

**Public Inquiry
York Street Bath
DPI/F0114/22/2**

**Proof of Evidence (Summary)
Hannah Downey**

1 Introduction

I recognise that Bath has a higher level of potential threat at certain times than other towns and cities in the UK.

I responded to this consultation with the view that I was objecting to the whole ATTRO not just York Street.

Local authority law and processes are not my area of expertise.
I politely ask that this be taken into consideration during this Inquiry.

2 The Public Consultation

Consultation papers confused temporary COVID-19 social distancing measures with permanent street closure for security purposes. Presenting it alongside public realm schemes added to the blurring of intentions.

The language was misleading. I am referring to the 'Bath City Centre Security Proposed Access Restrictions' Public consultation document.

Making reference to Covid-19 within the document only served to mislead the public who, because of the pandemic, were in a compliant mood, prepared for some disruption to normal life for the greater good of us all.

Had communication been clearer I believe there would almost certainly have been a greater response from the public.

3 Objection

My initial objection was that we will have not have **reasonable** and free access to our property.

Throughout our ownership access has been eroded away, this proposal will cut it off for good.

It fundamentally changes the city centre, defining it as being solely a business district and inhibits the residential community that used to co-exist.

No ability to park near the property, even for a short period.

Having to carry heavy goods in and out over an unreasonably long distance.

Not being able to access it during normal daytime working hours.

It is difficult to find trades who are prepared to work within the zone.

Arranging access for trades or deliveries is prohibitive and unreasonable.

Shutting off the centre significantly reduces the possible uses of the property and therefore value of our asset

Access for anyone with a disability is severely impeded.

It creates dangerous levels of congestion in Terrace Walk. There are too many different types of vehicle performing all sorts of manoeuvres for varying different reasons in a confined space. It should have been properly considered within the planning of this scheme. The council have not considered the consequences for the wider area or how the residents of Bath use and move around their city for genuine purposes.

This gives me no confidence that the council will do anything in the immediate future to resolve the situation

I have concerns about the impact of the ugly street furniture spoiling our heritage street scape. What assurances do we have that someone with an aesthetic eye and understanding of or cultural history will be signing off the designs?

4 Negotiations

W/C. 10th November 2021

Meeting with Simon Thomas in Terrace Walk

I was emailed with an outline of what we had discussed, excluding my concerns of the impact on the historic setting. It is partly why I would favour a wider security zone. I did comment on this in my original objection and it is not exclusive to York Street. It feels like it was deliberately dismissed in order to narrow down this public enquiry to York Street alone.

26th November 2021

Meeting with Chris Major and Lynda Deane in Terrace Walk

At the initial meeting they did not fully explain the weight behind my objections and that they needed to appease me. A solicitor was present, I believe it was Annemarie Strong, this was not disclosed to me until we were parting company.

I found myself questioning why a solicitor needed to be present?

1st December 2021

I had received an email from Steve Froggatt which stated in the opening paragraph that the National Counter Terrorism Office had identified 'The Roman Baths and areas around the Abbey' as crowded places and in need of protection. I later realised, these weren't the only areas identified by the police as being crowded. Why were the council being selective with the information? I knew as a resident that these were not the only crowded areas.

I asked for some justification for the ATTRO and the background behind the decision to introduce such a scheme to better understand how the council had arrived at this point.

I was sent evidence which included a letter dated 21st Feb 2020 to the council from the Chief Constable, this only served to raise more questions than it satisfied.

I believed that vital information had been withheld from the public about the scale of the area that required protection. It is clear from the correspondence with the police that a wider area was intended for public consideration and there was no sensitive content that prevented this being disclosed.

This initial recommendation did NOT suggest a permanent closure of the central core of the city. This was a proposal that the council asked the police to endorse which was put to the Chief Constable in a letter from Will Godfrey dated 26th February 2020. Not only does Mr. Godfrey ask for the inner core ATTRO to be supported by the police but he stated in that letter that the council would consult the public on **BOTH** the inner ATTRO and TRO and the outer ATTRO "ensuring consistency."

The opening sentence of the following letter from Andy March Chief Constable he says"Further to your letter dated 26th February, I write to recommend that in **addition** to our original request..... not instead of.

The council did not disclosed this outer ring to the public. Why?

They were being selective about what areas they were choosing to protect. Why?

This is compromising our security, the opposite of the advertised intention of the consultation.

It appears that not only have they misled the Police by suggesting they would consult on both inner and outer ATTROs and have not, but the majority of areas identified by the police are still vulnerable to attack. This surely undermines the credibility of the whole consultation.

It also raises the question what is the motive of the council to ignore the recommendation from the experts in security in pursuit of their own scheme?

2nd December 2021

I had a call from an unknown mobile number. The gentleman introduced himself as Will Godfrey CEO of BANES council. Patronising from the start, the conversation was around 20 minutes long and when I put the phone down my instinct told me something didn't feel right. I now felt bullied. I was being pressured to stand aside to allow the council to implement their scheme with no guarantee that they would resolve my genuine concerns.

Our security was being compromised because the council had withheld information from the public which I was now aware of and had now suddenly appeared in a press release on the 28th November.

The police did not distinguish any area as being in greater need of protection than another, they were all identified as in equal need. We seem to be protecting Abbey Green for the Christmas Market 365 days of the year yet Bath Rugby who play several matches throughout the season, advertised time and date precise, go unprotected. Why?

On the same day I received the call from Will Godfrey, the leader of the council, Kevin Guy, publicly distanced himself from the scheme in a separate press release.

I then became very suspicious of the whole situation.

3rd December 2021

I formally upheld my objection.

The public have a right to know the truth, we should have been given all the opportunity to have our say on the inner and outer security zones at the start, especially as the Police did not waiver this right.

9th December 2021

Will Godfrey wrote to the new Chief Constable asking if they would waiver the need to consult on wider zone so there would be no public consultation. Why?

The Chief Constable did not honour this request.

15th December 2021

I read a three minute script at the cabinet meeting

5 Public Inquiry

I feel the council has been driven by other pressures and policies. They saw this as an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions by ridding the city centre of vehicles, in doing so it has risked our security.

Permanent closure of the central zone can NOT be considered **proportionate** protection if the streets are empty at certain times of day or week, or if there are other means of attack or areas still left vulnerable. It is not justifiable.

I would like to see the whole central ATTRO scrapped altogether and residents be given an honest public consultation on the wider security zone.

If everyday live of residents is made more arduous, when there is no real threat too our security and the streets are not crowded, then all I can conclude is that there must be other motives in play and that terrorism has won!