

**Report of:** Janet Banfield  
Strategy and Review Business Manager

**To:** Area Committees

**Date:** February/March 2006 **Item No:**

**Title of Report:** Expansion of Designation Order to tackle alcohol-related anti-social behaviour



### Summary and Recommendations



**Purpose of Report:** To seek the views of Area Committees

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Susan Brown  
Crime and Community Safety

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Community

**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

**Report approved by:** Councillor Susan Brown  
Andy Collett, Financial & Asset Management  
Jeremy Franklin, Legal & Democratic Services

**Policy Framework:** Oxford's Community Safety Strategy 2005-08

**Recommendation(s):**

1. To support the extension of police powers that enable the police to remove alcohol from people drinking in a public place who are causing harassment, alarm or distress, wherever they are in the Oxford City Council Local Authority area.
2. Recommend to Full Council accordingly

## **Introduction**

1. Designation Orders, or “Alcohol Free Zones”, were first introduced in the city in 2002. Oxford was one of the first places in the country to use the legislation introduced by the Local Authorities (Alcohol Consumption in Designated Public Places) Regulations 2001 and the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2001.
2. The regulations give the Local Authority the power to designate public areas in which it will become an offence to drink alcohol after being required by a police officer not to do so.
3. It is not an offence to drink alcohol in a designated public place, but failure to comply with an officer’s requirements in respect of public drinking or surrender of alcohol, without reasonable excuse, is an arrestable offence. A person is liable on conviction by a Magistrates’ Court to a maximum fine of £500 or fixed penalty notices can be issued to individual’s drinking in a designated area. The maximum fine is £50 and can be issued by a police officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) if accredited with this power.
4. There is an automatic exemption where the Council has permitted tables/chairs on the highway or where the sale of alcohol has been allowed under an occasional licence, i.e. for events.
5. The regulations require the Local Authority to consult with the Police prior to making a Designation Order, as the Police will be responsible for enforcing it. Other statutory consultees are local licensees and the owners/occupiers of any land that may be designated.
6. The police are supportive of a city-wide Designation Order.

## **Existing Designation Orders**

7. Consultation was undertaken with residents living in or bordering the six proposed areas. A 33% response rate resulted in 95% of responding supporting or strongly supporting the introduction of these areas.
8. The areas subsequently designated in 2002 were:
  - The city centre entertainment area
  - Wellington Square and Little Clarendon Street
  - Blackbird Leys Road shops and Windrush Tower
  - Magdalen Bridge and the Plain
  - Manzil Way and Cowley Road from SS Mary and John to Union Street
  - The Canal Basin area

9. The Orders were effective in reducing both the number of people leaving late-night entertainment premises with bottles and glasses and the prevalence of daytime alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in areas traditionally associated with this type of behaviour e.g. Bonn Square, SS Mary and John Churchyard and Manzil Gardens.
10. However, there was an element of displacement to areas immediately outside the designated areas.
11. In 2003 a review took place and after consultation with a 42% response rate, 93% of respondents supported a second wave of Designation Orders:
  - The area bordered by The High, Broad Street , Cornmarket Street and Cattle Street.
  - The area bordered by Queen Street, St Aldates, Castle Street and the river.
  - The areas opposite Blackbird Leys Road shops including from the Medical Centre to the Housing Office.
  - West of the city centre including Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street and Mill Lane.
  - Walton Street from Little Clarendon Street to Cranham Street.
12. The effect of these Orders was the inclusion of the remaining entertainment areas that are in close proximity to the city centre. Again, the Orders were successful in addressing the late night entertainment issues but some displacement during the day did occur with some migration away from the zones and into residential areas and parks.

### **Current problem areas**

13. There are a number of areas in the city that are increasingly subjected to alcohol-related anti-social behaviour. In consultation with the police the areas have been identified most recently as:
  - Cowley Road between Union Street and The Plain
  - Shops on and around The Parade, Rose Hill
  - Blackbird Leys Road shops area
  - Summertown shops and nearby church grounds
  - Wood Farm shops
  - Grandpont Nature reserve
  - Abingdon Road and sites in the vicinity
  - The cemetery and other sites in Osney
  - Iffley Road
14. Some new areas have arisen that are consistently being used to display alcohol-related anti-social behaviour, most notably on Cowley Road between Union Street and The Plain, however many other areas are experiencing irregular occurrences of anti-social behaviour i.e. those perpetrating this behaviour are moving around the city. This

makes the implementation of geographically fixed zones less appropriate as a long-term solution.

### **Proposed solution**

15. The current “Alcohol Free Zones” have been successful in reducing the level of anti-social behaviour occurring in areas that have for many years been viewed by the public as long-term problem areas.
16. However, the nature of the problem has changed as fewer static locations are cropping up, with some noticeable exceptions, and more temporary areas of displacement are arising.
17. To enable the police to tackle this issue, no matter where it occurs in Oxford, the proposed solution is a citywide Designation Order that covers the whole of the Oxford City Council Local Authority area.
18. Importantly, the policing of the current areas will remain a “zero tolerance” approach but in the remaining parts of the city the police will implement the power of confiscation if the person is deemed to be causing harassment, alarm or distress.
19. The council required to erect in the place identified such signs as is considered sufficient to draw the attention of members of the public in that place to the effect of the order.
20. Signage in the existing Alcohol Free Zones will be retained. New signs will be erected if the police wish to extend their zero tolerance approach to an area with continual problems, in consultation with Oxford City Council. It will not be practical to place signage in all remaining areas of the city where the confiscation of alcohol is based on the behaviour of the individual. However, information regarding these police powers will be regularly publicised in the media and other printed publicity.
21. The next TalkBack citizen’s panel questionnaire will contain a question concerning whether the public support this approach. The results should be available mid-March.

### **Financial Implications**

22. There are minimal financial implications to this proposal. Consultation and signage costs will be covered through existing budgets.

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**Background Papers:** None