

Danii Wohler 7263
Designing Out Crime Officer
Lancashire Constabulary
Saunders Lane
Hutton
Preston
PR4 5SB



Lancashire
Constabulary

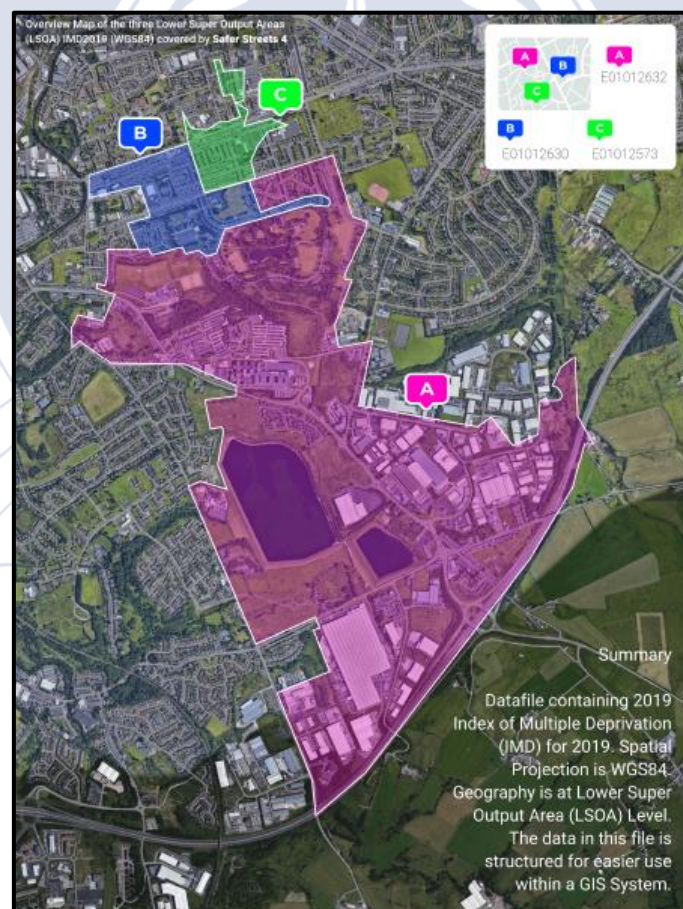
Environmental Visual Audit

Blackburn, Lancashire

On Friday 17th November 2022, An Environmental Visual Audit was conducted in support of Safer Streets 4 on three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) (A) E01012632, (B) E01012630, and (C) E01012573.

This was conducted by Lancashire Constabulary Designing Out Crime Officer 7263 Danii Wohler, in the company of Lancashire Constabulary Blackburn Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant 541 Steve Dundon, PCSO 7712 Luke Baldwin, and members of the Blackburn with Darwen Council Community Safety Team Muddassir Shah and Rebecca Hopwood.

The LSOA's encompassed within this EVA are located in the Blackburn with Darwen area in the East of Lancashire as shown on the below highlighted maps.



LSOA (A) E01012632

Observations



LSOA (A) E01012632 is a large area which encompasses sections of 5 different ward areas as seen in the above highlighted map: Audley and Queens Park Ward, Blackburn Central Ward, Blackburn South and Lower Darwen Wards, and Blackburn Southeast Ward.

The area has numerous varied uses including residential dwellings, Queens Park public green space and lakes, The Royal Blackburn Hospital, Blackburn Central High School, Fishmoor and Guide Reservoirs, and Shadsworth and Walker Industrial Estates.

The EVA focused on the Queens Park public green space and lake area which is located to the North of this LSOA as seen in the below Google Maps Image, bordered in its entirety by Queens Road.



The main pedestrian entrance into the park is to the Northwest elevation off Queens Road which is overlooked by residential properties and a primary school as can be seen in the below images which show the view looking both into, and out of the park at this point, along with a Google Street view image of the entrance.



On entering the park here, there was a large map for visitor convenience. This was however the only signage I noticed within the park so opportunities for rule setting and positive ownership display are missed here.



