



## **Watford CSP**

Request for renewal and variation of  
the current Public Spaces Protection  
Order.

**July 2023**

Updated by: C/Insp 1710 A. WISEMAN

Version 3.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I write in relation to the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) that currently exists within Watford Town Centre and surrounding environs (appendix 1).

The PSPO sets out an area whereby an offence may be committed if a person identified as entering the designated area is seen either acting in a manner contrary to public order whilst consuming alcohol or is thought likely to act in such a manner and can then be approached by a uniformed Police Officer, Police, Community Support Officer or other delegated Local Government Officer and told to cease consumption of alcohol immediately. Failure to comply is an offence under the current order.

This area and its current order in force is well known by residents in Watford and is commonly known as a 'no drinking zone'.

Following the introduction of The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, a timescale of three years was set as the maximum any PSPO can be in authority without the need for formal review and application to extend.

The last order was granted in December 2020.

I am seeking both to renew the existing order and a variation by extension to the existing Order. Specifically, that the southern boundary be widened so that the designated area incorporates additional streets and green spaces. The area is locally known as Watford fields. This request is evidence-based and founded on a review of crime and ASB in that location and is made also in response to requests by residents of Watford fields recorded within the recent ECHO (online anonymous reporting system) which recorded requests that Police address the ASB and misuse of drugs in the area. The connection between street drinking and ASB and misuse of drugs is well documented within the local intelligence picture, and I shall refer to this later in this report.

The review and outcomes process are Council managed, but ultimately implemented and operated in partnership with local Stakeholders and Police.

I am mindful that further discussion will be required on the implementation, conditions and practical aspects of managing a PSPO but I wanted to layout my rationale for supporting a renewal of this PSPO. I also wanted to emphasize the extension to the current geographical area will be undertaken by further consultation with local residents, schools and business (that if granted) would fall within the area of the extended PSPO

## **Watford Town Centre Overview**

Watford is a vibrant, diverse and progressive town. The town centre is a regional hub for shopping, with restaurants and businesses centred in and around the Town Centre and has a busy Day Time Economy (DTE)

In the evening the town attracts numerous persons who enjoy Night Time Economy (NTE) premises, in the form of; theatre, restaurants, pubs and nightclubs.

This presents a significant challenge for the Police and Local Authority. There is an existing strong and positive partnership approach to working with the Communities, Businesses and local Stakeholders in managing the town.

The town centre has undergone in the last few years substantial redevelopment in respect of a new IMAX cinema, additional restaurants, bars, shops and residential flats throughout the town and roads leading into the town. These improvements in the town are designed to encourage and develop the Early Evening Economy (EEE). There has also been investment within the transport infrastructure.

This investment within our community needs to be protected. The town already welcomes a monthly average of 3.5 million visitors and with the planned growth and additional injection of businesses and facilities this will without doubt go from strength to strength.

One of the main methods utilised to support the prevention of Crime, Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is the existing PSPO.

The PSPO allows Police to seize alcohol from persons who continue to drink within the area when they have been requested to stop.

The PSPO covers the town centre and its environs as well as other selected areas of Watford a detailed map (appendix A) is included. The map shows both the current extent of the order and the proposed extension.

The PSPO is relied upon by police to tackle issues such as street drinking - which is a considerable factor in ASB reports within the designated area of the current order.

The PSPO is also utilised and key in reducing “pre-loading” (heavy drinking prior to entering a licensed premise). This practice is a specific policing concern as it affects the licensed premises ability to manage intoxication and analysis shows increases vulnerability within an NTE.

The PSPO is a bespoke piece of legislation that allows the local authority to place specific restrictions upon an area where behaviour has or is likely to have a detrimental effect on the local community.

ASB for the town centre this year continues to fall through the focussing of dedicated patrolling and targeting of individuals responsible for this crime type – the PSPO has been instrumental in the support of this decrease.

Some reports can be linked to youth related ASB which escalated into group violence and serious crime. Additionally my Town Centre team report they are increasingly having to tackle homelessness, begging and street drinking.

There is a well-documented connection between street drinking the misuse of drugs. Such gatherings of street drinkers if left unchallenged have in additional crime types develop to feed these gatherings, these are notably street dealing and distribution of drugs, theft from shop both alcohol for immediate consumption by such gatherings and theft of other goods to sell on to purchase drugs and alcohol.

We have strong evidence that when these types of cohorts exist and become ensconced in a location we see a direct connection to youth related ASB misuse of alcohol and drugs and child exploitation leading to further child sexual exploitation.

