have built the community in Tilehurst.

I therefore wanted to ask you directly to reconsider this decision to close your Tilehurst branch, given the far-reaching impact this choice will have on our local residents, businesses and community at large.

Thank you for taking the time to read our considered response. I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Thompson

Cllr. Anne Thompson

Lib Dem Councillor for Tilehurst



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