

Address to the Full Council. 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Gateway Project on London Road.

I have lived on the London Road and run a business there since 1995. A few of you who have lived in Bath for that long, will remember London Road as it was then. Perhaps our surveyor noticed when he wrote in his survey in 1995:

*16 Walcot Buildings is a semi derelict building in a moribund terrace in what the surveyor described as a cosmopolitan part of the city. Today, most of us have no problem with: cosmopolitan. But rightly, we do have, or should have, a problem with moribund and semi derelict.*

In 1995, when my partner and I looked at London Road, we recognised that it had nowhere to go but..... back up.....That was to be a hard undertaking on a street where it was blatantly evident that it was a shorter walk to buy a bag of heroin than to buy a bag of sugar. In those far off days there were 17 empty shop fronts on London Road, and serious street crime was a nightly occurrence. However, change was on the way.....residents and businesses met the B&NES Chief Executive Officer and London Road Partnership came into being with the aid of council officers. With the help of our ward councillors we began to push for small changes, and then, larger changes.

In the intervening years we have had no fewer than 10 Walcot ward councillors, of whom, I am happy to say seven were on a scale between good and brilliant.....but even with all of their help, it has taken nineteen years to get a scheme drawn up that at last recognises that the London Road is *not* a motorway linking Southampton with the M4, that London Road is *not* a road to somewhere else. .... nor is not bed-sit land. But, Yes, it is a living community. Yes, it is a place where literally hundreds of people actually live and work. It is a fixed and stable community, where neighbour knows neighbour.....and helps neighbour. It`s a street where parents walk with their children. It`s a place where there are real, old established businesses.....not city centre pop-up shops.

The community has had to work hard to get this far. There is always a lot of undesirable investment in urban decay, and we experienced that nasty presence at our early public meetings; and Yes, we did get windows broken and Yes, we did get a swastika gouged deep into the woodwork of our shop front.....But, it was always the real and decent community members who set the positive agenda.

It is the same community that now forms the Gateway Group; residents and businesses. As a community we know what the problems are. As a community, we have set the priorities that finally puts people on an equal footing with traffic, The Gateway Scheme is also the final recognition that London Road is the Gateway to a World Heritage City.....and street of nearly 200 listed buildings of which 42 are Grade 1

Our greatest problem is traffic.....particularly heavy goods traffic.....most of which has nothing to do with the local economy.....London Road remains one of the most polluted streets in England and is currently under Air Quality monitoring. You will all know that Bath is under a legal requirement to reduce atmospheric pollution by 2020, or face heavy fines.....The proposals as laid out in the Gateway Scheme, by reducing traffic to one lane for much of the length of London Road, will effectively do that. Quite simply, if you do not solve the problem now..... you will have to solve the problem by 2020, or face heavy fines.

Our project should have started in January, Now, with this late introduced delay into a project; we risk losing the funding for the whole project.....and if the Gateway Project is shelved no one will benefit.....not even the cycling lobby.

The victim of a wrong decision tonight will not be the motorist or the cyclist on the urban motorway called The London Road. The victim will be the community that lives and works there, a community that deserves your protection and your goodwill.