



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA



DUNCAN BAKER MP
LOCAL, LISTENING, LONG TERM

Sarah Bütikofer
Liberal Democrat Leader
North Norfolk District Council
Holt Road
Cromer
NR27 9EN

Saturday 11th July, 2020

Dear Sarah,

North Walsham Town Centre Closure

I have returned home this morning after visiting North Walsham to see for myself the effects of the total closure of the town centre to traffic.

Since our initial conversation about this where I gave you the benefit of the doubt about these changes being necessary on safety grounds, I have monitored the growing anger from traders, residents and disabled people – many of whom have contacted my office - towards the council. They feel they have been completely ignored in their own town.

I was greeted with huge and very understandable anger by virtually everyone I met. The community thinks the council, by closing the Market Place, is 'killing the town'. There has been a lack of consultation and an unwillingness to listen to traders' fears, with some reporting takings down by a third since the town was closed off.

High Streets need footfall – if you make it harder for people to shop, they will bypass the town, which is what has happened.

Even more concerning was how many upset disabled people I met. They are having to walk a considerable distance to access the shops. They feel the council does not care about their needs and the solution in place at Bank Loke is a long walk which many are struggling with.

Public safety is important, but what has been put in place under that banner is, in my view, unacceptable. There are just two pinch points in the town by Lloyds Bank and QD. Lloyds is only open for four hours each day. To shut the whole town without a viable alternative shows a real lack of consideration for those trying to make a livelihood.

I urge you to deal with this situation immediately. Please listen to the community and work with those who know the town well to ensure it can operate safely without the need for shutting the entire Market Place: before more businesses are damaged even further.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Baker MP
Member of Parliament for North Norfolk

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