Queens Park features a network of long, wide tarmacked footpaths, which whilst prohibited, vehicles are able to easily access. There was an absence of lighting columns noted in this area, and I was advised that the entrance area is extremely dark at night-time, preventing safe, legitimate use and increasing fear for those who may venture into the park grounds. The very nature of the green space here including trees and shrubbery, means that any borrowed light from the surrounding area makes little difference to illumination levels within the park.

Further into the park towards the lakes, the issue of poor lighting was repeated, and with so many directions to travel in on foot it was easy to see how this park has become somewhere to avoid after nightfall. I was advised that there have historically been two stranger-murders within Queens Park, which local users and residents are still very alert to, heightening their concerns around safety here. A memorial created for one of the victims was present at a tree near to the boating lake.

An area identified to me within Queens Park as a hot spot for Anti-Social Behaviour and Drug Dealing incidents was the old bowling green pavilion building. The building has most recently been used by the community payback team and is fully boarded up. There was graffiti and criminal damage evident, and the area was quite secluded within the park with very little lighting, making it an ideal location for those wishing to commit crimes out of sight.

The building could be described as an 'eyesore' in what is a local beauty spot, and its derelict looking nature contributes to the broken windows theory, where visible signs of crime and disorder contributes to further crime and disorder when offenders feel comfortable and safe committing their offences here.



A further area highlighted as problematic at night was an old, roofless, brick-built seating area near to the boating lake as can be seen in the below images. This is the location of the memorial tree mentioned above and can be seen below.



This area is another hotspot for anti-social behaviour and is known to attract congregation by youths and adults committing crimes. Graffiti was present on this structure, including inappropriate paintings, and the design of seating here is set back out of sight, making it an ideal place to hide from view.

I was informed that groups of women from the surrounding community meet at Queens Park after dark seeking respite from poor domestic situations, and the current dark, poorly surveilled design of the park makes this an unsafe location for these vulnerable females, and other legitimate users of the park.

A CCTV camera was noted near to a children's play park area adjacent to the main entrance, however most other more vulnerable areas of Queens Park were not covered by any cameras.

A boathouse was seen to one side of the boating lake. Again, this was not covered by CCTV and featured poor lighting. This space cannot be appropriately utilised due to the fear of crime here and the community use building is at risk of criminal damage and burglary.



LSOA (A) E01012632

Recommendations

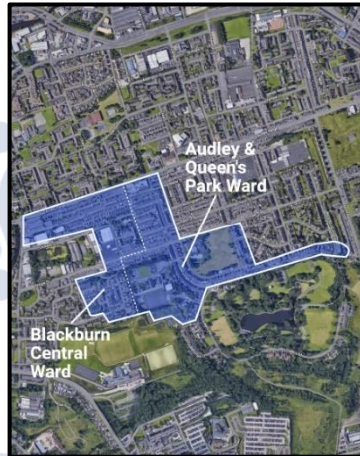
- The area would benefit from a review and upgrade of its current lighting scheme and increase in lighting columns throughout the park to support any CCTV system here and reduce opportunities for crimes including ASB and violent crimes, increasing feelings of safety after dark, and in turn encouraging legitimate use here which will also help to deter crimes.
- Clear signage should be erected in all areas here to promote rule setting regarding littering, ASB and appropriate behaviours. The responsible authority should consider robust aluminium anti-vandal, anti-

graffiti signage fitted to either dedicated on site sign poles or other structures using tamper-proof fixings to prevent damage or removal of the signs. This rule setting will help to set the tone to all users of what is expected and tolerated in the area, and details of how to report incidents and whom to, should be displayed to display clear ownership of areas.

