

Borough Wide

Use of illegal drugs or psychoactive substances

Psychoactive Substances

Psychoactive substances, also known as balloons, NOS and laughing gas, have become an increasing problem across the UK. Prior to 8 November 2023, nitrous oxide was controlled under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, which made it illegal to produce, supply, import or export the substance where a person knew, or was reckless as to whether, it would be consumed for its psychoactive effects.

Since 8 November 2023, possession of nitrous oxide has been illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 as a Class C drug if it is, or is likely to be, wrongfully inhaled to get high.

The associated antisocial behaviour continues to cause wider harm within communities. This includes groups gathering to abuse the drug in public spaces, such as during Notting Hill Carnival. There is also a significant environmental impact, particularly due to the volume of discarded canisters. Treating and disposing of each canister can cost on average £5, as they cannot be processed through standard waste streams because of the risk of explosion. Proper disposal may require depressurisation, while larger containers must be treated as hazardous waste. The rise in recreational gas use has therefore increased waste management costs.

It is essential that the Police have effective and efficient powers to address the use of psychoactive substances. The initial public consultation asked whether this prohibition should be removed from the PSPO. The results are shown below.

Consultation Outcome

The consultation results show a strong preference for retaining the prohibition on psychoactive substances. A significant majority of respondents, 69.9%, opposed the removal of this prohibition. Only 16% supported removing it, while 14.1% expressed a neutral view.

These findings indicate that most participants believe the prohibition should remain in place, reflecting continued concern about the risks associated with psychoactive substances formerly known as legal highs or balloons and their impact on public spaces and community safety.

Following the suggested removal, the Police commented on how useful the prohibition is in day to day Policing and how removing it would be detrimental.

The following link indicates the chaos being caused in London where [nitrous oxide](#) is for example being consumed prior to or whilst driving. There are no exact statistics to show the seriousness of the problem as incidents are often reported as 'dangerous driving' or the broader 'driving under the influence of drink or drugs'. One key issue is the challenge of police proving drivers have used the drug before road accidents as there is often no trace when offenders are tested.

The enforcement of such a prohibition is also particularly useful at large scale events such as Notting Hill Carnival. The amount of nitrous oxide canisters left behind after such an event is astronomical.



Some of the nitrous oxide canisters collected by Veolia post Carnival 2024



Nitrous oxide canisters and associated boxes left in the street during Carnival 2025

The increase in use is described as an epidemic, one which is difficult for the Police to control, particularly as the process of booking in nitrous oxide takes up significant time.

Illegal Drugs

Possession of illegal drugs such as cannabis is treated as a controlled drug contrary to S5(2) Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and enforced by the Police. Local Authority enforcement officers are not authorised to enforce the possession of cannabis and therefore the consultation suggested the removal of such a prohibition.

The consultation responses show strong support for keeping the prohibition on smoking cannabis. A majority of respondents, **67.3%**, said they did not agree with the Council removing this prohibition. In comparison, **17.9%** supported its removal, while **14.7%** gave a neutral response.

Overall, the results indicate that most respondents want the prohibition on smoking cannabis to remain in place.

The continued use of this prohibition would assist Police officers for the following reasons.

- Allows PCSOs to enforce the prohibition, giving them powers they do not have under section 19 of PACE.
- Enables Police officers to request the surrender of drugs and paraphernalia where seizure may not otherwise be justified under the Misuse of Drugs Act.
- Lets officers request items be handed over when they see someone trying to hide them, without immediately needing to conduct a search. The Police can still search in the usual way if the person refuses.
- Helps avoid criminalising children who might otherwise receive a criminal record.
- Prevents officers from having to leave the area to book items at a station, keeping them on the street during major events and routine policing.

Based on the above information and the comments provided by the Police, the second consultation asked members of the public whether the prohibition should remain. The results are shown below.

The consultation results show strong public support for applying the prohibition on the use of illegal drugs and psychoactive substances across the entire Borough and during Notting Hill Carnival weekend. A significant majority, **81.8%** of respondents, agreed with the proposal, indicating broad endorsement of the measure and recognition of the need for Borough-wide consistency in enforcement.

A smaller group, **14.3%**, did not support the prohibition being applied in this way. Their responses may reflect concerns about enforcement, proportionality, or the scope of the restriction.

