

REPORT TO: Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20 November 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Environment

SUBJECT: Long term implications of alley gating

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To discuss the long term implications of alley gates erected on public highways under the new Gating Orders legislation

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members note:

- (1) the potential benefits and other implications of alley gating schemes; and
- (2) the proposal that a multidisciplinary team monitor these implications over the next 3 years and review each scheme and the gating order procedure as necessary prior to the expiry of that period.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A report to the Executive Board on 21 June 2007 advised Members of the new legislation for obtaining a Gating Order, to be used when erecting alley gates on public highways, and proposed a policy and procedure to be adopted for all future requests for alley gates. It was made clear in this report that in considering a request for an alley gate on a public highway, Council officers will need to make a carefully balanced judgement between the improvement in quality of life for residents effected by the recorded crime and anti social behaviour, and the wider impacts upon the amenity of highway users to access local facilities, bus services etc. A report to Executive Board on 7 December 2006, stated that whilst some opportunities still exist, many of the locations suitable for alley gating have already been treated. Future cases are therefore more likely to be on through routes where the relative impacts upon highway users will be greater.
- 3.2 This report provides an assessment of the wider benefits of introducing such measures, together with the longer term implications of erecting alley gates.

3.3 Benefits of alley gating

Whilst it must be noted that alley gates will not be the solution in all situations, the erection of alley gates is likely to result in the following benefits:

- A reduction in the level of antisocial behaviour and youth annoyance;
- Reduced levels of burglaries/theft and other crime, possibly violent, related to the path or its use as an escape route;
- Criminal damage, fly tipping, graffiti and vandalism will reduce;
- There will be a positive effect on perceived and actual personal safety;
- Gates will help to reduce and combat negative images of graffiti, vandalism, fly tipping etc;
- Improvement in quality of life for those living in the vicinity of affected paths.
- Alley gates will assist in meeting targets for indicators relating to burglaries and other crimes and hence assist the Council and its partners in delivering its Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

3.4 Potential implications of erecting alley gates

There are a number of potential implications of erecting alley gates under the new procedure as listed below, which may need to be considered and balanced against the above benefits in determining the appropriateness of introducing an alley gating scheme. It should also be noted that the presence of alley gates can 'flag' an area's problems and influence people's perceptions.

- **Antisocial behaviour & crime may be displaced** – Consideration must be given to the potential for the problems to be displaced elsewhere. Displacement can be difficult to predict and prove, due to the transient nature of crime and anti social behaviour.
- **Permeability** – It is important that the permeability of an area, and the use of the routes in question are assessed, to minimise the potential for encouraging increased car use, creating community severance and impeding access to bus stops and other services, with possible health, safety and localised congestion problems resulting.
- **Financial implications** – The cost of erecting and maintaining gates and pursuing a legal order, must be fully considered. Further information on this is provided in paragraph 5.1
- **Access** – The impact upon access for maintenance, emergency services, postal routes and utilities (which may potentially constrain development), along with any mitigation measures, must be considered.
- **Visual amenity** – The potential positive or negative effects upon the borough's image of an increasing number of gates should be kept

under review. The visual amenity of individual gates will be considered as part of the planning process.

- **Abuse of the key system** – There is potential, particularly where a large number of keys have to be issued, for the key system to be abused, by gates being left open and keys being lent etc., which would undermine the benefits of the initiative

3.5 The Council is still in the early stages of its commitment to a long term programme to erect and maintain alley gates, and therefore it is recommended that the benefits and issues be kept under review for a period of 3 years.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource implications

5.1.1 Financial - Long term maintenance of gates. The 7 December 2006 Executive Board resolved that the maintenance of all gates existing at that time whether on highway or not, would be covered by a growth bid of £34000. This growth bid was successful and funding commenced in 2007/8. It was also resolved that any new gate should include a 5 year maintenance cost in the final package, to be funded by the Area Forum. It is likely, however, that maintenance costs will increase as gates become older. It will be necessary therefore to review the maintenance budget on a regular basis to ensure that it is able to cover the trend in actual maintenance costs for all gates.

