

## **Street Lighting Consultation – Houghley Gill**

### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to outline the findings from recent consultation undertaken with residents to ascertain their views on whether or not lighting should be installed down Houghley Gill.

### **Findings**

Out of 100 questionnaires that were distributed, 47 have been returned. The results show that 37 out of those 46 residents feel it is necessary for lighting in Houghley Gill and 9 do not. Unfortunately one resident also did not say whether or not they were in favour of the proposals.

The Neighbourhood Warden also conducted a survey speaking to people using the Gill. 7 out of the 8 people spoken to were in favour of the lighting proposals. However, 3 of these 7 had already completed the questionnaire.

Many residents who feel there is a need for lighting have been subject to various crimes and anti-social behaviour. The kinds of incidents highlighted to substantiate the need for lighting the Gill are listed below:

- Fencing stolen
- Attempted burglary
- Garden shed broken into
- House burglary
- Garage break in
- Vehicle theft/damage/burnt out cars
- Motorbikes being ridden up and down the Gill
- Wheelie bins stolen and burnt out

Other comments include the Gill being used as an escape route and youths climbing over garden fences to use the garden as a cut through. Overgrown grass needs to be cut at the entrance to the Gill and near to the Gill and fly-tipping is being experienced. Residents also feel lighting would make the Gill feel safer for all. Children from the high school particularly would benefit because they use it both in the morning and afternoon. Blocking up some of the access paths to the Gill would be beneficial - particularly the one at the end of Wyther Park Hill since the path to it is not safe.

A couple of residents living on Westover Road in Bramley highlighted how the lighting recently installed near Bramley Park has increased home security, reduced car crime and provided safer walking areas. They, therefore, feel lighting would be a beneficial for Houghley Gill.

Residents against the lighting have highlighted issues such as lighting a highly vegetated environment would be patchy and be more dangerous than its current unlit state. It may also have a negative effect in encouraging people to believe that

Houghley Gill was safe at night. Anti-social behaviour and vandalism can only be reduced by denying access i.e. blocking off right of way, which does not have to exist now the development has precedence in the area.

There is also a need to remove some of the trees and reduce the height of others, thereby creating more natural light. Lighting would also not prevent people from hiding in the shadows.

Some residents both in favour and against do point out that should lighting be installed it would need to be vandal proof. Many years ago the Gill did have lighting, but this had to be removed due to vandalism. Some residents expressed concern that lights may encourage youths to hang around in the Gill encouraging them to drink and commit anti-social behaviour, causing more upset for residents.

Two replies on behalf of Friends of Houghley Gill were against lighting and highlighted concerns about people being able to hide in the shadows, the lighting encouraging an increase in fly-tipping, encouraging groups to congregate at night, lighting pollution being an issue for the bat population, Police vehicles not having easy access to the Gill, the Gill being unsafe for anyone walking at night lit or unlit and unsafe for children anyway.

One resident, on behalf of Friends of Houghley Gill, states that everybody the group has spoken to has requested improved lighting at the top of the Gill in the area of the public street where the bottom of Houghley Lane meets the entry to Houghley Close. A street lamp which used to be there was removed at the time of the building of the Kings Approach estate. The grass verges are also in need of cutting.

The Police are fully supportive of the proposal. They feel that it will enhance the area for residents and will certainly be a deterrent to anyone considering any criminal activity within the area. The officers also strongly believe that any lighting in the area would have a positive effect on deterring groups from congregating, and thus reducing the instances of anti-social behaviour in the area. The Gill in the past has also provided shelter/cover for offenders who are attempting to evade arrest and, therefore, this would also be reduced if the introduction of lighting was to go ahead.

The feeling from the officers is that if the lights were to be installed it would definitely be a positive addition, rather than be of any detriment to the area.

A proposal was raised at the last meeting of the Wyther Improvement Group held on 1 September 08 with partner agencies and ward members seeking their views on lighting for Houghley Gill and they overwhelmingly support lighting of the Gill to improve safety in the area.

## **Funding**

Funding of the project would need to be explored with LCC PFI who have already indicated that they would be prepared to fund 50% of the costs. From earlier discussions and site visit the amount suggested would be roughly in the region of £30,000. The remainder of £15,000 would need to be explored via the wellbeing funding through capital.

## **Recommendation**

The findings from the consultation demonstrate, there is an overwhelming view that lighting would benefit the local community therefore a positive response to install lighting in the Gill. There are some reservations raised in relation to concerns about vandalism, and youths congregating should the Gill be lit, however this would need to be taken into consideration and monitored should the scheme be approved.

Gill Hunter  
Area Community Safety Co-ordinator