

GATING – Birch Grove Cut Through

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform members about the Birch Grove cut-through gating consultation.

2. Background:

Extract from Community Safety Report:

Residents in Birch Grove and the flats managed by Housing Solutions in Furnival Avenue, have been concerned about the anti-social activities that are mainly occurring at night. There are two locations being considered for the Gating Order. [Please see map in Appendix 1]

1. Location One – The cut-through between Birch Grove and the parking area of the flats.
2. Location Two – The cut-through adjacent to the flats leading to the Trading Estate and Bodmin Avenue.

Both locations are on land that is owned by the Housing Services Department of Slough Borough Council, but leased to Housing Solutions. However, historically these locations are used by the public as short –cuts.

Location One is very well used during the day by the public. A usage survey conducted in 2012 revealed that from 20th November to 24th November, 868 individuals used the cut-through in Location One, in a southerly direction and 989 individuals used it in a northerly direction. However nocturnal usage was greatly reduced. Between the hours of 2100hrs to 0600hrs, in the same period, 16 individuals used this route in a southerly direction and 73 used it in a northerly direction.

Location Two is used by employees of the Trading Estate and some members of the public. Currently there is no usage data available for Location Two; however its usage is thought to be significantly less than the usage of Location One.

There is evidence to show a significant amount of drug dealing and drug use in the area during the nights. The Housing Solutions' caretaker regularly finds and picks up drugs paraphernalia, especially in Location Two. Between the months of January and August 2013, 23 needles were found in this location [Please see Appendix 2 – for breakdown of drug paraphernalia finds & Appendix 3 – Photographs of drug paraphernalia].

Residents were surveyed in July 2012 and of the 72 households in the Birch Grove area who were surveyed, 52 responses were received with a majority of residents supporting the installation of a lockable gate at Location One, to stop the nocturnal anti-social activity. A separate survey conducted by Housing Solutions with their tenants too returned strong support for a lockable gate. The Housing Solutions residents further added that they would like Location Two, blocked owing to it being used for drug dealing and drug taking.

A residents meeting was held on 11th September 2013 in the community hall in Furnival Flats. 28 residents attended the meeting and it was clear that the anti-social and drug related activities were adversely affecting their quality of life. 22 ASB forms were also completed. The top four scores in the 'Fairly Big Problem' category were Littering, Vandalism, Drugs and Dog Fouling. The top four scores in the 'Very Big Problem' category were Groups Hanging around, Vandalism, Drugs and Drunks. The area adjacent to the flats was highlighted as a particular hot spot for drug related activity. One resident said that he has seen drug deals taking place and on one occasion witnessed the police chasing suspects. The porous nature of the layout was also deemed as a factor for users and dealers to have multiple escape routes. Two of these routes are the proposed locations for the Gating Orders.

During the meeting an overwhelming number of attendees expressed a wish that both locations should be completely blocked off. However, the survey in July 2012 seemed to indicate that there were residents in Birch Grove who did not want the cut-through completely blocked off.

3. Previous LAF Opinion

Several LAF members visited the site of these proposals on 18th Sept 2012; the consensus view was that there were no objections to a gate being installed at Location One which would be open during the day due to high usage of the cut through. No consensus had been reached about Location Two.

4. Proposals

Proposal Location One

The Gating Panel did not recommend the total blocking of Location One. Instead it recommended the removal of the existing white barrier, install close boarded fencing to match existing fencing and install a metal gate with a magnetic lock. In the proposal, the gate will remain unlocked during the day, but locked at night [timings to be stipulated in the Gating Order notice]. Planned renovations are being planned by Housing Solutions, which includes the re-surfacing of their car park. The management has agreed to do the trenching work and lay cabling to power the magnetic locks on the proposed gate, which will result in significant cost savings. This project will also be a good opportunity to pilot such a scheme in Slough as a timer activated mag-lock system has not been trialled before. If successful, such projects could be replicated at other locations in the Borough, if viable.

