

City Centre Access: An open community brief

Please note, this Open Brief was hosted on the City of York Council [website](#). This provides a commentary along with the key questions associated with the City Centre Access consultation. The information was provided in an accessible and easy to navigate manner.

1. Footstreet hours

We've summarised what you have told us so far, during [previous engagement exercises](#), in this 'open brief'; each page highlights the nature of 'key questions' residents and businesses were able to feedback on in our latest survey. Find out [how to get involved in the City Centre Access consultation](#).

Background to footstreet hours

During 'footstreet' hours, all but essential traffic (like emergency vehicles) are banned from certain streets in York city centre.

Before COVID-19, the footstreet hours ran from 10.30am to 5.00pm. In response to the pandemic, these hours were extended to run from 10.30am to 8.00pm in the evening, which allowed more outdoor seating for businesses and space to social distance.

Substantial feedback has supported the temporary later hours, as they have:

- allowed more people to enjoy the city after 5.00pm
- allowed an outdoor café culture to develop
- allowed shops to open later

However other feedback has suggested:

- some blue badge holders have commented that the extended hours prevent them from accessing York's evening attractions, events and meetings
- some food businesses have fed back that it slows down takeaway deliveries as it stops delivery vehicles entering the footstreets

See details of current [footstreet](#) arrangements.

What you've told us about footstreet times

Some disabled people are able and choose to visit the city centre before the morning footstreet restrictions begin. However, this is not an option for many, for a variety of reasons, including set times for carer support, and, many shops open at 10.00am, so this only allows 30 minutes access. They will often be competing with delivery drivers looking to do the same.

The extension into the evening makes accessing the shops before they close more difficult. This has been a particular issue with services like banks, many of which shortened their opening hours during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evening extension has affected some people's ability to attend evening groups on Spurriergate and at Friends' Meeting House, and once lockdowns are finished with, the 8.00pm finish will have a greater effect on Blue Badge Holders. Most city centre evening and cultural events start before 8.00pm, meaning blue badge user cannot park centrally to attend them.

In addition, business representative groups have told us that the 5.00pm finish discourages the evening economy, by presenting a visual signal to people, including residents leaving work, that the city is closed.

In workshops that were held earlier this year, Blue Badge holders told us that longer evening parking was beneficial to use leisure facilities, such as the theatre, opera house, and York Minster.

One possibility to improve city centre access (for vehicles) is for footstreet hours to start from 12.00 noon on weekdays - this is something we'd like to test with York residents before making any permanent changes to footstreet hours.

A later start time would mean that Blue Badge holders are able to access the services they've said are important, for longer in the mornings, when the streets are less busy with pedestrians, although during some school holidays and the busiest times of year the increased numbers of people may not allow this to happen.

Differing rules at different time would also be inconsistent, which would make signage difficult and could cause confusion.

This would also mean that deliveries, and all other vehicles, would be able to drive in to the footstreet areas too, meaning there could be significantly more traffic at those times and increased risk to pedestrians on busy streets.

We would also have to take clear guidance on whether this would be acceptable under our duties to protect people from terrorism, following instances where a vehicle has been used as a weapon in areas of large footfall in other cities.

Blue Badge holders have told us that using the city centre before 10.30am is not an option for many, for a variety of reasons, including set times for carer support, while many shops opening at 10.00am leaves a very short window.

Key questions we asked about footstreets

Following the summer engagement with the public and stakeholders, we're considering making the permanent hours of footstreets from 10.30am to 7.00pm. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal? If you disagree, what time would you prefer it to end?

If footstreets finished later in the evening, do you agree they should start later on weekdays, and what time would you prefer footstreet hours to start?

This survey has now **closed**. Residents and businesses provide feedback by answer this question alongside a range of other questions.

Thank you for providing feedback on key questions ahead of plans being put before Executive council members in November 2021.

2. Improving access to and from footstreets for people with disabilities

We've summarised what you have told us so far, during [previous engagement exercises](#), in this 'open brief'; each page highlights the nature of 'key questions' you can feedback on in our latest survey. Find out [how to get involved in the City Centre Access consultation](#).

Background to improving access to and from footstreets for people with disabilities

Previous engagement has shown that, on arrival in the city centre, 65% of survey respondents choose to park in Blue Badge Bays, in city centre car parks, or using on-street 'double yellow line' locations. Buses were also considered useful, but were not as frequently used, with just 19% opting for this service.

Both surveys and focus groups have shown the quality of pavements ranks highly in disabled access priorities, but scores poorly when rating the city's current provisions, with over 60% of survey respondents ranking York's city centre surfaces as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Dropped kerbs were cited as a particular issue in current footstreets, particularly due to the increase in outdoor hospitality taking up valuable space on pavements.

