

We, the undersigned, would like to formally object to the proposed footstreet extensions which are in breach of equality law. As City of York Council's consultations have shown, the temporary extensions have discriminated, disproportionately, against disabled people.

From the survey September 2020<sup>1</sup>, 156 out of 201 (78%) people who are **Blue Badge holders** disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "There is parking close enough to allow me access to the city centre"

The Equality Act<sup>2</sup> explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Far from minimising disadvantages suffered by disabled people, City of York Council's decision to make the footstreet extensions permanent increases them. The steps being taken to improve access to the city centre are slow in coming and, as we have stated previously, are still going to result in some disabled people being excluded from the city centre permanently.

We continue to hear from people affected by the changes. The devastating impact it has on their day to day life, their quality of living, feeling of belonging and social lives has been horrific to hear about. The people who have contacted us represent all ages, from younger people wanting to meet their friends to older people wanting to access support or get to the central Post Office to access services only available to people simply wanting to shop in familiar places. Whilst we do our best to represent these voices through consultations, this inevitably creates a degree of emotional distancing for City of York Council as you do not get to hear directly the heartfelt stories that we hear.

Reducing traffic in the city centre and retaining accessibility are not in opposition. For example, York Civic Trust<sup>3</sup> have, in their suggestions for the Transport Plan, said that the council should extend the pedestrian area, whilst allowing access for disabled people through a permit scheme. A solution which would reconcile both the need to reduce traffic in the city centre without excluding disabled people.

The Council's official line has been that these measures to extend the footstreets were temporary and put in place to "allow social distancing and to allow businesses to continue to operate during the pandemic<sup>4</sup>." However, it appears to many of our members that the council has used this to introduce the changes they had wanted to make anyway, and in the process disregard the rights of many disabled people to access the city centre. In effect, the Council

---

<sup>1</sup> [York Open Data](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

<sup>3</sup> [York Press, 8th June 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Equalities Impact Assessment ongoing extension of the city centre footstreets](#) (11th November 2020)

appears to have used the pandemic to create a sort of trojan horse to bring in permanent measures by stealth.

York is a Human Rights City and as such should be welcoming, and accessible, to all residents and visitors regardless of their identity or background. Recently the York Human Rights City Network released [a statement](#) concluding that a human rights approach has not been adopted in developing the current plans for the footstreets. They reaffirmed that “as a matter of legal obligation, the dignity and respect of disabled people, and the impact of the access policies on disabled people’s rights must be considered in any 'balancing' of needs; such an assessment needs to occur with the full involvement of disabled people.”

Further they made clear recommendations, including that City of York Council “acts in full compliance with its international and domestic legal obligations”. More specifically, that

1. CYC should immediately freeze plans to make the current situation permanent through the Footstreet Scheme, pending an inclusive assessment - see (4).
2. CYC should explicitly acknowledge that some city-centre Blue Badge parking will need to be reinstated to meet the needs of their disabled residents who cannot use alternatives.
3. CYC should explicitly acknowledge the **free** labour DPOs have invested in gathering rich data around this topic, completing the relevant surveys, and attending multiple hours of consultation zoom meetings where they have already shared their data and recommendations.
4. CYC should set up a working group, including DPOs as equal partners, to collectively assess the Footstreet Scheme and consider how to balance the rights of York’s disabled citizens with other considerations. YHRCN extends an offer to facilitate this working group to mitigate the tensions now surrounding this issue.
5. We recommend that CYC take a human rights approach and use PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-Discrimination and Equality) to guide decision making now and in the future. This ensures that human rights are put at the centre of policy and practice.

We also refer you to our many previous statements - which you have seemingly ignored - and the results of consultations to learn more about our objections.

Regards

[York Disability Rights Forum](#)

[York Accessibility Action](#)

[The York M.E. Community](#)

[York Access Hub](#)

York Equal Access Campaign

York Labour Group of Councillors

Stephanie Holdsworth, 47 Diamond Street, York YO31 8LH

Carlos Eduardo Arellano Silva, York student

Amira, York resident

Caroline Hayward, York resident

In addition to the signatories, these comments were made publicly on the [YDRF blog](#). All comments submitted were approved and are included verbatim.

**ASSOCIAZIONE PREMIO ELEANOR WORTHINGTON-ODV**

JULY 31, 2021 AT 11:45 AM

I totally endorse this document

**CLAIRE BEVAN**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 11:33 AM

I absolutely agree, the restrictions on Blue Badge holders accessing the city centre in their vehicles is discriminatory!

