Request for Anti-social behaviour case review / Community Trigger

Car Cruising

BR67QS TN147DX

- COURT ROAD, CHELSFIELD
- A21 / HEWITTS ROUNDABOUT / M25 J4 SPUR ROAD
- COURT ROAD, BADGERS MOUNT / LONDON ROAD / CROW DRIVE / POLHILL



Request to:

- London Borough of Bromley Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
- Sevenoaks District Council Community Safety Unit

Request by:

email:



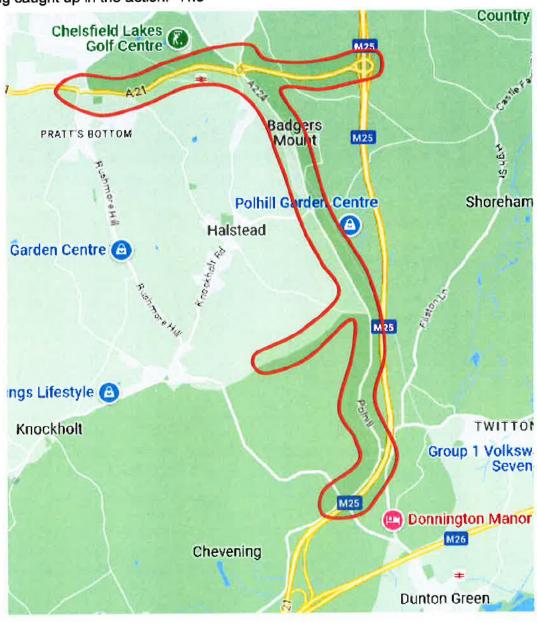
Introduction

Background

The issue of cars and bikes speeding around this area has been around for some years. Since late 2021 / early 2022, the problem increased to such proportions that there are organised Car Meetings centred around Hewitts roundabout late at night, typically between 23:30hr and 03:00hr if not dispersed. They occur up to three times a week, usually with over 100 cars and many spectators on the roads. The events are a high risk to the safety of the general public due to the careless driving of those taking part. Several people avoid driving in the area at night out of fear of being caught up in the action. The

noise of cars with modified exhausts and engines whose fuel-air mix is adjusted to make it run roughly and backfire, is highly intrusive and is causing a detrimental effect on the local residents' wellbeing causing stress and lack of sleep.

This request for an Anti-social behaviour case review / Community Trigger has been unanimously supported by the Parish Councils and Residents' Associations of Halstead, Badgers Mount, Knockholt, Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom.



Car cruising area outlined in red

Community Action to date

The Metropolitan Police (Met) gave a presentation to our local communities of Halstead, Badgers Mount, Knockholt, Pratts Bottom and Chelsfield in February 2023 to inform of the growth of car meets in the London area.

A leaflet advising how to report these incidents was distributed to the communities of Halstead, Badgers Mount, Chelsfield and Pratts Bottom. Halstead Parish Council (HPC) intends to meet with the Kent Police Commissioner in the near future.



Police Action to date

The Met engaged with and provided advice to Kent Police who now also attend meetings which disperse the meetings.

In February 2023, the Met contacted their local Traffic Management Officer to request a mobile motorway matrix board on the Hewitts roundabout to flash up warning signs around car meetings of plain clothes officers on patrol and seizure of vehicles.

In June 2023, the Met increased patrols together with Kent Police and is in contact with the local Neighbourhood Policing Team. Met Police traffic vehicles are tasked with patrols in the area from 1700-0100hr. Other traffic cars respond outside these hours.

The Police stress the importance of reporting incidents at the time, as only then can they be aware of them and know the impact on the community. Patrol units endeavour to attend but this depends on how the call is graded and what other calls are outstanding.

The Met's Road Safety Engineering Unit worked with the council and the contractors;

the new road surface on Hewitts roundabout is a high friction surface course (68PSV), chosen to prevent drifting at the location.