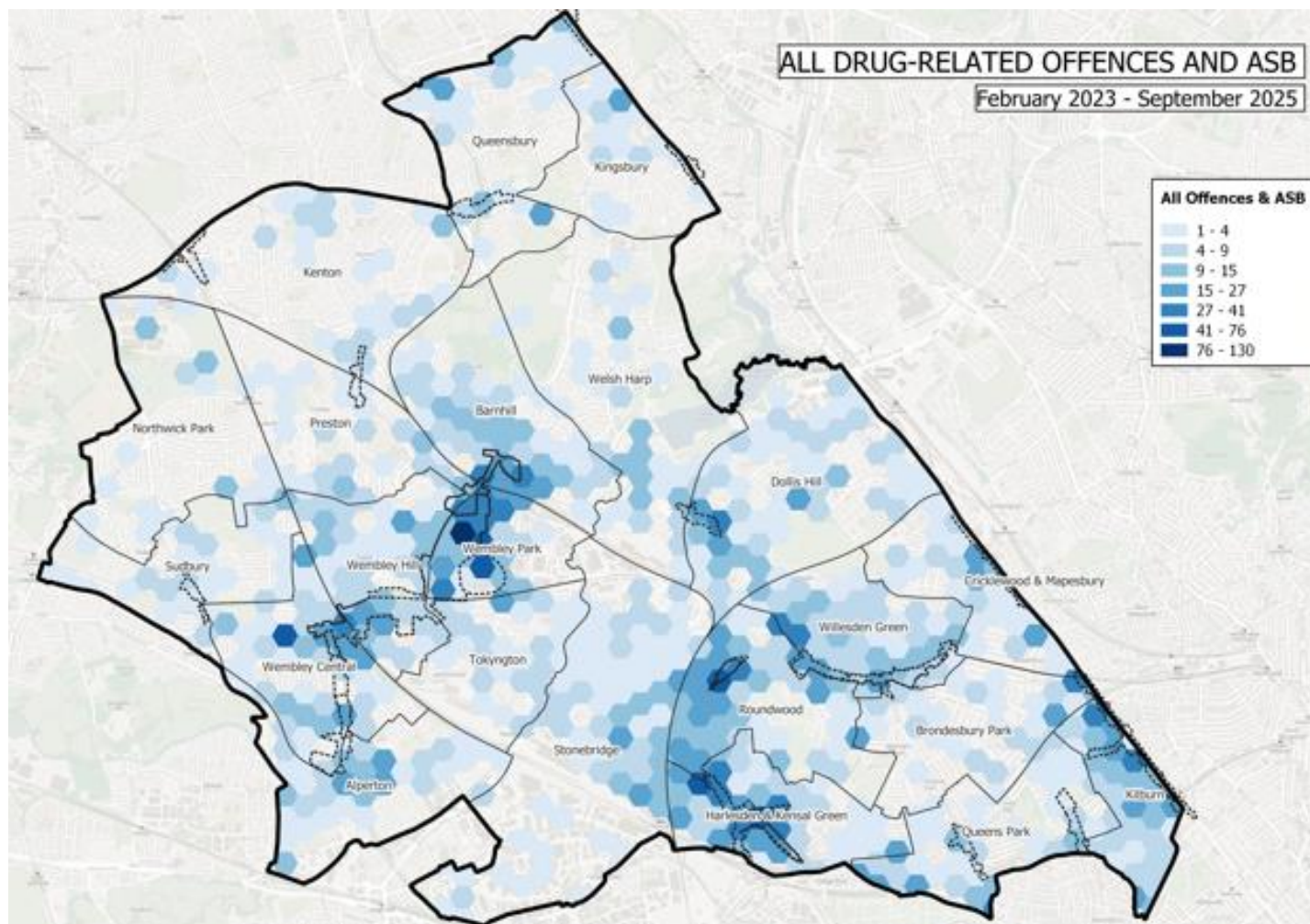
Only **3.9%** of respondents selected “Not Applicable,” suggesting that most participants felt able to form a clear view on this issue.

Overall, the feedback demonstrates strong community backing for the prohibition and its Borough-wide application during this high-profile event.

Retaining this prohibition would therefore allow Police officers to deal with the consumption of nitrous oxide more efficiently.

The heat map below shows all drug-related offences and incidents of ASB recorded between February 2023 and September 2025. Due to the way the Police record drug offences, it is not possible to distinguish which incidents relate specifically to nitrous oxide or cannabis. However, the data provides a useful indication of where drug offences are occurring across Brent. For clarity, the heat map includes drug-related ASB, drug possession, and drug

trafficking offences. While not directly linked to nitrous oxide, it offers helpful context regarding the wider drug-related challenges faced across the Borough.



Notting Hill Carnival

Parking

During Notting Hill Carnival 2024, a significant number of drivers chose to park illegally, and the situation worsened in 2025. Within Queens Park ward, 146 PCNs were issued on Sunday 24 August and 367 on Monday 25 August, despite parking suspensions being in place.

