

# Parking privileges for Christians in York

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York City Council has made exemptions for churches from controversial new parking restrictions.

New rules will ban parking in several city centre streets on evenings and weekends. But after protests from local churches, the council said it had taken steps to protect parking for people attending church. Other objections about the effects on the local night time economy were dismissed.

Councillor Dave Merrett said the removal of traffic would "enhance the city centre experience for residents and visitors alike at all times of the day, something we strongly believe will benefit businesses too".

He said that local churches had made representations, after which he had amended the terms of the order to take into account morning and evening services.

He said the changes reflected the objective of taking traffic out of the city centre as much as possible as part of the Reinvigorate York initiative.

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, said: "Giving special privileges to Christians in this way is illegal, according to advice from our lawyers. We will point this out to York City Council and ask them to treat everyone who parks in York in exactly the same way."

Mr Sanderson said that the practice of giving parking privileges to churches was widespread in local authorities, and may lead to a legal challenge.

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