**York Sight Loss Council’s Objection**

 **To the TRO 14/10 and 14/49**

York Sight Loss Council would like to formally object to the proposed TRO and extension to the footstreet project being made permanent as it stands. We find the exclusion of blue badge holders from driving or being driven through the footsreets is prohibitive and is in breach of the Equality Act (2010). By introducing this TRO, City of York Council would be failing its Equality Duty by directly discriminating, against blind and partially sighted and other disabled people, who are classified as having a protected characteristic under the law.

The Equality Act is clear and states that measures should:

* Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
* Take 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.

We believe that City of York Council’s intention to implement this TRO, risks contravening the above criteria as laid out in the Equality Act (2010).

Blind and severely sight impaired people qualify for a blue badge under the government scheme. A blue badge holder may use their badge when travelling with friends, family or in a taxi to be dropped off at locations they are familiar with, allowing them to be independent and able to participate and contribute to their local community. By preventing blind and severely sight impaired people from using their blue badges from 10:30am to 5pm in the footstreet area, the council reduces their independence. Additional support could be required to guide a person from an unfamiliar location to attend appointments, meetings, social gatherings, or cultural events. By becoming dependent on others to provide that support is a direct disadvantage to a visually impaired person denying them from having an equality of opportunity and discourages them from actively engaging in public life where their participation is disproportionately low and is underrepresented. This is further compounded during winter months, which many blind and partially sighted people find disorientating with the additional health and safety risks associated with dark nights and inclement weather.

We propose that:

1. City of York Council postpones the TRO proposal and seeks alternative solutions to achieve its outcomes.
2. We request that accessibility to the city centre is restored to its previous provision prior to the COVID emergency measures being implemented.
3. That the council to adopt the 3 pledges that have been shared with the Executive Member for Transport on several occasions under the Sight Loss Councils national campaign #streetsforall.
4. That the Council acts as a Human Rights City and fulfils its Equality Duty along with its duty of care to the most vulnerable residents in the community. Freedom of movement is one of the most basic of human rights; by allowing blind and partially people to access goods and services, without the prejudice or restrictive measures, ensures that CYC are complying with the Equality Act and are following their Equality Duty as a responsive public body.

You may not have considered the ramifications that this TRO would invoke or that your reasonable adjustments of relocating parking bays on the outskirts of the footstreets fail to compensate for the loss of existing parking provision. We hope you will consider these recommendations to be reasonable and will debate them as part of your decision-making process.

Kind Regards

York Sight Loss Council