

Claimant
G Walsingham
First
11 November 2022
Exhibit GW1

Claim No. G00LU797

IN THE LUTON COUNTY COURT

B E T W E E N

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Claimant

-and-

**(1) PERSONS UNKNOWN WHO PARTICIPATE OR INTEND
TO PARTICIPATE IN STREET CRUISES IN STEVENAGE,
AS CAR DRIVERS, PASSENGERS AND/OR SPECTATORS**

First Defendants

**(2) PERSONS UNKNOWN WHO, OR WHO INTEND TO, PROMOTE,
ORGANISE OR PUBLICISE CAR CRUISES IN STEVENAGE**

Second Defendants

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF
GRAEME WALSINGHAM**

I, **GRAEME WALSINGHAM**, Chief Inspector of Stevenage Police, WILL SAY
AS FOLLOWS

INTRODUCTION

1. I make this statement in support of the Council's application to renew the Injunction against car-cruising that was granted by this Court on 7 December 2020.
2. As Chief Inspector, I am responsible for Policing within the Stevenage Community Safety Partnership. I have held this role since 19 April

2022, as successor to Simon Tabert who gave evidence for the original Injunction in 2020, and who has since retired.

3. I have been a member of the police service in Stevenage since 1999. I have had numerous roles during my time at Stevenage, working closely with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team Inspector. I now lead a team with responsibility for solving long term policing problems in the Stevenage area.
4. The facts and matters to which I refer in this statement have become known to me in the course of my carrying out this role. They derive either from my personal knowledge, in which case they are true, or from information on police systems and/or provided to me or officers of Hertfordshire Constabulary, in which case they are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Where I refer to documents, these are contained in exhibits marked **GW1/[X]**.
5. I have read the statement of Simon Tabert dated 23 July 2020. In this statement I have set out to supplement Chief Inspector Tabert's statement with matters that have taken place since 2020.

CRUISERS

6. The roads in Stevenage are attractive to the 'Cruising' fraternity who find the dual carriageways and lack of traffic lights conducive to driving their vehicles at high speeds. I have seen via intelligence reports and incident logs that Cruisers have travelled from outside the county to engage in this anti-social behaviour.
7. I myself have not witnessed any car cruising or racing, however I am aware of the several incidents that have occurred in Stevenage. Inspector Patrick McPeake, the incident commander at the collision between car cruisers and pedestrians in July 2019, has appraised me of what occurred and details the scene.

INCIDENTS SINCE THE INJUNCTION

8. I have searched the police systems for records of enforcement action taken in relation to this injunction. The entries I found are summarised below. The “Diversion letters” referred to are a warning to the driver that their behaviour was a breach, and explain (i) what that breach was, (ii) that there is an injunction in place, (iii) why it’s in place and (iv) what constitutes a breach. An example is at **[GW1/6]**.

a. 11 April 2021 – Police incident report HC-11042021-0374 is titled “Car with Amplifier full volume”. The location is Fairlands Valley Car Park (off Broadhall Way). The incident was recorded at 15:21 hours. The informant reports 4 cars in the car park and a vehicle playing amplified music. **[GW1/1]**

b. 22 April 2021 – Police incident report HC-22042021-0792, titled “two groups of 3+ cars”. The location given is Fairlands Valley car park, Six Hills way. The report is timed at 20:42 hours. The informant reports that there are multiple groups of vehicles and people in the car park playing loud music. **[GW1/2]**

Diversion letters were sent to 5 drivers involved in the two incidents above.

c. 2 May 2021 - Police incident report HC-02052021-0610. The report is titled ‘Driving around car park’ and the location given is St. Margaret Clitherow Primary School, Monkswood Lane. The incident report was made following a call received at 20:09 hours. The informant states that there was a “*A silver Golf inft [informant] cannot get reg driving around carpark fast up and down lanes, has nearly hit infts stationary car already*”. The report states that “*words of advice [were] given and [the drivers were] told to move on*”. Diversion letters were sent to the two drivers involved. **[GW1/3]**

- d. 7 May 2021 - Police reported to Stevenage Borough Council two car drivers for breaching the injunction on Thursday 6th May 2021, by driving at excessive speed or otherwise dangerously and driving in convoy. **[GW1/4]** I see from the second witness statement of Sarah Pateman made for these proceedings, and I believe, that the Council did not take enforcement proceedings against these drivers on the basis that there was not enough evidence against them to do so.
- e. 27 May 2021 - Police incident report HC-27052021-0848 of three cars forming a suspected car meet at the Showground car park **[GW1/5]**. Diversion letters were sent to 3 drivers; a copy of one of these is at **[GW1/6]**.
- f. 26 June 2021 - Police incident Report HC-26062021-0851 of vehicles racing around the Showground car park. One vehicle is identified by the reporting person. **[GW1/7]**
- g. 30 June 2021 - Police incident Report HC-30062021-0029 of ongoing issues with “modified” vehicles going up and down Fairlands Way at around 21:55 hours. The reporting person did provide details of vehicle registration. **[GW1/8]**
- h. 30 October 2021 - Police incident Report HC-30102021-0657 of a group of people with vehicles congregated at Ridlins car park, playing amplified music and racing. The reporting person did not provide any further details of the vehicles. **[GW1/9]**
- i. 28 January 2022 - Police incident Report HC-28012022-0782 from a member of the public reporting vehicles doing ‘donuts’ and racing in the Showground Car Park. Police attended the area but did not locate any racing or vehicles. The person making the report did not provide any vehicle registration and therefore no follow-up enquires were carried out. **[GW1/10]**

