



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

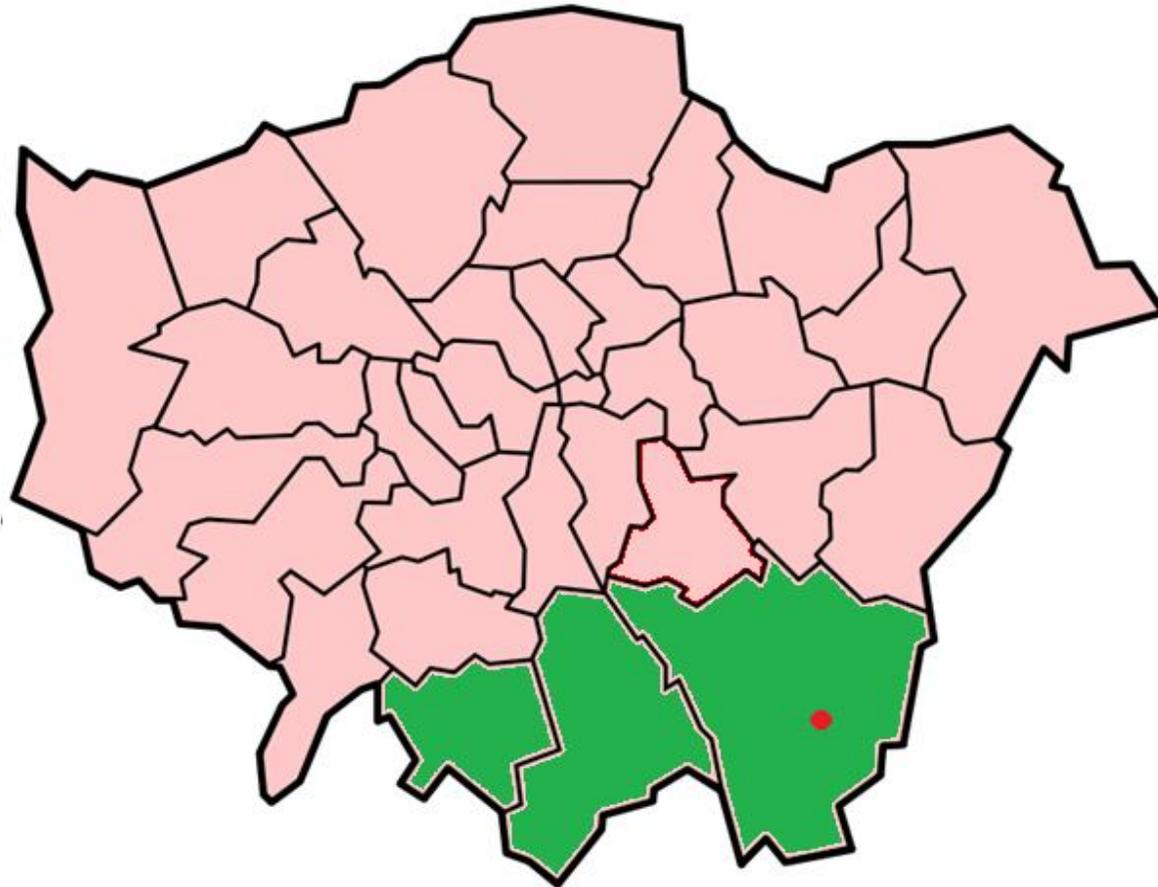
# **Crime prevention through environmental design at Huntsmoor House.**



**Constable Sean Hathaway**

**1**

# Bromley Borough.



**One of 32 boroughs in  
Greater London.  
Population of 330,000  
people in 150.1 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Hunstmoor House is  
in the Orpington  
District of Bromley  
Borough.**

**Bromley, Croydon, and Sutton  
are merging to form SN Cluster**



## Scanning

# *The Venue*

Huntsmoor House is an apartment block of twelve flats. Owned by Council, maintained by a housing association.

Built in the 1950s during the post war regeneration.

Cray-Valley-West Local Policing Team



## *Understanding the Problem*

Huntsmoor House was crime hotspot, taking up police time in the Cray Valley West Neighbourhood. It accounted for 12% of all complaints received by the Housing Association, across their whole portfolio.

