

16 York Street
Bath
BA1 1NG

11th April 2022

Re: York Street Public Inquiry DPI/F0114/22/2

To Whom It May Concern,

Following the announcement that a public inquiry is to be held regarding the access of vehicles into York Street I wish to convey my concern if the road is made 'live' to traffic again.

I have several businesses in York Street as well as renting out accommodation in York Street on both a short-term and long-term basis.

I have suffered the inconvenience of not being able to get a vehicle close to my doorway at any of these premises, I have also benefitted from using some of the highway for seating for my customers. However the health & safety factor of having the street closed far outweighs any of this.

I have had businesses in York Street since 2005 and over the past 17 years have seen the dangers of having traffic entering this street. I spend much of my time in the area, often 7 days a week.

For anyone to appreciate fully the dangers traffic in this street causes they need to understand the nature of York Street.

York Street is a short, narrow, one-way and direct road straight up to the Roman Baths and Kingston Parade (what most people call the Abbey square). The road separates the pedestrian area around the Abbey from the pedestrian areas of Church Street and the Abbey Green area and also now the pedestrian area around the new Clore learning centre. Therefore having the road open to traffic allows vehicles to cut into the middle of the pedestrian areas.

The area of York Street and Church Street has 3 ice cream shops, a chocolate shop and 2 sweet shops. There are children running around Kingston Parade all day long for most of the year.

Just recently, whilst talking to someone in the street, I saw a 4 or 5 year old child running around the square and then continuing onto the currently closed York Street. If this road was open that child could have ran straight behind a reversing delivery vehicle.

My own 20 month old son was chasing pigeons around the square last week and to imagine that the road adjacent to the square may have had vehicles driving down, reversing down or trying to turn around in it, is frightening.

Over the years I have seen many near misses between children, other pedestrians and vehicles on York Street.

York Street is a dead-end street with space for only small vehicles to turn around in the street if they make multiple manoeuvres.

It had/has 6-8 parking bays, depending on the size of vehicles parked, and drivers cannot clearly see if there is an available space in the street without entering the street and then having to reverse back or try and turn in the street if no space is available.

Larger delivery vehicle drivers either drive down and later reverse back up the street or vice-versa.

When the street was last open to traffic some regular local delivery drivers would slam their vehicle into reverse gear at the end of York Street and then reverse down the street at speed sometimes sounding their horn.

Since the street has been closed to traffic for most of the day all my deliveries have either come very early morning or the drivers will either carry small boxes, use sack trucks for larger boxes or pallet trolleys for larger deliveries. I have had no problems with deliveries as most of these drivers are now used to having pedestrian areas in city centres.

The few parking spaces that have been lost are more than compensated for by the large amount of disabled and other parking bays in Henry Street and Kingston Road which are now being used more by blue badge holders and residents. These are much wider two-way streets with turning areas and both entry and exit points.

As a life-long Bath resident I can remember the horrific incident in Milsom Street many years ago when a driver of an automatic car in Wood Street pressed the accelerator instead of the brake and killed someone by crushing them against the railings outside Lloyds bank. In recent years cars have smashed into shop fronts and last year a car drove through railings in Laura Place. Often these accidents occur with drivers of automatic vehicles either through a mistake or a health issue. With York Street being a narrow one lane street with limited turning space I believe these type of historic incidents should also be noted and taken into account.

I feel a 10am-midnight traffic restriction would suit the street best as this is the restriction I have worked with outside my restaurant in Trinity Street, Cardiff, and it appears to work very well for all. Having an earlier lifting of the restriction in the evening will allow local people, visitors and tourists the risk of feeling safe in the street when actually vehicles could enter. 6pm feels like the middle of the day in summer months and the area is still bustling. There is a gradual reduction in the number of people wandering around the area as the evening goes on, but re-opening within the evening will only lead to a false sense of security for those people still doing so.

I would also like to state that from my experience of living in Bath all my life, and working in the city centre for the past 17 years, I feel areas where traffic is restricted but some vehicular access is still allowed are just as dangerous as fully open roads. I believe a prime example is Pulteney Bridge, where pedestrians feel that the bridge is traffic free but then suddenly a taxi or approved vehicle appears unexpectedly. Therefore I feel if the sensible decision is made to close York Street to traffic after 10am each day it should apply to all vehicles in order to facilitate the safe environment it would become.

To conclude I feel that opening up York Street to traffic once more will only succeed in risking the health and safety of children, families and visitors in order to save a 100 yards or so for anyone needing to deliver or collect in the street. It seems a very selfish and morally wrong decision to make a slight inconvenience for a few people outweigh the safety of so many others.

Yours faithfully

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