

High Street car ban plan will force disabled from the town

I WRITE with regard to the 18-month Colchester town centre traffic trial, and the impact this will have on disabled people and carers in the town.

We have been trying to work with Colchester Council for two years, but have been knocked back at every turn.

The 26 parking spaces in the High Street, and the further 11 in Head Street, are the most popular in Colchester, due to being relatively level and in close proximity to services and shops.

The proposed replacement spaces in Vineyard Street, Priory Street and underneath Culver Square are not equivalent to these spaces.

To qualify for a blue badge, the most someone can walk with "very considerable difficulty" (Department for Transport guidance 2012) is 80m. It is more likely to be much less than this.

Vineyard Street is accessed only by a steep flight of stairs, or a lift that breaks down very regularly. The distance to reach the High Street from this car park is 232m, and includes more than 60m on a steep gradient.

Priory Street is a staggering 404m from the High Street, and includes narrow pavements in Priory Street, which means larger manual or powered chairs must use the road on a stretch next to a blind corner. Whichever route you take includes a very steep gradient.

The parking underneath Culver Square can be used by registered users only. There is no way to register online, and applications can only be picked up in person. It takes more than three months to be issued a pass. On top of this, it takes 256m to reach the High Street.

Many disabled people struggle with mornings, due

Reader picture

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■ Wivenhoe street scene – taken by JOHN CHIVERS, of Kingfisher Close, Colchester

to having to wait for carers, or pain and fatigue. All cars will need to be away from the High Street at 11am, or drivers will face a fine – and will also be competing with delivery lorries and rush-hour traffic.

A "no loading" zone is being put into place outside Castlegate day centre for adults with disabilities, in George Street.

It daily has people who can't walk far dropped off outside and wheelchair users who struggle with the narrow roads. This will be completely stopped under the plans.

The council is setting up a monitoring group for the first six months of the trial.

Our greatest concern is that disabled people will be driven out of the town centre – either to be isolated at home, or to face driving further to more accessible towns, and so will not be counted.

Please stop these plans before the damage is done.

JADE HAMNETT
Chair

Fair Access to Colchester

...AS a person with severe breathing and mobility disabilities, I write in strong support of Sir Bob Russell's recently-published view, that Colchester High Street should be left as it is.

To do away with blue badge disabled parking will mean that I, and other disabled people, will be denied our basic human rights to access and use the various High Street facilities.

Parking facilities outside of the High Street will not help me, because of the extra severe pain and the mental and physical effort I would be forced to endure to access the High Street – such as negotiating far longer distances, sloping paths, hills and steps.

I strongly believe this

scheme is totally against the spirit of the Equality Act 2010 (Disability) Regulations, and may be breaking them.

I would be grateful to those readers who agree this scheme is unfair and discriminatory to make your views known to Colchester Council and Essex County Council, by contacting councillors Anne Turrell and Derrick Louis, who can be contacted by e-mail as follows: cllr.anne.turrell@colchester.gov.uk and cllr.derrick.louis@essex.gov.uk

ALAN GOLDSWORTHY
Buckingham Drive
Colchester

...I CANNOT believe the proposed High Street car ban is the "will of the people" as has been suggested by the county council transport chief, councillor Derrick Louis.

I live in Priory Street and

cannot understand how this will possibly work. It will spend twice as long in traffic as previously.

There is simply no thought about consequences in Colchester town planning. It is apparent that whoever thinks these schemes has no idea what will happen to traffic.

If there has to be a restriction like this, the plan must be to have a ring road, or an alternative route for cars – here there is nothing in place! This is not the will of the people.

JO McDONALD
Priory Street
Colchester