

Statement to Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

Ceris Humphreys (Bath resident)

The Streets Strategy report seeks the Panel's input on the principles of a Streets Strategy and its views on what issues should be identified, considered and addressed within the proposed coordinated approach.

Please consider this statement in your debate.

Fundamentally, sustainability has at its heart enabling people to live in the places where they can easily access the things they need. One thing Bath achieves much more successfully than many other cities is having many residents living in its centre. And the presence of a significant residential population is a key contributor to Bath's vibrancy, making it a living thriving place, not just another visit destination.

B&NES has long recognised the importance of this to the city and its economy, seeking to bring into residential use more unused accommodation above commercial units in the centre (eg Milsom Quarter Masterplan).

It's therefore surprising the report doesn't currently highlight the need for the Street Strategy to reflect the vital need to keep Bath liveable for residents.

The impacts of commercial activities in the City Centre on residents are many and development of the Street Strategy should take proper account of this.

But particular attention needs to be paid to noise – an impact which doesn't merely affect residents as they move around the streets but penetrates their living space, studies and bedrooms in buildings that often cannot be insulated effectively against noise. This needs to be considered in the context of a proper noise strategy covering not only city centre streets but other public spaces in the city include parks and green spaces, as the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations has raised with council leadership recently.

It's now well-recognised noise can impact adversely on public health in many ways, with a scientific pathway now being recognised as related to distress produced by increased physiological arousal because of recurrent stimulation of the endocrine system and autonomic nervous system induced by intrusive noise. It's also well-understood these impacts correlate with the number of occurrences, volume and time of day – poor sleep can cause daytime sleepiness and affect children's learning.

Consequences include reduced mental health, impaired learning and development in children and young people, increased behavioural problems, and many others.

It's essential the Street Strategy recognises the presence and needs of residents, with most importantly proper consideration of how noise will be managed so as to prevent adversely impacting on the mental health of local people and life chances of children and young people.

Please ensure this fundamental issue of liveability and sustainability is included in the Strategy going forward.