Complaint = Most nights between 12pm and 2am, groups of up to 12 youths (none of whom were residents) would loiter in the garden. They would shout, swear, smoke cannabis, deal cannabis, fight with each other, and intimidate residents – especially when they were asked to leave.

Prostitutes were also known to use the sheds within the garden at Huntsmoor House. To gain entry to the garden offenders would smash locks off the bin store doors, and they would spray paint over security lights and cameras.

Physical signs = discarded condoms, needles, empty beer cans, graffiti, and vandalism.

Additional information stream = Daily complaints to the housing association indicated that the residents were deeply unhappy.

Ten residents had asked to be re-homed elsewhere.

With declining police numbers, and budgets, no guaranteed response to calls.

When Police attended youths had already left run.

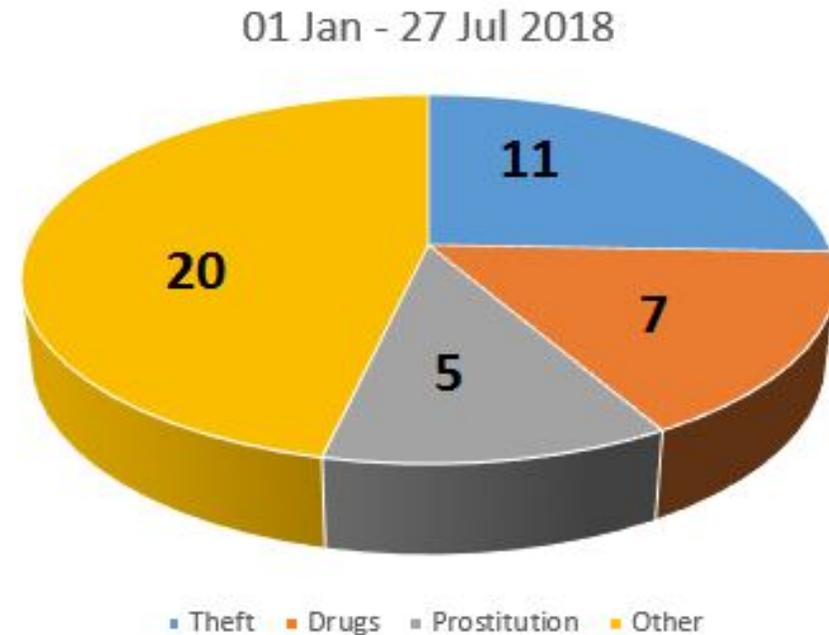
Despite additional patrols / arrests etc. no police activity had made a tangible impact.

## **Understanding the Problem**

Police information reports and crime records for Huntsmoor House\* showed that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 to 27<sup>th</sup> July 2018 there had been 42 RECORDED incidents involving Police.

The Housing association were also receiving 'a constant stream' of complaints a from residents. Most of these complaints were about intimidation, noise, the smell of cannabis and the litter left behind.

Working with the housing association, and the Local Policing Team we decided upon a Problem Solving approach to dealing with Huntsmoor House. Helpfully, the Housing Association identified a local budget available to tackle the problem.



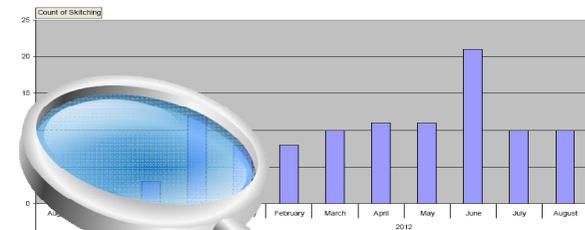
*\*All known variations of the spelling of 'Huntsmoor' were checked.*

## **Defining the Problem**

*Crime and Antisocial Behaviour is occurring in the gardens of Huntsmoor House on a regular basis. The residents are not involved in this criminality, and their quality of life and right to feel safe is being impinged. Criminals are able to evade police using alleyways to escape into the estate beyond.*

## **Setting the Aim**

*To reduce Crime and ASB and calls to service.*



## The Venue

During an Environmental Visual Audit of the property I noted;

- The property has a single garden surrounded by high walls to the front, fencing (in disrepair) to the rear, and a mix of hedges and fencing to the sides.
- There are no lights in the garden, or in the alleyway adjacent.
- Much of the front garden is given to a long hedge which is 1.3 metres high.
- The property is elevated from the road, and the path from the road is steep.
- There are bin stores on either side of the property with evidence of multiple repairs to the doors.
- The Garden was empty of furniture, clothes lines, or any sign of 'normal' use by residents.

