

REPORT TO: Safer Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 12th November 2013
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Policy & Resources
PORTFOLIO: Community Safety
SUBJECT: Alley-gate proposal: Elkan Road, Widnes
WARD(S) Halton View

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present details of an alley-gating scheme requested of Birchfield, Farnworth and Halton View Locality Area Forum.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That: Members of the Board note and comment upon the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Locality Area Forum for Birchfield, Farnworth & Halton View received a request for the installation of an alley-gate from a resident of Elkan Road, Widnes, in January 2013.

The request was made for a gate to be installed between numbers 31 and 33 Elkan Road to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour on the pathway that runs between the two properties, through to Moorfield Road.

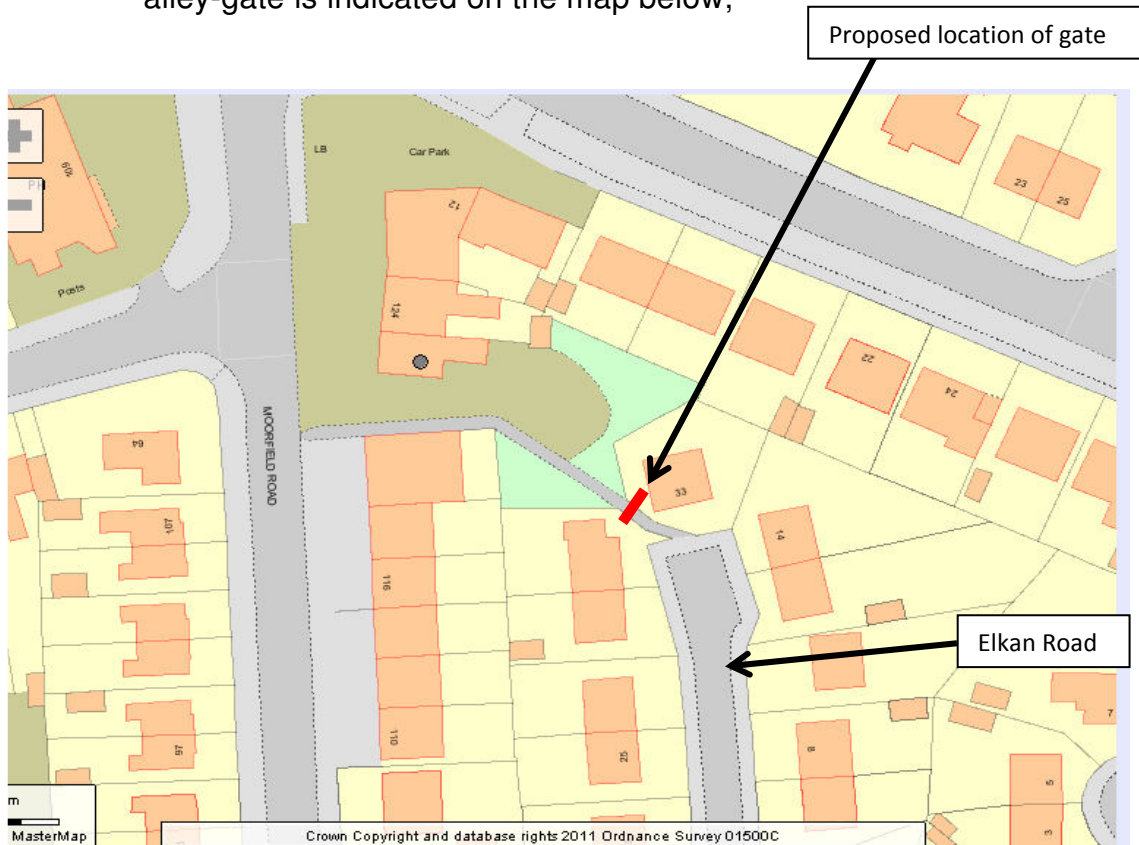
The request was made in light of a number of incidents of anti-social behavior, criminal activity, and an armed robbery that took place at retail premises on Moorfield Road in 2012, for which the pathway was used as an escape route.

The gate has been requested on the basis that it would hinder access to and from a grassed area adjacent to the pathway, and will therefore discourage the congregation of individuals in that area.

A request was also made that a gate be considered between the shops on Moorfield Road, to reduce access to the pathway from its other access point. It was decided that initially this aspect of the request would not be pursued, but could be revisited should issues remain following the installation of a gate between numbers 31 and 33 Elkan Road.