I would request that any conversion considers our current challenges and priorities and ensure that these are addressed within the PSPO.

### **Prepare, Protect, Pursue & Prevent**

The PSPO needs to be continued to preserve the current tried and tested powers. The PSPO is fully supported by police.

If we do not renew this valuable tool in the enforcement of the town centre public order we risk further increasing ASB and alcohol related incidents by losing a preventative power.

If we do not continue the order and do not cater for our current challenges, we miss an opportunity to protect the public and ensure we have a safe environment for people to work and visit for the future. Not showing the initiative and proactively addressing the changing challenges exposes the Constabulary and its partners to scrutiny and criticism.

Key to progression is to ensure fair and appropriate measures are in place and utilised to protect those who are vulnerable and or who need safeguarding.

ASB and crime within the town centre and local environs is manifested in different ways but includes:

- Aggressive Begging and Street Drinking.
- Theft from shops of alcohol ,to serve the street drinking cohort is a well-established crime theme within the town.
- The attraction street drinking congregation have acted as a market for other crime types such as of stolen goods crime mark and distribution and use of drugs
- It is well documented where street drinking has manifest itself in the town centre youths have been attracted to the same location because of the ability to gain alcohol form others there ,this has had direct connection to child exploitation
- Further to this these locations where street drinking has gained a foot hold youth and gang related issues have occurred with groups associating with those engaged in street drinking .
- The NTE with links to pre loading Drug taking and Violent Crime.

Hertfordshire borders the Metropolitan Policing area, and we believe that there is displacement from the Metropolitan area into Hertfordshire and Watford from arrests and intelligence.

The ability to have powers that prevent individuals, and Organised Crime Groups from cohabiting in public spaces by the coalescing of such groups in activity of street drinking ASB and crime must be sought to protect the safety of the public.

Our Policing Objectives within the use of this power are to:

- Keep People Safe
- Prevent Crime and Anti- Social Behaviour both within residential and business areas.
- Protect the Community, Businesses and those who work and visit the town centre and reduce the risk of harm from Crime and ASB through appropriate and proportionate use of legislation.
- Ensure that the use of powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 powers are applied and implemented in such a way that they are transparent, non-discriminatory, accountable, stand up to scrutiny and provided confidence and reassurance to the communities within their application.
- Through proportionate, appropriate use of powers and working with partners, manage offenders whose behaviour and criminality that has a detrimental impact on community.
- Increase feelings of safety and security of communities who work, live within and socialise in the town.
- Maintain the reputation of Hertfordshire Constabulary in delivery of policing services through the partnership approach.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 outlines the legal powers that allow for this to be implemented. I detail these below so it is clear as to which powers it is we seek to utilise. I have also considered this against the Human Rights Act.

The PSPO provides the legal basis to restrict activities within an area that have had or are likely to have a detrimental impact on the community.

***Legal Definition of Anti- Social Behaviour:***

- *Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person,*
- *Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or*
- *(c) Conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.*

**Human Rights Act 1998**

The Human Rights Act (ECHR) is a key piece of legislation. In reviewing this request I have considered the specific rights detailed below.

- ECHR Article 8 – Right to Privacy / Family Life.
- ECHR Article 10- Right to Freedom of expression.
- ECHR Article 11 – Freedom of Association.
- ECHR Article 14 – Freedom from Discrimination.
- ECHR Protocol 1 Article 1 – Enjoyment of one's possession.

In reaching conclusions I have balanced what is the right thing to do in law and ethically to protect the wider community from the criminal and anti-social behaviour of a few. I have also considered what the community would expect the police to do in such circumstances. This is also balanced against the rights of the few.

**Article 8** - There is a minimal impact on this right, as there is no intention to deprive anyone of a family or private life, unless there is an attempt to behave unlawfully or in anti-social manner.

**Article 10 & Article 11-** There is no intention prevent people from expressing their thoughts and freedoms or associating together. In the application of this power there would be no intention to prevent someone from lawfully going about their lawful business in a peaceful manner

In specifically considering the Association element I have considered the rights of both those who wish to associate (Group) together and the wider Community who could be impacted upon by that particular association (group). In coming to the conclusion that I believe the power is appropriate and proportionate to use, I do not believe that

anyone will be negatively affected unless they behave in an Anti-Social way, behave or act unlawfully or breach any conditions set within the power.

There is nothing to prevent our communities behaving or associating as they wish provided they do so within the confines of law.

