# Essex Police introduce dispersal order to combat unsafe car meets in Epping Forest and Harlow



In response to rising concerns over dangerous driving and anti-social behaviour linked to unauthorised car meets, Essex Police are set to implement a dispersal order across the Epping Forest and Harlow districts. This order, effective from 6pm on May 31 until 6pm on June 1, aims to curtail activities that have recently escalated into excessive speeds and reckless manoeuvres. Authorities are keen to reassure local residents that the aim is to maintain public safety, particularly in light of the town’s reputation as one of the most desirable locations in Essex.

The move comes on the heels of a worrying pattern of unsafe driving practices in the area. Reports indicate that incidents similar to those prompting the latest order had previously involved gatherings of up to 80 vehicles at locations such as The Oaks Retail Park, where complaints regarding loud noise and erratic driving resulted in police intervention over the festive season. Inspector Tony Short of Essex Police highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by these car cruise events, reminding the community that while most drivers abide by traffic regulations, a significant minority engage in behaviour that endangers others.

Residents have expressed their growing unease, especially as these car meets become more frequent. In previous instances, including a notable event in August 2024 when around 400 vehicles gathered, police were forced to act swiftly. The dispersal powers conferred by such orders allow officers to direct individuals suspected of anti-social behaviour to vacate the area, with the possibility of arrest for non-compliance. The police have continuously promoted their commitment to protecting law-abiding citizens and ensuring that public spaces remain safe for all.

Despite the enforcement of these orders, some community members question whether such measures can effectively resolve the underlying issues. Apathy towards responsible driving and the allure of car culture are seen as pivotal factors contributing to the phenomenon. In February 2025, another dispersal order was enacted specifically in Harlow to prevent a similar escalation, suggesting that this approach is becoming a standard response across various precincts in Essex.

As the local authorities step up policing efforts in response to these events, they stress that the focus remains on mitigating harmful behaviour rather than penalising everyday drivers. The hope is that through vigilance and enforcement, residents can continue to enjoy the charm and safety of their communities without disruption from errant drivers.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062586/huge-dispersal-order-covering-pretty-commuter-town), [[4]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/april/west-thurrock-dispersal-order-in-place/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062586/huge-dispersal-order-covering-pretty-commuter-town), [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/harlow-dispersal-order-over-car-cruise-event/), [[5]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/southend-dispersal-order-for-car-cruise-event/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-67710797), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66496118)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66496118), [[7]](https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/essex-police-enforce-harlow-dispersal-7491024)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062586/huge-dispersal-order-covering-pretty-commuter-town), [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/harlow-dispersal-order-over-car-cruise-event/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062586/huge-dispersal-order-covering-pretty-commuter-town> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/harlow-dispersal-order-over-car-cruise-event/> - In February 2025, Essex Police imposed a dispersal order in Harlow to prevent a potential car cruise event. The order covered areas including River Way, Church Langley, Old Harlow, Harlow town centre, and Gilden Way, effective from 6pm on 28 February to 6am on 1 March. Inspector Tony Short stated that while many drivers are responsible, there is a history of dangerous and anti-social driving associated with such events, and the order empowers officers to direct individuals acting anti-socially to leave the area or face arrest. ([essex.police.uk](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/harlow-dispersal-order-over-car-cruise-event/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-67710797> - In December 2024, Essex Police implemented a dispersal order in Harlow after approximately 80 vehicles gathered at The Oaks Retail Park on Christmas Eve. The order was enforced from 11:15pm on 24 December until 6:00am on 25 December, following reports of anti-social behaviour. A police spokesperson mentioned receiving multiple calls from concerned residents about the large car meet. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-67710797?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/april/west-thurrock-dispersal-order-in-place/> - In April 2025, Essex Police enforced a dispersal order in West Thurrock due to concerns over a car cruise event. The order was in effect from 9:30pm on 4 April to 9:30pm on 5 April, following reports of 60 to 70 vehicles driving at excessive speeds and in a dangerous manner, posing a risk to the public. The order granted officers the authority to direct individuals suspected of involvement in such activities to leave the area or face arrest, and not return for 48 hours. ([essex.police.uk](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/april/west-thurrock-dispersal-order-in-place/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/southend-dispersal-order-for-car-cruise-event/> - In February 2025, Essex Police imposed a dispersal order in Southend to prevent anti-social behaviour linked to a potential car cruise event. The order was in place from 5pm on 28 February until 6am on 2 March, covering the entire Southend district. Inspector Jane Childs noted that while many attendees are responsible, there have been instances of dangerous driving and anti-social behaviour, including noise disturbances. The order empowers officers to direct individuals suspected of involvement to leave the area or face arrest. ([essex.police.uk](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/february/southend-dispersal-order-for-car-cruise-event/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66496118> - In August 2024, Essex Police implemented a dispersal order in Harlow following a large car meet involving about 400 vehicles. The order was enforced from 8:30pm on Sunday until 6:00am, covering areas including River Way, Old Harlow, Church Langley, and Harlow Town Centre. The order granted officers additional powers to direct individuals acting anti-socially to leave the area. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-66496118?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/essex-police-enforce-harlow-dispersal-7491024> - In August 2024, Essex Police enforced a dispersal order in Harlow following a large car meet involving approximately 50 vehicles. The order was in effect until 6am on 21 August, covering areas including River Way, Old Harlow, Church Langley, and Harlow Town Centre. The order was implemented after reports of anti-social behaviour and careless driving around Edinburgh Way in Harlow. ([essexlive.news](https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/essex-police-enforce-harlow-dispersal-7491024?utm_source=openai))