What you've told us about accessible parking

The majority of respondents are unable to comfortably walk very far.

Government guidance states that "applicants who can walk more than 80 metres, and do not demonstrate very considerable difficulty in walking" would usually not be deemed as eligible for a Blue Badge. This means a relatively small increase in the footstreets area (for example extending the walk from Castlegate to Castle Car Park) can be the difference between making a journey possible, or not.

As a result of this, a high proportion of survey respondents (91%) cited a car park's proximity to a desired location as the most important consideration when choosing where to safely leave a vehicle.

Multi-storey car parks remain unpopular with disabled visitors, due to inconsistent access to lifts.

Conflicting needs and perspectives

There are conflicting needs within, and perspective inevitably differ about, York city centre.

The desire from many people with disabilities for spaces to be free from vehicles and cyclists, while other Blue Badge holders are requesting access to pedestrianised roads, appears incompatible. This is also an issue to address when considering the potential use of e-Scooters, bicycles, and delivery locations within the city centre.

For an alternative perspective, WalkYork, a new engagement group representing the views of pedestrians, supported the extension of the footstreets (90% of respondents), but recognised the need to make the city centre more inclusive for Blue Badge holders and disabled groups.

Shopmobility and Dial & Ride Service

During engagement, awareness of the Shopmobility service was low. However, those who had used the service expressed positive feedback. It was suggested that the current location (Coppergate Car Park) wasn't the most suitable location for all vehicles and/or residents to access, as it is a multi-storey car park.

The Shopmobility service closes at 4.00pm, which also makes the service currently unsuitable for workers and evening activities. Once again, users expressed concern over poor quality pavements, surfaces and lack of dropped kerbs which made it difficult to access many premises in the city centre with their hired Shopmobility aid.


What we've done

Improving the quality and availability of Blue Badge parking on the edge of the footstreets has been a key feature of the work we've carried out over the last 18 months. Since the summer of 2020 we have implemented 16 new disabled parking bays across the city centre, with a further 13 to follow, in addition to the areas where Blue Badge holders can continue to park on double yellow lines.

Map of footstreets and Blue Badge parking

Follow the [link](#) to the view a map.

For some disabled people, the Shopmobility service and 'Dial & Ride' are great solutions for being able to use mobility aids and transport to get around the city centre. We propose to invest in improving the service, working with both existing users and those who may use it in the future, and identifying new additional locations. We also intend to work with Tier who provide e-Scooters and e-Bikes to see if the service can be expanded to mobility aids.

In 2020, Disabled Motoring UK were invited to undertake an [Independent Review of York City Centre's Disabled Access Offer in 2020](#) . We have reviewed the recommendations set out in the report, and we're implementing some of them through the Strategic Review of City Centre Access and Parking.

More recently, In 2021 we commissioned Martin Higgitt Associates to undertake an accessibility audit of routes in the city centre. A community event (short tour) in the city centre was held to discuss disabled access with city centre users, and to examine issues in the field. An online session was also held around this. A report on this piece of work will be published shortly and this will be examined by councillors.

We have outlined plans to support existing services that support people with access needs. This includes a £10,000 grant for the Dial a Ride service, in addition to a £10,000 grant for the Shopmobility service.

One of the ways some cities have looked at helping disabled people get around their city centres is through dedicated shuttle services of various kinds. We have carried out a feasibility study and this is technically a possibility for York. The next step is to understand the cost of providing and running the service, the features of the service (vehicle type, frequency, cost and route) which would make it a genuine option for disabled people.

Key questions we asked about improving access to and from footstreets for people with disabilities

One of the key areas where Blue Badge Holders Park is Duncombe Place. Do you agree with the proposal to remove the existing flowerbed and relocate cycle parking, to create new disabled parking bays?

Do you agree with the proposal to invest Shopmobility and 'Dial & Ride' service improvement, to identify new additional locations, and to work with Tier to provide mobility aids?

We propose carrying out a full feasibility study on a shuttle service, co-designed with residents who have a disability, as part of our 'Local Transport Plan'. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal, and, if you have disabilities would you use a service of this type?

We propose to work with disabled groups to provide additional seating at key points across the city centre, improve the availability and quality of disabled toilets, and improve the quality of our pavements. What are your views on this proposal?

This survey has now **closed**. Residents and businesses provided feedback by answer this question alongside a range of other questions.

Thank you for providing feedback on key questions ahead of plans being put before Executive council members in November 2021.

3. Cycling, e-Bikes, e-Scooters and access to the city centre

We've summarised what you have told us so far, during [previous engagement exercises](#), in this 'open brief'; each page highlights the nature of 'key questions' you can feedback on in our latest survey. Find out [how to get involved in the City Centre Access consultation](#).