- Pedestrian footpaths in the area would benefit from maintenance to improve the general appearance and safety. The paved external entrance area was particularly hazardous and slippery during our visit. This maintenance will display positive ownership of areas and help to increase feelings of safety, encouraging legitimate users to use the space at all times.
- Queens park would benefit from increased numbers of local authority monitored CCTV cameras to promote feelings of safety and deter crimes such as ASB and Violent crimes here, whilst supporting the identification of offenders. Areas such as the bowling green, boat house, play areas and pathway junctions near to the boating lake would benefit from CCTV coverage.
- Clear signage should be erected where CCTV is present. Signage should be of robust aluminium anti-vandal, anti-graffiti construction, fitted to either dedicated sign poles, walls or fence perimeters using tamper-proof fixings to prevent damage or removal. This rule setting will help to set the tone for users from the outset that security and safety in the area is taken seriously, assisting in crime prevention where offenders feel they are being watched.
- Local authority and policing media outlets such as social media, websites, and apps such as Lancashire Talking etc should be utilised to encourage awareness and confidence in the reporting of incidents. Two-way communication streams will help to increase passing surveillance in areas where residents are able to report or be informed of local problems. This will help to keep residents alert to crimes and provide them with the reassurance that this is being dealt with by the relevant authority, increasing confidence in authorities and increasing feelings of safety whilst preventing crimes.
- Similar social media outlets should be used to promote good news and events at the park to encourage legitimate footfall into the area, which in turn deters criminal behaviour where legitimate users are seen as 'capable guardians', increasing the risk of apprehension to crimes.
- The implementation of resident volunteer groups, wardens, Neighbourhood Watch etc could be considered here, with regular area patrols to increase capable guardianship and surveillance.
- The Boathouse should be considered for community repurpose, with renovation works and improved security including lighting and cctv as above.
- Similarly, the bowling green and pavilion building should be considered for renovation and community use with improved lighting and cctv coverage also.
- The brick-built seating area near to the boating lake serves no purpose and should be demolished to prevent loitering, concealment, and the associated crimes. If seating is required in the area, pedestal type single seats should be considered as these allow resting but by design discourage lengthy congregation.

LSOA (B) E01012630

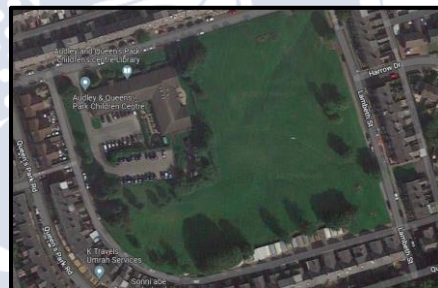
Observations



LSOA (B) E01012630 sits directly to the North of LSOA A and encompasses sections of 2 ward areas as seen in the above highlighted map: Audley and Queens Park and Blackburn Central Wards.

It features a dense housing stock made up predominantly of interconnecting terraced streets, along with Audley Junior Community School, numerous commercial businesses and hot food takeaways, places of worship and a community use green spaces including a MUGA and children's play park.

The Queens Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre building and its associated rear car parks were visited first during the EVA of this area as seen in the below Google Maps Images.



This area is a hotspot for anti-social vehicle use and congregation by groups using the centre car park for illegitimate purposes. The area is believed to suffer from drug dealing, drug taking, and groups smoking, vaping, and littering whilst loitering here. A vehicle access prevention barrier is present; however staff choose not to secure this gate after the centre has closed to allow residents parking, however this decision allows the above issues to continue.

A local authority CCTV camera is located to the front of the centre on Pringle Street; however this is the opposite side of the building to the car park so provides limited coverage in the area.

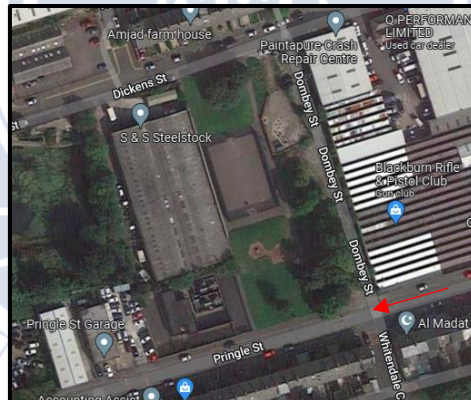
Heading East up Pringle Street a previously open alley way where the rear of properties on Pringle Street and Lambeth Street has been restricted by alley gates. This area is believed to be a hotspot for drug dealing. A concrete and stone mound at the end of Pringle Street is planted with trees and shrubbery and its height obstructs natural and passing surveillance from Lambeth Street. Windblown litter gathers here making it look untidy and unmaintained. This, coupled with the green space adjacent, isolates the area and makes it an ideal location for such unlawful behaviour as can be seen in the below image.



