

Kari Erickson statement Cabinet 23 June 2021

I want to share with the cabinet my experience as a mother of a severely asthmatic child; I am hoping that I can share my experience briefly and then briefly deliver my views of LTNs. I hope that my input can be received with respect and sensitivity as it touches on a very trying time in my life.

I am a mother of three, including twin girls who were premature. One of my daughters suffered a collapsed lung soon after birth, and in her first 18 months she was repeatedly hospitalised for bronchiolitis. We gave her an inhaler around the clock, including at times in the middle of the night to try to keep her lungs clear. We surmised that the air quality in London was really harming her, notwithstanding the fact that we lived on a blocked off street with no through traffic, part of Londons "cycle superhighway." We also did not own a car, but we did use black taxis to get around including to attend her various hospital appointments. I am pleased to say that, since moving to Bath, she has not had another episode that has resulted in hospitalisation and we now hardly use her inhaler. We do, however, have a car now and car journeys are a part of life even as we walk as much as we can, including to school and nursery. I note that her breathing is worse on busy roads; a prime example is the playground in Victoria Park!

I understand that the council and particularly the liberal democrat party has an agenda to reduce traffic overall, to promote active travel, and to promote clean air initiatives. I have some scepticism that "liveable neighbourhoods" with roads closed to through traffic will be an effective tool for these measures, and I am concerned that it will create further rifts and divides in our community as indeed I already see them doing. Traffic does not "evaporate", and certainly it doesn't in a city like Bath that is often rainy and incredibly hilly. We did not own a car in London but we do here; I could not take my children to enjoy the activities, the escapes out of the city and at times the journey to school without it. I have explored car pools with other parents - there are several good reasons why they do not work. I fear that this policy seeks to penalise drivers rather than incentivise "green" behaviour with positive reinforcement. I have witnessed division in the parts of London I used to call home as low traffic zones were implemented, and I foresee congestion, aggravation and bad feeling if they are implemented here. Everyone I hear promote these schemes wants to live in an LTN, but no one wants "other people's" traffic. My own view is that Bath residents live in a city and must accept that this comes with traffic; we are not a little village or out in the countryside. I really feel that this plan is flawed; just because there is money given for something like this doesn't mean it is a good idea. I would love to hear more about school buses, better public transport, increasing use of the park and ride and incentivising residents to own only one vehicle. With more people working from home, perhaps fewer families need two cars - this could go a long way

to helping parking issues. I also wonder why we do not have car clubs or promote use of taxis; that is how we tackle the need for a second car when it arises.

I also fear that this scheme is promoted at the expense of business as it complicates visits to Bath. Sometimes I feel that residents here don't want people visiting our beautiful city. If you feel that way, why live somewhere like Bath? On the few occasions where I have voiced my scepticism about LTNs (always in very measured tones), I have been lambasted; one person decried "car-centric parents"; another very vocal proponent of active travel who you probably all know told me that when I was taking my daughter to hospital in a car in London I was "part of the problem." There is a distinct lack of compassion in these conversations and it is pretty repellent!