



Highway Enforcement Quick Guide

Our commitment to assessing concerns relating to unlawful interference of the highway

Highway Rights and Responsibilities

Suffolk County Council recognises that all individuals have the right to the safe use and enjoyment of the highway. This right is supported by the statutory duties placed upon Highway Authorities under the Highways Act 1980.

The Act provides us with the legal powers to address a range of issues affecting the highway, including:

- Encroachments
- Obstructions
- Damage
- Unlawful interferences

These provisions enable us to take appropriate action to maintain the safety, accessibility, and integrity of the public highway network.

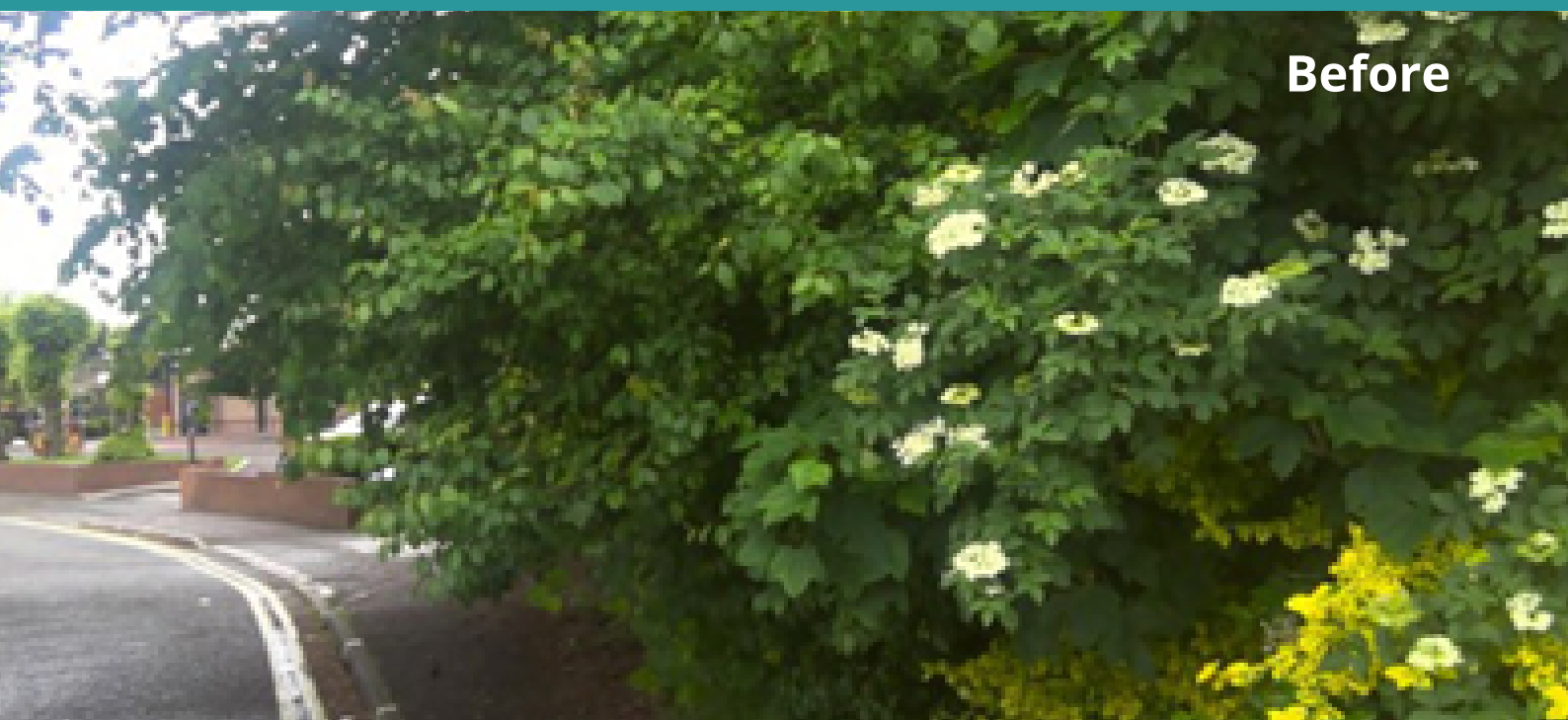
What we deal with

Suffolk County Council has the authority to investigate and take action on a range of issues that affect the safe and lawful use of the public highway. These include:

- Privately unmaintained ditches that cause flooding on the highway
- Objects illegally placed on the highway by landowners that pose potential hazards
- Illegal excavation within the highway boundary
- Encroachment onto the highway by third parties
- Unauthorised signs or mirrors erected within the highway

- Mud on the highway, often resulting from agricultural or construction activities
- Illegal encampments on highway land
- Overgrown private hedges that obstruct footways or reduce the usable width of the carriageway, including those that prevent highway maintenance (see photographs below)

These matters are addressed in line with our statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980, and we prioritise action based on the level of risk to public safety and access.



Assessment of highway interference

To support the effective prioritisation of customer reports, Suffolk County Council has developed an Enforcement Policy, which will be published soon. This policy provides clear guidance for officers assessing reported safety concerns on the highway.

The policy is built around a risk-based approach, using a risk matrix to evaluate:

- The severity of the issue
- The potential risk posed to highway users

This structured method ensures that hazards are assessed proportionally, based on their impact and urgency.