# Analysis



## Analysis

# The Venue / Identifying the 'Draw'

Crime Data analysis showed that Huntsmoor House was alone. This problem was not occurring in other properties in the area.

There was no data to suggest the 'draw' to Huntsmoor House. No obvious 'honey pot' such as a drug dealer residing there.....



A night time visit proved to be pivotal.

I approached the gardens, I hadn't seen or heard anything from the road – or on my approach up the path. As I opened the side door I was confronted by 8 youths, the usual smell of cannabis, and empty beer cans.

I realized that they had been able to observe me from the moment I had parked down on the road.

They were invisible to anyone passing by at street level.

They had fallen silent and had watched me as I walked into the garden.

I felt the intimidation that the residents had experienced on a daily basis.

Analysis

Prostitutes,  
Youths, Drugs,  
ASB, Loitering

Huntsmoor  
House  
Gardens

Criminal Damage  
to doors.  
Permeable Site  
via broken fence



Youths aged  
between 14 - 20

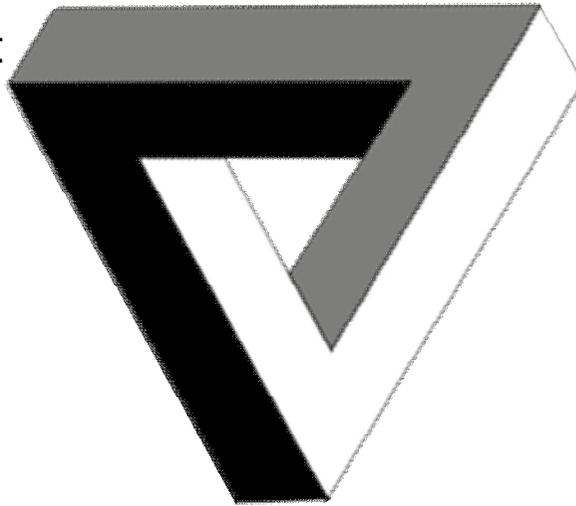
Nearly all  
weekend, and  
from 4pm to  
2am weekdays

Lack of  
Natural  
Surveillance.



# Offender

Youths loitering to commit  
ASB / Take Drugs.  
Prostitution.



# Victim

Intimidated residents.  
Quality of life. Litter.

Housing Association / Cost  
of repairs / complaints

Police / Calls to respond.

# Location

A Steep incline on approach. Vehicles cannot access. Observation from the garden of the surrounding area while being hidden from view. No capable guardian.



## Formulating a proportionate response.

Efforts had already been made by Police to attack the problem by focusing on the offenders. This had resulted in some arrests for possession of cannabis, but were expensive, protracted, and not lastingly effective.

The residents, and the housing association were clearly the victims – the residents were intimidated, and the housing association were fed up with what they had marked as a ‘problematic site’.

For these reasons, I decided to look at the environmental design and how it could be altered towards my aim.

Taking stock of budget sympathies – I prioritised the changes I recommended as;

1. Natural Surveillance – Front Garden, Rear Garden, Alleyway.
2. Access Control in the Alleyway.
3. Lighting in the Gardens and alleyway.
4. The creation of defensible space.