I have also considered this with Protocol 1, Article 1 in mind which gives the right to the peaceful enjoyment of one's possessions. This also includes the businesses who could be affected or who are adversely affected by crime and anti-social behaviour.

There is likely to be little impact on those who participate in un-lawful behaviour or crime as they are able to access their possessions without hindrance and it is that behaviour that impacts on others. I remain mindful that behaviour of a few can also put others off of visiting the town centre thus potentially depriving the wider community of access. I also acknowledge this could be by perception of preconceived opinions about certain communities and fear as opposed directly evidenced intimidation.

It is illegal activity, crime and anti-social behaviour only that we seek to prevent. Therefore, the application of this power must be done proportionately and ethically and not used randomly to simply move someone on or displace a problem. Whilst the PSPO would provide the over-arching power, each situation must and would be assessed on the information present and action taken based upon that situation.

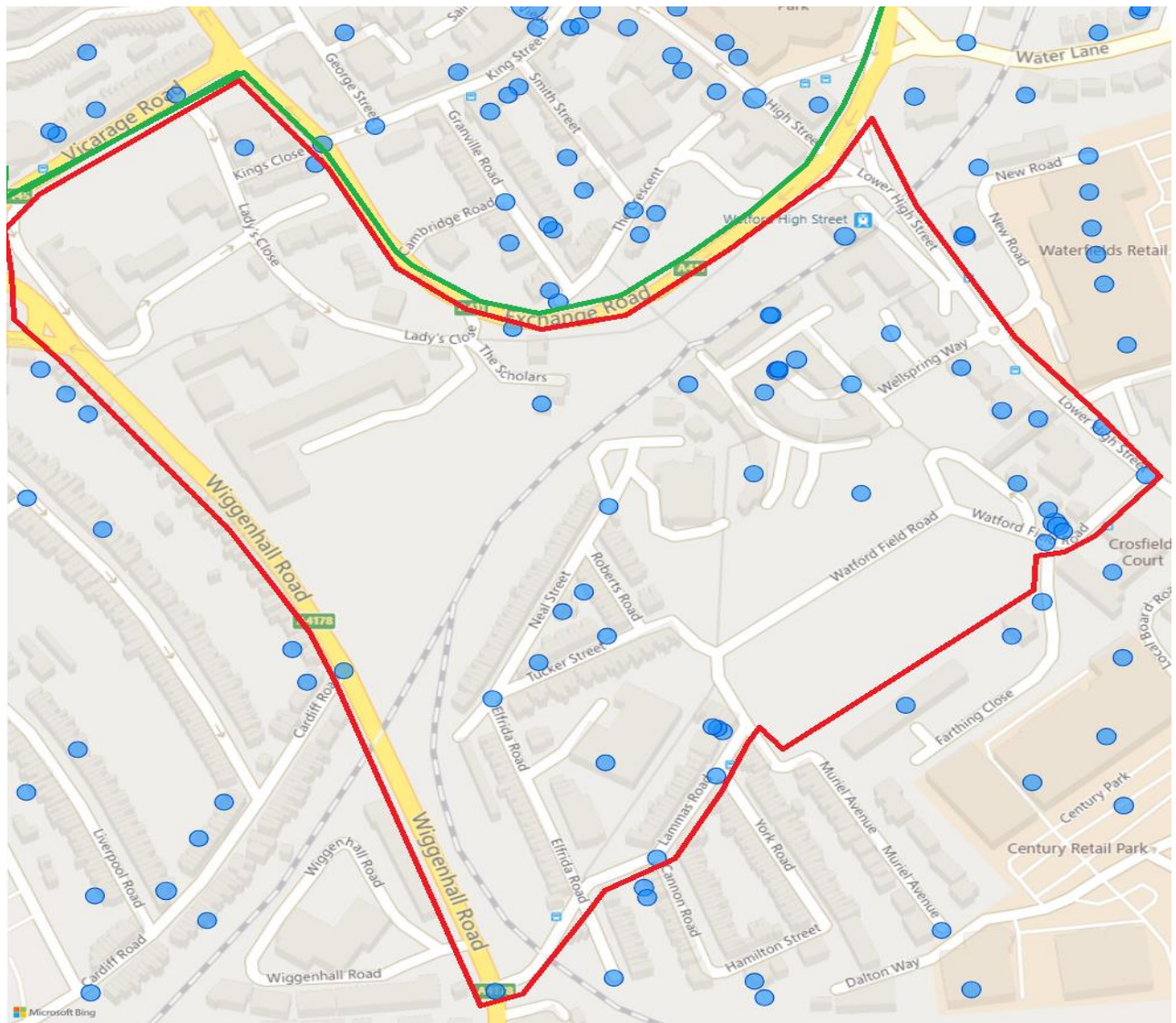
### **Request for alteration**

It is requested that the southern boundary be widened so that the designated area incorporates additional streets (and all public spaces within the area demarcated by):

