

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ALLEY GATES

CLEVELAND POLICE

- The force's awareness / experience of this community safety measure

I strongly support the retention of the existing alley gate network across Stockton-on-Tees.

From a policing perspective, alley gates have been one of the most effective situational crime prevention measures implemented within our communities. Historical evaluations have demonstrated significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour following their installation, including overall reductions of 55% and reductions of up to 88% in some locations. Whilst these figures relate to earlier evaluations, there is no evidence to suggest that the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, criminal damage or opportunistic offending have diminished to the extent that such protective measures are no longer required.

- Benefits / challenges created (e.g. access) through the use of alley gates

The benefits of alley gates extend beyond recorded crime reduction. They restrict access routes used by offenders, reduce opportunities for burglary, criminal damage, drug-related activity, fly-tipping, littering and youth nuisance, whilst providing reassurance to residents and improving perceptions of safety. They also assist partner agencies by creating a more manageable environment in which communities can take pride in and maintain their local area.

- Potential impact on these localities if existing alley gates are removed

The removal of alley gates would present a significant risk to public safety and community confidence. Many of the locations where gates are installed remain areas that experience high levels of demand relating to crime and anti-social behaviour. Removing these physical barriers would restore unrestricted access to rear alleys and other vulnerable spaces, creating opportunities for offending that currently do not exist. In my professional opinion, this would be likely to increase incidents of anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, fly-tipping, environmental crime and acquisitive offences, resulting in increased demand on Cleveland Police, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and wider community safety partners.

Whilst there are recognised maintenance costs associated with the ageing gate infrastructure, these costs should be balanced against the financial and social costs of increased crime, enforcement activity, investigations, environmental clean-up and victim support services that are likely to follow any significant removal programme. In many cases, prevention represents better value than responding to criminality after it has occurred.

- Any viable alternatives to alley gates (which may be more cost-effective)

At present, I am not aware of any alternative intervention that can deliver the same level of sustained crime prevention, environmental improvement and community reassurance at a comparable cost. Additional patrols, CCTV, target hardening and engagement activity can all contribute to community safety, but they should be viewed as complementary measures rather than replacements for a proven physical access control system.

- Any other views relating to this scrutiny topic from a police perspective

Cleveland Police support the continued retention of alley gates across Stockton-on-Tees, supported by a sustainable maintenance and replacement programme focused on areas of greatest community safety need. Retaining this infrastructure protects previous investment, supports ongoing crime reduction, helps safeguard vulnerable communities and contributes positively to the wider objectives of the Safer Stockton Partnership.

In summary, alley gates remain a proven and cost-effective community safety measure. Their removal would be likely to have a detrimental impact on crime reduction, anti-social behaviour, public confidence and partner agency demand, whilst retaining them continues to deliver tangible benefits for residents and neighbourhood safety.

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