

# Streatham Vale Alley Survey

*By Streatham South Liberal Democrats*

## **Introduction**

This is a report prepared by the Streatham South Liberal Democrats in order to assess local residents' views on the state of the alleys running behind many houses in Streatham Vale. Many of these houses were built by a company called Wates, who then later sold all the houses and kept ownership of the alleyways. As these alleys are privately owned they are neither the responsibility of the private homeowner or Lambeth Council. Many local residents have complained that the alleys have not been properly maintained, and feel that the alleys raise serious environmental, health and security concerns in Streatham Vale.

In September, local Lib Dem campaigners Ahmad Ali, Karen Davies and Chris Nicholson conducted a survey to ask local residents what they thought should be done to sort out the alleyways, and who should be held responsible for their upkeep. The key findings of this survey are found below.

## **Key Findings**

- Respondents to the survey were virtually unanimous in considering the current state of the alleys to be a problem.
- Half of those surveyed don't actively use the alleyways.
- 63% of respondents think that the alleys should be gated with an access key given to residents.
- A third of those surveyed thought that the alleys should be gated and permanently closed.
- 50% of those surveyed think that the company who owns them, Wates, should properly maintain the alleys, while 34% of respondents agreed that Lambeth Council should take over the management of the alleys.

## Method

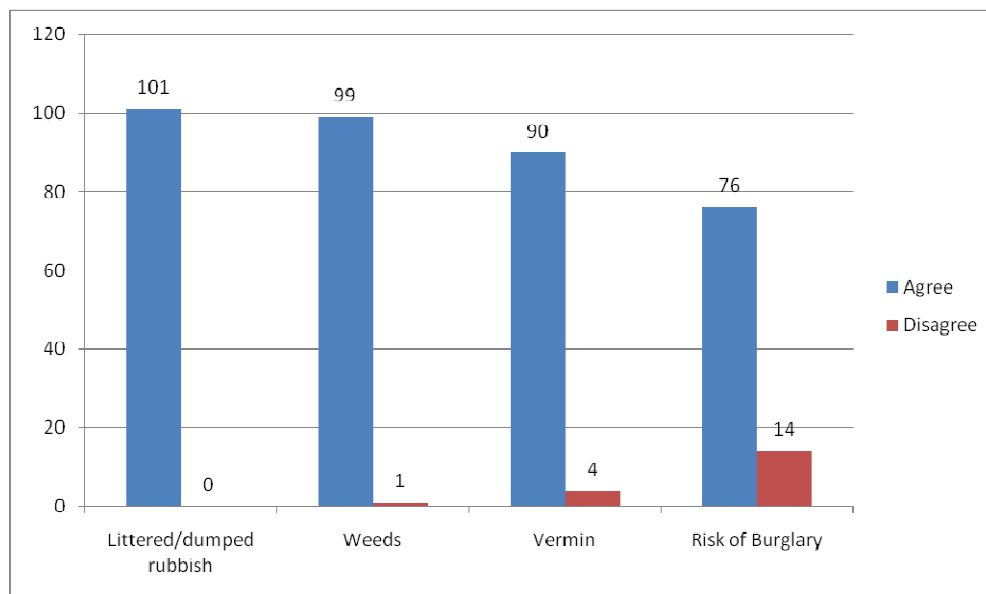
Members and volunteers of Streatham Liberal Democrats delivered survey forms to the homes of residents, and these were returned by being left in letterboxes to be collected, or sent to a freepost return address. From this, **113** completed surveys have been returned to date.

### The questions asked were;

1. Do you think the alleyways are a problem?
2. Do you use the alleyways?
3. What should be done about the alleys?
4. Who should look after the alleys?
5. What do you think should be done with the overgrown allotments?

## Results

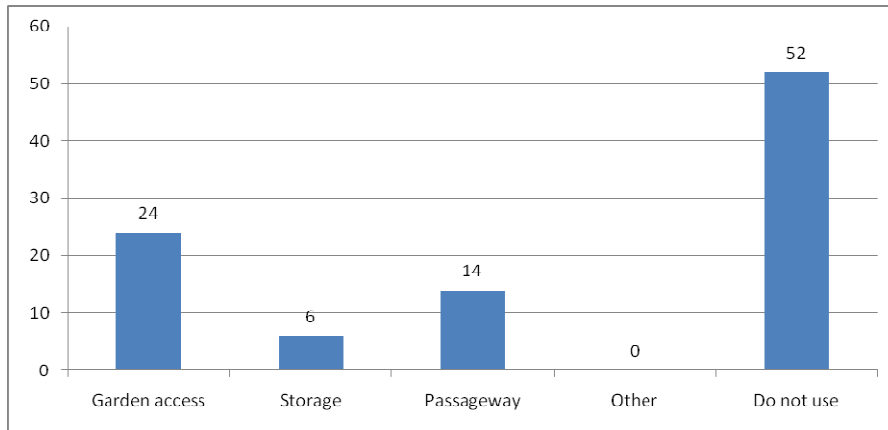
FIG.1 **Q.1 Do you think the alleys are a problem?**



Respondents were asked if they thought believed the alleys were causing a problem, and what was the problem being caused. As **Fig 1** shows, the overwhelming majority of people agreed that the alleys were a prone to being littered and a home for dumped rubbish, often overgrown with weeds and a home for vermin. Less agreement was seen in the final question as to whether residents thought that the alleys created a security risk to their

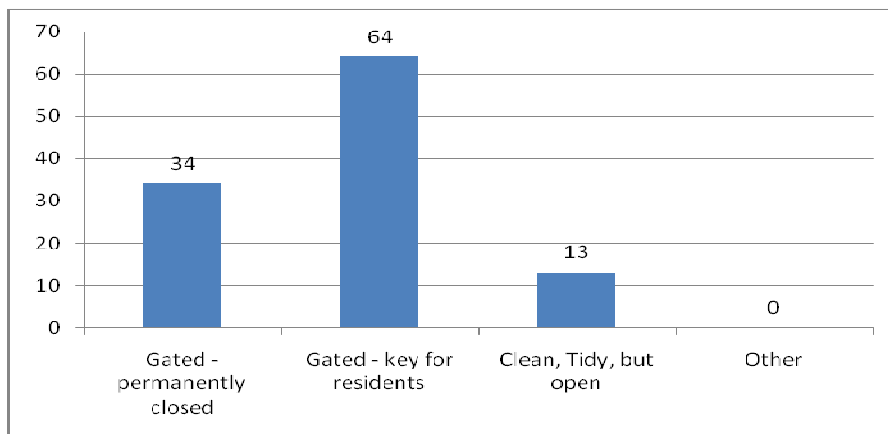
home, but there was still a healthy majority of people who thought that the threat of being burgled greater as a result of the alleys.

**Fig.2 Q.2 How do you use the alleys?**



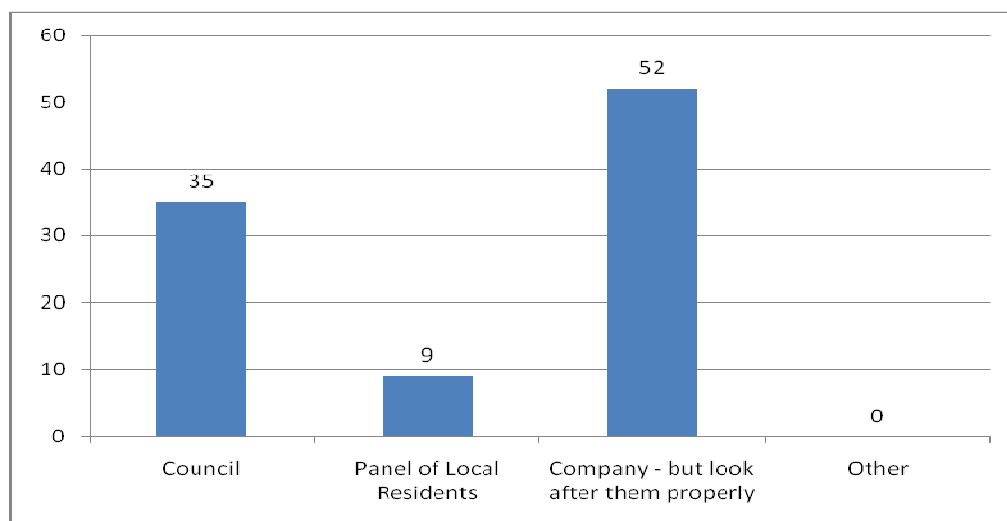
The survey found that although some people were using the alleys for garden access, or as a pedestrian passageway, the majority of respondents were not actively using the alleys at all.

