Listed Building Application 19/05077/LBA – Cleveland Bridge

Comments by Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (FoBRA)

1. Since the need for the repairs to Cleveland Bridge has been occasioned by heavy traffic for which it was never designed, a permanent HGV weight limit should be imposed after the completion of the works to reduce the risk of further damage in the future. This should be, at most, equal to the 18 tonnes temporary weight limit, but we believe that a more appropriate weight limit would be 7.5 tonnes limit such as applies through the city centre.

2. Cleveland Bridge is not part of the national Strategic Route Network (SRN) and is therefore under B&NES control. The SRN does however run from the M4 down the A46 to Bath and the A36 south east from Bath, so in effect passes through the city at this point. B&NES Council should discuss with DfT replacing this part of the SRN with a more suitable alternative route such as the A350. The Council should take the opportunity to monitor the pattern of HGV movements when the bridge is closed.

3. The 'Bath City Centre Diversion Route' (WSP Report Volume 3 Figure 6.1) is apparently intended for HGVs coming from the A36 south to access the centre for deliveries. However, other HGV drivers going north-south or vice versa will be tempted to take this 4.5 mile diversion rather than the alternative routes. The only thing to stop them is the 7.5 tonne HGV weight limit through the city centre. This is not currently enforced. It will have to be rigorously enforced for the duration of the bridge closure to prevent the use of the city centre by large numbers of heavy lorries.

4. The main east and west diversion routes appear to assume that traffic arriving at one end of the bridge will have a destination on the immediate other side of the bridge. But it seems more likely that its ultimate destination will be far removed from there. For example, an HGV which would have come down the A46 from the M4 could well have a destination further south, so will have no interest in driving up the A36 back to Bath (and would presumably be diverted via the A350 in any case). Therefore it would appear that the 23 and 45 mile diversions quoted represent the extreme case, and that traffic will in practice be diverted by significantly less than these distances.

4. Although it is not made explicit in the discussion at paragraph 4.2 of the WSP report, the map at Annex B proposes that the 'Bath City Centre Diversion Route' would be the main diversion route for LGVs and cars. This would result in a huge increase in the number of LGVs and cars passing through the city centre for the months that the bridge is under repair, adding greatly to the already high levels of traffic congestion and air pollution in one of the most sensitive parts of the World Heritage Site, including one of its Key Elements. It is also one of the air pollution 'hot spots' that the Bath Clean Air Plan is meant to address, with special measures required at Gay Street/Queen Square. It would also add to pressure on the A36/Lower Bristol Road, including the Churchill Bridge roundabout, which already has very high levels of air pollution.

5. The diversion of LGVs and cars through the city centre would have a major and unacceptable impact on the amenity and air quality of the area. The Council should take steps to ensure that as much of this traffic as possible (particularly LGVs) is directed to use alternative diversion routes which avoid the city altogether. Any reference to the city centre as a diversion route for LGVs and cars should be deleted from the plan.