The Met advised HPC in June 2023 that London Borough of Bromley (LBB)-installed CCTV cameras would be installed on selected lamp-posts for the best views. They would be monitored 24 hours a day from LBB's control room. The cameras would record meetings gathering and LBB would pass the information to the Met's Proactive Safer Roads Team for investigation. The lamp-posts identified are the responsibility of TfL who has not responded to requests for permission to use them. LBB has offered the use of one of theirs which they believe would provide an acceptable view. The Met has also contacted LBB's Road Safety Team and is in regular contact with Kent Police regarding the situation. As at September, there appears to be no progress regarding the CCTV and the matter is ongoing.

The current situation

As at September 2023, car meetings continue unabated with measures taken so far appearing not to have had the desired effect. The most recent incidents were on 26/27 August and 3 September. At a meeting of around one hundred cars in July, about thirty registrations numbers were captured by an observer. All those car owners were served with Section 59 notices. Cars have been observed racing at high speed, side by side on Crow Drive.

Four sample incidents of car cruising have been reported by email to LBB ASB and SDC Community Safety units and the Met with a view to requesting a Community Trigger.

Speeding, loud vehicles are not restricted to night time car meetings. There is a trend for tuning engines and modifying exhausts that means that a growing number of cars are illegal in configuration and noise levels (over 72db). The noise of these cars causes stress to local residents and happens day and night on the major roads in the area.

The Request for a Anti-social behaviour case review / Community Trigger

Evidence

The Anti-social behaviour case review / Community Trigger is a process to ask the local council or other agencies to review the response to anti-social behaviour incidents that have been reported.

By means of this document, a multiagency review of how this issue is dealt with is now requested.

As mentioned above, four sample occurrences have been reported to the Councils and the Met for incidents on 10, 13, 15 June, 1/2 July, 21/22 July, 26/27 August and 3 September 2023. Please see Appendix 1 for transcript of the emails to LBB and SDC following these events, together with photographic evidence captured at the time.

Despite local residents being urged to report car meetings to the Council and Police, a disappointing number actually do, possibly due to the fact that the situation has not improved many months after they first tried reporting. Calls to the Police on 101 regularly mean a wait of 20-30 minutes and some people are reluctant to call 999 or report to various agencies after the event.

When events occur, local residents seem keen to report them on social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Next Door. In the absence of large numbers of residents reporting incidents to the agencies, please see some snips of social media comments in Appendix 2.

Possible action to be considered – feedback from other district councils

Some other district councils have effective injunctions in place, banning car cruising. LBB and SDC could do likewise. However, these require a lot of resource and expense and may still fail in court. Southend City Council has found that a Public Space

Protection Order area, that enables on-thespot fining of £100 to the offender, has so far proved more effective than their three year injunction but these too require appropriate resourcing to capture vehicles' registrations.

Action Requested

These car cruising events take place in an area that spans two local councils in different districts, LBB and SDC. This causes difficulties in the collection of evidence as this may be split between the two districts. It has also led to delays in police attending, or not attending at all, especially when the police call advisor responds that the event is not in their area but will "pass the message on to the neighbouring police force".

Events have been reported to both Councils and the Met, who have "adopted" the area as lead agency, working with Kent Police.

As mentioned above, it would be appreciated if several courses of action are considered for investigation, including:

- Multi-agencies from both districts to work together
- Prompt installation of CCTV cameras around Hewitts roundabout
- Installation of matrix board on Hewitts roundabout
- Apply for injunction banning car cruising
- Place a Public Space Protection Order on the area, and consider its resourcing and operation

Appendix 1

Emails sent to Anti-Social Behaviour Unit of London Borough of Bromley and Community Safety Unit of Sevenoaks District Council

REPORTING OF SAMPLE INCIDENTS OF CAR CRUISE MEETINGS

First email 16 June 2023, reporting incidents on 10, 13, 15 June 2023

From:

Sent: Jun 16, 2023 at 6:58 PM

To: community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk, community.safety@bromley.gov.uk

Subject: Anti-Social Behaviour - Car Cruising - Hewitts roundabout and Surrounding Area

Dear Sir / Madam.

I am sending this email to both Sevenoaks and Bromley Councils as the anti-social behaviour we have been experiencing for more than a year spans both councils, the issue straddling the boundary between the two districts.

