

Annex 5: Public Meeting - Comments

Millfield Road / Thorpe Street

In support of gating:

1) (Monday 24 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser

We were there at the meeting tonight, as we are very much in favour of the alleygates. It was very depressing that what we would regard as a straightforward and proven way to reduce crime, fly tipping and graffiti should receive so many negative comments. This is a particular problem on our side of Millfield Road, indeed near neighbours have suffered two burglaries recently.

I wanted to make a point at the end but we ran out of time. There was a suggestion that an amended scheme might move some gates further back to a north/south direction, which we believe means that if this were accepted for the four streets, then those of us at the ends would be vulnerable to displaced criminal activity as we would be outside the gated area. For this reason we would be very much against that amendment.

We do hope however that the scheme is accepted generally, as we recognise that this is a one-off opportunity which is not likely to be repeated.

(Wednesday 26 March 2014 – further comment received from Susan Major)

Many thanks for your help with this issue. Having spoken to quite a few people on this side of the street there is quite a lot of support for the scheme here. It appears that supporters assumed that it would succeed and therefore did not give the meeting/consultation sufficient priority.

(Thursday 27 March 2014 – further comment received from Susan Major)

We understand the concerns in Thorpe Street regarding the changing character of the area, which we share - but after careful consideration we feel that the solution to a number of problems that the gates will provide far outweigh any possible loss of freedom.

Other people have suggested that putting gates on the alleyways will somehow turn us into a 'gated community'. This very loaded word is not really appropriate to what is proposed. We feel that very little community life goes on in those alleyways, apart from nefarious goings on at night. We use our alleyway with our bikes and the wheelbarrow to the allotment and hardly ever see anyone in it. Our interactions with other people in our community all happen at the front.

People talked about the need for children to be able to play in the alleys, but it would actually be much safer if they were gated. The alleyway becomes a safer and more secure yard extension for children to play with their friends in yards across the alley. It becomes a safer area to practise riding bikes and have a degree of independence to play.

We acknowledge concerns about the 'stopping up' of a 'safer' route across the streets. This is of course something that is less convenient for us in Millfield Road, but I must say that when we have our young grandchildren with us we would regard it as far safer to cross at the ends than in the alleyways through parked cars.

Rubbish collection issues were another reason to consider a 'no' vote - but it's now possible that all rubbish collections in the near future will be made from the street side of properties, whether or not the alley gates are erected, so that was another good reason for us to vote for the gates.

This is a one-off opportunity to carry out the scheme, as the council won't have the money again and the next neighbourhood on the list will benefit. Ours was top of the list because of the relatively high crime rate in the streets. Evidence was provided about the proven reductions in crime following the installation of alleygates in other areas of York. There've been two recent break-ins on Millfield Road (and many more in recent years), all to the rear of properties. It's clear from this that the alley represents a serious security issue - and there has also been a good deal of fly tipping, at times our rear exit has been blocked because of this. There is also the problem of dog dirt, reports of drug dealing and a lot of ugly graffiti appearing on back gates in recent years. It may be that some residents have been unaware of many of the problems locally - but as the police say, that's because most of the illegal activity happens late at night.

With the gates in place in our alley at least, I believe we can look forward to living in a much tidier and safer neighbourhood, especially for the elderly and those with young children - and we actually think the gates look quite good! So as you can see we are very much in favour and feel that the move would solve a large number of current problems, at the expense of preventing a limited number of people walking through a short cut.

I would just add that a number of compromises have been suggested, one of which allows the cut through to remain, although this would be at the expense of leaving some properties outside the gated alleyway. An alternative suggestion is to gate Millfield Road/Thorpe St only, and not the other streets, leaving the cut-through in place.

2) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

Dear Councillor,

We couldn't make the meeting last night to hear concerns or otherwise about the proposed scheme; I understand that the decision is 'in the balance'. Just a short note to reiterate that we are in favour of alley-gating with regard to restricting access to the alley in order to reduce/eliminate: graffiti; crime and other anti-social behaviour.

3) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

Hello

I was sorry not to be able to make the meeting yesterday re: Alley gates on the odd side of Millfield Road. I just wanted to add my voice to the support for this project. It seems a bit of a no brainer to be honest! It can only improve security for our houses and those of Thorpe Street. I can't imagine that there are any tangible arguments against this Alleygating project?

4) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser,

My support for the gating scheme isn't motivated by recent events - I was fervently in favour before the recent break-ins took place, as the 'peace of mind' benefits appear to far outweigh any possible minor inconveniences residents may experience.

I understand that there is a proposal (as mentioned by Sue & Ralph) to erect only North/South facing gates locally. Can you confirm that this proposal wouldn't effect the installation of the East/West gate at the bottom of Thorpe Street, as a number of proven vulnerable properties at the low end of Millfield Road would then be disadvantaged.

I'm aware that there has been a fair amount of opposition to the proposal, but it's my understanding (correct me if I'm wrong) that waste collections in the near future are likely to be made from the street side of properties anyway. Do we yet know if/when that is to be the case?

I was unable to attend the meeting last night, but I'm keen to see the minutes once they've been written up. Would that be possible?

One last point (and forgive me if it's already been raised) but if the gates are rejected - is there a possibility of erecting CCTV cameras instead?

Anyway - I'm sorry I couldn't make the meeting and thank you for all the effort you've put into the gating scheme thus far.

5) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

Dear Cllr Fraser

We were unable to attend the public meeting last night but wish our support for the alleygating scheme currently under consultation to be noted.

We believe that the increased security that the alleygating scheme will bring alone outweighs any disadvantages.

6) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

As a resident of Millfield road, would like to express my support for an alley gate. I have had an attempted burglary in the past and as a single woman, would feel just a little more secure.

I attended the meeting last night and remained unconvinced by objections to the scheme. I do hope a vocal minority will not rob us of the chance to go ahead. I would like to say thanks to the council representatives, and yourself.

7) (Wednesday 26 March 2014)

Hi

Although I am not living in my house at the moment as I am working overseas I would like to express my opinion regarding the proposed alleygates. I have always been in favour of the alleygates being installed and as a property owner if my opinion is still relevant please take note of it.

8) (Wednesday 26 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser,

We were unable to attend the alleygates proposal meeting on Monday night, so we would like to advise you that we strongly support the proposal to gate the alleys.

9) (Wednesday 26 March 2014)

Councillor Fraser,

My wife and I were unable to attend the public meeting on Monday to discuss the proposal to install alley gates in some of the streets off Scarcroft Road. We live on Millfield Road and are strongly in favour of the proposal. We believe it would reduce littering, graffiti and, crucially, improve security at the rear of our house. Our neighbours were burgled a few months ago and it made us realise how vulnerable we are with open access to the alley.

There also appears to be more young families moving into the street, and with a child on the way ourselves, we would appreciate the improved security alley gates would provide for children.

I hope you will take our views into account.

10) (Thursday 27 March 2014)

Good morning

I was unable to attend the meeting however I am 100% in favour of the alleygates for millfield road . As a single parent I feel it would be safer and reduce crime and allow my child to also play in the lane safely given that we have no gardens so to speak.

I hope this scheme goes ahead as a resident for 21 yrs it is something I have always wanted to see.

11) (Thursday 27 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser,

I wanted to write in support of the proposed alleygates in the Scarcroft Road area. I was the victim of burglary last year when 2 very expensive folding bicycles were taken from our back courtyard. Police confirmed that the individual came over our locked back gate, which would not have been possible had there been a gate protecting the alley. This was a personal loss of over 500 pounds as we were

unable to claim the theft with our insurance company as they weren't locked to a "fixed point". It is impossible to lock all our courtyard possessions to a fixed point (ie. garden furniture, BBQ) so we continue to be vulnerable to theft.

I cannot think of any sensible reason to not proceed with the proposed gates as those who need access through the gates will have access. Only those using it as a cut-through might disagree but I don't feel this argument for convenience has equal weight.

12) (Thursday 27 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser

I was unable to attend the public meeting re the alley gate proposal on Monday night so I wanted to write to express my support for the scheme.

Roughly 12 months ago we were broken into at the rear of the property whilst away for the weekend. The intruder did not take much of any financial worth, however, I am still picking up the emotional damage he left behind with my 8 year old daughter. She is still scared in her own home after he smashed her money box all over her bed. She is uncomfortable being left alone to watch tv in the living room if I am upstairs and she has to watch me put out the bins and recycling for fear of being inside the house whilst I am in the yard. I feel if the alley ways were gated it would deter opportunists and limit the number of break ins in the area. I was informed by CID during the investigation into our burglary that 17 properties were broken into over a 2 week period. Obviously this was an exceptional time but sadly these times can reoccur and I would be far happier knowing that additional security was in place to prevent other children experiencing what my daughter is still struggling to come to terms with 12 months later.

