

**Essex County Council (Fairmead Road, Waltham Abbey/Loughton)
(Prohibition of Motor Vehicles) Order 20****

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Epping Forest is a 2,400-hectare area of ancient woodland, and other established habitats, the age of the forest and the range of habitats it contains make it a valuable area for wildlife and it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Conservators of Epping Forest have requested the implementation of a Permanent Traffic Regulation Order to be installed on Fairmead Road, preventing motor vehicles from accessing the majority of this road.

This follows the implementation of an Experimental Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on 29 May 2020 on a 500-metre section of Fairmead Road in response to continued inappropriate and illegal use of highway space, including but not limited to:

- Fly-tipping
- Suspected drug dealing
- Use of the area as a public sex environment.
- Environmental damage to SSSI and SAC by day and night
- Verge parking in the conservation Zone by day and night
- Anti-social behaviour by day and night
- Stolen vehicles being dumped and burnt out
- Improved public safety due to no motor vehicles creating an environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders, who are now able to utilise a safe, traffic free route through this section of Epping Forest.

In 2012, Essex County Council introduced a Prohibition of Motor Vehicles on a 700 metre stretch of Fairmead Road in 2012, as this open stretch of highway was subject to misuse by those perpetrating the above types of crimes and public nuisances to a greater extent.

Following the improvement brought about by the 2012 Prohibition of Motor Vehicles, it was felt that the success could be replicated to resolve the issues being experienced on the remainder of Fairmead Road. Creating a safer environment for cyclist's walkers and riders and serving to protect the local environment of Ancient woodland its flora and fauna.

To enforce this, a gate was installed preventing access to vehicular traffic. Since the introduction of the experimental order there has been a 90% reduction i fly tipping, the public sex area is no longer used and no instances of public sex have been reported, there has been no instances of anti-social behaviour, criminal activity, or rough sleeping at the location.

There has been a vast improvement in the environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders, who are now able to utilise a safe, traffic free

route through this section of Epping Forest. The closure of the road also had the additional effect of allowing the regeneration of this location which is part of The Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special

Scientific Interest (SSSI) and there has been considerable improvement to biodiversity in this location.

The local police completely supported the closure and confirmed the reduction in call outs to incidents.

The experimental order received several objections, and these were due to be determined following Essex County Councils governance process, however, the time frame for undertaking this process has expired. In order to consider the merits of this scheme correctly the permanent order making process will now be undertaken. All objectors to the experimental scheme will be invited to comment on the permanent proposal which will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Highways to determine following the 21-day consultation process.

The effect of the proposed permanent order will revoke the existing prohibition orders on Fairmead Road and consolidate the restriction into one order for the entire extent of prohibition.

The gate installed for the experimental Order will now be opened until this process has been completed in accordance with the statutory regulations and Essex County Council governance and removed if the decision is taken to not proceed with the order.