

**The Essex County Council (Wake Road, High Beech, Waltham Abbey)
(Prohibition of Motor Vehicles) Order 2021**

Statement of Reasons

Summary of the Location

Wake Road, known locally as Manor Road, is a local road running through Epping Forest. Either side of the road there are parking bays which are owned and operated by the City of London Corporation as public parking spaces for accessing the forest.

Wake Road is a through route through the Epping Forest, but is not the only suitable route. Pauls Nursery Road runs adjacent to Wake Road before the roads join at Wake Road's northern end.

Reasons for the Proposed Changes

A request has been received from the Epping Forest District Council Community Safety Partnership, funded by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex and supported by the City of London Corporation to close Wake Road to motor vehicles overnight following recorded anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. The behaviour includes:

- Prolific and endemic drug taking and dealing
- Voluminous use of nitrous capsules and balloons to get a temporary high
- Loud sounding of car horns late into the night
- Loud and dangerous handbrake turns and spinning of vehicles
- Drinking of alcohol and smashing of bottles across the carriageway
- Setting off of fireworks late into the night
- Road racing at high speeds
- Roaring of engines and loud music
- Dangerous and drink/drug driving
- Intimidation of other users of the road through the Green
- Consistent speeding cars (50 mph) in a 20 mph zone.
- Outrageous amounts of litter from capsules, balloons, discarded fast food and alcoholic drink.

Essex Police has seen an increase in officers who drive through the forest being diverted from the incident they were due to attend to deal with issues occurring at this location. The Community Policing Team and Special Constabulary have spent the vast majority of their time policing this area (particularly late at night) which has detracted from routine community policing work and public engagement. When these teams are off duty it has fallen onto the Local Policing teams to respond to and this impacts on the service the residents of Epping Forest receive. A longer term solution is required and therefore the proposal is supported by Essex Police in order for policing resources to be directed to other duties in the local area.

Benefits of the Proposed Changes

The proposed changes are already supported by local members of the public, whose views were sought through an informal consultation carried out by Epping Forest District Council Community Safety Partnership. In addition to this, 7760 members of the public have signed a petition to seek action to address the problems within the High Beech location, which this proposal aims to improve.

The proposal will prevent motor vehicles from entering the car park area of Wake Road after sunset (specific hours to be signed on site and will vary seasonally in line with shift patterns of Epping Forest Keepers). Pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians will be permitted to continue using Wake Road as a through route at all times. All users will be permitted to travel into and through this length of road throughout the day, so that the public can continue to access and enjoy the Epping Forest.

There are several other forest car parks in the vicinity, all of which are now closed and gated at the same time to prevent similar such issues. However, as the parking spaces here are adjacent to a public highway, it is not possible to prevent access without the use of a Traffic Regulation Order. The City of London Corporation Forest Keepers/constables will facilitate the opening and closing of the gates daily in line with the existing opening and closing of forest car parks.

The measure of effect will be a reduction in the number of recorded incidents and complaints of the behaviours listed above. All incidents should be reported to the relevant enforcement authorities so that the success of the experiment can be measured. This data, along with the responses to the consultation will enable Essex County Council to make the decision as to whether the restriction will remain in place permanently.