Background to cycling, e-Bikes, e-Scooters and access to the city centre

There are a range of views on how cyclists, e-bikes and e-Scooters should access our city centre.

Some people would like to be able to cycle and use e-Scooters everywhere in the pedestrianised footstreets. Others would like to create a cycling route through the footstreet area. However, there are concerns that sharing pedestrianised areas with cyclists and e-Scooters makes some people feel unsafe, particularly those with visual or hearing impairments or those with small children.

What you've told us about cycles, e-Bikes and e-Scooters accessing York city centre

A section of the My City Centre survey (July 2021) focussed on cycling access to York city centre. 8% of respondents completing the short survey, and 16% of respondents completing the long survey, said that they regularly travelled into the city centre by bike. A workshop was also held to understand current and future access requirements for cyclists.

It was also observed that the increase in pedestrianised areas has put pressure on cycling, giving the perception that it has been 'pushed' outside the city centre.

This feedback is consistent with disabled groups, who feel similarly about the changes to Blue Badge areas and the extension of the footstreets. A suggestion was made to open the footstreets to cyclists, or at the very least, those using a bicycle as a mobility aid. However, this idea conflicts with the views of some pedestrians accessing the footstreets.

Insufficient cycling infrastructure in the city, such as secure parking and barriers on some routes, was also referenced, as it currently doesn't recognise the variety of sizes, weights and wheelbases of modern bikes – especially bikes adapted for use by disabled cyclists. Across all engagement, groups also felt there was a lack of secure cycle parking, expressing the need for more bike stands at regular intervals across the city centre.

There was a shared empathy amongst the cycling group for delivery cyclists navigating the city centre and their daily experiences, which is consistent with feedback from the delivery driver group.

What we've done about cycles, e-Bikes and e-Scooters accessing York city centre

We announced a £3.3 million transformation of active travel routes by 2023, with measures included to improve access in the city centre. This includes the north-South cycle route, with investment set out to improve signage along High Petergate, Minster Yard, Deangate, Goodramgate, Aldwark, Hungate, Navigation Road and Walmgate.

As part of this package of investment, there will be future campaigns that focus on improving behaviours on bridges, including awareness of avoiding close passing cyclists.

Key questions we asked about cycling, e-Bikes, e-Scooters and access to the city centre

Should e-Bikes and e-Scooters be allowed to use footstreets during pedestrianised hours, and should we trial allowing people whose cycle is their mobility aid to use it in the footstreets? Should we trial allowing couriers to cycle through the footstreets at all times, or after 5.00pm when food deliveries are at their busiest?

This survey has now **closed**. Residents and businesses provided feedback by answer this question alongside a range of other questions.

Thank you for providing feedback on key questions ahead of plans being put before Executive council members in November 2021.

4. Improving city centre cycle routes

We've summarised what you have told us so far, during [previous engagement exercises](#), in this 'open brief'; each page highlights the nature of 'key questions' you can feedback on in our latest survey. Find out [how to get involved in the City Centre Access consultation](#).

Background to improving city centre cycle routes

It is currently considered that there would be an unacceptable level of 'conflict risk' between cyclists and pedestrians, particularly at periods of high footfall, if a two-way segregated cycle route (Parliament Street, Davygate, Blake Street) was permitted.

There is insufficient space, within the existing carriageway layout, to provide a safe arrangement for two-way cycling in Parliament Street while allowing for vehicle

access, out of footstreet hours. Significant changes would need to be made to the signalised junctions at either end of the route to accommodate contraflow cycling.

What you've told us about improving city centre cycle routes

In recent consultations between 21-26% of survey respondents cited cycling as a 'useful' way to access the city centre, whereas only 19% of respondents listed cycling as their primary mode of transport. 15% of respondents regularly travel into the city centre by bike, with less than 1% using e-scooters/e-cycles.

When asked why individuals might be deterred from cycling into the city centre, feeling unsafe on the road was the most common response. The inner ring road was referenced as the most unsafe area for cyclists, which some deemed unusable if travelling with young children.

It was also flagged that in order to get to certain cycling routes considered safer, other unsafe roads without cycling lanes or provisions had to be accessed first. Stonebow was cited as an example of this, due to the competition of space with a large number of buses.

Key questions we asked about improving city centre cycle routes

How can we work with cyclists to co-design improvements to the existing cycle routes around the edge of the footstreet area, and secure cycle storage in key cycle park hubs (with people then continuing on foot)?

This survey has now **closed**. Residents and businesses provide feedback by answer this question alongside a range of other questions.