Thank you for your time.

13) (Thursday 27 March 2014)

Dear Sandy,

May I express in the strongest terms possible that I am **IN FAVOUR** of the alleygating scheme going ahead as soon as possible.

Many thanks indeed

14) (Thursday 27 March 2014)

Hello

Thank you for the note regarding alley gating.

As a family who have lived here for almost twenty years, all adults, none who have cars, and who also have an allotment at scarcroft, we are totally supportive and would welcome alley gating.

We did not miss the meeting through complacency but because we all work and not in nine to five roles, therefore could not attend.

Over the years we have seen the situation re graffiti, fly tipping and security, deteriorate and have been victims ourselves.

The situation we believe has worsened since the lighting in the alley (more than in the street) was introduced and has helped people find their way to do damage etc., furthermore will stop the school children using as a place to smoke etc etc. which we also experience being at the other end of the street.

We are totally supportive and desirous of the proposal to alley gate and do not understand any of the arguments about through access, meeting friends, avoiding traffic and other similar nonsense that is being muted against the scheme. In no way will alleygating stop me or my family using the alley where required , such as bike access, deliveries. Neither are we people that do not know and/or care about our neighbours and do look out and care for our neighbours in many different ways knowing the elderly and vulnerable, again this has has been insinuated in some leaflets to oppose.

Please accept this email as a voice of support to the scheme.

Regards

15) (Friday 28 March 2014)

Dear Councillor Fraser,

I am writing to you regarding the proposal to put gates on the alleyways of Millfield Road/Thorpe Street.

I reside at [REDACTED], and, given the recent break-in at number [REDACTED], I am fully in favour of these gates being introduced. As I was not aware that there was a meeting on Monday to discuss the scheme, could you please advise as to how I can add my support?

Kind regards,

16) (Wednesday 2 April 2014)

Dear Mr Fraser,

We would like to inform you that we are in support of the proposal about the alleygates.

Thorpe Street / Russell Street

No comments received

Russell Street / Scott Street

No comments received

Scott Street / Nunmill Street

No comments received

All four schemes (at statutory consultation)

In objection to gating:

17) (Sunday 23 March 2014)

Dear Julie Gunnell, Sandy Fraser and Dave Merrett,

please find enclosed some of the questions that move residents in the streets that you propose to gate:

1- why did not everybody get an invitation to Monday evening ([REDACTED] did not get one for example) - **This has since been amended but very short notice for the 3 streets involved**

2 - What are the savings for the city with the rubbish collection happening from the front?

3 - On what percentage of responses was the 'yes' to gates based.?

4 - Residents versus Home owners (great mobility in this area amongst those who rent)

5 - Years of residence to distinguish between people with experience of the area and its good neighbourly vibes and those who have 'modern' ideas of security.

6 - quite a bit of the rubbish and de-fouling of the alleyways happens through residents

7 - small /narrow alleyways need extra attention as the machines don't get into them
- with regular cleaning they would not accumulate and attract so much junk/
syringes etc.

8 - How was crime rate counted: I heard, that car theft or vandalising was counted in
because it is not separately evaluated - thus falsifying the picture.

- * Short-term 'sticking plaster' solution to deeper underlying problems
- * Would not solve problems, simply move them elsewhere
- * Do we really want 'not in my backyard' policy?
- * What messages are we giving to our children?

Hoping for an openminded and listening meeting,

Yours sincerely

[3 residents]

18) (Sunday 23 March 2014)

Dear Emily,

**Re: Public Meeting to discuss the proposed alleygating schemes between
Millford Road, Thorpe Street, Russell Street, Scott Street, Numill Street and
Bishopthorpe Road**

Thank you for your letter of 13 March 2014 and for your time on the telephone on
the afternoon of 21 March 2014. I am [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

As we discussed, due to the short notice given for the public meeting (I received the
letter advising me of the meeting on 19 March 2014) I might be unable to attend as I
am on business in Scotland that day.