- Lower High Street (from j/w with Beechen Grove to j/w Watford Field Road)
- Lammas Road
- Wiggenhall Road (from j/w Vicarage Road to j/w Lammas Road)
- Ladies Close
- The foot path leading from ladies close to Wiggenhall road
- The foot path from the high street station, to Ladies Close
- Neal Street
- Roberts Road
- Wellspring Way
- Elfrida Road
- Tucker Street
- Pumphouse Crescet
- Kings Close
- The Scholars

This request is evidence-based and founded on a review of crime and ASB in that location. The green outline on below map identifies the southern boundary of the existing PSPO area. The red represents the proposed new southern boundary of the

PSPO. The blue dots within this proposed new section of additional designated area, represent locations of where instances of ASB have been reported to police between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2023. There are forty instances in total.



Examples of the ASB reported during this period, pertinent to the area in question include:

- A group of four to five intoxicated males being rowdy, disturbing a visually impaired resident living in Pumphouse Crescent.
- A drunk female in the area of Field Gate House, refusing to leave.
- A resident in York Road reporting a group of eight youths, two of whom believed to be drunk, walking around local streets and arguing.
- Drunk people 'talking very loudly' in Watford Fields at 2am, disturbing a local resident.
- Drunk male abusing passersby in area of Watford High Street railway station.



In addition to these and other known instances of ASB in this location, there is a risk of police activity in and around other key ASB hotspots, located within the existing PSPO, displacing the nuisance further afield. It is therefore considered prudent to broaden the boundary of the PSPO where it sits in close proximity to those hotspots, most notably the High Street, St Marys church yard and Market Street, so as afford police with the best possible ability to continue to tackle to the ASB in the event that it is displaced beyond the existing boundary.

### **Application Considerations**

In considering whether to make a request that a PSPO be implemented I have considered the following options:

#### **1. Allow PSPO to lapse.**

*I believe this option would expose the community to risk and expose the Constabulary and Local Authority to criticism and a loss of confidence.*

#### **2. Convert to PSPO without alteration**

*This option has been considered but is less favoured due to a review of recent crime and ASB figures which supports a request to adjust the existing boundary to incorporate additional areas.*

#### **3. Convert PSPO to PSPO with alteration.**

*Favoured option: By extending the boundary (and signage) of the PSPO to incorporate the aforementioned streets and public spaces, there is a realistic possibility of perpetrators being deterred from committing ASB, whilst affording police the additional power to address reports of ASB in this locality.*

### **Considerations around restriction and enforcement**

Street Drinking – The issue of street drinking inherently relates to the ASB that comes with it. This includes littering, Noise, unacceptable language and behaviour and public urination.

Alcohol - This is a complex area because of the Licencing Legislation concerned and a desire to support businesses and events in the town centre whilst at the same time achieving the aims of the PSPO and managing ASB and NTE.

## **Enforcement**

Currently the communities understanding of the PSPO means that officers are able, in the overwhelming number of interdictions in relation to street drinking, to require immediate compliance and cessation of the activity within the orders area negating any need for further enforcement actions. Where enforcement is required this rarely goes beyond the disposal of the seized alcohol.

## **Recommended Action**

It is clear that to allow the PSPO to lapse without replacement would not serve the best interest of the Community or Businesses and it would therefore be neglectful the Local Authority, Police and detrimental to the policing objectives to allow this to happen.

To convert the current powers into a new PSPO is desirable, with a request to alter the location boundaries of the existing order. I consider this to be the most suitable and proportionate course of action in supporting the town a safer place for the future.

I would suggest that all the signage pertaining to the order be refreshed and renewed due to weathering and to allow for a new map of the signage to be circulated to my officers to ensure continued awareness of the boundary for new officers joining the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

I would suggest that consideration be given to building in a review period at 6 months after initial implementation and then annually.

I also suggest that an overview be provided to One Watford and the Local Council Scrutiny Committee to provide accountability.

