

I am speaking on behalf of York Accessibility Action Group. We have formed as a direct result of the foot streets closures. The petition Closed to Us which was founded by Alison Hulme now has over 1,500 signatures.

This is the third time I've spoken, before the Covid pandemic and the subsequent changes to the foot streets, I didn't have to spend time writing and speaking about disability issues in York. I was proud of the city I lived in and happy to live here.

Now so many residents and visitors are cruelly excluded from the heart of this beautiful city, it's shops and services. Disabled people now have to go out of town or to other towns such as Leeds and Harrogate to go shopping or access services.

The mark of a civilisation is how it treats the old and disabled and so what is currently happening here is a poor reflection on the City of York.

There seems to be a woeful lack of understanding and awareness about the needs of disabled people.

Following the last council meeting Comments on Twitter from shocked members of The Green Party across the country highlighted that these exclusionary practices in York by the Green Party were not shared by others in the Green Party. Environmental protection and concern was not to happen by excluding disabled blue badge holders.

There seems to be a fundamental misunderstanding about the use of cars by disabled people – people need their cars for a variety of reasons including as a refuge and a place where medical equipment can be stored for use.

To obtain a bb people must undertake a vigorous application process and are only granted a blue badge after the authorities are sure that a person qualifies for a bb.

To be entitled to a blue badge you can't walk more than 50 metres repeatedly and to an acceptable standard.

Currently the distance to the Post Office from various replacement parking spaces are much longer: the proposed space on Cumberland street is 156m one way. From the Castlegate car park is 280m, and Post Office to St Andrewgate is 375m as the roads take you, not as the crow flies. You must remember that you must double the distance as you must walk there and back.

Throughout the report sent about the latest proposal, there is a continual use of stated mitigation for the loss of parking for the vehicles of over Blue Badge holders with streets where the parking is dual use and this has been criticised in every piece of consultation as unworkable and there have been numerous complaints to the council and DPO's. The council has also failed to heed the criticisms from numerous organisation and individuals regarding the café areas spilling out onto streets and making them further inaccessible. Consultation can only be considered as such if it is listened to and changes made as a result.

Similarly the council is not only excluding disabled residents from the city centre but visitors from far and wide, along with those just across the boundaries in North, East and West Yorkshire.