A shared alleyway to the rear of both Pringle Street and Winchester Street was identified as a hotspot area for anti-social behaviour and drug dealing activity. There was evidence of fly tipping in this location. This alleyway was devoid of any alley gates and allows permeability from Dewhurst Street to Queens Park Road without obstruction, as identified on the below Google Images Map.



West of Pringle Street with the junction of Dombay Street is a small industrial area as seen on the below Google Maps image.



This area has suffered from repeated instances of fly tipping, litter, abandoned vehicles, and damaged street furniture, which was evident during the EVA to the entrance to a children’s playpark and Multi-Use Games Arena as seen below. Signage warning against fly-tipping was visible on a wall on the Dickens street side of the park.



Entry was possible into the grounds of neighbouring industrial structures via insecure gates as seen below, posing a risk to youngsters and anyone else who may stray into these zones. This access is also believed to be exploited by criminals and prostitutes. Anti-social behaviour is commonplace here, and used fireworks littered the area during the visit.



The MUGA and playpark area sit between Pringle Street and Dickens Street, in a patch of land between the industrial units. Whilst this is an excellent amenity for the community, its isolated nature, and lack of any lighting or CCTV mean it cannot be legitimately used after dark. This area is known to be used for drug dealing and other drugs activity, and there have been numerous drug-related arrests made by Police here. An isolated footpath to the rear of the MUGA leading between Pringle Street and Dickens Street is particularly problematic and provides a transport route on foot out of sight from criminal activity.



Evidence of further used fireworks and condoms were seen around the park area, confirming anti-social behaviour and sexual activity occurring in the area, and a divan bed base was seen dumped in adjacent scrubland. There has been an issue of vehicles being abandoned on this land, and the local authority has now added a mound of earth to prevent vehicle access. Local Authority red bin bags were seen tied to the sides of the MUGA, in the absence of dedicated litter bins here, which can be seen in the below images.



An area further East of the MUGA within the LSOA was identified to me on Cromwell Street as seen below. This area has recently had a number of garages demolished and cleared due to drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, though this is still believed to occur in the derelict space. This area was devoid of lighting columns, was in poor repair and felt like an area to avoid.



A local resident spoken to during the EVA, raised concerns regarding gang congregation and drug dealing from vehicles around the Walter Street and Queens Park Road area near to the shops and Masjide Noorul

Islam Mosque on Audley Range. Such behaviour is believed to occur daily, with vehicles blocking footpaths and is intimidating and worrying for local residents and the mosque community who fear for their safety.

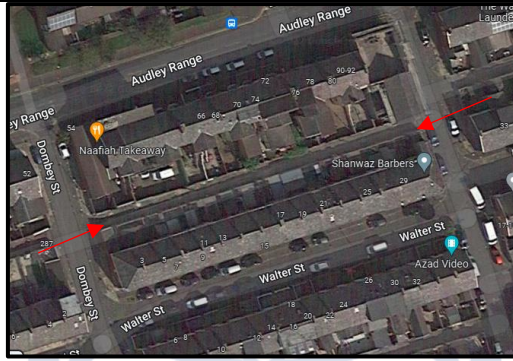


There is generally poor CCTV coverage in the area off Audley Range, with junctions of North Road, Lambeth Street, Chester Street and Queens Park Road left vulnerable due to the lack of CCTV. Audley Road is the main route through town, and criminals are able to move freely onto the residential estates without fear of being seen or apprehended.

The Madrassa Nooral Islam Girls School is located next door to the Masjide Noorul Islam Mosque on Audley Range, and features an unrestricted alleyway to the rear, shared with neighbouring businesses and also residential properties to the rear on Walter Street. This alleyway connects Dewhurst Road with an extension of Chester Close. This alleyway was identified as problematic for drug dealing and anti-social behaviour and is used as a 'rat run' to the rear of shops and dwellings here. Evidence of litter and fly tipping was seen (as shown below), and the area did not feature any lighting so is known to be very dark during the evenings making it the ideal location to commit crime.



Adjacent to this alleyway, another alleyway linking Chester Close with Dombay Street was identified as problematic, again there was unrestricted access here.