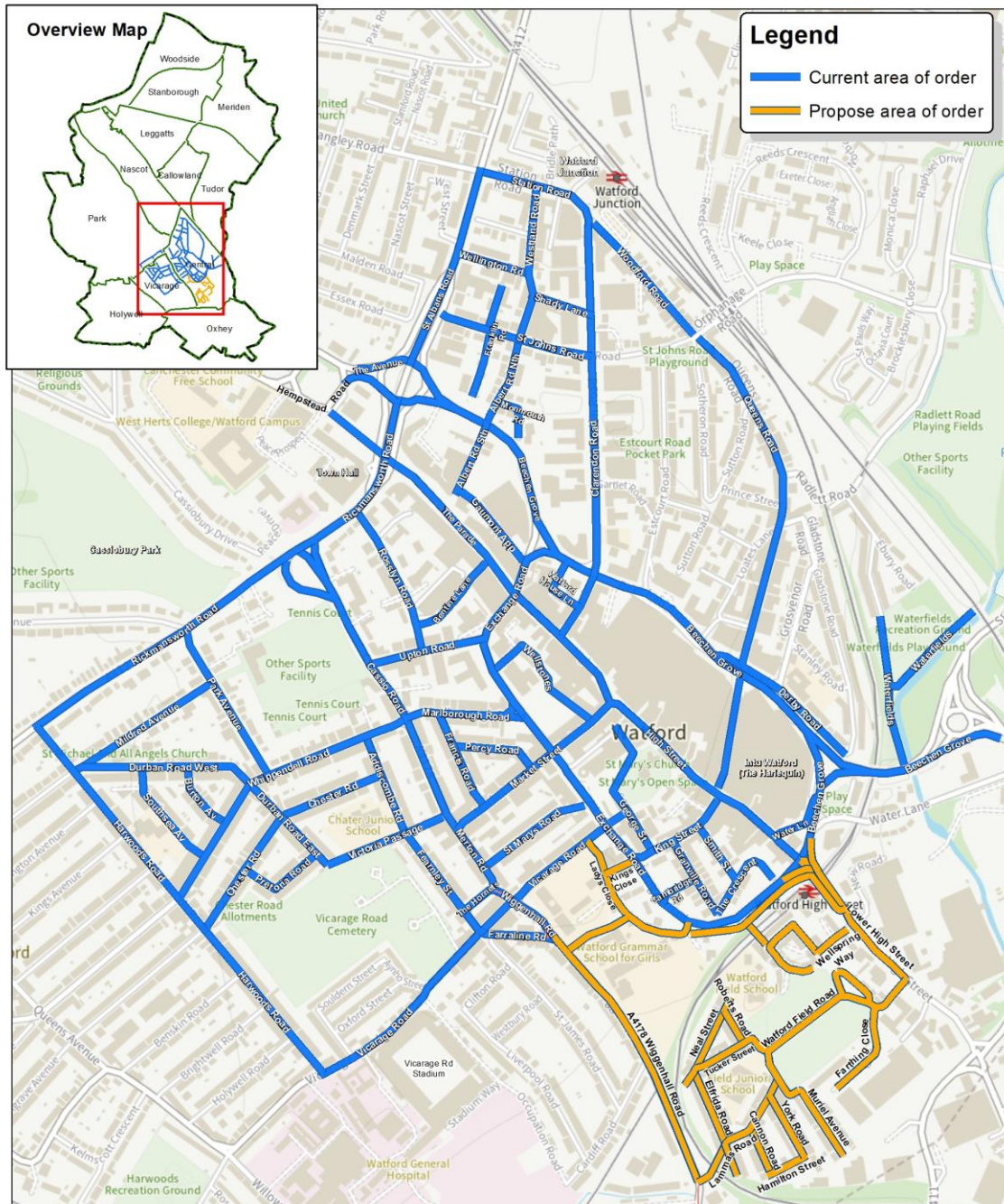
Yours Sincerely,

*a wise man ...*


Chief Inspector 1710 Andy Wiseman

**18<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

# Appendix A: current boundary and street covered within the PSPO (2020-2023) and proposed extension



'Public Space Protection Order' (PSPO) makes for an offence to continue to consume alcohol when asked to stop by a police or an accredited officer. It is also an offence to fail to surrender alcohol within the designated area when requested to do so by a police or accredited officer with a maximum fine of £500 on any of the streets defined in blue. This includes all public areas abounded by blue roads as defined on this map.




**WATFORD  
BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**


Town Hall, Watford,  
Hertfordshire WD17 3EX

**PSPO Map**

Map Produced by: Geographic Information  
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Scale 1:9,000



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