

# Communities wage war on drink-fuelled hooliganism

## SOCIETY

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A BATTLE is on to reclaim once-thriving pockets of Leeds which have turned into virtual "no-go zones" for locals because of a plague of on-street boozing.

In one suburb, old ladies have reported being too terrified to venture out for a loaf of bread. Families have told the YEP they feel too intimidated by street drinkers and drunken loiterers to shop locally, and are travelling out of the area for the most basic of goods. Elsewhere, traders blame the lager louts for massive slumps in their takings. But communities are fighting back, and a raft of measures designed to reclaim our district shopping centres are being increasingly enforced.

The city already has FIVE areas covered by a Cumulative Impact Policy (C.I.P.), which can

cap the number of premises selling alcohol.

Leeds also has 18 areas with DPPOs (Designated Public Place Orders) in force, which allows police to ban drinking in public places and move troublemakers on.

Headingley, Woodhouse, the city centre and Horsforth are the city's street boozing hotspots, as they are the areas with BOTH bits of legislation in force.

Armley Town Street, long plagued by street drinkers, could soon join them and campaigners in east Leeds are also set to launch their own bid.

All agree a renewed collective effort is needed to restore community spirit and give local traders a vital boost.

Armley Labour councillor Alison Lowe, who has long campaigned on the issue, said: "Armley has had serious problems with street drinkers and anti-social behaviour for a long time.

"A lot of people reported that they are not going to the shops

and using other amenities as a direct result of street drinkers.

"Businesses have been directly affected by street drinkers.

"Leeds City Council have started to tackle the street drinking problem by getting six injunctions against the worst offenders.

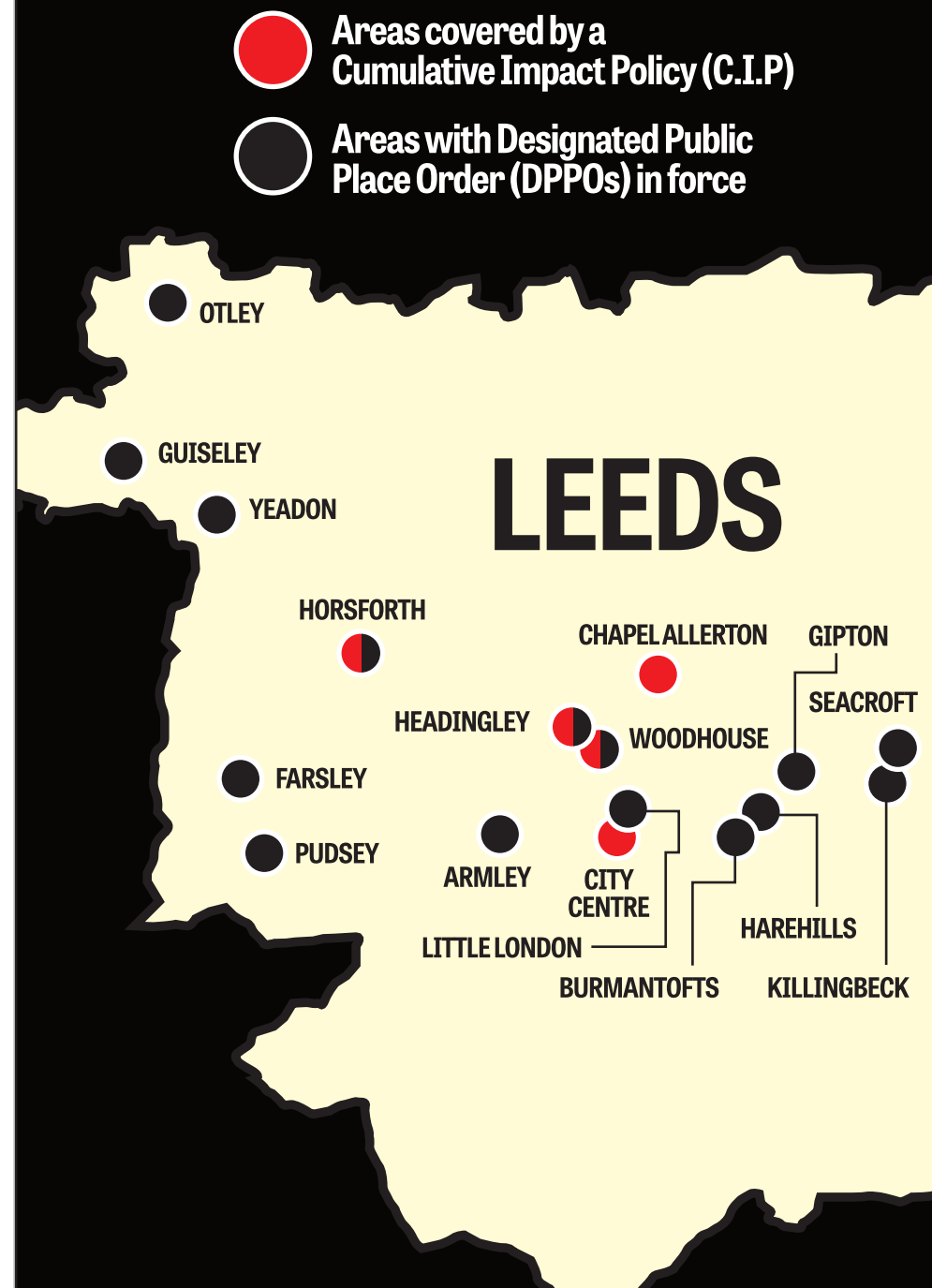
"This has already seen a substantial improvement in the problem.

