

Dear Resident

Tackling night-time, anti-social behaviour at High Beach, Epping Forest

The High Beach area of Epping Forest has experienced issues with anti-social behaviour for at least the last 15 years. The anti-social behaviour occurs most evenings, irrespective of the season, or weather, and is mainly centred around the Pillow Mounds car park with visitors arriving by car.

The Forest Forum launched a change.org petition 'Stop the anti-social behaviour and littering in Epping Forest', in July 2020, while residents launched a 'Make High Beach Safe' campaign, in June 2020, campaigning for a reduction in noise, traffic offences and intimidating behaviour. The behaviours cited as causing concern include

- Illegal drug use and dealing of illegal substances
- Littering, particularly that associated with 'legal high' use, alcohol and fast food consumption
- Night-time noise disturbance caused by cars (engine revs, horns, driver action etc.) firework use and loud music
- Hazardous 'joy ride' style driving and speeding.
- Intimidation or abuse of other users of Manor Road

The Community Safety Partnership are working collaboratively with Epping Forest District Council, Essex Police, North Essex Parking Partnership and the City of London Corporation to reduce, and where possible eliminate, the anti-social behaviours demonstrated by late night visitors.

Since July 2020, City Corporation staff have undertaken additional night shifts, with support from Essex Police, to enforce the night-time byelaw parking restrictions in the Pillow Mounds car park, however this activity is not sustainable in the long term. As soon as the patrols reduce, the night-time activity is likely to resume and a more permanent solution is being sought.

The night-time closure of the High Beach car park may present a simple and cost-effective solution to address issues by disrupting and deterring use of the main parking area at night-time.

Night-time closure of High Beach Car Park, including highway access on Manor Road.

The Community Safety Partnership reviewed several proposed solutions to the issues.

- Remodelling the car park/highway to allow closure without highway access restrictions,

- Use of automatic number plate reader cameras to facilitate enforcement action (byelaw or criminal) on the vehicle owners and
- Night-time road closures by installation of gates.

The former two would be expensive, take considerable time to implement and may not fully address the issues or stop incidents occurring.

The Partnership have concluded that a road closure, using gates, at night-time is the most effective and financially achievable solution, particularly for an experimental phase to test effectiveness in the first instance.

This type of road closure was tested during the initial Covid-19 lockdown response when all Forest car parks were closed. At High Beach this was achieved using concrete blocks to close off Manor Road. The result of the road closure was a marked reduction in anti-social behaviour, littering and inappropriate car park use.

It is proposed that the highways authority install gates which can perform the same function without denying access during the day when the anti-social behaviours are not prevalent.

The ability to swiftly block access, such as closing the car park or implementing restrictions on illegal public gatherings, could if necessary support any future Covid-19 pandemic associated lockdown restrictions. A further benefit would be the release of staff for both the City Corporation's Forest Keepers and Officers from Essex Police at this location which can then be redeployed to other important community safety functions.

Using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) Essex County Council (the highway authority) will install gates at either end of High Beach Car Park, Manor Road to facilitate the ability to temporarily close a 200m section of road which provides access to 96 marked, car parking bays. The proposed gates will be highway compliant with high visibility, reflective markings, so they are quickly recognisable to drivers at night.

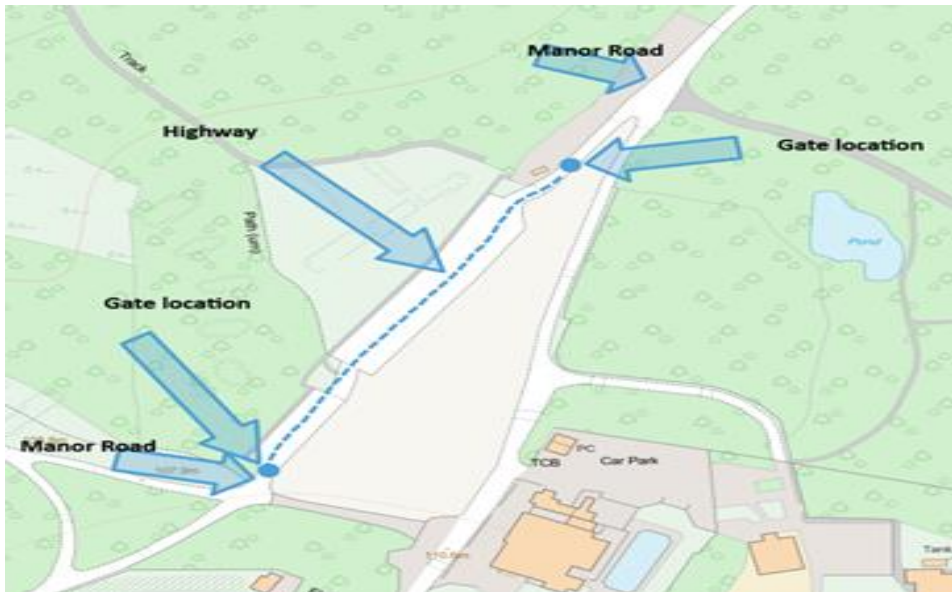


Figure 1

The gates will be closed at night-time, imposing travel access restrictions during the hours of darkness. Current proposals suggest closure between sunset and 0730hrs daily.

Signage will direct drivers approaching from Avey Lane (SW) to bypass the closed section via Wellington Hill and Pynest Green Lane and from Forest Side/Claypit Hill (NE) via Paul's Nursery Road junction. These alternative routes allow drivers to divert around the closure with minimum impact on travel distance (<1 mile) during the hours of darkness.

The proposed gates and signage will be funded by Essex Police Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) Community Safety Development Fund and Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership at a cost of £12,700. The City Corporation will provide long-term assistance by assuming responsibility for gate opening and closing.

The proposal has support from the following organisations.

- Essex Police
- Essex Highways
- Essex County Council Highway Panel (Epping Forest Local Highway Panel)
- County Councillors
- Epping Forest District Council – Community Resilience Service
- District Councillors
- North Essex Parking Partnership

This proposed night-time closure is experimental, an ETRO can only stay in force for a maximum of 18 months while the effects are monitored and assessed.

As a resident who will be directly affected by the proposed night time closure, the Community Safety Partnership are informally consulting with you prior to the ETRO being advertised and put in place as we welcome your views and want to give you the opportunity to respond before progressing the implementation of the ETRO by Essex Highways.

If you have any comments, objections or feedback please email the Community Safety Partnership at csp@eppingforestdc.gov.uk no later than Friday 26th March 12noon after which we will progress the implementation of the ETRO.

Once in place, members of the public have 6 months to raise any comments/objections. If no comments/objections are raised then a decision will be made whether to make the experimental order permanent.

Kind regards

Caroline Wiggins

Lead Officer for Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership