

PROPOSED GATING ORDER
BRUNSWICK ROW
BRIGHTON
BN2 4JZ

Brunswick Row is a little-used pedestrian route between Ditchling Road and London Road Brighton, intersected midway by Queens Place. The London Road end consists of **three** commercial units access doors. While the Ditchling Road end is a delightful example of **seven** 'Old Brighton Style Cottages' sympathetically built for the 21st Century (between 04/11/2005 & 24/02/2006 per VOA web site)

The proposal is to 'gate' at both ends the section between Ditchling Road (Fig 1) and Queens Place (Fig 2); serving the **seven** residential properties. Gates to be open from 8.00am to 6.00pm.



The Sub Group made a site visit on Saturday 13th January 2007 at 11am.



Our conclusions have been formulated from reading the thorough report prepared by Simon Bannister, Environment Improvement Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, and from this site visit.

THE SITE VISIT

During the site visit we met Simon Bannister and Matt Eastal, Senior Environment Improvement Officer, Brighton & Hove City Council; interviewed the street cleaner, who was working there at the time; met and questioned three residents; examined the area and adjoining streets.

During the site visit we were given to understand that: The problem was severe and ongoing. Within the previous 12 hours, one resident had had his house pelted with eggs, someone banging repeatedly on his door in the early hours, someone pushing their arm through his letterbox to try to gain access. Within the preceding weeks another resident who had used the bicycle stand outside her house had had the bike tyres slashed. A gang of teenagers had run up and down overturning the commercial waste bins at the western end and a downstairs window had been smashed. Drug dealing in the street was rife, and the gathering of unruly street-drinking teenagers was frequent and had resulted in the police attending to break up fights between rival gangs of girls and boys.

On several occasions, residents had to request that drinkers/drug users moved from their own front doorsteps

so that they could get in or out of their own homes. Residents felt intimidated and threatened by this.

We observed first-hand the evidence of very recent antisocial behaviour, including broken alco-pops bottles, broken eggs and egg stains on one of the dwellings, a metal grill that one resident had been forced to install after her window had been smashed (mentioned above), and signs of a freshly applied layer of anti-graffiti paint that did not completely obscure the underneath layers of graffiti on the white walls at the Eastern end of Brunswick Row.

Residents fully accepted that living in a city centre was never likely to be a completely peaceful experience, but felt that the antisocial behaviour they were subjected to was out of proportion to the normal expectations of living in such an area.

Residents were committed to keeping Brunswick Row as a (public) right of way and had drawn up a binding agreement between themselves which was being checked by lawyers, detailing their joint responsibilities to open the gates at 8.00am everyday and ensure that they remained open until 6.00pm when they would be locked for the evening/night. They looked forward to the time when the disruption, criminal and antisocial behaviour in the area had diminished and Brunswick Row could once more revert to being open twenty-four hours a day, 7 days a week.

Our visit coincided with what should be one of the busiest shopping periods in London Road - i.e. 11.00am to 12.00 midday on a Saturday, but we did not see any evidence of non-residents using Brunswick Row as a through-route between the Level and London Road. This is probably because Brunswick Row is not opposite any entrances/exits to the Level, and also because the London Road end is so narrow and derelict looking. We walked the adjacent streets and concluded that members of the public were more likely to use these as a through route than Brunswick Row.

COUNCIL OFFICERS' REPORT AND SITE MEETING WITH SUB-GROUP

From the written report and meeting the officers of the Council we learnt the following:

Other measures to reduce the problems had been tried. These were the installation of bright streetlights (previously the street was unlit) and more frequent police presence. The former had not deterred the miscreants at all - they took advantage of the bright lighting to be able to see what they were doing. The police noted that the nature of drug dealing had changed as a result - instead of the passing over of one large pack of drugs for money, dealers now used the street to openly measure out and trade in smaller quantities of drugs to more 'customers'. The increased police presence only worked as a deterrent when the police were actually on site. This was because different groups were offending in the Street, not the same individuals over and over again.

The geography of the area - specifically the junction with Queen's Place - meant that shoplifters, drug dealers, miscreant youngsters, etc are afforded several routes of escape. This offers them a sense of security in openly using Brunswick Row for their own criminal/antisocial ends - they were confident that they could escape easily. NB crime reports do not show many incidents of arrests in Brunswick Row. This is not because there is a low-level of crime; it is because arrests are made elsewhere when the criminals have escaped from Brunswick Row.

The police believe that Brunswick Row at the moment increases the level of crime between The Level and London Road and makes arrests difficult.

ADDRESSING THE CAUSES OF ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

In subsequent discussions on the proposed Gating Order the sub-group regarded as fundamental the improvement of the social attributes of the whole southern end of Ditchling and London Roads. We would like to see a reduction in crime and social disorder, a great reduction in drug dealing and drug taking, and an improvement in the lives of young people in our City. In accepting the need for a Gating Order the sub-group supports such social improvement in the area. If the Gating Order has the anticipated effect, then not only will the residents of Brunswick Row have an improvement in their lives, but also those people who live in the wider area. If the antisocial problems are merely shifted to other nearby areas then the Gating Order will have failed.

Any Gating Order needs to be a short-term measure whilst other measures of reducing crime and social disorder are brought into play. The sub-group believes that there is a need to cater for our young people and not just to criminalise them. Are there youth clubs open nearby? Are there public lavatories open for reasonable periods of time nearby? Do nearby shop-keepers rigorously enforce the banning of sales of alcohol to under 18s? Unemployment among young people in the City is relatively high, particularly among the disadvantaged. Many jobs open to them are dead-end and there are a lack of apprenticeships. The City must address the question as to why we have so much antisocial behaviour in the first place. We therefore welcome the announcement of the new Urban Respect Programme in Brighton and Hove which we hope will benefit all sections of society and will reduce the need for gating orders in general, and lead to Brunswick Row being completely open in the near future.

DESIGN OF THE GATES AND STATUATORY NOTICES

During the site visit Simon Bannister explained that the final design of the gates will be that of an 'open view' to be decided on after liaising with:

- Conservation Team
- Police Crime Team
- Emergency Services
- Cityclean

A requirement of any gating order is that signs are prominently displayed at both ends of the gated section of explaining the gating order, how to comment on the order, and its date for review one year on.

CONCLUSION:

Taking into account the particular circumstances of Brunswick Row, the sub group considers it appropriate to support the proposed Gating Order - bearing in mind that the gate will be open between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm every day, and that the gating order will be reviewed after one year. They accept that there is no short-term alternative to the proposal of gating Brunswick Row between Queens Place and Ditchling Road.

- Being satisfied that all other options have been tried before reaching the gating order.
- That the residents do not see this as a permanent arrangement, they look forward to a time when the antisocial behaviour declines.
- That the residents have no intention of turning this into their private courtyard.
- Alternative routes between Ditchling Road and London Road are acceptable.
- Brunswick Row currently appears to be little-used as a pedestrian route between Ditchling Road and London Road (except by those participating in antisocial or criminal behaviour).

Colin Bennett
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Please see the attached documents – ‘Sussex Police letter Brunswick Row Gating Order’ and ‘General comments on gating orders’.