"However the other side of the problem is the number of off licenses in Armley Town Street and the fact that many more businesses can apply to become off licenses.

"Members of the public see the problems every day when going about their day-to-day business on Town Street. They can see groups of drinkers and that is making them frightened. We are now gathering more evidence to prevent more off licenses from opening. We are making progress on this issue.

"Town Street is a fantastic place to shop and it has got a wide range of amenities. If we want to protect them and keep

## HIGH-RISK HOTSPOTS IN THE CITY...



them safe, then we need to support our local shopkeepers and businesses."

Campaigner Gudrun Shemilt, chair of the All Together Armley group, said Armley had "endured a hardcore of street drinkers...for a long time at all times of day on Town Street".

"Gradually this has eroded the community's comfort and

use of the shopping centre," she said,

"We believe that the main priority is to tackle the anti social behaviour and the fact many people feel unsafe on Town Street.

"The All Together Armley committee is also looking at plans to hold community events on Town Street aimed at cohe-

sion to produce a more positive presence and feeling."

A panel of licensing chiefs at Leeds City Council was told at a recent meeting that there were "increasing concerns about large groups of mostly male street drinkers gathering on Town Street. Residents find this intimidating and have reported

## Clampdown is already reaping success

POLITICIANS AND the police have worked hard to raise awareness and drive a clampdown on the booze-fuelled trouble plaguing Armley.

Leeds West MP Rachel Reeves carried out an extensive survey in the area gathering anecdotal evidence from shoppers and locals. She said: "There can be little doubt that there is a link between the high number of off-licences in

Armley Town Street, selling strong alcohol at a cheap price, and the issues due to street drinking that blight the area.

"The police have powers to ensure current licensees follow the law by not selling to under 18s and people who are clearly drunk, but neither the police or the city council currently have sufficient power to prevent new off-licences opening in Armley. I am hopeful that a Cumulative

Impact Policy in Armley will make sure residents have a greater voice in local decisions."

West Yorkshire Police Superintendent Sam Millar, who heads the Safer Leeds partnership, said: "We are committed to continuing to do everything we can do tackle street drinking and alcohol-related anti-social behaviour that has a detrimental

impact on our communities. Designated Public Place Orders and Cumulative Impact Policy are important measures that support our partnership work. We are making full use of the available legislation, including the use of injunctions...and have seen a reduction in complaints. We hope the work towards a Cumulative Impact Policy for the area will bring further improvements."



COMMITMENT: Rachel Reeves and Alison Lowe with Armley businessman Steven Etherington