With this in mind I am outlining three main areas that I would have raised at the
public meeting and ask that these are included in your report of that meeting which
will be included in report which will be taken of a decision at the Officer in
Consultation meeting. These areas are as follows:

- A proposal to pause the project and monitor behaviour and crime in back
lanes and establish greater community engagement in crime prevention
- Observations relating to the issuing of the public consultation meeting
- My main areas of objection as per my letter of 16 February 2014

For the avoidance of doubt I am opposed to the introduction of alleygates

Proposal

As you state in your letter the local community is evenly split on the subject of alleygating. To proceed with the scheme as currently proposed will be against the feelings of a large part of this community. That said, I recognise that not to proceed is also against those who support the proposal.

Rather than proceeding I suggest that the City of York Council and other partners pause this project for a six month review period in order to:

- Monitor the true usage of the alleys rather than assumptions of use
- Bring the community together and introduce a neighbourhood scheme where residents monitor and advise police/the Council of any instances of concern
- Revisit this situation in six months to see if any improvements have been made or not.

This approach allows for a natural pause to take place and ensures both sides of this debate are listened to. It also helps bring a stronger community together by getting people to work together rather than going down the immediate route of installing gates.

I consider that the best way for the community and the council to take this forward is to pause, engage the community to better monitor usage of alleys and reassess the situation in six months. In doing so, the whole community will feel that they have properly been engaged in this process whether they support the final decision or not.

In taking this proposal forward I suggest that the Police, Safer York and our three Councillors hold a further public meeting to engage the community on this approach. The long term results will be a stronger, intertwined, sustainable and engaged community. If we can achieve that without the gates then something far better than just installing the gates will have been formed.

Observations of the consultation process

As we discussed on Friday I was concerned to have received a letter regarding the public meeting on 19 March 2014. You kindly explained during our telephone conversation that there had been an administrative error and not all streets had received the letter, hence a later mailing of the letter to those who had not received it.

Your letter states that *“the council has therefore made arrangements to hold a public meeting to give residents the opportunity to air their views and discuss what the best way forward would be for the community”*.

I am concerned that those who received the letter with less than one week of notice of the meeting will be unable to attend. As a result, they will have been denied the opportunity to convey their view regardless of whether they are in favour or opposed to the alleygating scheme. It might have been better to have postponed the meeting and held it one month later giving those effected the maximum amount of notice to attend the public meeting.

As details of the outcome of the meeting will be included in the report to be taken for a decision at the Officer in Consultation meeting I am very concerned that this will be an unfair report as there will be a number of people who cannot attend the meeting due to the lack of notice.

The extremely short period of time to advise residents of the meeting is a serious flaw in the consultation process, opening to question whether this has been a fair and meaningful consultation.

The lack of notice for most residents to be made aware of this public meeting must be included in the report of the public meeting in order that the Officer in Consultation can make a truly informed view.

Reasons for objection

While there is no requirement to repeat my reasons for objection as per my letter of 16 February 2014 I would have raised them had I been able to attend the public meeting so for clarity these are (note that I have withdrawn one following your helpful explanation during our phone conversation):

- Crime - Over the course of the last year I have spent a lot of time at home. This has given me the opportunity to observe behaviour. Any issues of a criminal or anti-social behaviour nature have not taken place in the back alleys. They have instead taken place in the main street. The figures provided to residents on the level of crime and anti-social behaviour at the Micklegate areas show that crime has fallen without the gates being there. Furthermore, the figures include automotive crime. Given that no vehicles are parked in alleys, instead being on the main street, the inclusion of these figures undermines the case being made and appear to have been included to raise the overall figure. I live half way up Thorpe Street so fail to see how the alleys could contribute to automotive crime outside my front door.
- Right of way - The current open nature of the back alleys presents an open feeling to the community living in these streets off Scarcroft road. Installing the gates removes a right of way that I enjoy using. The continuous route through the alleys provides a quieter and safer alternative to Scarcroft road. Furthermore, the alleygates close down a community giving the impression of a fortress and an area with problems.

