18th August 2026

Email:- nquin@link.co.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

<u>Fakenham Banking Hub appeal request</u>

I refer to the recent assessment carried out by LINK of cash access in Fakenham, Norfolk; which concluded that there needed to be increased capacity at an Assisted Cash Service in the town to provide for a free cash deposit service for personal banking, a cash deposit service for businesses, a free cash withdrawal service for personal current account holders and a cash withdrawal service for businesses; but **NOT the need to provide a Banking Hub service in the town.**

North Norfolk District Council would question how such a conclusion has been reached and would ask that LINK review its recommendations for the following reasons:-

- North Norfolk District Council has worked closely with LINK and Cash Access UK over the past three years and has been pleased to support the provision of banking hub facilities in Holt, Cromer and North Walsham in the District which has seen the re-provision of much-valued banking services to business and personal customers in these towns following the loss of high street banks from each of these locations in recent years.

- Given Fakenham's population, extensive rural hinterland and relative lack of public transport services in the area served by the town as a local service centre and provider of education, health, leisure services and employment; the District Council is surprised that Fakenham isn't seen as a potential location for a banking hub facility.

- Fakenham is the largest town in the west of the North Norfolk district – being some 26 miles from Norwich and 22 miles from Kings Lynn. The town serves an extensive hinterland of rural north-west, north and central Norfolk – taking in much of the North Norfolk Coast National Landscape Area between Burnham Overy Staithe in the west and Blakeney in the east – including the small resort town of Wells-next-the-Sea and the pilgrimage village of Walsingham – serving a total population of more than 25,000 people across an extensive geography of many small village communities.

- LINK's recent appraisal stated that the town had 17,598 adults living in the local area and 9,685 living near the high street. The District Council doesn't understand how these figures have been calculated but understood that 2024 ONS figures had the town's total population as being 8,558, with the Adult (Over 18) population as 7,063. However, using the Fakenham Academy (high school) catchment area the adult population would be 15,156; but, as stated in the point above, Fakenham also fulfils a role as a key local service centre for a large area of the North Norfolk coast, centred on the small town of Wells-next-the-Sea, which would take the total population served by the town to more like 25,000.

- As Fakenham is a key settlement in Norfolk, with a strong and diverse employment base, it is identified for future residential and commercial growth in accordance with national planning policies. The North Norfolk District has an up-to-date Local Plan (adopted in December 2025) which makes provision for the town to accommodate over 1700 new dwellings in the period to 2040 across five allocated sites – including a large urban extension to the north of the town accommodating 1500 homes in two (major) phases of development.

- Historically, Fakenham had large branches of Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds, NatWest and TSB – four of which occupied prominent buildings in the town's attractive central Market Place, serving agricultural, manufacturing and retail businesses and personal account holders. The town also had branches of the Halifax, Nationwide and Norwich and Peterborough (subsequently the Nottingham) building societies. Seven of these eight retail banking businesses have closed their Fakenham branches over the past few years, with only Nationwide continuing to have a permanent presence in the town. Over the same period, branches of Barclays have closed in Burnham Market and Wells-next-the-Sea.

- Over the past few years there has also been a number of post office closures in the Fakenham area, further restricting access to cash and banking services for local residents and small businesses – including at Holt Road and Wells Road, Fakenham; Colkirk, Helhoughton; Little Snoring, Sculthorpe, Walsingham and West Raynham. Between 2020 and 2025 Fakenham didn't have a permanent post office facility and after a period of temporary and mobile provision, a new branch facility opened in the town's Market Place in the autumn of 2025.

- Fakenham and its hinterland continue to have a diverse range of businesses, many of which are self-employed or small businesses in the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors and therefore have a need to deposit and withdraw cash.

- Whilst acting as a local service centre, Fakenham's relative isolation and distance from other large settlements – eg Norwich and Kings Lynn - means that the town has a high degree of self-containment, with over 65% of local people living and working in the town and its hinterland.

- Given Fakenham's relative distance to other towns and retail centres, the town has the largest number of national retailers of any town in North Norfolk – with four supermarkets and a number of national and regional high street stores, as well as a strong offering by local independent retail businesses. Further, the weekly market remains a key asset for the town attracting both local people and visitors, many of whom rely on cash transactions for purchases and whose traders would value a banking hub facility to deposit cash.

- The North Norfolk Coast and Fakenham area attract large numbers of tourist visitors who might want to access cash. Key visitor attractions include the Norfolk Coast National Landscape Area, Fakenham Racecourse; Pensthorpe; Thursford, Holkham Hall Estate; Walsingham Shrines.

- Public transport services to/from Fakenham are quite limited with bus journey times to Norwich and Kings Lynn taking over an hour each way. Unlike Cromer and North Walsham, Fakenham has no rail service.

- North Norfolk, including the Fakenham area, has an aged demographic, with the numbers of people aged Over 65 being some of the highest in England – at 33% of the district's population compared to only 19% nationally. Older people rely on local services more than the wider population, possibly due to losing the ability to drive and being more cautious around the use of online banking. This element of the population therefore attaches more importance to and values in-person customer service provision as provided through Banking Hub facilities more than the wider population.

- Compared to other towns in Norfolk where banking hubs have been agreed / provided there does seem to be some inconsistency in the data used to assess levels of need and access to retained banking services in larger settlements – Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn, Dereham and Bury St Edmunds. For example, Fakenham has a much larger population (both in the town and wider hinterland) than either Holt or Watton and is further from and has poorer public transport services and frequency than either Wymondham or North Walsham to Norwich.

- North Norfolk District Council doesn't see this as being just an issue of having access to cash – the town's distance from retail branches of major banks restricts choice and customer access to personal financial services and therefore the establishment and operation of a banking hub, where there is a presence of different financial services businesses over the course of a week, would be greatly valued and re-instate / strengthen the role of the town through increased footfall through people having a reason to visit the town centre as in the past.

- At the present time, the District Council understands that Barclays, Lloyds and NatWest have all provided some customer service presence in Fakenham at the Community Centre and in a mobile facility on one or more days of the week and believes that the quality and visibility of such services would be greatly enhanced through the sharing of a premises in a central location within the town through the establishment of a Banking Hub. There are currently a number of possible premises in the Market Place, Bridge Street and Norwich Street areas of the town centre which the District Council believes could accommodate a Banking Hub based on the model adopted in other North Norfolk towns.

- The District Council believes that there is significant support for the establishment of a Banking Hub in Fakenham from the public, local businesses and key local stakeholders.

Should you have any questions concerning the above, or wish to discuss how the District Council might be able to support the provision of a Banking Hub in Fakenham aligned with supporting our objectives of promoting financial inclusion and local and national Government's ambitions to see a revitalisation of high streets / town centres through accommodating new uses which provide vital services and generate interest and footfall, please do come back to me.

For all of the above reasons, North Norfolk District Council would ask LINK to review its decision in concluding that Fakenham does not need a Banking Hub facility and speak further with local stakeholder groups about how such a facility could be provided in the town in the future.

Yours faithfully

Steve Blatch - BA (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI, DMS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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Our Ref:- Fakenham Banking Hub 17 08 26

CC:- Jerome Mayhew MP, Member of Parliament for the Broadland and Fakenham Constituency
Cllr Angela Glynn, Mayor of Fakenham, Fakenham Town Council
Cllr T Adams, Leader of North Norfolk District Council
Cllrs Vickers and Puchard, District Councillors for the Lancaster (Fakenham) South ward
Cllr Cushing, District Councillor for the Lancaster (Fakenham) North ward