

# PETITION REQUESTING MEASURES TO REDUCE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE ALLEYWAY BETWEEN POPLAR'S CLOSE AND RUISLIP HIGH STREET

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Eddie Lavery
<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	Cabinet Member for Residents' Services
<b>Officer Contact</b>	Richard Webb – Place Directorate
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix A – Location maps

## HEADLINES

<b>Summary</b>	To inform the Cabinet Member that a petition has been submitted by residents of Poplar's Close, Ruislip requesting measures be introduced to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve feelings of safety in an alleyway off Poplar's Close, for the Cabinet Member to determine whether the Council should pursue the implementation of any measures in that alleyway.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>  <b>Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026</b>	This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: Be / feel safe from harm  This report supports our commitments to residents of: Safe and Strong Communities
<b>Financial Cost</b>	The cost of any measure that it is agreed should be implemented will need to be determined.
<b>Relevant Select Committee</b>	Residents' Services Select Committee
<b>Relevant Ward</b>	Ruislip

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services:

1. meets with petitioners and listens to their request to introduce measures in the alleyway between Poplar's Close and Ruislip High Street which could reduce anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety in the alleyway.
2. notes the assessment carried out by Council officers on the potential viability of measures that could be introduced in this alleyway and the likely effectiveness of those measures in achieving the benefits sought by the petitioners.

3. **decides whether to instruct officers to seek to install lighting in the alleyway, subject to the agreement of property owners that would need to consent.**

### **Reasons for recommendations**

The Petition Hearing will provide a valuable opportunity to hear directly from the petitioners regarding their concerns and suggestions.

### **Alternative options considered/ risk management**

None at this stage.

### **Select Committee comments**

None at this stage.

### **Democratic compliance/ previous authority**

Not applicable.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

1. A petition with what appears to be 37 signatories has been submitted to the Council in relation to security in the alleyway connecting Poplar's Close to Ruislip High Street. The signatories on this petition are residents of Poplar's Close. The petition states:

*"The petition of the Residents of the Ward of Ruislip declare that the adjoining alleyway between Poplar's Close and Ruislip High Street should have adequate lighting, CCTV and require the shutters used by Superdrug to be closed when not in use, to reduce anti-social behaviour, littering, urination, defecations and to increase personal safety for local residents and users of the alleyway. The petitioners therefore request that Hillingdon Council ensure these matters are taken seriously, and necessary action be taken to address the above requests."*

2. In addition, accompanying the petition was a request to note residents' comments that:

- 1) *They have raised this previously and nothing has ever been done.*
- 2) *The women bypass the alleyway including Superdrug, therefore meaning the shutters stay open, and also the nursery staff never use (the alleyway) in winter.*
- 3) *Someone from Specsavers is drinking in the alley before work each morning.*
- 4) *Two of the homeless individuals hanging around outside Tesco are becoming very aggressive.*
- 5) *Many residents have access to their properties, including us, via this alleyway. I really hope we can action this because deterrence is such a powerful tool".*

A further note, accompanying the signatures, includes an additional comment that:

*"Frequent drug users meet in the shutter area. Often (we) find needles and human faeces along with broken glass bottles.  
Children often use the alley to go to nursery as well as old people".*

3. In response to this petition, Council officers attended the location to assess the situation and the viability of introducing measures which could improve conditions in the alleyway, reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour occurring or improve feelings of safety.
4. The alleyway in question connects the end of Poplar's Close to Ruislip High Street. At the High Street end it is bordered by two retail premises with residential accommodation above those shops. The alleyway at this end is actually part of one of the retail premises bordering the alleyway and currently occupied by Superdrug. At the Poplar's Close end the alleyway is bounded by a house and a nursery, with the gardens of the house and nursery bordering the alleyway for approximately 30m. The alleyway provides a short-cut between the close and Ruislip High Street with an alternative route between the ends of the alleyway being possible via Ickenham Road with a travel distance of approximately 300m compared with the alleyway's length of approximately 70m.
5. Following the initial request to take steps to reduce anti-social behaviour in this area, the Anti-Social Behaviour and Environment Team tasked our Environmental Enforcement Officers (EET) to patrol the footpath during the evening, and issue fixed penalty notices as appropriate. As a result, 13 separate patrols were carried out between 09 June 2022 and 10 July 2023. The officers reported that they engaged young people who were loitering in the area on two occasions and who subsequently moved on after being spoken to by the officers. No actual offences were witnessed during these patrols.
6. The Council officers also considered whether lighting could be improved which would reduce anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the alleyway would be very dark at nighttime. Lighting the alleyway may have an impact on how it is used a night. However, any lighting to be installed would either be a matter for the adjacent property owners or would require the Council to enter into an agreement with a property owner to install lighting on their property and be powered from that property.
7. In 2022, Council officers liaised with the occupiers of both retail premises forming the alleyway at the Ruislip High Street end. The businesses were asked whether they would install lighting in the alleyway. However, it proved difficult to engage with those businesses since officers were advised that decisions on these matters could only be made at head office level and not locally. No agreement was achieved.
8. When the Council is considering installing public space CCTV it is necessary to consider the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. This Code requires that the use of surveillance cameras should balance public protection and individual human rights and sets out 12 guiding principles that help achieve this balance. The first principle is that the use of a surveillance camera system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and be necessary to meet an identified pressing need. Legitimate aims include public safety and the prevention of disorder or crime.
9. The Council officer's initial assessment of the location was that there was no suitable nearby lamp column upon which a CCTV camera could be installed which would provide adequate coverage of the alleyway without intrusion into private property. Installation of a CCTV camera on the wall of one of the buildings bounding the alleyway would require the Council to enter into a wayleave agreement with the property owner.
10. A further site assessment was carried out in 2023. This assessment identified that there may be a suitable location for mounting a camera on the High Street which would provide some coverage of the entrance to the alleyway. This camera would primarily provide

