

STATEMENT TO B&NES COUNCIL

21 July 2016.

Walcot Terrace & Walcot Buildings.

My name is Alex Schlesinger: I live on Walcot Buildings and run a retail business from there.

The regeneration of the public realm on London Road has been a significant and welcome event; however, it has thrown into high relief a number of problems which relate to community relations with B&NES council and problems with the concept of community and public consultation. These are affecting residents and businesses in both Walcot Terrace and Walcot Buildings.

At the inception of the project the council set up a consultative group of local residents, known as the Gateway Group. From the start it was made clear by officers that the group would only be allowed limited input. Eventually, at a later meeting, we were actually told that we would have to accept the scheme as it was being put to us, or the whole scheme would be scrapped...including the grants for frontage renovations.

During the time that the Gateway group was meeting regularly we were shown no fewer than three different proposals for traffic regulation.

The Gateway group last met on the 26th March 2015. There was no council officer available to take notes. The group has not met since, and despite enquiries as to the status of the group it has never been officially disbanded.

Since that time, and in response to pressure from the cycle groups there have been a further two TRO schemes published, and possibly another, sixth order that has never been published. I refer to a possible sixth order because the street signage as installed is at variance to the details as published in TRO number 5, which was published 11 months *after* the last meeting of the consultative Gateway Group.

Throughout the time that the Gateway Group met, members repeatedly warned the council that residents at Walcot Terrace had benefited for a number of years from the shared use of the outer pavement: Shared between pedestrians, vehicles delivering, and cyclists. The Gateway Group was concerned that in response to approaches from cycle groups this benefit was now to be withdrawn without consultation with those residents and businesses likely to be affected. Eventually, the only change we were able to elicit was provision for hearses to park outside Messrs. Dolman.

During the time that we were discussing the earlier TRO proposals I had become concerned that some features on the TRO proposal map were not explained in the map key. I was particularly concerned about an undefined change in parking and loading for the length of Walcot Buildings. Despite repeated emails to Highways, I was unable to obtain a full explanation of their proposals.

As the Gateway group did not meet after March 2015, there was no further public consultation other than a hastily organised meeting between councillors, officers and some residents. Even this meeting had its time and date changed at the very last minute; thus ensuring that interested parties, including myself, were unable to attend. The meeting lasted less than an hour, as much extra time had previously allocated to an earlier meeting with cycle groups, a meeting to which residents and other interested parties had been excluded.

Now, that the TRO proposals have been put into experimental practice, we have noticed further changes from TRO 5. Cyclists are now given priority to pedestrians on the pavement at Walcot Terrace, whilst at Walcot Buildings The TRO 5 proposal to prohibit loading at peak morning hours has now transformed into what appears to be a 24 hour prohibition on loading and parking. Bearing in

mind that only three properties in Walcot Buildings and none in Walcot Terrace have any rear access.

This means that in Walcot Buildings and Walcot Terrace, no fewer than eighty-three residential units and seven businesses appear to have been denied reasonable vehicular access to their premises, with no loading signs and double yellow tabs on the kerbs. This means that removal vans, delivery vans and vehicles bringing services to these Grade 2 listed properties. We already have instances such as new carpets that remain undelivered, and at one property, a specialist firm called in to make a chimney flue safe has been unable to bring its vehicle to the location. The chimney flue remains unsafe.

Indeed, the only places where loading is permitted along the whole length of London Road in question, is the adjacent Bedford Street which is immediately blocked if any large commercial vehicle stops there and at the far end of London Road, at the approach to Cleveland Bridge.

I therefore ask that there is immediate and equitable consultation with residents, businesses, pedestrian interest groups and the cycle groups, prior to any further implementation of the current TRO, be it TRO 5 or something subsequent.