# Hoo village confronts surge in violent youth anti-social behaviour threatening local shops



The village of Hoo in Medway, Kent, is grappling with a surge in anti-social behaviour attributed to groups of young people, a situation that has escalated to alarming levels for local businesses, residents, and authorities. Over recent months, shopkeepers and community members have reported a spate of incidents involving youths described as 'feral,' who have engaged in threatening and disruptive activities in multiple locations around Hoo.

At the centre of the concern is a family-run SPAR convenience store, operating in the village for nearly two decades. The business has been subjected to daily verbal abuse, threats of violence, and acts of vandalism. Staff have reported being targeted with water sprays from plastic bottles, which were initially feared to contain acid, and some youths have even threatened staff with a plastic knife. These behaviours intensify when shop employees request identification from young customers attempting to purchase age-restricted items such as cigarettes and vaping products. Racist insults and threats to bomb or burn down the store have also been directed at staff, leading to a climate of fear among those working there. One owner reflected on the nature of these threats, saying to MailOnline, "People have definitely got more aggressive, I notice it most when I ask them for ID." They added that they attempt to manage the situation by limiting the number of youths allowed inside the shop at once and maintain a minimum of two staff members during operating hours for safety.

The disturbance extends beyond the SPAR store. Another parade of shops roughly half a mile away on Knights Road has also been plagued by similar anti-social behaviour, including thefts from convenience stores and violent altercations. Notably, on Monday, 3 February, police were called to the Premier Express store at around 11.30pm following reports of a violent incident where a teenager was slashed in the face with scissors. The injured boy was hospitalised but later discharged, and a 26-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of assault as investigations continue. This parade includes various businesses such as two convenience stores, a hairdresser, a pharmacy, a funeral parlour, a Chinese takeaway, and a kebab shop.

Locals describe a range of concerns, from rowdy youths riding bikes dangerously in the streets to outright thefts and street fights. A nearby resident known only as Jan, a mother of two, said, "There are issues all the time with youngsters running amok… Some of them are only 14 years old yet they can be out in the streets until nearly midnight." Elderly residents have expressed growing fears for their safety; Susan Chell, 78, stated to MailOnline, "I definitely don't go out at night anymore, I don't open my door to anyone once the sun has gone down." Another local, Elizabeth Reed, 70, observed that while most youths behave, groups performing risky stunts on scooters pose a danger, noting that police promised extra patrols but their presence remains insufficient.

Shopkeepers have attempted to engage with local schools and parents to mitigate the problem. According to the business owners, some parents are cooperative, while others deny responsibility for their children's actions. They have also recommended that fellow businesses report incidents to ensure official records and adequate police response, though they note many do not follow through.

Kent Police have acknowledged the reports of anti-social behaviour involving young people in Hoo and have stated an investigation is ongoing. Officers have reviewed CCTV footage and taken witness statements following the April 12 incident, during which a group of children allegedly threw liquid from a plastic bottle in a store. The force is working in collaboration with schools to identify those involved and communicate with the families concerned. A police spokesperson conveyed, "Officers are liaising with the owner of the premises and work is ongoing, including with schools, to help identify those responsible so that they and their families can be spoken to and a proportionate resolution reached."

Despite the difficulties, some community members are striving to channel the energies of local youths into more positive activities. Julie Evans, 65, proprietor of the Five Bells pub situated in the heart of Hoo, reflected on the situation: "They're kids at the end of the day, that's all they are… I see them hanging out on the grass, but they never cause any damage and I think sometimes it's been blown out of proportion." She has started a darts club at the pub aimed at providing young people with constructive recreational opportunities. Evans described the club's appeal and atmosphere: "We have a couple of age groups and honestly, you should see them, they all think they're the next Luke Littler – and some of them are. One of the nine-year-olds who comes down is unbeatable, he's so good."

Local governance is also engaged with the issue. Independent Councillor Ron Sands, 72, noted that police presence has been insufficient, contributing to ongoing problems. "I haven't seen anything myself but they do come here to sit at the park, and I have heard about bad behaviour," he said. Sands has advocated for increased police patrols and cautioned that a lack of enforcement might lead residents to take matters into their own hands.

Spar UK, the company that operates the convenience store at the centre of the disturbances, has expressed its concern for the safety of its employees and customers. A company spokesperson told MailOnline, "We take the safety of our team members and shoppers very seriously and are aware of a number of incidents of anti-social behaviour that have been reported at our store in Hoo, Kent." The company added that it is collaborating with local authorities to address the issues and maintain a safe environment for the community.

The situation in Hoo highlights a complex challenge facing small communities, where escalating anti-social behaviour by young people is impacting local businesses and residents alike. Efforts by community members, local authorities, and businesses to manage and mitigate the problem continue amidst ongoing investigations and responses from law enforcement.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/village-shops-close-after-crime-spree-271253/> - This article reports on the Co-op and Crescent Stores in Hoo closing their doors after a series of thefts, highlighting the escalating anti-social behaviour in the area.
2. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/shop-s-alcohol-licence-suspended-after-serious-crime-and-di-319817/> - This piece details the suspension of Kent Quick Mart's alcohol licence following a serious assault, underscoring the severity of anti-social behaviour in Hoo.
3. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/large-gathering-of-car-enthusiasts-tip-off-prompts-police-280840/> - This article discusses the implementation of dispersal orders in Medway City Estate, Hoo Peninsula, and Strood Retail Park to tackle anti-social drivers, reflecting the broader issues of anti-social behaviour in the region.
4. <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/police-crack-down-car-meets-8058778> - This report covers police actions against car meets in Medway City Estate, Hoo Peninsula, and Strood Retail Park, addressing concerns over anti-social driving and behaviour.
5. <https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/police-crack-down-car-meets-8058778> - This article highlights police efforts to crack down on car meets in Medway City Estate, Hoo Peninsula, and Strood Retail Park, aiming to address anti-social behaviour related to dangerous driving.
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7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14664825/sleepy-Kent-village-besieged-feral-children.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data