**Fig.3 Q.3 What should be done about the alleys?**



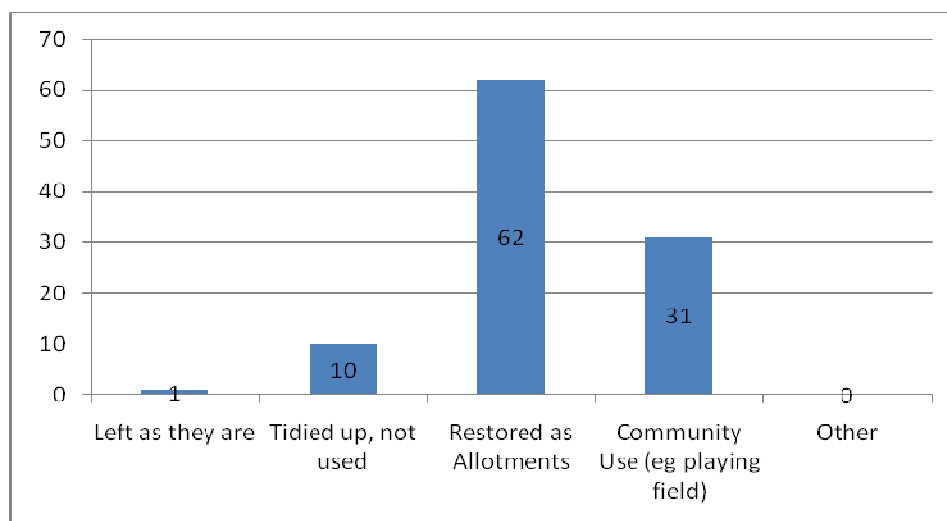
In general, people believed that the alley ways should be gated (88% of respondents to this question choosing one of the gated options). From **Fig 3**, we can see that most residents would like a key for the gates, giving the community more security against burglaries and helping to combat fly-tipping.

Fig 4. **Q.4 Who should look after the alleys?**



From **fig 4**, it is clear that the majority of local residents recognise that Wates own the alleys and as a result feel that they should be held responsible for their maintenance. A significant number of people would support the Council taking over the management and upkeep of the alleys from Wates. It was also noticeable that a number of people ticked both answers for the Council and the private property developer to maintain the alleys, perhaps highlighting the view that the Council should take over only if Wates continues to neglect the alleys.

Fig 5. **Q.5 What to do with allotment sites.**



The survey also raised the possibility of the overgrown allotment sites between **Sherwood Avenue, Helmsdale Road, Bridgewood Road** and **Grayscroft Road** being brought back into use should the alleys be sorted out. A majority of respondents supported the allotments being restored for their original use. However, a significant minority would prefer the allotment sites to be used for more open space, perhaps incorporating a playing field for instance.

## *Conclusions*

We believe that some strong recommendations for future action have come out of this consultation of local Streatham Vale residents. It is clear that there is overwhelming support for action on the current state of the alleys. Residents are united in their concerns that the neglected alleyways running behind their houses are a potential health hazard, and many residents fear that the alleys pose a potential security risk.

The majority of local residents feel that the property developers, Wates, should be held responsible for the alleys upkeep. There is also strong support for the alleys to be gated off to prevent the problems already listed.

*The Streatham South Liberal Democrats believe that Wates need to be reminded of their obligations concerning the alleys, and should help local residents by providing the funds to install gates for the alleys.*

Ahmad Ali, Karen Davies and Chris Nicholson will now be writing to Wates with the findings of this report and to encourage them to take action.

## Appendix A: Summary of all results

Question	Answers			
<b>Section 1: Are the Alleys a problem?</b>				
The alleys are often littered/have dumped rubbish.	Agree	Disagree		
	101	0		
The alleys are often overgrown with weeds.	Agree	Disagree		
	99	1		
The alleys are a home for vermin like rats.	Agree	Disagree		
	90	4		
I think the alleys put my home at greater risk of being burgled.	Agree	Disagree		
	76	14		
<b>Section 2: Using the Alleys</b>				
I use the alley by my home for:	Garden Access	Storage	As a Pedestrian Passageway	Do not use them
	24	6	14	52
<b>Section 3: What should be done?</b>				
What should be done about the alleys?	Gated and permanently closed.	Gated but with residents given a key		Left open, but kept clean and tidy
	34	64		13
<b>Section 4: Looking after the alleys.</b>				
Who should look after the alleys?	Council should take them over	A panel of local residents	The company that owns them, but they must look after them properly	
	35	9	52	
<b>Section 5: The Allotment sites</b>				
What should be done with the overgrown allotments?	Left as they are	Tidied up, but not used	Restored as working allotments	Should be open space for community use
	1	10	62	31