

Public Space Protection Orders Frequently Asked Questions



What is a Public Space Protection Order?

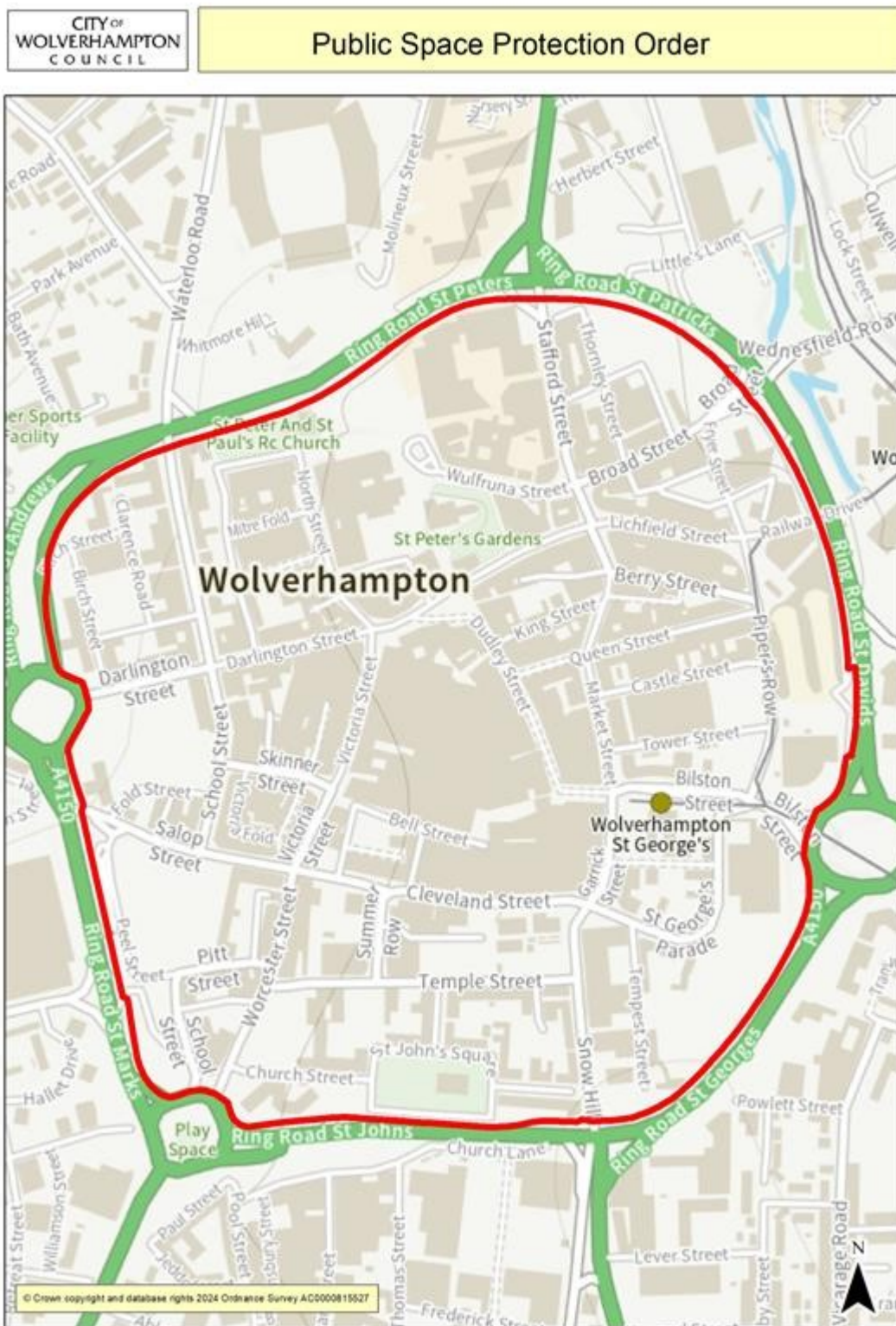
Public Place Protection Orders (PSPO) are orders made by the local authority under powers which were given to them under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

These powers make it possible for Local Authorities to deal with a particular nuisance or problem which is detrimental to the local community's quality of life by imposing conditions on the use of that area which apply to everyone. They are designed to ensure the law abiding majority can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The Council is consulting on proposals to implement a PSPO within the City Centre which will prohibit the use of face coverings to disguise identity and prevent groups gathering with the intent to cause, or where they are causing ASB.

What location will the PSPO Cover?

It is proposed that the PSPO will cover the city centre inner ring road locality, the below shows the proposed area where the restrictions will be applied.



Is this a ban on groups of people meeting in the city centre?

Proposals could include restricting groups of over 3 people gathering where there is a likelihood of them causing nuisance and or ASB.

These prohibitions would not affect legitimate groups of friends gathering to shop or visit the city centre and visit the night time economy.

The proposals would allow the Police and other public authorities to disperse groups and order them to leave the city centre (for a period of 24 hours) where they are causing or likely to cause a nuisance, threat or alarm to others.

Will everyone in the designated area be required to remove face coverings?

Where face coverings are being used to disguise identify the Police or other public authorities could, under the powers order individuals to remove their face coverings.

The PSPO would not discriminate against people who legitimately wear a face covering for medical reasons, or who wear face coverings for religious purposes such as Niqab or Berkas and medical face coverings as shown below.



Any individual wearing a face covering, who is suspected of, or likely to cause nuisance, threats or alarm to others, and where they purposely hide their identify can be directed to remove the covering. This may include being asked to remove (but not limited to) such items as a balaclava, face mask, scarf, snood or cap.

Why have these area been selected?

Data collected since 2021 shows an increase in ASB incidents in the city centre location, with the majority of incidents concentrated in and around Dudley Street and the Bus Station areas. During this period there have been several serious offences which have resulted in increased outreach and policing in the location. Shops in the city centre have seen an increase in petty theft, and recent surveys completed listed ASB and groups of people hanging around as the top concern for people visiting the city centre. This evidence indicates that more robust measures are needed to respond to concerns highlighted in these areas to ensure that the area is a safe place to visit, work and live.

How will Police be applying this power?

Where a group of people or an individual is likely to cause, or is causing anti social behaviour the PSPO gives Police the authority to request that person/s remove any face coverings being purposefully used to disguise their identity, and (if proportionate) instruct them to leave the PSPO area and not return for a period of 24 hours (unless they are required to use public transport which requires the need to enter the city centre). This power would apply to all areas within the PSPO boundary area.

If a PSPO is made and I breach it, what are the potential consequences for me?

Continued breaches of the PSPO would be subject to a staged and proportionate response from the Police. Where the prohibitions are breached once, authorised officers may issue a warning and advise a parent or guardian where the individual/s are under 18 years old. If the prohibitions are breached on a second occasion this can result in a referral to complete diversionary positive activities, and onward referrals to the ASB team, if a breach is of a more serious nature or is continuous, this can result in either, a fixed penalty fine, criminal charges and / or considerations of a Criminal Behaviour Order or Injunction.

If approved how long will the PSPO last?

The PSPO would initially be put in place for three years, it can then be renewed for periods of up to three years thereafter.

What can I do if I witness someone causing anti-social behaviour?

Do not call 999 unless a person's behaviour poses a threat to life, where there is on-going violence or if a crime has been committed and the offenders are still at or near the scene.

If you witness and are concerned about ASB you can report it by calling the non-emergency telephone number 101, or reporting is using the online West Midlands Police web page.

When will this be implemented in Wolverhampton?

If the terms of this proposed PSPO are approved, the order would come into effect in Spring 2024.