

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

Hannah Downey

1 Introduction

1.1 I would like to make it clear from the start that I fully support **proportionate** protection of the public when at risk of a terrorist. I recognise that Bath has a higher level of potential threat at certain times than other towns and cities in the UK.

1.2 I responded to this consultation with the view that I was objecting to the whole ATTRO

1.3 I do not understand/would welcome an explanation/justification why York Street is singled out for this Public Inquiry.

1.4 Local authority law and processes are not my area of expertise. I have not been involved with local government at this level before and therefore I cannot be expected to be an authority on the laws and legislation surrounding the consultation. I politely ask that this be taken into consideration during this Inquiry. However, for what it is worth, I have witnessed the evolution of Bath from being a child here at school, living outside the city and in the city on higher hills and lower slopes and also lived in the central Zone. In the past I commuted from Bath to work but now run my business in the centre of the city. Coming full circle, I now have children of my own, doing the school runs to primary and secondary schools in the city. I therefore know Bath extremely well and I have witnessed many changes over my lifetime, good and bad. It is through experience that you learn from successes and failures and for that I hope this knowledge gives some credibility to my comments.

1.5 The property I refer to in this consultation has been in our ownership for 25 years. It is on the corner of Church Street and Abbey Green.

1.6 I have raised concerns in the past about the poor traffic management in the areas surrounding Abbey Green.

2 The Public Consultation

2.1 A public consultation should be clear and concise and all information relating to it should be easily accessible. In this instance consultation papers from the start confused temporary COVID-19 social distancing measures with permanent street closure for security purposes. Presenting it alongside public realm schemes for Milsom Street and Kingsmead Square added to the blurring of intentions.

2.2 The language, I think, was misleading too. I am referring here to the 'Bath City Centre Security Proposed Access Restrictions' Public consultation document published by the council prior to the consultation.

On the introduction page the opening sentence states the council proposes to 'permanently strengthen on-street security' That could mean anything like using bollards or more police and security guards on the streets. On the opening page the words 'temporary' appeared three times, Covid-19 twice, social distancing, re-open and recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 were all used to lull the reader into believing that the changes about to be proposed were important but not detrimental and promote our 'wellbeing' (another word they used) They shy away from saying 'permanent road closures'. This, I feel, would have engaged the reader to much and they would rather they drifted off.

Making reference to Covid-19 within the document also 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.

I for one was one of those members of the public who did not at first realise these temporary COVID-19 street closures were also the same closures proposed in a public consultation to make them permanent. I know many people who thought the same thing.

2.3 Even though I have a business within this area, I found out about the consultation by a chance conversation.

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

2.4 Conveniently most Covid-19 social distancing measures were removed but not from the central core. The central zone and Milsom Street and Kingsmeade have had permanent signs put up closing of the streets, preventing vehicles entering yet the consultations were not concluded. It feels like the council have pre-empted the final decision.

3 Objection

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

Throughout our ownership the property has been subject to several street closures with access eroded away, this final proposal will cut it off for good.

The consequences of this will be.....

It fundamentally changes the city centre, defining it as being solely a business district and therefore 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, forcing me to work late at night which is impractical as I typically need access after 10am when guests check out.

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

Calling the council to arrange 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

3.2 Access for anyone with a disability is severely impeded. This I find particularly difficult to comprehend, bearing in mind the amount of legislation surrounding the Equalities Act that the council would have had to satisfy. In the original proposal access for disabled people was prohibited altogether. This has now been altered to allow taxis to enter but only when the council have been called to arrange the gates to be opened.

3.3 Another major concern is the dangerous levels of congestion in Terrace Walk and the area known locally as 'Bog Island' . Already highly congested with coaches and deliveries and trades vehicles during the day the only relief on this pressure was to be able to use York Street. Even when York Street was open during the day I had my car hit twice while waiting on red at the traffic lights. There are too many different types of vehicle performing all sorts of manoeuvres for varying different reasons in a confined space. It is a disaster and should have been properly considered

within the planning of this scheme. The council have bulldozed ahead with implementing their goals without considering the consequences for the wider area.

Ironically, they have actually created an area of high foot fall outside the secure zone which in itself could be an attractive target for anyone intent on a terrorist attack.

York Street and Bog Island have become busier over the years because of other street closures. For example access to Abbey Green being restricted in 2016 and Swallow Street prior to that. When SouthGate shopping centre was built the coaches were redirected to Bog Island as a temporary measure because of an oversight at the planning stage, 12 years later and the coaches are still there! No proper consideration has been given by any recent administration of how the residents of Bath use and move around their city for genuine purposes. The council have recently developed the far end of York Street for the core learning centre but again have not given any considered thought to the rest of York Street within their planning

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

3.4 I also have a great concern about the impact of the ugly street furniture needed to implement the security ring, spoiling our heritage street scape. The council have already ignored the pattern book for the city drawn up in 2010 when introducing ghastly cheap looking tomato red furniture in Union Street.

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

The council did make efforts to meet with me to discuss my concerns.