It was noted during discussion with Ward Councillors that residents in Elkan Road have been proactive and have set up an informal 'neighbourhood watch' scheme, but are seeking preventative measures.

The geography of the pathway and the desired location of the alley-gate is indicated on the map below;



3.2 Information provided to the Locality Area Forum by the Community Safety Team indicates that recorded criminal incidents are not notably high, there being 26 recorded incidents in the vicinity over a six month period.

Analysis of reported disorder within the vicinity indicates the presence of anti-social behavior, affecting individuals and groups of people, as well as the wider community.

Residents have cited that youths regularly congregate on the grassed area adjacent to the pathway and consume alcohol. On entering the pathway from Elkan Road, such congregations of people cannot immediately be seen.

Whilst the number of recorded incidents does not constitute persistent disorder, feedback from the resident requesting the alley-gate indicates that many instances go unreported.

The availability of unhindered access to an area in which those wishing to perpetrate anti-social behavior can do so is an influencing factor in heightening the perception of crime and disorder, contributing significantly to making residents feel vulnerable and unsafe.

As outlined above, it is noted that this location has been used as an escape route following a particularly violent armed robbery on Moorfield Road in 2012. This appears to have further heightened fear of crime in this location.

- 3.3 In discussions between the Community Safety Team and the Area Forum it was concurred that the geography of this location does lend itself to encouraging anti-social / criminal behavior, as there is no direct view of the land adjacent to the path from the Elkan Road end of the alley alleyway. This is demonstrated in the photograph at Fig.1 below.



Fig.1: View from Elkan Road

Conversely, during the course of bringing this matter forward, a concern was raised around the possibility of a person walking from Moorfield Road, between the shops, and into the open area that leads through to Elkan Road being in a potentially vulnerable situation. From that direction it is not possible to see the whole of the area behind the Moorfield Road properties. Should anyone be

followed or confronted within this area, their escape could be hindered by the installation of an alley-gate.

The Police Crime Reduction Advisor has surveyed the site with this in mind and has confirmed that the installation of a gate does not present any more risk than would be present in an ordinary cul-de-sac. The Community Safety Team has signaled support for the scheme that was consulted upon.

3.4 The pathway is an adopted footway with a right of access. Refer to map at Appendix 1.

The recorded statistics do not indicate that the existence of the highway facilitates the persistent commission of criminal offences or anti-social behavior. As such the pathway does not meet the requirements of S129(A) of the Highways Act 1980, so cannot be gated under that legislation.

In the absence of legislation permitting the installation of a gate, the Locality Area Forum agreed to consult local residents, using the Council's Procedures Applicable to Alleygating Applications.

In the event that a gate was installed at the proposed site, residents of neighbouring streets, who may currently use the pathway as a route to shops and amenities on Moorfield Road, would need to use an alternative route on Chorleys Lane, or Belmont Road, to reach Moorfield Road. Refer to map at Appendix 2.

All residents in Elkan Road and Elkan Close would be issued with keys.

3.5 Consultation with Local Residents took place in April 2013.

162 households were consulted by letter within a radius of properties determined by the Highways Department. There were 17 responses received.

The results can be summarised as;

- 12 respondents submitted a written response to lodge support of the scheme;
- 4 respondents submitted a written response to support the scheme conditionally (related to the provision of keys and the aesthetics of the scheme);
- 1 respondent submitted a written objection to the scheme on the basis of a 'blocking of the highway'.

The resident who submitted the one firm objection would be issued with a key as part of the scheme.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Local Transport Plan states that the Council will promote cycling and walking and provide safe routes to school. Alongside the UDP it aims to provide sustainable access to employment and local amenities. The gating of safe routes to school and access to the cycle network is contrary to meeting those aims.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Council's Property Services Division has estimated the costs for the proposed scheme as £2,232.18, to include fees, keys and maintenance.

The Area Forum have agreed that this would be met from the Birchfield, Farnworth & Halton View Locality Area Forum budget.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

No significant implications. The consultation responses did not indicate the pathway to be a widely used walking route to schools in the area.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

There is no indication that the pathway is used to access work and employment areas. The demographic of the immediate area is predominantly that of people over working age.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Residents perception that they live in a safe environment aids general well-being.

Gating the pathway may discourage the use of the footpath network by people from surrounding streets, potentially reducing the benefit of walking, and promoting greater car use.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Previous studies have indicated that alleygates reduce burglaries, instances of littering and fly-tipping, and general anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behavior can have a significant impact on quality of life.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

By reducing fly-tipping and general litter problems, gates improve the overall appearance of the borough.