Alleyways around Walter Street were in general identified by the NH Policing Team as being hotspots for drug dealing activity and loitering in the early hours of the morning, making residents feel unsafe within their homes and in the neighbourhood.



LSOA (B) E01012630

Recommendations

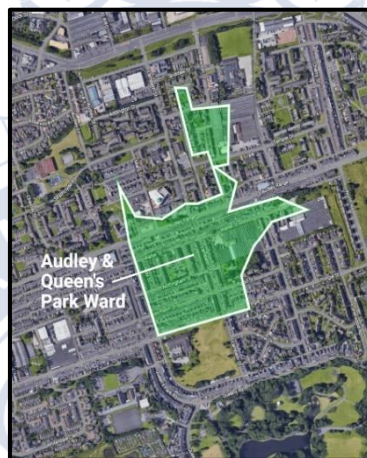
- Staff at the neighbourhood Learning Centre on Pringle Street should secure the vehicular access gates to their car park once the building is closed to prevent this being used for anti-social vehicle use and unlawful congregations.
- Clear signage should be erected in all external areas of the NH Learning Centre to promote rule setting regarding opening hours and acceptable behaviours. Robust aluminium anti-vandal, anti-graffiti signage should be fitted to either dedicated on site sign poles, building walls or other structures using tamper-proof fixings to prevent damage or removal of the signs. This rule setting will help to set the tone to all users of what is expected and tolerated in the area, and details of how to report incidents and whom to, should be displayed to display clear ownership of areas.
- The concrete and stone mound at the end of Pringle Street (Junction with Lambeth St) should be considered for removal and replaced by vehicle prevention bollards or low planters which prevent vehicle access but allow natural surveillance into the area from surrounding streets. If this is not viable, trees and shrubbery should be maintained so that branches do not overhang, and shrubbery allows natural sightlines without causing visual obstruction for pedestrians and vehicle users. Opening up this area will make it less attractive for criminals to loiter and deal drugs etc.

- A lockable alley gate would be beneficial to the rear of Pringle Street and Winchester Street to prevent excessive permeation and unlawful access between Dewhurst Street to Queens Park Road.
- Dombrey Street would benefit from improved road surfacing and markings, with clear signage erected regarding fly tipping and vehicle parking to promote order and encourage legitimate and appropriate use of the area. Fly tipping should be cleared from this area and landscaping well maintained.
- The MUGA and children's park between Dombrey Street and Pringle Street are look worn and dated, and whilst these are a great facility for children and youths in the area, they would benefit from aesthetic maintenance and damage repair to promote feelings of ownership and responsibility here. Areas which fall into disrepair, with peeling paint and rust contribute to the 'Broken Window Theory' giving the impression that it is not looked after and making them a comfortable place to offend.
- Lighting improvements would benefit the MUGA and children's park areas to increase feelings of safety. Clear signage should be erected to promote rule setting and outline expectations of users of the sites.
- The MUGA and children's park area would benefit from increased numbers of local authority monitored CCTV cameras to promote feelings of safety and deter crimes such as ASB and Violent crimes here, whilst supporting the identification of offenders. An area identified as the best location for a camera here was on the Dickens Street elevation.
- Disused community spaces around this park should be repurposed and perhaps handed over for community group redevelopment. Community group and local school involvement should be encouraged. This will help to place responsibility on local groups and residents to look after areas here, promoting ownership and encouraging territoriality to ensure they do not fall into disrepair. Often when resident or local groups have been involved in replenishing the appearance of areas, they are more likely to challenge and report incidents, and crimes here become less 'victimless' when offenders realise, they may know someone involved in its creation.
- Clear signage should be erected in all areas at this MUGA and park to promote rule setting and outlining acceptable behaviours here. Signage regarding the presence of CCTV should also be present. Signage should be of robust aluminium anti-vandal, anti-graffiti construction, fitted to either dedicated sign poles, walls or fence perimeters using tamper-proof fixings to prevent damage or removal. This rule setting will help to set the tone for users from the outset that security and safety in the area is taken seriously, assisting in crime prevention where offenders feel they are being watched.
- New litter bins/ dog waste bins should be introduced to the MUGA and Playpark area and entrances to encourage responsible disposal of litter. These should be emptied regularly to prevent overflowing. Bins should be of fire-proof design and construction to prevent the risk of arson here.
- The area of damaged wall to the United Utilities substation land next to the MUGA should be repaired expeditiously to prevent further damage, and prevent bricks being used as missiles here. Proper maintenance will display positive management and maintenance here which can help to deter crimes.
- The former garage clearing on Cromwell Street is believed to have been sold or is being sold. This is positive and a new use for the area will remove its availability for crime.
- Areas on Audley Range would benefit from increased numbers of local authority monitored CCTV cameras to promote feelings of safety and deter crimes, whilst supporting the identification of offenders. Junctions of North Road, Lambeth Street, Chester Street and Queens Park Road were identified as above.
- Lockable alley gates should be considered for the rear alley behind The Madrassa Nooral Islam Girls School on Audley Range to prevent unrestricted access between Dewhurst Road and Chester Close.