Since 2021, but mainly since Spring 2022, there have been car cruising meets centred around the Hewitts roundabout at the end of the spur road off the M25 J4. These meets typically take place around midnight and, if not dispersed by the Police, will continue until around 3 am. The cars are very loud with tuned engines to make them backfire, there are typically over 100 of them and they race on the A21 from Pratts Bottom to the Hewitts roundabout. Form there, either towards Orpington or Badgers Mount on the A224 or up the spur and on to the M25. Some continue from Badgers Mount to Polhill and as far as Morants Court roundabout towards Dunton Green.

We are in contact with Met Police since last Winter and provide evidence where possible to their Proactive Safer Roads Team. Several residents call the Police when a meet is occurring.

The Met Police have flagged this area as a hotspot for this ASB and are working with LBB to install CCTV cameras and warning notices on the roundabout. We are aware that the Met Police is liaising with Kent Police to encourage them to patrol the area.

The reason I am writing this email now is partly due to the fact that the meets are becoming more frequent, two or three times a week (in fact 10, 13 and 15 June just this week), and that is in addition to the individual loud backfiring cars that race up and down the A-roads at all times of day and night.

Most importantly though is the safety and wellbeing of the local communities of Halstead, Badgers Mount, Knockholt, Dunton Green, Chelsfield, Pratts Bottom and Orpington. It is terrifying if one inadvertently finds oneself being over and under-taken by these cars when innocently using the roads. I have heard that some people will not drive into the area at night now and someone who was too scared to pull out on to the roundabout due the cars racing round. The residents' wellbeing is affected as, not only is the noise horrendous, it also causes lack of sleep - even when the event is finished some cannot sleep due to the stress. I have heard from several people that they are at the end of their tether and really cannot take this much longer. I am one of those people. I know I am not the only one who tries to get to sleep in the quietest room in the house (in my case the dining room, under the table!) - we should not have to do this.

I know I represent our communities when I request that you do whatever possible to stop this ASB. Others in our communities may also contact you. We are monitoring this issue and may inform you every time there is a car meet so you can appreciate the scale of the problem. If we feel nothing is being done to resolve the matter, we may use the Community Trigger to request multiple agencies review this case. I truly hope it will not need to come to this.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I would welcome your comments.

Kind regards,

Second email 3 July 2023, reporting incident on 1/2 July 2023

From:

Sent: Jul 3, 2023 at 12:08 AM

To: community.safety@bromley.gov.uk, community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Subject: Re:Anti-Social Behaviour - Car Cruising - Hewitts roundabout and Surrounding Area -Second Email 2
July 2023

This email is the second one to report the same ASB in our area. Loud cars racing around the Hewitts roundabout area day and night is becoming the norm with the late-nighters going on till 2:30 am and the early-mourners starting around 4:30 am.

But to report "the same ASB" I am reporting organised late night car cruising, where groups of people gather and spectators and their cars block the carriageways, in addition to highly dangerous driving. This occurred again last night from around midnight and was still going on at 2:35 am today 2 July. I am aware that there were 999 calls made to the police at midnight as there was risk to life in the manner of the drivers' behaviour. At that time there were about 15 cars that were waiting around for others. Normal meetings in this area attract about 100 cars. It seems the police were unable to attend on this occasion, or at least for more than two and a half hours.

The effect is that residents of parts of Halstead and Badgers Mount are unable to sleep due to the noise and stress, plus the fear of using the roads late at night and the worry that there will be a horrendous accident where innocent drivers could be seriously injured, or worse.

I would be grateful if you would record this as a second occurrence of the same ASB as reported in 16 June 2023 for the purpose of building up a log for use when we utilise the community trigger to request a review of how this issue is dealt with.

Kind regards.

Third email 23 July 2023, reporting incident on 21/22 July 2023

Subject: Re:Anti-Social Behaviour - Car Cruising - Hewitts roundabout and Surrounding Area - Third Email 23 July 2023

From:

Date: 23/07/2023, 08:22

To: community.safety@bromley.gov.uk, community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Dear Sir, Madam,

This is my third email to report the same ASB in the same area, Car Cruising in the Hewitts roundabout and surrounding area. I have described the incidents and their effect on the community in my previous emails and the purpose of contacting you is to add to the log of same ASB as those reported on16 June and 2 July to use towards utilising the Community Trigger to request a multi-agency review on how the issue is dealt with.