Illegal parking on double yellow lines, corners and junctions caused severe congestion, making it difficult for vehicles, particularly emergency services such as the Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service, to move through the area. Local residents were also unable to park near their homes or within their allocated CPZs due to the volume of vehicles. Despite the £80 penalty, many drivers appeared to accept the fine as a convenient alternative to other forms of travel, potentially to reduce costs or avoid crowds when leaving Carnival.

Enforcement teams were unable to keep pace with the volume of vehicles, and tow trucks were often unable to access certain streets due to obstructions caused by illegal parking.

Introducing **£100 fines for every additional 30 minute period**, on top of the initial PCN, may deter carnival goers from parking illegally. The intention is not to restrict attendance at Carnival, but to balance the needs of residents and businesses who experience significant disruption over the Carnival weekend.

Although Carnival takes place only once a year, the sudden influx of thousands of visitors has a substantial impact on residents. Those who are elderly or have disabilities may be particularly affected if they cannot access their vehicles or are forced to park far from home. Brent Council has also received complaints about vehicles blocking driveways, preventing residents from for example, leaving for work or fulfilling caring responsibilities.

The suggested prohibition reads as follows:

Parking Restriction – Notting Hill Carnival

No person shall, at any time, following the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), park or leave a vehicle in a manner that:

- Obstructs the highway or pavement;
- Blocks access to properties, driveways, or designated emergency routes;
- Causes danger or nuisance to pedestrians or other road users.
- This includes but is not limited to where parking suspensions apply.

The second consultation asked members of the public to confirm whether such a prohibition should be added to the PSPO, the results of which are shown below.

Consultation Outcome

The consultation asked residents whether they agreed with the proposed prohibition on problematic parking during the Notting Hill Carnival weekend. A total of 77 people responded. The results show an overwhelmingly positive response to keeping the prohibition in place. Nearly nine out of ten respondents (89.6%) agreed that the restriction should remain. Only a small proportion (5.2%) disagreed, and an equal number felt the question was not applicable to them.

These results indicate strong public support for the measure, suggesting that residents recognise the value of the prohibition in helping manage congestion, improve access for emergency services, and reduce disruption for those living in the affected areas during the Carnival weekend.

Placing Items On The Public Highway

Over the years during Notting Hill Carnival 2025, the streets surrounding Kensal Green and Kensal Rise saw large numbers of individuals placing items in public places without consent. Some of these items were then used for commercial purposes, such as selling food, while others were used to entertain the public, such as sound systems. This had a negative impact on local residents.

Items such as BBQs in public places can pose safety risks to passersby, and food and alcohol sold without proper checks may be unsafe for consumers. These activities have increased so significantly that the scale has become impossible to measure.

Although Carnival takes place only once a year, the sudden influx of thousands of visitors has a substantial impact on residents. For those living nearby, having barbeques, sound systems and unregulated food and drink stalls set up outside their homes is understandably unfair if they are not comfortable with it.

Some residents have reported that their forecourts, front gardens, entrances and driveways have been taken over by individuals setting up items for sale, and many feel too intimidated to challenge this.

While some may hold a different view, the intention is not to restrict attendance at Carnival. Instead, it is to balance the needs of residents and businesses and to prevent significant disruption over the Carnival weekend for those who live in close proximity.

The suggested prohibition reads as follows:

Placing Items On The Public Highway

No person shall at any time place items in a public place without the written consent of the London Borough of Brent. This may include but is not limited to barbeques, sound systems, tents, tables, bags and other vessels. In doing so, a person is required to:

- Surrender any items that the authorised officer reasonably believes to be associated with the breach. For the purposes of this prohibition, 'surrender' means items will not be returned.

The second consultation asked members of the public to confirm whether such a prohibition should be added to the PSPO, the results of which are shown below.

Consultation Outcome

In the consultation regarding whether the prohibition on placing items in a public place should be included over the Notting Hill Carnival weekend, the majority of respondents expressed support. A significant proportion, **64.9%**, agreed with the prohibition, indicating strong public backing for measures intended to manage large items such as BBQs, sound systems, tents and other objects that may obstruct public areas or contribute to safety risks.

A smaller portion, **27.3%**, disagreed, reflecting concerns from some respondents about restrictions or how the prohibition may be applied. A further **7.8%** stated the question was not applicable to them, suggesting that a small minority did not feel directly affected by the issue.

Overall, the results demonstrate broad support for maintaining control over items placed in public spaces during the event, with most participants recognising the importance of safety, accessibility and effective event management.

Appendix 9 shows photographic issues faced during Notting Hill Carnival in 2024/25.