- A further alley gate location to be considered was the alleyway linking Chester Close with Dombay Street.
- Other areas identified as requiring improved CCTV coverage during the EVA in this LSOA were the Pringle Street junction with Lambeth Street. The Pringle Street Junction with Queens Park Road, and Queens Road opposite the park entrance at the bottom of 'Telly Tubby Hill'.

LSOA (C) E01012573

Observations



LSOA (C) E01012573 is located North of both LSOA's A and B and encompasses a section of Audley and Queens Park ward as seen in the above highlighted map.

This area features a dense housing stock made up predominantly of interconnecting terraced streets and some commercial businesses.

Lambeth Street was the first section of this LSOA covered during the EVA, and as with the junction of Pringle Street, a concrete and stone mound at the junction of Ripon Street was overgrown and obstructed sight lines into the area. Again, leaves and windblown litter congregated here making the area look unsightly as can be seen in the below images. A lack of litter bins in the area contribute to this problem.



One of the themes discussed with both the Neighbourhood Policing Team and BwD Community Safety Team during the EVA was the under-reporting of crimes in the area. Residents discuss issues between themselves, via social media and to local councillors, and people know a lot about what is going on in the area including drug dealing and gang type behaviour, however only a proportion is being reported to Police or the Council. This means that crime figures in the area are inaccurate and makes interventions difficult where official statistics do not reflect local issues.

An alleyway to the rear of properties on Lambeth Street, joining Ripon Street with Nottingham Street was identified as another hotspot for criminality. This alleyway is wide enough for vehicles to access and is used by local drug dealers as a cut-through between the streets, allowing them to travel around easily without being seen or caught. Drug dealers are believed to congregate here, and one resident has erected a high fence to protect their property.



Another area off Lambeth Street with the junction of Ripon Street / Nottingham street as shown in the below Google Maps and EVA images, was identified as a hotspot for fly tipping and vehicle abandonment. Alleysways to the rear of properties here are used as 'rat runs' by criminals travelling out of sight, and the access point is not overlooked by surrounding properties. This particular alleyway leads to another section of Ripon Street.

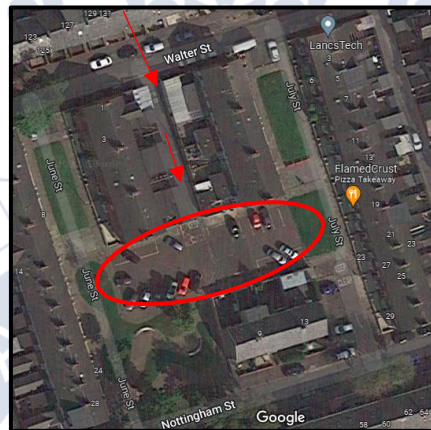


A lack of cctv and lighting here means the area is extremely dark at night and one resident has retrofitted their own cctv cameras to the rear of their property, at the alleyway location.

The adjacent patch of currently disused land has become the main target for fly tipping here as shown in the below images, however a notice was seen at the time on a nearby lamppost suggesting that a planning application has been submitted (Ref 10/22/0166) for the erection of 9 residential dwellings on the land.



