

Malcolm Baldwin statement – 11th January 2024 CES meeting.

The importance and context of the Circus Area/Catharine Place Liveable Neighbourhood implementation.

Good morning.

Chair and members of the Scrutiny Committee thank you for this opportunity of speaking to you again following my attendance and presentation at your Scrutiny Committee of September 2023 [see Appendix below].

Out of respect for the importance of the role of this particular Committee, I was conscious that in September it was not possible for me to comment upon the actual detail of our local community's LN proposals. Those proposals related to a much consulted upon and meaningful Liveable Neighbourhood within our Circus catchment area, which for all practical purposes also includes the neighbouring location of Catharine Place.

Indeed, let me first take this opportunity of apologising to members who may have, on that occasion, requested more detailed responses from me to their enquiries relating to potential individual street interventions within our proposals.

I felt at that time that awaiting a decision from our Highways Department on which elements of our overall proposals they might judge realistic to carry forward, within the likely constraints of financial and budgetary considerations, was a more prudent approach.

The above being said, I wanted today to take the opportunity to briefly re-emphasise both the importance and context of the recently announced proposals by our Council in relation to our Circus area and Catharine Place, as jointly they reflect an important element within the next suggested phase in our city's Liveable Neighbourhoods implementation.

Also, in fairness to this Committee and its members to put myself up for scrutiny if you have any more detailed questions specific to the recently announced LN proposals, as they importantly relate in their context to our CARA area.

Hence, in summary, the importance and context of the recently announced proposals:

- For CARA, the rationale for LNs has never been about mere traffic interventions.
- We have never adopted the view that our local Council should do everything for us.
- We have initiated significant public realm improvements in key areas of our catchment area, in particularly the last two/three years, in Margaret's Buildings and Julian Road and now are additionally focused on similar improvements in Saville Row and Bartlett Street.....all aspects of our public realm are included in this improvement process. (Note: Improved traffic management is an additional important part of this process).
- Our catchment area represents the second most significant visitor heritage attraction in our city * and the dangers in potential 'over-tourism' need urgent action to 'disentangle' significant levels of this visitor footfall from the toxic mix of excessive and often speeding rat-running and indeed from some more general traffic flows.

This 'disentangling' of excessive and toxic traffic movements will create a greatly more benign environment for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

- Our proposals, of which the two most important elements are reflected in the Council's most recent LN announcements, have always represented a meaningful, benign but relatively low-cost intervention.

- The nature of the significant heritage aspects of our catchment area, with its continually increasing local Bath-based and general tourist footfall, means that the improvement values delivered by these current proposals will be enhancements not just on a local basis but for our city as a whole.

I hope that, perhaps even on a 'multi-partisan' basis, this Committee can endorse the LN proposals for our CARA catchment area and encourage the turbo-charging of their implementation.

I recognise that we are not quite 'over the line' yet but the work of Highways officers and key councillors, such as in particular, Cllr. Joel Hirst and Cllr. Manda Rigby and her team has been exemplary to date.

Let's support them in getting this particular proposal over that line for the benefit of our city as a whole. That's what has always differentiated CARA's Liveable Neighbourhood proposals from others it adds real value not just to our local area but to our city as a whole!

* Included in CARA's catchment area:

The Circus.

The Assembly Rooms.

The main route from the city to the Royal Crescent (via 'upper' Gay Street or Bartlett Street).

The main route from the city to the city's parks area (via 'upper' Gay Street or Bartlett Street).

Malcolm Baldwin.

Chair - Circus Area Residents Association (CARA).