



Open letter to Exeter City Council Leader, Councillor Phil Bialyk

Dangerous Road Crossings near St Sidwell's Point

From Cllr Carol Bennett, Exeter City Councillor, Heavitree Ward

Dr Andy Ketchin, Green Party Candidate for Newtown & St Leonard's ward

February 28th 2023

Dear Councillor Bialyk,

Residents are concerned about the safety of pedestrians and cyclists travelling to and from the key city facilities of St Sidwell's Point, the bus station, the Job Centre and Vue Cinema. Concerns have come to us from across the city, but especially from Heavitree, Newtown & St Leonard's.

The access to these facilities is designed for cars, not for pedestrians and cyclists. Some road crossings are uncontrolled and difficult to negotiate, and the controlled crossings require pedestrians to make significant detours, away from natural 'desire lines'. This means that people are routinely forced to make dangerous crossings on Paris St, Cheeke St and the upper end of Western Way. Additionally, cyclists have to contend with the very busy and fast-moving roundabout, with many therefore choosing to avoid using it.

Results of an Exeter Green Party survey evidence just how dangerous residents find these crossings, with many stating they will not even allow older children to travel to the pool on foot or by bike. I am attaching a selection of quotes from residents to illustrate the reality of their experiences.

When Cllr Bennett asked about taking action on this issue, the Labour Portfolio Holder said that this was not a matter for the city council.

However, Exeter City Council has a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of residents using its facilities, including St Sidwell's Point. This includes providing safe access for pedestrians and cyclists. The City Council also has policy commitments to supporting Active Travel and increasing the number of people walking and cycling for short journeys in the city. All these issues are areas for City Council action.

We are therefore asking you to take action on areas that are within the remit of Exeter City Council on this important issue. Some specific requests are set out below.

1. The draft Exeter Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. (LCWIP)

In the draft Plan, there is an Exeter City Centre Walking Network Priority map, (p 98) showing proposed priority walking routes within the city centre. There are no routes proposed that enable pedestrians or cyclists to safely access the pool, bus station, Vue or Job Centre. The nearest 'priority walking route' proposed is Sidwell Street several hundred metres away. Access by pedestrians entering the city centre from St Leonards, Newtown or Heavitree is not addressed, despite the volume of people arriving at these destinations on foot & by bike. We know that the current access is dangerous and entirely out of step with the City Council's stated aspirations to encourage Active Travel and to comply with the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy. The LCWIP (section 6.2.1) points out the importance of safe crossings.

- *Can you reassure me that Exeter City Council will work with Devon County Council to review the current proposed priority walking routes to include access to the pool, bus station, Vue cinema and the Job Centre ?*
- *Can you ensure that the LCWIP is used as a valuable opportunity to review the poor design and access decisions made when the pool and bus station sites were at the planning stage?*
- *Will you also confirm you support a redesign that enables pedestrians and cyclists of all ages to arrive safely and easily at these key city centre facilities?*

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Please can you arrange for copies of the following to be shared with me:

- any planning documents relating to risk assessment for access, for the bus station and St Sidwell's Point?
- any information relating to mitigation measures proposed and actioned, regarding risks on access to the pool and the bus station?
- Current risk assessment documents for the St Sidwell Point site.

We look forward to hearing from you

yours sincerely

CLlr Carol Bennett & Dr Andy Ketchin