



# Street Noise

*A cleaner, safer neighbourhood. We all want it. We can all help to achieve it.*

## WHAT IS STREET NOISE?

Streets in an urban environment can be noisy places. It might irritate us and cause stress, but we have to put up with a certain amount of it.

Some street noise is unnecessary and can be reduced, controlled to within reasonable limits or avoided altogether.

This leaflet sets out the different sorts of unnecessary noise in streets that most often cause annoyance and describes what can be done about them.

## NOISY CAR STEREOS

Almost all cars have some sort of entertainment system fitted, and operated in accordance with the manufacturers original intentions, most do not cause a problem.

In the past few years, the cost of powerful systems has come down considerably. There has been a growing trend for more powerful systems to be fitted to more and more cars. The sound power emitted by some of these devices is far in excess of

that required to entertain the vehicle occupants.

- As a matter of fact, the levels they generate inside the passenger compartment of a car are sufficient to cause permanent hearing damage.
- Many freely available in-car entertainment systems are capable of generating sound pressure levels far in excess of 90dB(A) inside the passenger compartment.
- Exposure to loud music at these levels causes temporary hearing loss called “**Temporary Threshold Shift**”. The effect of this is to make the music level seem less loud – which in turn, causes the person listening to it to turn it up, to compensate for the apparent reduction in volume they experience.
- The resulting exposure to high sound pressure levels over a short period of time causes “**Permanent Threshold Shift**” (also known as “**noise induced hearing loss**” or **deafness**)

Vehicles with loud entertainment systems have the potential to cause a “**statutory nuisance**” annoy anybody within earshot.

The amount of annoyance depends largely on the volume, the time of day and the proximity of housing. It is usually the bass component that is most noticeable and annoying.

The problem gets worse when several vehicles gather together in car parks and

other areas. Sometimes this develops into a bigger problem with revving engines, defective or deficient exhausts and squealing tyres, causing serious disturbance.

In such circumstances we can investigate to decide what action we need to take to prevent nuisance. We have access to the DVLA records to trace vehicle ownership details for this purpose.

- We can take action to stop noise from car entertainment systems – this includes serving an “**abatement notice**” on the registered keeper and/or the driver and **seizing** the entertainment system and associated items.
- The maximum penalty for breaching an abatement notice is **£5000** (£20,000 for a trade or business)
- We have a large collection of amplification equipment awaiting destruction. If you own an in-car entertainment system and would like it **seized and destroyed**, you don’t need to make an appointment; just operate it at excessive volumes in a public place – we will do our best to assist.
- The Police can also use **fixed penalty notices** to control excessive noise from noisy exhausts or noisy in-car entertainment systems.
- The Police also have powers to **seize vehicles** driven in an anti-social manner (which includes vehicles emitting excessive noise).

## BUSKERS

Buskers are a normal part of the street scene in many of our towns. However, they can be irritating if they set up outside your house or flat and play the same tunes over and over again or are simply playing too loud.

If you are bothered by noisy buskers, it may be possible for us to investigate and take action. There may also be some **licensing issues** that our licensing team can help you with.

## NOISE FROM SHOPS

It may be that a noise you are experiencing is coming from a speaker in, or outside the front of a shop.

As in the case of Buskers, we can investigate this sort of noise to see if it is causing a **statutory nuisance**. If it is, we can take action to stop it.

There may also be some licensing issues involved that our licensing team can help you with.

## NOISE FROM ROAD TRAFFIC

Road traffic noise should not be confused with noise emissions from individual vehicles.

The general noise from traffic is another one of the inevitable consequences of

modern life that we are unable to help you with.

You can improve the sound insulation properties of your home to reduce the effects of road noise, but you should seek expert advice. (we cannot help you with this).

**Suffolk County Council** may be able to help if the noise levels from traffic have changed because of changes in the road layout. They can be contacted on **08456 066 067**

## NOISE FROM ICE-CREAM CHIMES

It is possible that noise from ice cream vehicles could cause a statutory nuisance within the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 but this is extremely unlikely; however, there are circumstances under which this activity is a direct offence under section 62 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, and we pursue offences in accordance with the guidelines set out in our enforcement policy (available on our website).

If you are bothered by ice cream chimes, let us know the name of company involved, what is being advertised and where and at what time/s the problem occurs, and we will investigate.

## OTHER NOISE

If this leaflet has not provided the information you were looking for, we have

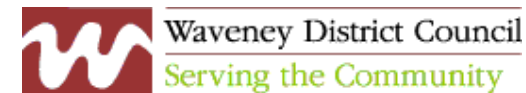
another, more general leaflet available on the subject of noise, which may help. This is available on our website (see below)

## CONSULTATION

We would like to know what you think about street noise.

If you would like to make a comment, or make a complaint, write to us at the address given below, or use the feedback form on our website at [www.waveney.gov.uk](http://www.waveney.gov.uk)

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