coverage of the High Street but may act as a deterrent to inappropriate use of the alleyway. Therefore, the installation of a camera on the High Street which provides some coverage of the entrance to the alleyway will be progressed following a survey of the potential mounting location to ascertain whether it is suitable.

11. It should be noted that the presence of a CCTV camera in the alleyway itself would not necessarily prevent or deter anti-social behaviour, drug use or rough sleeping in itself. It would support the identification of those involved in any criminal behaviour but may not be an effective deterrent without a further response (e.g., attendance at the scene by the Police when crime / anti-social behaviour is observed).
12. On the basis of the available information on the frequency and impact of any crime or disorder in the alleyway, the fact that it was not necessary for local residents to use the alleyway to access Poplar's Close, and the impact on crime and disorder that a surveillance camera could be expected to achieve, it was assessed that the 'pressing need' criteria was not met for installation of a camera in the alleyway.
13. In addition, the Council officers considered whether access to the alleyway could be restricted to reduce the behaviours having a negative impact on the area. However, it was noted that there is a fire exit in the alleyway and it was considered that restricting access to the alleyway would be difficult if those with a legitimate interest in using the alleyway for access to / from Poplar's Close were to continue to have access. Given that part of the alleyway is also private property the introduction of physical restrictions to access would be a matter for the property owner and not the Council.
14. The presence of the fire exit in the alleyway to an adjacent shop clearly contributes to the problems reported by the petitioners in that it provides some shelter for rough sleeping or street drinking. Shuttering this exit when the premises was closed could reduce the anti-social behaviour but this is a matter for the shop concerned and the Council has no powers to require the shop to restrict access to the entrance.
15. It is recommended the Cabinet Member considers the request of the petitioners, and the conclusions of the officers responding to those petitioners as outlined in this report and decides whether to instruct officers to further engage with the owners of the properties bounding the alleyway with a view to seeking their agreement to install lighting in the alleyway. It is not recommended that the installation of surveillance cameras in the alleyway be pursued due to the initial assessment concluding that the requirements of the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice could not be met in this location.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION**

### **The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities**

The recommendations will allow the Cabinet Member to consider the petitioners' requests and to decide on the preferred response. Introducing measures in the alleyway could have a beneficial impact for local residents who use the alleyway. However, the potential effectiveness of any permanent measures that could be introduced cannot be predicted and will have a cost for the Council. Surveillance cameras were considered not to be appropriate in the location due to the impact on privacy not being justified by the available information on crime and disorder in the alleyway.

## **Consultation carried out or required**

No consultation has been carried out.

## **CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance has reviewed the recommendations to this report and concurs with the financial implications as set out above.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications emanating from this report. However, dependant on the outcome of the petition and recommendations outlined above, this report will need to come back to Finance for further comments once the project costs have been estimated.

### **Legal**

Legal Services confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Whenever necessary legal advice is given in relation to specific issues as they arise to ensure that the Council always meets its legal obligations.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Surveillance Camera Code of Practice

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/update-to-surveillance-camera-code/amended-surveillance-camera-code-of-practice-accessible-version>

## **TITLE OF ANY APPENDICES**

Appendix A – location maps

# APPENDIX A - LOCATION MAPS

