

In response to the extension of the consultation period, One Jesmond is perplexed by the latest actions of Newcastle City Council. Whilst time to clarify and consider the representations made during the trial period is welcome, a large number of people have put a lot of effort into detailed written submissions ahead of the deadline. This apparent last-minute change of process is shambolic and again looks like the council does not value transparency in its dealings with its citizens. There appears to have been a significant response to the scheme: around 20,000 comments on Commonplace, with letters to the council and to councillors setting out individual experiences and views on the issue. There have been requests for information that the council either did not have available to assess the need for the scheme or did not want to offer. There must be over a quarter of a million words which have been submitted to the authority: how will it make sense of what it already has? The council seems to have belatedly acknowledged what many residents pointed out before it began: that the trial period is unrepresentative. It started not long before Easter and covered traditional holiday periods as well as the summer closures of the schools and universities. The impact on Jesmond residents and those who need to travel around this area of the city will only worsen in the coming weeks, although not reach its peak. There will be a particular toll on women who take caring responsibilities for children alongside their work, that will no longer be able to drop in to support relatives during a busy day. Those carers who are paid to make visits in Jesmond are amongst the lowest-earning and hard-pressed, and often receive no allowance for their travel time and distance, which will now have increased. What more will those who have spoken already have to say? And how many future converts to the scheme will show empathy for their neighbours whose circumstances are very different to their own. We are certain that contributions from any residents and those connected to Jesmond who have yet to comment, will reflect the increasing impact of the changes, and the council must see that opposition is growing. There is only one equitable solution - remove the bollards - and then to work with the community to design a viable alternative, or to accept that this area, so close to the city centre, is unsuitable for such intervention.