



**Report to Palfrey & Pleck Local
Neighbourhood Partnership**

Agenda No

29 June 2005

**RESPONSE TO PETITION FROM MR G ROWLEY
GOWER STREET**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Local Neighbourhood Partnership on initial investigations into a petition submitted by Mr George Rowley on behalf of various residents of Gower Street, Pleck, detailing their concerns over parking problems and road safety.

More specifically, the residents of 76-90 Gower Street are requesting the Council give consideration towards providing a properly constructed vehicular access to their properties all of which front on to an ornamental grassed area of Council owned land.

Recommendation

The Local Neighbourhood Partnership is recommended to note the contents of this report.

Report detail

The design of this former Council development is not unusual, with many similar layouts in the borough. Gower Street is only five metres wide, precluding on-street parking on both sides of the road. Numbers 76 – 90 Gower Street all front an area of land which was formerly vested within the Council's Housing Services Committee and is still in Council ownership. It comprises a large ornamental verge containing five well established trees.

The properties have pedestrian access from the highway via a paved footpath running around the perimeter of the land but there is no legal vehicular access across this land. Some residents regularly drive their vehicles over the public footway and on to the verge either to park or gain access to their front gardens. This has resulted in significant damage to the verge and paved footpath.

Initial investigations indicate the costs associated with the type of facility requested would be considerable. In addition to the general construction costs all the underground services to the properties would have to be diverted. Funding for this type of scheme is very limited and has to be targeted to locations with significant road safety implications. Whilst safety concerns have been identified, initial investigations indicate they are unlikely to lead to this request becoming a priority for funding allocation.

Now the problem has been identified, appropriate measures will be investigated and implemented to prevent the continued illegal and unsafe use of the footway and verge by vehicular traffic in the short term.

On a positive note, both Street Pride and the Urban Regeneration Team are carrying out initial investigations into a broad reaching scheme for the whole of Gower Street. This

scheme is looking to address issues of tree protection and replanting, traffic control to deal with the rat running from Junction 9, provision for off and on street parking and resurfacing of footways to facilitate pedestrian access.

Potential funding streams are being investigated along with option appraisals. The successful implementation of this scheme would address the concerns of residents and improve the general street scene around Gower Street.

The Partnership should be aware that this process will be lengthy and it is likely to be a minimum of six months before substantial progress is made. A progress report can be prepared for the Partnership at that time if requested.

Resource and Legal Considerations

The illegal use of the verge and footway has implications for both pedestrian and vehicular safety. The cost of providing a vehicular access drive would be considerable with the necessity to protect underground services.

Citizen Impact

Records show that at the time of the Walsall Housing Group (WHG) transfer, three properties were taken over by the WHG and the remaining five were in private ownership. It should be noted that residents have moved into these properties in the knowledge that their houses have no vehicular access.

Environment Impact

The current practice of illegally using the verge and footway is detracting from the visual amenity of the street. There are five substantial trees on this land, some or all of which may need to be removed if a vehicular access were to be provided. The trees form a prominent landscape feature, adding to the visual landscape quality of the area. The Council's Unitary Development Plan identifies policies for protection of trees and green spaces

The air quality report 2003 identified this area as having air pollution well above relevant standard. The retention of the mature trees would assist in the management of local air quality.

Performance Management and Risk Management Issues

The Council has a duty to address the illegal and unsafe practice currently being undertaken by residents of Gower Street.

Equality Implications

None directly relating to this report.

Consultation

The residents have already indicated a wish for a vehicular access drive.

Links to Vision 2008

The conversion of an existing area of open green space into car parking will have an

adverse impact upon the Council's vision priority of ensuring a clean and green borough.

The conversion of an existing area of open green space into car parking will have a positive impact upon the Council's vision priority of listening to what local people want.

Contact Officers

Steve Thomas

Telephone: 01922 652490

Email: thomass@walsall.gov.uk

Gordon Dewdney

Telephone: 01922 652447

Email: dewdneyg@walsall.gov.uk