The most recent incident took place on 21/22 July 2023 from around 23:15 hr on 21 July. About 100 cars gathered around Hewitts restricting the approaches and spectators lined the verges and roadsides. The police were contacted by several local residents and two Met Police patrol cars dispersed the meeting at 00:08 hr on 22 July. Police ref: 94-220723.

LBB has stated that a camera will be temporarily fitted to a lamppost in order for the location to be monitored and the police contacted as soon as a gathering begins to form but I have not heard of any progress of this matter.

I would be grateful if you would record this as a third occurrence of the same ASB in the same location for the purposes of initiating the Community Trigger.

Kind regards

Fourth email 16 September 2023, reporting incidents on 26/27 August and 3 September 2023

Subject: Re:Anti-Social Behaviour - Car Cruising - Hewitts roundabout and Surrounding Area - Fourth Email 16 September 2023

From:

Date: 17/09/2023, 00:55

To: community.safety@bromley.gov.uk, community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Dear Sir, Madam,

This is my fourth email to report the same ASB in the same area, Car Cruising in the Hewitts roundabout and surrounding area. I have described the incidents and their effect on the community in my previous emails and the purpose of contacting you is to add to the log of same ASB as those reported on 16 June, 2 July and 21/22 July 2023 to use towards utilising the ASB Case review / Community Trigger to request a multi-agency review on how the issue is dealt with.

The most recent incidents took place on 26/27 August from around 23:30 hr and 3 September 2023 from around 01:30 hr. The police were contacted by several local residents and I believe the councils have already been informed after the events. One resident driving home reported that she was nearly hit by one of the cars on 27 August. The Met Police were not able to attend on 3 September as they were attending a road traffic accident on the A2 at the time.

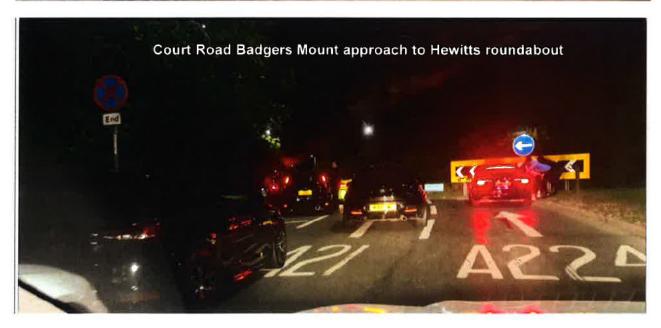
Unfortunately, I was not able to drive to the location to gather evidence on either of these latest two occasions.

I would be grateful if you would record this as a fourth occurrence of the same ASB in the same location for the purposes of initiating the ASB Case review / Community Trigger, which will follow in the near future.

Kind regards,











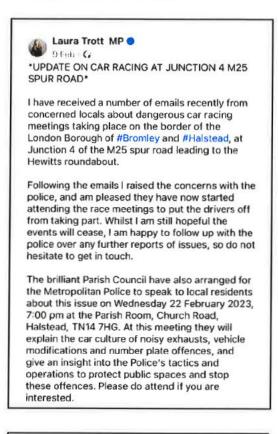


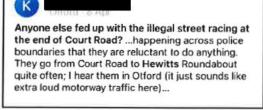
Appendix 2

Emails, social media posts and comments during car cruising incidents.

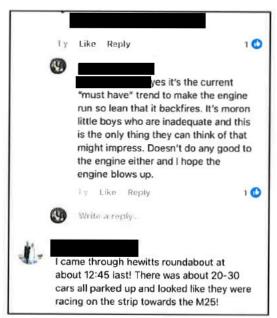
Below are snips from emails and social media platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp and Next Door. The content below is far from exhaustive but demonstrates the general attitude and frustration of the local communities.

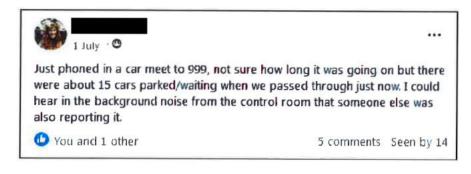
Most of the posts are from the last six months but a few date as far back as October 2022 to demonstrate the length of time that this anti-social behaviour has been commented on amongst local residents.