The provision of gates can be deemed visually intrusive by others, and present an image that the area is subject to anti-social behavior.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Alleygates are designed to reduce the risk of crime and anti-social behavior within the borough.

There are no other risks linked to the proposed scheme.

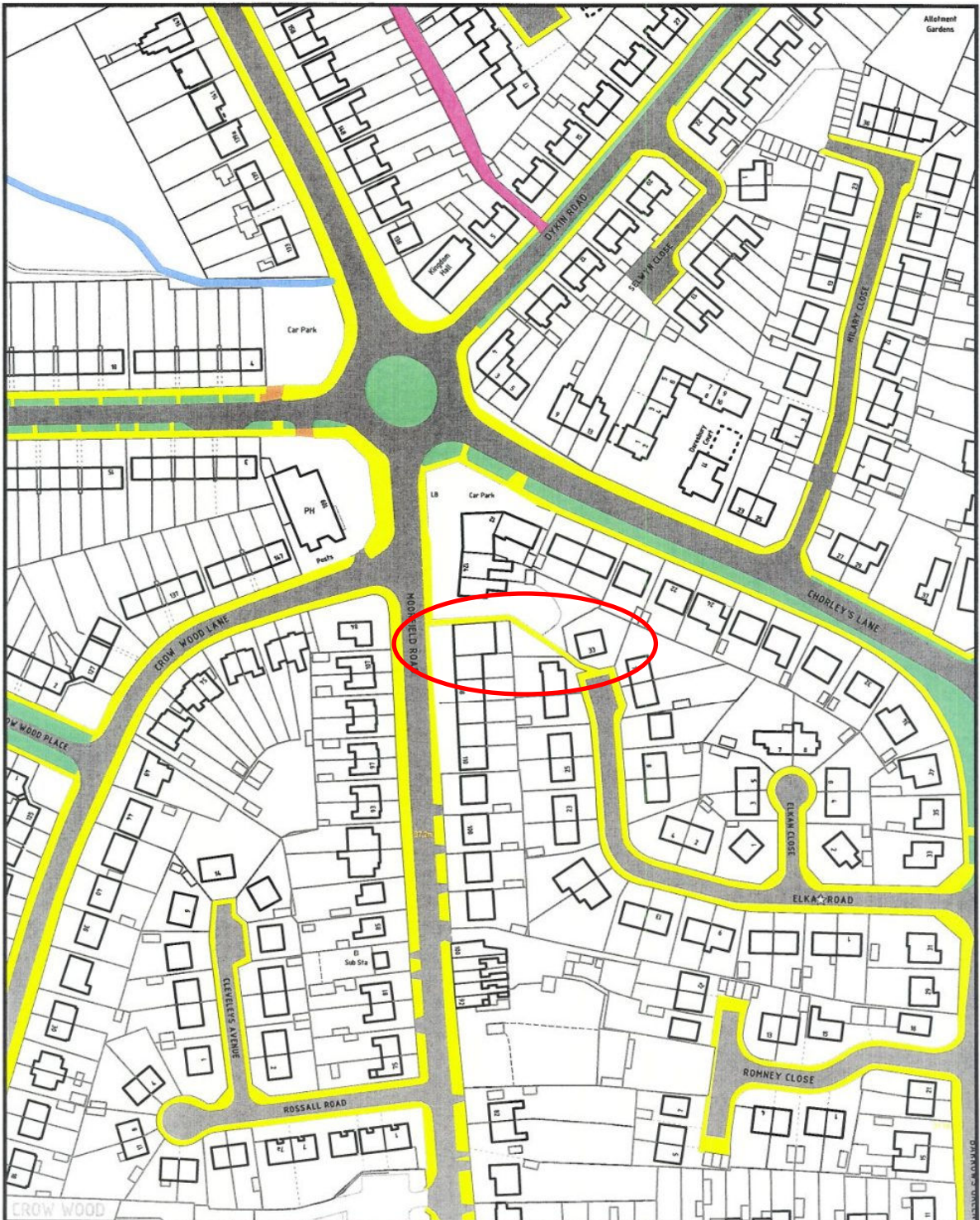
8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**



8.1 There is a potential issue should elderly and disabled users use the pathway as a through route. These are likely to be residents of surrounding streets who would not be key-holders. There were no responses to the consultation highlighting this issue specifically.

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

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1



	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> TITLE </div>	■ Adopted carriageway	■ Public Right of Way (approximate line only)	Date : Scale :	
		■ Adopted Verge			
		■ Adopted Footway			
		■ Adopted Alleyway			

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