**NATASHA RAWNSLEY**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 5:14 PM

Since I became disabled access to the city for me has been difficult (I cannot cycle or walk to a bus stop any longer) I am now limited to where I can get to in my car.

Not being able to get into the city centre means that I can no longer visit, shop or meet friends in my home town!

**ROSALIND MAIR**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 5:33 PM

I support this objection to the foot streets proposals for the reasons given.

**CAROLINE GRANTHAM-THORN**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 7:23 PM

I agree the blue badge restrictions now in place are an act of discrimination against being able to park closer in town for disabled people. This needs to be addressed and the access of parking be allowed once more.

**NANCY**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 7:43 PM

I have a business on Fossgate & my disabled customers have been prevented from getting to me – not only is it completely wrong that the council have done this, it has had a detrimental effect on businesses too.

**CHARLOTTE PHILLIPS**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 8:37 PM

I agree. Access is a human right

**ROBERT NEWMAN**

AUGUST 3, 2021 AT 10:36 PM

I used to go all the time to York, often a couple of times a week and it is an 80 mile round trip, since they did this I have been three times, each time was an utter trek as I could not park anywhere within a reasonable distance of the city centre and it was a nightmare getting round, some of the closed streets the cafes have blocked the pavements forcing my wheelchair onto the cobblestones and other access issues, I think tie the councillors into wheelchairs and send them up and down the cobblestones until they agree to vote against, I bet these wimps would last about 30 seconds before they decide to vote against

**ANTONIA CROWTHER**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 12:12 AM

This is obviously dreadful discrimination and the Council must find a way of allowing Blue Badge holders into the centre again and not making them feel like second-class citizens.

**ANGELA ELLIS-SKELTON**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 1:19 AM

I agree disabled people /blue badge holders need access. Stop killing the city centre. Access

Should be available to all.

**JULIE DEVINE**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 5:51 AM

Disabled people are being treated like 4th rate citizens who are not worthy by York City Council. Do they know how much effort it takes to keep transferring from wheelchair to car for example....especially in pouring rain or snow? Shocking behaviour....all because of money and tourism

**KAREN WILSON**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 8:20 AM

Their next step will be rounding us up and gassing us.

**PETER YORK**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 9:29 AM

The appalling LibDem council is clearly guilty of gross discrimination and breach of human rights. Unfortunately the bungled North Yorkshire council reorganisation did not abolish them as they so well deserved.

**JULIET ABSON**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 9:49 AM

I am a regular visitor to York and I have found the restrictions to access difficult and confusing. I support York residents in their fight over this issue.

**PETER WRIGHT**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 7:12 PM

It's discrimination at its finest by our wonderful out of touch council .  
Appalling!!!

**LYNNE DOLAN**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 7:20 PM

We used to go into York most weeks and enjoyed visiting Betty's for lunch. Parking on Blake Street made this possible. My husband has not been into

York for over a year since Blake Street has been blocked off. It's hardly ever busy enough to warrant being closed either as there is plenty of space for everyone.

**SUE BILLANY**

AUGUST 4, 2021 AT 7:28 PM

I think access to the city centre needs to be available to all people

**FIONA LOMBARD**

AUGUST 5, 2021 AT 7:21 AM

It's a nightmare now, unless you have a long range electric scooter there's no way of getting into York. Manual assistant or self propelled wheelchairs can't get any where near, it's an exhausting slog along rough and uneven ground with very few drop kerbs. I damaged my wheelchair trying last week.

**PETE KILBANE**

AUGUST 9, 2021 AT 10:33 PM

The York Labour Group of Councillors support you.

**ROY MCGREGOR**

AUGUST 13, 2021 AT 11:07 AM

Although admirably trying to support small cafés etc in the social distancing situation, the anti-car brigade on CYC have taken it all to extremes. Streets like Fossgate and Church Street are an obstacle course, there is no standardisation in using road or pavement, it alternates and sometimes it's both.

In all of this, the blind pedestrian should not be forgotten, even with a guide dog he / she must have problems. So, seriously, has the council sought and implemented the opinions of these disadvantaged groups?

Add into the equation the potential and growing menace of e-cyclists – another anti-car measure and York is the only place in Britain to have such a large ‘trial’ – and the chances of casualties are growing daily.