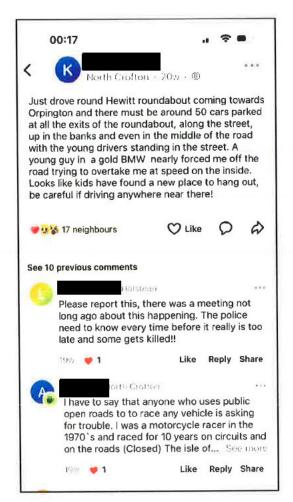




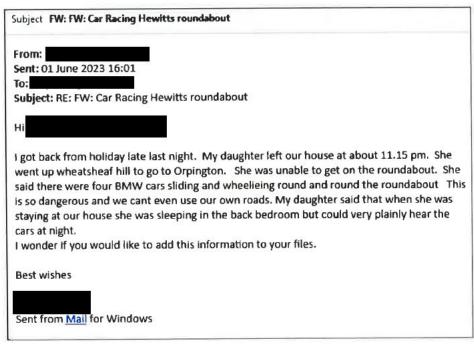




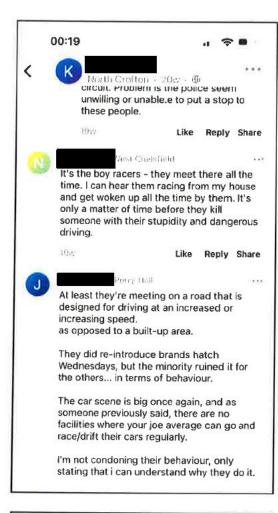






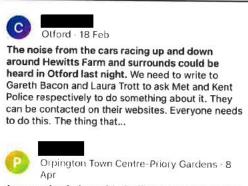




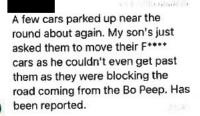








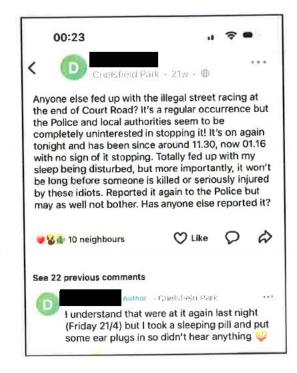
Anyone else fed up with the illegal street racing at the end of Court Road? @Marie Driving at 100 MPH at Hewitt's Farm Roundabout is simply impossible. The tyres on practically any vehicle will simply not grip the road at all at that speed.

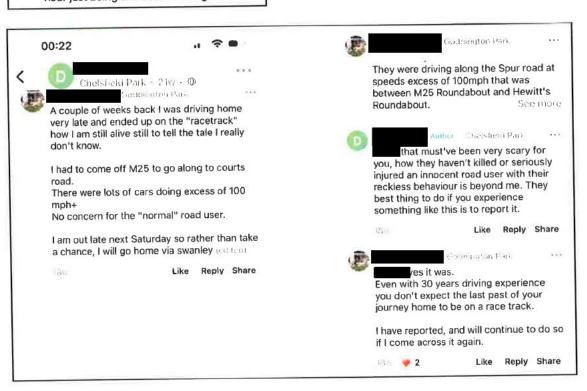


I heard loud cars tonight but sadly that's the norm these days now the A21 dual carriageway Hewitts-bound starts at the bottom of the hill giving drivers more road for them slam their foot down on the gas and reach a higher speed before the roundabout.

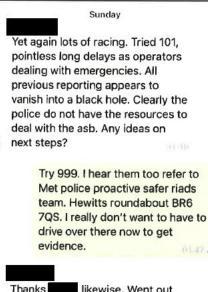
Mon 7 Aug

I've heard them since 14:00hrs today. Went out but yet again I could not locate them. On a good note, our 5am phantom seems to have disappeared but we now have a 15:00hrs idiot m-f. Starts on top of Rushmore hill and spends an hour just being anti social driving





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Thanks likewise. Went out earlier at 17:00 as they were warming up but too much traffic to id specific vehicles. It just seems we are wasting our time with the police and their inappropriately named "proactive" safer road team.