The areas of June and July Street within this LSOA feature a residents car park, accessible only via a rear alleyway off Walter Street as shown in the below Google Maps Image.



This car park has been problematic for residents due to vehicle abandonment, drug dealing, and vehicles being parked here out of sight, which are used to store quantities of drugs. Police have recovered drugs from vehicles here and the local neighbourhood policing team are aware of and have been targeting drug dealing and other criminality in this car park.



There was no cctv in this location, and very little lighting, most of which would be borrowed light from the adjacent street lighting columns on June, July and Nottingham Streets surrounding the car park.

One resident was spoken to within this car park, and raised concerns regarding drug dealing, criminal activity and groups loitering here at night. This same resident referred to local awareness of drugs stored in vehicles here. They stated that women and children do not feel safe in this area after dark and avoid it.

There were also numerous examples of fly tipping seen here.

Another area of concern mentioned by a resident was the gated alleyway to the rear of June Street, where fly tipping and unlawful access is occurring due to residents failing to secure the alley gates after use.

LSOA (C) E01012573

Recommendations

- The concrete and stone mound at the end of Ripon Street (Junction with Lambeth St) should be considered for removal and replaced by vehicle prevention bollards or low planters which prevent vehicle access but allow natural surveillance into the area from surrounding streets. If this is not viable, trees and shrubbery should be maintained so that branches do not overhang, and shrubbery allows natural sightlines without causing visual obstruction for pedestrians and vehicle users.
- New litter bins/ dog waste bins should be introduced to the Lambeth Street area to encourage responsible disposal of litter. These should be emptied regularly to prevent overflowing. Bins should be of fire-proof design and construction to prevent the risk of arson here.
- Local authority and policing media outlets such as social media, websites, and apps such as Lancashire Talking etc should be utilised to encourage awareness and confidence in the reporting of incidents. Two-way communication streams will help to increase passing surveillance in areas where residents are able to report or be informed of local problems. This will help to keep residents alert to crimes and provide them with the reassurance that this is being dealt with by the relevant authority, increasing confidence in authorities and increasing feelings of safety whilst preventing crimes.
- Lockable alley gates should be considered for the two identified (as detailed above) rear alleyways behind Lambeth Street (connecting Ripon St with Nottingham Street). Consideration should be given to ensuring this would not interfere with the new proposed development on adjacent land.
- The junction of Lambeth Street with Nottingham Street would benefit from local authority monitored CCTV cameras to promote feelings of safety and deter crimes such as ASB, drug dealing and fly tipping whilst supporting the identification of offenders.
- Clear signage should be erected near to all road junctions / concrete mounds / disused land such as that off Lambeth St / Nottingham street to promote rule setting and outlining acceptable behaviours here such as no fly tipping. Signage regarding the presence of CCTV should also be present. Signage should be of robust aluminium anti-vandal, anti-graffiti construction, fitted to either dedicated sign poles, walls or fence perimeters using tamper-proof fixings to prevent damage or removal. This rule setting will help to set the tone for users from the outset that security and safety in the area is taken seriously, assisting in crime prevention where offenders feel they are being watched.
- The June/July Street resident's car park should also feature warning signage and would benefit from increased lighting and Local Authority Monitored CCTV cameras to deter against drug dealing and loitering, whilst supporting the identification of offenders.
- Residents would benefit from local authority engagement and reminders of their responsibilities regarding securing the gates when not access is not required for bin collection etc.
- Fly tipping should be cleared from rear alleyways, with consideration of a community skip day where residents can responsibly dispose of waste and furniture items into skips to prevent them ending up in alleyways.

The above security comments and recommendations are made in order to **keep people safe and feeling safe and to prevent crime and disorder in accordance with-**

- **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006)**
Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to

which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and reoffending in its area.

Crime prevention advice is given without the intention of creating a contract. Neither the Home Office nor the Police Service accepts legal responsibility for the advice given. Fire Prevention advice, Fire Safety Certificates conditions, Health & Safety Regulations and Safe Working Practices always take precedence over any Crime Prevention issue. Recommendations included in this report have been considered for a specific site and take into account information available to the Police.

Danii Wohler 7263 Designing Out Crime Officer | Lancashire Constabulary

