# Barricades in Barton Hill spark backlash and accusations of ethnic cleansing



A recent installation of barricades in Barton Hill, an area of east Bristol governed by the Green Party, has ignited fierce backlash and accusations from local residents. On the morning of March 13, community members woke up to find council workers erecting what many locals have described as a "race wall," heavily guarded by police officers, some equipped with Tasers. This alarming display has led to claims that the council's actions resemble "ethnic cleansing on steroids," highlighting the racial and class-based tensions at play.

While the Bristol City Council justifies these barricades as part of a misguided initiative to reduce traffic and improve air quality, residents are rightfully skeptical. Many believe that these measures are intended to isolate their community from affluent neighbours, further entrenching existing inequalities. With 55% of Barton Hill's residents belonging to ethnic minority groups, there is a palpable fear that this plan will push them towards greater marginalization.

Local business owner Naveen Challagundla, 26, raised serious concerns about the impact of the barriers on trade, saying, "It feels like a prison. The pollution levels are the same as in wealthier areas, but we are being shut off. We're going to lose all that business." Echoing these anxieties, disabled resident Melissa Topping, 55, warned that the frustration stemming from these impositions could lead to "guerrilla warfare" within the community.

Although the council assures residents that the East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood (EBLN) project is a trial lasting six months, followed by community feedback, many remain doubtful. The physical barriers may prove difficult to remove, and the council's stated goal of cutting personal car usage by 44% in five years seems less a realistic target and more an unattainable dream that sacrifices the needs of local citizens for bureaucratic tick-boxing.

Despite claims that the scheme prioritizes safety and environmental concerns, practical issues loom large. Charity worker Lisa Whitehouse lamented the "ghettoising" effect of the barriers, stating that they create unnecessary isolation while the hope for reduced traffic simply leads to rerouted congestion in surrounding areas. Meanwhile, with already limited public transport—buses reportedly running only once every half hour—many residents face dire logistical hurdles.

Frustrated locals, such as engineer Mark Gottshalk, voiced a collective desire to reclaim their roads, emphasizing the need for better access to essential services. Kebab shop owner Zeravan Sadik expressed similar concerns about the barriers obstructing delivery options, signalling potential downturns for local businesses in a community already struggling under the weight of ineffective governance.

In light of the contentious police presence during the installation, Avon and Somerset Police Commissioner Clare Moody has announced an investigation, suggesting that the heavy-handed approach was unnecessary and indicative of deeper issues within the council's conduct. Councillor Ed Plowden, trying to defend the early morning works, claimed safety necessitated such measures amid protests, but the lack of transparency has only fueled further dissent.

With mixed opinions surfacing among residents—some lauding potential benefits for cyclists, while others decry the implementation methods—the ongoing controversy surrounding the barriers casts a stark light on the challenges urban areas face. The situation epitomizes the need for local governments to engage in genuine dialogue with their constituents and remain steadfast in promoting inclusive and equitable policies that address socioeconomic disparities—taking a lesson from those on the political right who seek to champion the voices of all citizens rather than impose top-down constraints that risk deepening divides.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/police-join-contractors-bus-gate-installed-before-sunrise/> - This article supports the claim of police presence during the installation of bus gates in Barton Hill as part of the East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood scheme, highlighting community protests and the council's actions.
* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/police-join-contractors-bus-gate-installed-before-sunrise/> - It also details local reactions to the installation, including concerns about the impact on traffic and community life.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2025-02-26/treatment-of-residents-in-tower-block-evacuation-exceptional-case-of-neglect> - This report from ITV highlights broader issues with Bristol City Council's handling of local affairs, such as in the case of Barton House's evacuation, indicating a pattern of contentious community relations.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2025-02-26/treatment-of-residents-in-tower-block-evacuation-exceptional-case-of-neglect> - It also underscores the lack of trust residents have in the council's actions and policies.
* <https://www.firstbus.co.uk/bristol-bath-and-west/news-and-service-updates/updates/road-closure-020325-fireclay-road-barton> - This page provides information on road closures and diversions in the area, which could exacerbate the logistical issues faced by residents due to the new barriers.