Thank you for providing feedback on key questions ahead of plans being put before Executive council members in November 2021.

5. Deliveries in the city centre

We've summarised what you have told us so far, during [previous engagement exercises](#), in this 'open brief'; each page highlights the nature of 'key questions' you can feedback on in our latest survey. Find out [how to get involved in the City Centre Access consultation](#).

Background to deliveries in the city centre

The competing interests of delivery drivers accessing the city continues to be a challenge, particularly with the increase in demand for cycling and e-cycle delivery services.

What you've told us about deliveries in the city centre

During a focus group held with delivery drivers who regularly access the city centre, concerns were expressed about the rise in cycling and e-cycling food delivery services, which became increasingly popular during the sequence of lockdowns during 2020 and 2021. Participants suggested that, without refined governance and clear cycling lanes, the volume of delivery cyclists and e-cyclists could become unmanageable for both the delivery drivers as well as the pedestrians and vehicles navigating around them.

Delivery hubs for larger deliveries were proposed to avoid bottle necks in popular delivery points across the city centre. It was also referenced that other cities are investing in cargo bikes and breaking deliveries into smaller, more regular deliveries, particularly to offices and small businesses.

The dual use of loading bays in Duncombe Place was welcomed by participants, contradicting the views of some disabled residents who find the location dangerous due to high levels of activity.

WalkYork provided supporting feedback from a pedestrian's viewpoint, expressing frustration at delivery bottlenecks in the city centre, particularly the market, due to the large number of vehicles making it difficult to walk through the centre before 10.30am.

What we've done about deliveries in the city centre

Carbon reduction and reducing the impact of vehicles on our city centre are both council ambitions. We want to ensure that business deliveries to be ultra-low emission vehicles (for example, electric vehicles) or cargo bikes by 2030.

To achieve this we're exploring options for trans-shipment hubs, which will allow city centre deliveries to be collected at a central point outside the city centre, and then transferred by electric vehicles or cargo bikes.

Key questions we asked about deliveries in the city centre

Do you agree that York should aim for city centre deliveries to use ultra-low emission (electric) vehicles or cargo bikes by 2030, and, do you support exploring options for trans-shipment hubs?

This survey has now **closed**. Residents and businesses provided feedback by answer this question alongside a range of other questions.

Thank you for providing feedback on key questions ahead of plans being put before Executive council members in November 2021.

6. Private hire taxis and Hackney carriages

Background of private hire taxis and Hackney carriages engagement

Throughout our engagement there was a shared opinion between taxi and hackney carriage groups that there is insufficient space for both to park up during busy periods, particularly as certain areas are now shared spaces with delivery drivers and Blue Badge holders.

Duncombe Place, in particular, was referenced as a difficult location for taxis, which is consistent with the views of disability groups, who find the location overly crowded and risky to manoeuvre.

Consistent with the views of cycling groups and My City Centre survey respondents, it was also suggested that the steep increase in food delivery drivers was adding to the issue of a lack of space, and high volume of traffic.

What you said about private hire taxis and Hackney carriages

From a City Centre Access point of view, comments have been received from the York Taxi Association and from the York Disability Rights Forum.

Improve taxi services, including clearer signage indicating location of taxi ranks on areas such as Clifford Street. A potential new evening rank on Piccadilly (opposite Spark:York)

Explore Electric Vehicle (EV) charging options for taxi drivers. The number of EV charging points available across the city and further afield is increasing rapidly, which includes rapid charging points (equivalent to refuelling).

Establish a forum between taxi operators and disabled groups to improve the taxi offer.

What we've done about private hire taxis and Hackney carriages

Our Licencing Team (through an external consultant) will undertake an 'Unmet Demand Survey' between November 2021 and December 2021.

Hackney Carriages are regulated by local authorities, who can place a limit on the number of licences issued, if an unmet demand survey is carried out:

- the limit on Hackney Carriage numbers may be raised or removed if it demonstrates evidence of significant unmet demand

- the limit may be kept at the same level if it demonstrates no evidence of unmet demand

The Unmet Demand Survey will explore some of the points around improved taxi services, and clearer signage, alongside a potential new evening rank. It will also be able to highlight any poorly used ranks, due to either inappropriate location or lack of signage/awareness of rank, through filming the ranks and through public consultation.

Monitoring and surveys will be undertaken at taxi ranks in the city centre to record the volume of passengers and hackney carriages, together with Hackney Carriage waiting times and wait times for any queuing passengers.

A Revised Vehicle Emission Standards Paper is due to go back to Executive in February/March 2022, taking in to account the recommendations from the Unmet Demand Survey. This new policy could potentially increase the number of electric and wheelchair accessible vehicles.