W/C. 10th November 2021

Meeting with Simon Thomas In Terrace Walk

Following this meeting I was emailed with an outline of some of my objections that we had discussed. However, we did talk at length about my issues with the impact on the historic setting. I have a big issue with all the ugly street furniture creeping into the city that is detrimental to the aesthetic values of this World Heritage city. 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, at the walkabout but this was not disclosed to me until we were parting company.

Why was she not introduced from the start of the meeting?

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

Were they trying to catch me out?

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. However, I later realised, these weren't the only areas identified as being crowded by the police. 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 then sent evidence which included a letter dated 21st Feb 2020 to the council from the Chief Constable Andy Marsh, but this only served to raise more questions than it satisfied.

Reading this letter 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.

The police advised the council in that letter that the city needed better protection from potential terrorist threat. Their first and foremost recommended was for an outer security ring to protect the city, which was to be **implemented as and when the threat level was raised**. It identified areas at risk such as Bath Abbey, Bath rugby at the Rec. and the Bath Half. The police stated that this recommendation was to **'ensure that the ATTRO is a proportionate measure used to the minimum extent'**.

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

Still to date we have not been consulted on it. They have chosen to withhold information from the public because most areas identified as in need of protection fall outside the central core.

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, which together 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?

If this consultation was really born out of a desire to protect us then why are the majority of areas identified by the police, like Bath Rugby, still vulnerable to attack?

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.

I felt that 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 on the 2nd December, 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 I think 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 waive this right. The council have been deliberately selective and were treating the public with contempt.

9th December 2021

Will Godfrey wrote to the new Chief Constable asking if they would waive 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, I have never done this before and while I stand by every word I read out, I wasn't prepared for questioning or had any idea of that I would be questioned. I hope the Public inquiry will give me a proper chance to make my case.

5 Public Inquiry

5.1 I could never have imagined I would be in this position.

I have satisfied myself that I am not pursuing this simply for personal gain. While it does detrimentally affect my daily routines, I believe that our security has been compromised and for that reason I have pursued it for greater good of us all.

5.2 At certain peak times I think the streets should have restricted access, but not 365 days of the year especially if the footfall in the central streets is low especially mid week.

5.3 I feel the council has been driven by other pressures and policies and has a greater desire to reach carbon neutrality. They saw this as an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions (which in itself is applaudable) by ridding the city centre of cars and other vehicles, but in doing so it has risked our security.

5.4 I cannot fathom the rationale behind the cost and waste of time behind having two public realm consultations for Milsom street and Kingsmead Square which are in effect the same as the central security zone. Why not consult on the wider security ring to protect us all and then open up the debate on how we can collectively reduce emissions without shutting down the entire city that has functioned far better in the past without road closures making life difficult for everyone. More regular public transport and school buses would be a start.

5.5 This ATTRO has meant that I have sustained significant injury to my person carrying heavy loads an unreasonably long distance, I have been forced to work late at night which in turn has been so impractical that I now have to pay out to employ someone else to do my job losing me around 10 percent of my income. I cannot deliver anything close to the property or park near it. I can't get trades to work when I have needed them to and it has limited the overall use of the property, all in turn reducing the value of our asset. AND to cap that hundreds of fans who watch the Rugby week after week are still unprotected at publicly timed and dated matches.

5.6 What is there to stop a terrorist entering on foot with a bomb in a backpack?

5.7 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.

The police used the word '**Proportionate**' that I think is of key to this debate.

'Proportionate measure used to the minimum extent'to be Commenced, suspended or revived' were phrases used within the original proposal by the police.

They were also stated 'the extreme of which would be to restrict access to a road'.

5.8 The council justification for closing York Street until 10pm are in my experience unfounded.

They argue that there will be more footfall because of events at the new core learning centre.

There have always been events at the Roman Baths and Pump Rooms and it has never caused any heavy congestion in York Street. Especially late at night.

I would expect that school children will predominantly use this educational facility and I cannot think of any reason why they would be there up until 10pm.

There are more ways to access the Roman Baths and Core Learning centre than via York Street.

Stall Street for example leads straight to Southgate and the train station.

They state there is no turning area, when there is. The dropped pavement leading into Church Street allows ample space to turn around, I have been doing so for 25 years. It has become more difficult and dangerous forcing us to use Terrace Walk.

York Street can be busy but this usually happens when a coach offloads tourists in Terrace Walk, but there are other roads that coaches can pull in to despatch their customers.

5.9 I would like to see the whole central ATTRO scrapped, ugly signage removed and unnecessary road closures re-opened and have a public consultation on the wider security zone.

5.10 I would argue that when everyday lives and simple tasks of all residents within the zone are made more arduous, they can no longer freely access their property, park, or easily get deliveries. When disabled people have access made more challenging and everyone else has to suffer clogged up traffic on the perimeter streets, when there is no real threat too our security and the streets are not crowded, then all I can only conclude is that there must be other motives in play and that the terrorism has won!

6 Evidence

Photographic evidence

1 Various images of the daily congestion on Terrace Walk

2 images of Terrace Walk area outside the central protection zone on the evening of 8th February.

3 Images of York Street and Abbey area on the evening of 8th February.

4 Images of Central Bath on a typical sunny Friday afternoon 25th March

5 & 6 Images of bath prior to a Bath Rugby game played onto the 5th March 2022

