

1 Background

- 1.1 Pennine Lancashire Community Safety Partnership has been successful in securing £750,000 from the Home Office Safer Streets 4 Project to tackle acquisitive crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in hotspot areas. Three identified LSOA's across the Pennine footprint have been identified in Blackburn with Darwen which suffer from the highest number of acquisitive crime and ASB.
- 1.2 Funding provisions include costs for alley gating where it is felt this will aid in reducing acquisitive crime and ASB and as such, £57,000 of the funding secured has been allocated to this purpose.
- 1.3 Further to consultation with ward members, partners and residents, 10 gate schemes requiring 22 gates have been identified as necessary to reduce and prevent acquisitive crime and ASB.
- 1.4 In order to install alley gates, the council are required to seek a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) as per the Anti-Social, Crime and Policing Act 2014. PSPO's can be granted by the council where it is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the activity carried out, or likely to be carried out in a public spaces has:
- has had, or is likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality;
 - is, or is likely to be, persistent or continuing in nature;
 - is, or is likely to be, unreasonable; and
 - justifies the restrictions imposed.
- 1.5 The primary purpose of the PSPO is to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour where it is associated with the use of an alleyway. The schemes detailed below have been approved by members.
- Audley Range to Walter Street (Girls School)
 - Audley Range to Copperfield Street,
 - Audley Range to Walter Street (barbers),
 - Walter Street and Dickens Street
 - Copperfield Street and Dickens street
 - Walter Street and Cromwell Street
 - Lincoln Road (between house numbers 6 and 32)
 - Randolph Street
 - Winchester Street
 - Pringle Street and Chester Close

Details of each scheme is attached at appendix A.

- 1.6 A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has been agreed by leadership and ward councillors for streets listed above to enable the implementation of the gate schemes.
- 1.7 The Planning Department have been consulted and it has been confirmed that Planning permission will not be required as the height of the gates do not exceed 2 metres and the gates would be set back from the highway into the alleyway.
- 1.8 Section 64(5) of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 states that the order may not restrict the public right of way over a highway that is the only or principal means of access to a dwelling; or a highway that is the only principal means of access to premises used for business or recreational purposes
- 1.9 On 20th February 2023, ward Councillors, Police and the Community Safety Team conducted an onsite public consultation at over 300 properties likely to be affected by implementation of the proposed gate schemes. From that door knock exercise, 194 survey responses were collated. Of those who completed the survey, 100% were in favour of alley gates, equating to a 100% positive response rate from residents. Every respondent confirmed that restricting the access to their alleyway would not restrict their only or principal means of access.

2 Rationale

- 2.1 It is a well-known fact that burglars prefer to break into houses where there is less chance of being seen. Clearly, this is usually away from the main thoroughfare, namely through rear doors or windows.
- 2.2 The Environmental Visual Audit (EVA) conducted by Police partners on 17TH November 2022 in the Queens Park / Central area advises that this area has the fall out of the high proportion of crime within that area. In the past 3 years ASB and Burglary along with assault. Analyst data shows that approximately a quarter of properties were entered from the rear. The most common method of entry being forcing a door where the lock was not to standard. The second being entry by a window.
- 2.3 The EVA reports the area is littered with rubbish and graffiti which in relation to the 'broken window' theory, attracts more of the same crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.4 Queens Park and Central ward consists of various terrace housing and 1960's built social housing which contributes to the main issues and although some estates within the bank top area have been part of prior crime prevention work; gates have been used to block off potential permeability to restrict movement between the estates however this is not consistent throughout.
- 2.5 The report recommends to reduce easy access to the rear of the dwellings, properties should be fitted with a robust anti-climb rear access gate with anti-lift hinges and security rated locking mechanisms that can be secured from both sides.

2.6 The report also recommends to redirect pedestrians and vehicle route and increase natural surveillance, unfretted access to quiet and dark alleyways should be restricted. Gates should be strategically located to cut off potential rat runs. Where appropriate, vehicular/pedestrian entrance gates or an effective access control system should be incorporated into the area.

2.7 There is a lack of CCTV and lighting in the area and multiple rat runs allow criminals an easy escape. CCTV and lighting are also being funded in the area through Safer Streets as per the recommendations of the EVA.

2.8 Burglary statistics give the strongest evidence of crime. This is supported by the British Crime Survey (BCS) which indicates that 89 percent of burglaries are reported to the police, compared with only 31 percent of incidents of vandalism (Walker et al. 2006). However, it is just such anti-social behaviour, and also environmental crimes, that are some of the most important nuisance factors afflicting residents in Blackburn with Darwen.

2.9 Other criminal or anti-social behaviour alley gating can help alleviate:

- 2.6.1. Fire starting
- 2.6.2 Fly tipping and other environmental crime
- 2.6.3 Alcohol related nuisance
- 2.6.4 Drug dealing / taking
- 2.6.5 Graffiti
- 2.6.6 Dog fouling
- 2.6.7 Sex working
- 2.6.8 Urinating
- 2.6.9 Unfamiliar people acting suspiciously in the alley way

2.10 It's evident that the overwhelming majority of residents have experienced anti-social behaviour in various forms in the last 12 months as a result of issues in their alley ways. The rationale behind alley gating is to protect the public from all these factors.

2.11 The installation of alley gates also:

- Reduces the fear of crime
- Increases community involvement and cohesion
- Improves environment – beautification

3 Conclusion

3.1 The feedback received from residents has been hugely supportive of the alley gates installation proposition.

3.2 The EVA recommends and supports in the installation of alley gates in this area with a view to reducing anti-social behaviour and acquisitive crime and improving the feeling of safety amongst residents.

3.3 The perception of safety and crime reduction **and** statistical evidence can both can be monitored - by resident survey or questionnaire and regular review of the statistical evidence.

3.4 We have duty as a Council and within the Community Safety Team to work for the benefit of majority, but also for the protection of the minority.

3.5 Our aim always is to improve the quality of life and safety of the residents of Blackburn with Darwen.

3.6 Alley gating is one hugely significant tool with which to help meet these objectives along with the installation of new CCTV, better lighting, home security kits, improved window and door locks, new back gates and improvements to the local environment and green spaces, all of which have been agreed under the Safer Streets Project and funding for by the Home Office.

End of Report

4 **Appendix 1**

Blackburn Safer Streets 2 Alley Gates. Locations