- j. 26 May 2022 - Police incident Report HC-26052022-0704 from a roads policing officer of three cars racing along Broadhall Way, Stevenage. (Road signage is located on the A602 Broadhall Way advertising the injunction. The 2019 incident took place on Monkswood Way, which joins Broadhall Way.) Officers spoke to the occupants of two of the vehicles, which were registered to locations outside of Stevenage. **[GW1/11]**
 - k. 1 July 2022 - Intelligence report 41/32290/22, Police log report HC-01072022-0694. Call received on from an individual wishing to make police aware they intended to hold a car meet in Stevenage on 7 August 2022. Police advised that a court injunction was in place and, despite not involving car cruising/racing, the meet would still be in breach of the court order. The caller decided that they would still go ahead with a car meet, but in another location. The caller resided at an address in Stevenage. **[GW1/12]**
9. I have also noted two incidents that are recorded as having taken place in towns nearby to Stevenage, which suggest to me that the problems of cruising are being held at bay by the injunction, rather than that they have naturally died away.
- a. Police incident Report HC-29032021-0788 dated 29 March 2021 of approximately 50 cars and 100 people gathered and revving their engines at Oldings Corner, Hatfield. Police issued a dispersal direction under section 35 of the Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Act 2014 requiring them to leave the area. Hatfield is some 20 minutes from Stevenage via the A1(M). **[GW1/13]**
 - b. Police incident Report HC-10072022-0789 dated 10 July 2022 of 20 cars cruising along Watling Street, St Albans. The informant alleges that this is a regular thing along that Road. In this case, police did not attend. **[GW1/14]**

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

10. I have read in Simon Tabert's account (paragraph 23 onwards of his witness statement) of how Stevenage Police have attempted to control car-cruising since 2009, under the various powers available to us.
11. There are currently no additional powers available to the Police other than those discussed by Mr Tabert, and I have no reason to believe that those same alternative approaches would be successful now if the Injunction was lifted.

ONGOING NEED FOR INJUNCTION

12. Although there is a power to take enforcement action in respect of breaches of the injunction, police apply a proportionate response to all types of matters. Hertfordshire constabulary's overarching strategy is to apply a prevention-first, problem-solving approach to crime and anti-social behaviour matters. In the case of this injunction, Stevenage police devised a response plan and decided that diversion letters would be the initial option for officers dealing with car meets. 10 diversion letters have been issued to drivers who were in breach of the injunction, and two were reported to Stevenage Borough Council, (though, as stated above, I understand that the council considered the evidence of breach to be insufficient for enforcement proceedings). Checks on the vehicles stopped indicate that these came from various parts of the county, and so I believe people are still travelling from other areas to meet in Stevenage.
13. Since the injunction we have had no reported large car meets, and certainly not to the scale seen in July 2019. The lifting of this injunction would undermine the council and police strategy, as I am certain people would begin to meet in Stevenage once again in large numbers.
14. The people who have been issued with diversion warning letters have not to my knowledge come to Hertfordshire Police's attention again in relation to these issues, but I firmly believe that this is because of the injunction and power of arrest sitting behind and giving force to those

warnings. For me the injunction is demonstrating an effective response to the problem that has inspired interest the Cambridgeshire Police's community safety team in Peterborough and from Peterborough Council. From a community concern aspect, I believe the community of Stevenage would be deeply concerned if the injunction is revoked and would be met with backlash from community leaders and the public who are concerned about road safety.

15. I have also reviewed the social media pages for the groups identified at the time of the last instruction:

a. Cruise Herts has a Facebook page with ca. 9,000 followers, with the most recent post being in July 2022. The "about" section of the Facebook page appears to locate it just north of Stevenage centre.

Cruise Herts also has an Instagram page with ca. 3,800 followers.

b. Herts Car Society is a private group on Facebook with ca. 1,700 members. As at 11 October 2022, 24 posts had been made to the page in the past month. (As this is a private group, I am not able to view the posts.)

c. Royal Herts Statics – This facebook page is still posting to ca. 1,700 followers, and appears to be based around Hatfield. The page refers to fortnightly "meets", a "convoy" and a "cruise" earlier in 2022, and "convoys" and "meets" in 2021.

d. Herts BMW Owner Club is a private Facebook group with ca. 600 followers. The group page states that it holds "monthly static club meets around Hertfordshire". As at 11 October 2022, there had been 42 posts in the past month. (Again, as this is a private group, I am not able to view the posts.)

e. Motorheadz (based in the West Midlands) has ca. 5,100 followers.

- f. Static Takeover – This page appears to be highly active, with ca. 5,200 members. The locations given include multiple towns within Hertfordshire.
16. I have been informed by the Council that it has written to the individual who I refer to in paragraph 8(j) above, and that individual has confirmed that for as long as the injunction remains in force, he does will not participate in or promote any activities that would breach it.

CONCLUSION

17. From the checks carried out by officers on cars stopped for racing, and the recent intelligence report from a car meet organiser, I believe that there is a real risk car cruising would return to Stevenage if the injunction were to be revoked. In my view, all the reasons put forward by Simon Tabert in his statement hold good. As he says, cruising is a persistent and dangerous problem. The Police have tried many methods to address it, with positive results on the day, but the cruisers always return. They are resilient to police tactics and so the Injunction has been required to solve the problem sustainably.
18. I have read the statement of Sarah Pateman which also supports the renewal of the Injunction. To the extent that I am able to comment, I agree with what Ms Pateman has said.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signature: *G F Walsingham*

Name: Graeme Walsingham

Date: 11 November 2022

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Claimant

- and -

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DRIVERS, PASSENGERS AND/OR
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First Defendants

**(2) PERSONS UNKNOWN WHO, OR
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Second Defendants

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF
GRAEME WALSINGHAM**

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