5.1.2 Financial - Cost of legal gating order process. To complete the legal Gating Order process requires an advertisement of the Order in the local press. This, is likely to result in costs of approximately £500-750 per order (which may be an area consisting of several gates eg. the 6 gates for Addison Square/Shelley Road). This cost will need to be borne for each alleygating scheme by the Area Forum, and is based on several Orders for different schemes being processed at the same time.

5.2 Social inclusion implications

The report details a number of potential implications which will effect social inclusion such as the creation of gated communities, reduced permeability, interaction, and accessibility with a possible greater reliance by a small

number of people on the private car at the expense of other modes of transport. As mentioned in the report a balance will need to be made between any potential issues and the positive impact upon crime and anti social behaviour reduction for each proposed alley gate.

5.3 Crime and disorder implications

It is expected that erection of gates will have a largely positive impact on crime and disorder, however there is some fear that anti social behaviour will simply displace elsewhere and therefore consideration needs to be given in assessing requests to minimise the potential for displacement. The degree to which this will happen will always be difficult to predict.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

It is likely that erection of alley gates will have a positive impact upon safety and perceived safety. However, care must be taken to ensure that the alternative route for pedestrians facilitates safe and convenient access, whilst bearing in mind the needs of children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

In assessing the impact of an alley gating proposal, consideration must be given to the maintenance of the route as a means of access to employment and learning facilities and the convenience and safety of any alternative routes proposed.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The impact on health of erecting alley gates is likely to be marginal, providing that safe and convenient alternative routes are available, which don't discourage walking and cycling in favour of car journeys. However, it could be argued that stress levels experienced by those affected by the crime and anti social behaviour could be reduced, significantly in some cases.

6.4 A Safer Halton

It is proven that erection of gates will have a largely positive impact on crime and disorder as detailed in 3.3 above.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The introduction of an alley gating scheme must be considered in the context of potential redevelopment and regeneration of the area concerned, to ensure that key access routes are identified and protected. However, it is likely that successfully addressing the problems of vandalism, fly tipping, graffiti and

crime by the implementation of alley gating will help to kick start the regeneration of the area.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Risks associated with the proposed course of action

It is clear from the report that whilst there can be significant benefits to be gained from introducing alley gating, the full implications, as highlighted in paragraph 3.4, are not yet fully understood. The proposal to monitor and review the initiative after a three year period is considered important in the management of risk. However, immediate action may need to be taken in advance should key problems emerge at specific sites.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

In considering an application for alley gating it will be necessary to carefully balance the needs of local residents with those who do not own a car, are disabled or elderly and who might be disadvantaged by the loss of the route. The statutory legal procedure does allow users of paths to make representations to a proposed gating order should they feel the need to do so.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Guidance relating to the Making of Gating Orders

www.respect.gov.uk

Contact Jonathan Farmer ext.3018

NAME OF BOARD: Safer Halton and Urban Renewal PPBs

DATE OF MEETING: 20th November 2007

REPORT TITLE: Long term implications of alleygating

AUTHOR: J Farmer

STANDARD SECTIONS – CHECKLIST		
All reports must be submitted together with the following checklist fully completed		
	Yes	No
<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>The financial, manpower and land (buying or selling) considerations should be clearly detailed including any corporate implications of following the recommended course of action.</p>	x	
<p>Social Inclusion Implications</p> <p>Any implications relating to social inclusion/anti-poverty should be highlighted.</p>	x	
<p>Sustainability Checklist</p> <p>Any implications that affect the sustainability themes of economy, society and the community and the environment should be included.</p>	x	
<p>Best Value</p> <p>Any Best Value implications should be included.</p>		x
<p>Legal Implications</p> <p>Any legal implications should be included.</p>		x
<p>Crime and Disorder Issues</p> <p>Any crime and disorder implications should be included.</p>	x	
<p><i>Please review these potential effects, within the context set out overleaf, to compose your summary assessment</i></p>		
<p>Summary assessment of Implications:</p> <p><i>See report section 5</i></p>		