

Dear Shehla Naqvi,

As all those who were copied into your email will probably know, I am the councillor who you refer to in your letter to Nick Brown.

Since you cannot possibly know the details of my 'engagement' with Sustrans and the Council in relation to this matter, it is not surprising that your letter is so full of ignorant comments.

Given your concern for democratic principles, you will presumably be happy to support the call which I have made to the Council to ensure that the Nolan principles in relation to standards in public life are fully complied with in connection with any decisions taken on Acorn Road. I look forward to hearing you do so.

You will presumably also support the democratic right of people to petition the Council stating that they believe the Council has 'failed to consider properly and fairly the proposals for change in relation to Acorn Road' and should review its decision. As you should know, over 1300 residents (the vast majority of them from Jesmond) have done so. I look forward to you agreeing that it is important that these views be taken into account by the Council.

It is odd that, as someone who apparently is such a great admirer of the democratic process, you seem to criticise me for doing my job as a councillor. I have been elected (twice) via the democratic process to represent the residents of North Jesmond. I try my hardest at all times to do so. In relation to this particular matter, I have had numerous people thank me, in the warmest terms, for the work I am doing on their behalf. They do not think I am trying to subvert the democratic process. On the contrary, they think I am trying to correct something which has gone badly wrong.

Of course, on a matter such as this, where views are divided, there will also be many residents who feel I am not doing the right thing. But the fact is that, as a result of the democratic process, I am one of the three people who North Jesmond residents have chosen to represent them. There will no doubt be many Conservatives living in Newcastle East who do not support the stance which Nick Brown takes in Parliament on numerous issues. Presumably however they accept that he is entitled to act as he thinks best and do not accuse him of subverting the democratic process just because he takes a different view from them.

When you stood recently as a candidate for election, you were decisively not chosen to represent residents. Yet now you seem to be taking it upon yourself to act as a residents' representative. Of course you have every right to lobby the Council as any other resident does, but you have no democratic mandate whatsoever.

Various people expressed astonishment to me that you could regard convening a public meeting to discuss Acorn Road as anti-democratic. You now say that it was a 'one-sided' public meeting. This is in sharp contrast to the views of many people who said that the meeting was fairly conducted, that I gave a balanced presentation and who noted that views from across the spectrum were expressed. Were you in fact at the meeting?

You refer to being impressed by the 'depth and thoroughness of this process'. It must be clear, even to you, that large numbers of residents and others do not share that view and in fact feel very strongly to the contrary. To say that 'it would be undemocratic to overturn this' is the sort of simplistic cant that unfortunately you seem to find it hard to avoid writing.

Throughout your correspondence you appear to imply that people opposed to Option 1 have no interest in environmental improvements and no interest in finding a scheme that produces benefits for cyclists and pedestrians. This is a complete travesty of the truth which it suits you and your colleagues to propagate. There are numerous passionate cyclists, prolific pedestrians and people who care deeply about the local and the wider environment who are opposed to Option 1 for a wide range of good reasons.

I, together with many concerned residents and traders and my ward colleagues, have been working very hard over recent weeks to try to find the best possible solution for Acorn Road. There have been some encouraging signs of progress and we will continue to work hard to try to achieve the best overall solution.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Breakey

Councillor for North Jesmond