As a result, not all reported issues will lead to enforcement action - only those that meet the necessary risk thresholds.

This approach helps us allocate resources efficiently while maintaining the safety and accessibility of the highway network.

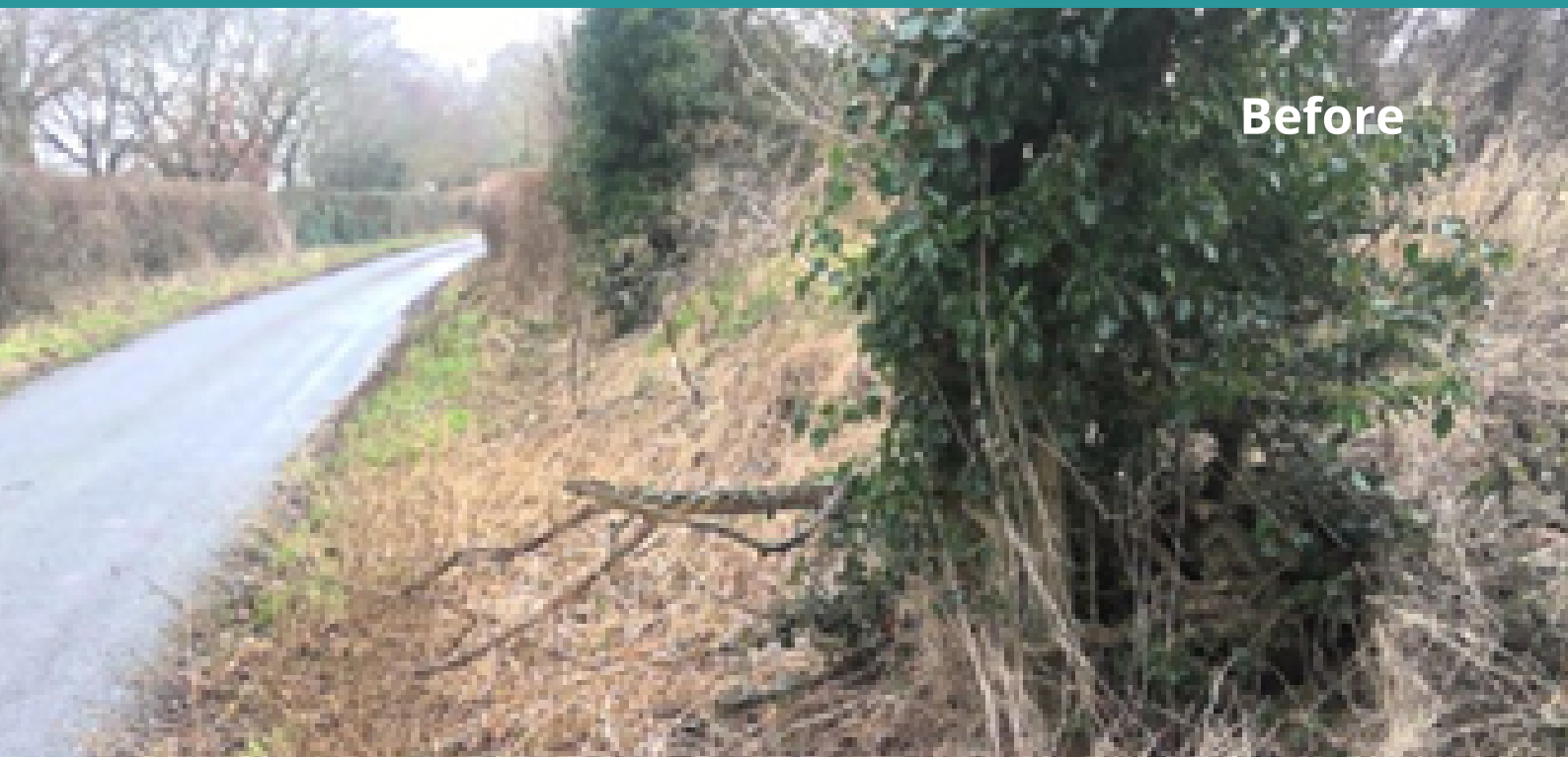
Enforcement Process

Once investigations and assessments are complete, Suffolk County Council will determine whether enforcement action is necessary. This process may involve reviewing:

- Land Registry records
- Historic maps
- On-site features
- Local knowledge, including input from members of the public or Parish Councils

If it is established that a person or party is responsible for the issue, they will be contacted and advised of the works required to remove the hazard or obstruction from within the highway boundary.

This step ensures that those responsible are given the opportunity to resolve the issue before formal enforcement measures are considered.



Enforcement Options

Suffolk County Council has a range of enforcement tools available to address issues affecting the highway. These include:

- Providing advice and guidance
- Issuing formal letters
- Serving Statutory Notices, which may lead to court proceedings
- Undertaking remedial action directly, with the costs recovered from the responsible party

Wherever possible, we adopt an informal and collaborative approach, engaging with residents, landowners, businesses, farmers, and members of the public. Our aim is to achieve compliance through discussion and negotiation, rather than formal enforcement.

We believe that education and liaison are often more effective and cost-efficient than legal action. Face-to-face meetings are particularly valuable, as they allow us to offer tailored advice and guidance, often leading to more positive and lasting outcomes.

Report It

If you have any concerns relating to possible highway enforcement issues, you can [report a highways issue](#) quickly and easily online using our Highways Reporting Tool.