Proposal Location Two

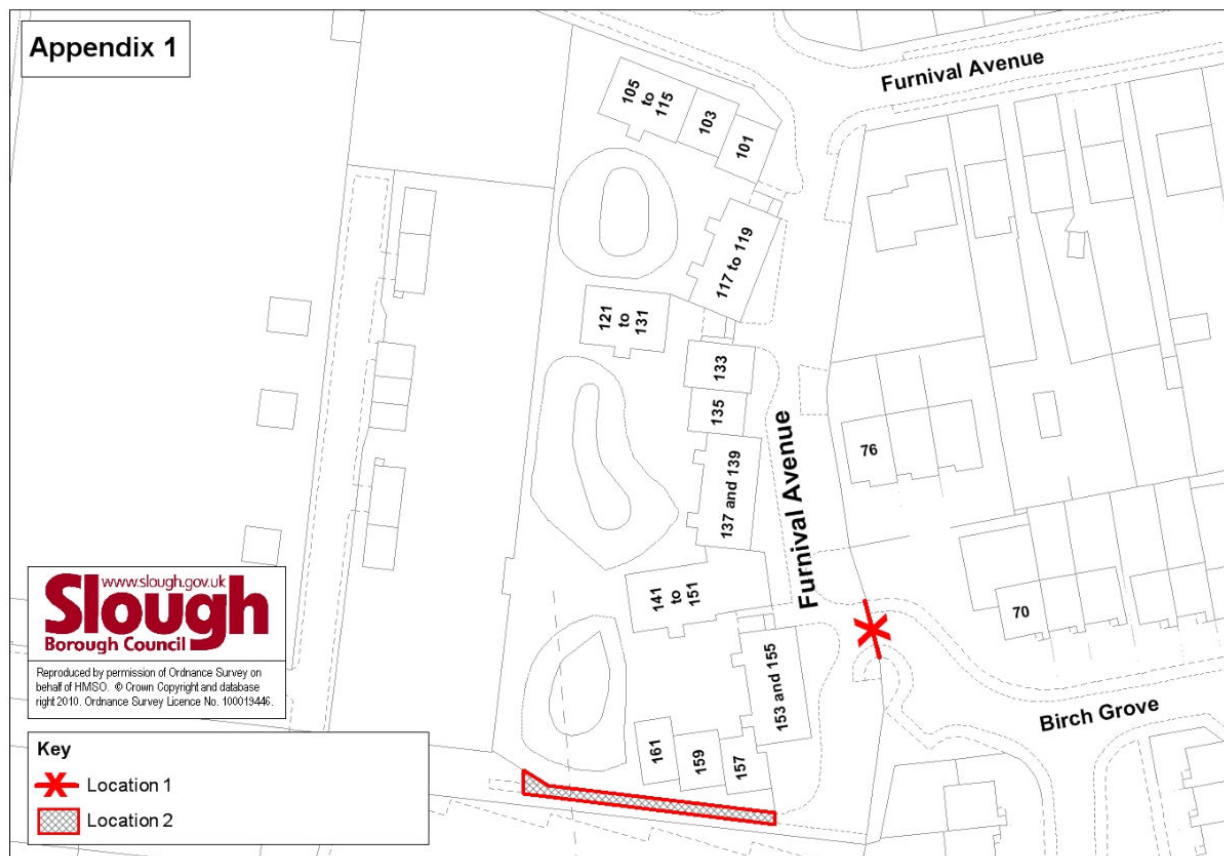
To fence off the through route adjacent to the flats as shown in the plan on Appendix 1, to prevent drug taking and dealing in the area.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Location Map of proposed gates and fences.

Appendix 2: Drug paraphernalia data

Appendix 3: Photographs of drug paraphernalia



Appendix 2

DRUGS AND PARAPHERNALIA FOUND - FURNIVAL AVENUE ALLEYWAY REAR OF 159 BLOCK

01/01/2013 to 09/09/2013

January

09/01/13 - 2 x Needles, multiple caps, Vit wipe packets

17/01/13 - 1x Needle, multiple empty beer cans, 3x empty baggies

23/01/13 - Caps

February

05/02/13 - 2 x Needles on footpath, sharps box in hedge with needles

15/02/13 - 1 x needle , Vit packs , 2 x empty vodka bottle

26/02/2013 - 4 x Needles, empty syringe packets, vit packs, 2 x spoons

March

7/03/13 - 1 x Needle

14/03/13 - 1x Needle, multiple caps, beer cans and empty spirit bottles

20/03/13 - 2 x Needles, 3 x baggies, 2 x spoons

26/03/13 - 1 x sharp box containing 4 needles

April

9/04/13 - wipes, caps, spirit bottles

17/04/13 - 6x needles , vit wipes ,clothing

19/04/13 - multiple beer cans, empty syringe body, caps, vit wipes

May

15/05/13 - 2x Needles, caps

29/05/13 - open sharps box, spoons and vit wipes

June

05/06/13 - Baggies, spoons, clothing, 1 x Needle

12/06/13 - Spoons, caps, vit wipes, 2 x Needles

July

9/07/13 - Empty beer cans, spirit bottles, clothing, spoons, caps

16/07/13 - 3 x Needles

23/07/13 - 2 x Needles, baggies, pill pot (no personal details)

August

22/08/13 - 6 x Needles , 1 x sharp box with needle protruding

cont: Clothing, multiple vodka bottles, cans, vit wipes, multiple caps

September

06/09/13 - Caps, vit, wipes, spoon, clothing, spirit bottles, beer cans

Appendix 3



Location One



Location Two



Drug Sharps Box - Location Two



Drugs paraphernalia – Location Two



Location Two



Location Two