- Waste collection - We will move to a situation where residents will store refuse at the front of properties creating a littering hazard as bags are opened by cats or burst, a health hazard as they begin to smell in hot weather and the impact of this will be to downgrade the current tidy, clean and well-presented street with bin bags stored at the rear of properties. Furthermore, residents will place their bin bags on the pavement for collection presenting a mobility issue for those with prams and the elderly. This also increases the risk that these bin bags will burst spilling waste onto the streets. The collection of waste from the front of properties also increases the likelihood that cars will be damaged during the collection process. Waste is also currently collected just after 0700 as people are getting ready to go to work. Collecting at this time from the front of properties will not work as the street is very busy at that time of day. A later collection time increases the risk of litter and people tripping over bags left on the pavement.
- Council cutbacks - While I recognise the work the Council has done to reduce costs, as a Council Tax payer the money spent on installing these alleygates would be better spent on frontline services rather than on something this community does not want or need.
- Resolve the problem - Rather than closing down communities, creating barriers and ruining life in what is a vibrant and friendly part of York, if this problem exists that target the money planned to be spent on these alleygate barriers on solving the problems people have. This is a core example of a frontline service that the Council should be working on rather than wasting the hard earned money of Council Tax Payers on gates that are not wanted and will ruin a community.

I hope that this letter has been of assistance and that my suggested proposal helps takes this issue forward.

If you require any further details please let me know.

Kind regards,

Nunmill Street / Bishopthorpe Road (informal consultation stage)

In support of gating:

19) (Wednesday 19 March 2014)

Dear Ms Tones,

I'm unable to attend the public meeting on 24/3 but would like my views to be taken into account.

I reside at [REDACTED]. I've lived in York since 1988 and in that time I have been burgled on two occasions. Both burglaries were via a back alley (one in Vine St - now gated) and once here at [REDACTED] via the back alley four years ago.

I support gating the back alley between Nunmill St and Bishopthorpe Rd. I've been burgled here and there has also been an instance of vandalism (graffiti on the back gate). My next door neighbours have also been burgled. I don't know whether there have been other burglaries.

It is not pleasant being burgled, especially at night. The effect on my children's feeling of security was marked. Unfortunately our experience is all too common. But we shouldn't have to put up with it.

I appreciate that just because someone has been burgled this doesn't automatically justify gating an alley, but the fact is that the council is, it seems, prepared to fund the installation of gates, so the security risk is recognised and lack of money is not an issue. That leaves the question of whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

The benefit is security. At present, most of the houses here are vulnerable to unauthorised entry from the back alley, because they have low walls and it is relatively easy to get in, out and away without detection. In short - they are vulnerable.

The disadvantage is, possibly, inconvenience, mainly I imagine for car users, in particular those who have garages in the back alley (we don't - we have to park on the street in residents parking). The alley (on the corners) is a tight squeeze for larger vehicles - my car is too wide to get into the alley. I suppose installation of gates might further reduce available space, but this would depend on where the gate posts were installed.

To be clear, I don't want a situation where car owners/ tradesmen cannot actually get into the alley.

For my part, I think that feeling secure outweighs the disadvantage. I accept that others may not, but it seems to me that installing gates that do not prevent cars accessing the alley is a fair compromise between both sides.

In this context, there is a further point that ought to be considered. If, as seems likely, all the other alleys save the one between Nunmill St and Bishopthorpe Rd,

are gated, it leaves our alley as the only insecure alley in the area. As a consequence, we are more likely to become a target for burglaries simply because the other properties are secure and difficult to access. In such circumstances, our security is actually diminished.

This isn't an argument to level the playing field by not gating the other alleys (why should those householders not be more secure?) but rather that ours ought to be gated along with those alleys.

I leave it to the democratic process, but if and when someone is burgled, there is bound to be an element of 'we told you so' and it will be back on the agenda.

20) (Thursday 20 March 2014)

good evening Emily,

Unfortunately I won't be able to attend the meeting as I'm currently housebound due to a broken ankle.

I support alleygating to the alley (at the back of my house) At my age, security is a big issue and this would be such an advantage. I think most people are thinking of the inconvenience of carrying refuse thro the house, but we already do that for recycling!

I hope I can express my opinion this way, and that my opinion will be counted.

I have already filled in a form that was sent to me re. alleygating.
I hope the meeting goes well .

21) (Tuesday 25 March 2014)

Dear Councillor,

Just a quick email to thank you for taking the time and effort to arrange and chair last night's challenging meeting regarding alley gates. For what it's worth, I think you did a great job!

As residents, we appreciated the opportunity to air out views and to hear the views of others.

Please could you keep me informed as and when the reports are available to read (if public access is permitted)?

In the mean time, I would ask that you continue to bear in mind that on Bishopthorpe road, there are no disabled or infirm residents and that all of the regular car user/garage owning residents are in favour of the scheme.

Regards,