

PE1595/X

Stuart MacMillan Letter of 14 January 2016

To the Public Petitions Committee.

I write in reference to the petition to PE 1595 “Moratorium on shared space schemes” which i wish to support.

I am the former chairman and a current member of the East Dunbartonshire Visual Impaired Peoples Forum. Through circumstances thrust upon us the forum members have had to become rapidly informed about the current state of town management schemes. The proposed changes in Kirkintilloch to include a shared space has critical implications for the mobility and independence of, at the very least , the visually impaired members of the community.

Any design change should be inclusive of all members of society and enable them to continue to do previous actions and allow them to explore their limits and encourage further participation in society. Any scheme that leads to reduction in mobility and removes freedom of movement must be thoroughly thought through to remove any such actions.

I was always taught to make sure to differentiate between design and styling when carrying out project planning. The shared schemes appear to be an exercise in styling to give the appearance of action and rejuvenation to an area by superficial means by removing what is thought of as street clutter. However the underlying flaws in these systems remove involvement from those very people that must be pedestrians in an area. If the intention is to revitalise a town centre to help the local shops and other amenities it would be counter productive to reduce the ability of potential pedestrians to safely navigate around the area.

There are many towns and cities around the world who are aiming for a “Vision Zero”; “zero fatalities and serious injuries in a transportation system” using safer design of streets which “prioritise the most vulnerable travelers”.

The current push is for plans to be predictive and make sure accidents do not happen rather than reactive. Current thinking is to make sure that design is “pedestrian first” not to simply equalise all of the transport methods but to be able to correctly identify the vulnerable users and make sure they are not disadvantaged. A person versus a car can never be equal without some compensating arrangement being controllable by the pedestrian. An accessible crossing in a properly designated place has the potential to enable such a balancing mechanism. Arbitrarily placing controls as a box ticking exercise to claim this allows everyone to use the system as before is not only bad design but potentially negligent .

There is so much that needs to be properly set out to ensure consistency of intent and implementation of these schemes that while there is no set of professionally reviewed guidelines it is reckless to continue to create such traffic exercises. Additional costs to implement corrective plans would be removed if we had proper

planning at the initial stages. It is as good and correct to say that a scheme is not right to be implemented in an area than coerce a plan to fit inappropriately.

In light of this it would be fit and proper for a comprehensive and planned approach and set of guidelines be created for the correct use of different traffic schemes. We do not currently have this knowledge about shared spaces and we must halt further implementations.

I therefore give consent for my support to be added to the Parliament website.

Sincerely,

Stuart MacMillan