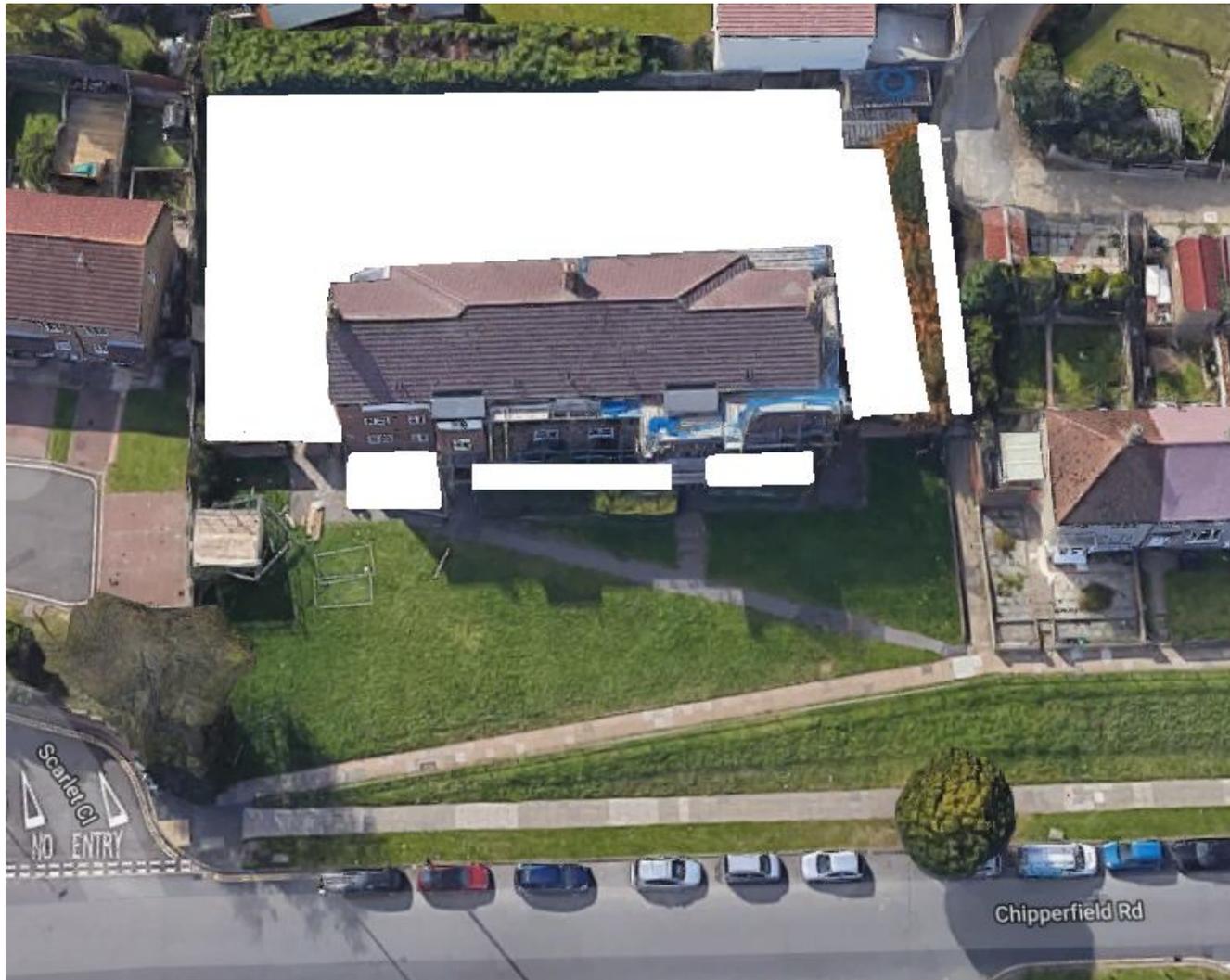
In agreement with the housing association we decided to put other measures such as CCTV and security doors etc. ‘On Ice’ until we had established the effectiveness of these initial responses.

## Removing the draw

Working on the theory that the lack of natural surveillance, and with it, the ability to commit crime with impunity was the primary draw that made Hunstmoor House an attractive place to loiter and smoke drugs etc. I advised that the walls to the front, and the hedges to the front and sides all be removed to open up the surveillance potential.



Response



The white areas describe zones with zero natural surveillance.

## Response

# Access Control

In order to limit the access into the garden areas I advised the Housing Association to fit steel gates to the bin stores and gardens. Wooden doors had been kicked open time after time, and had proven to be ineffective. Even when solid doors were fitted, weakness was exploited in the frames and entry was gained.



*"It is better to fit the correct door once, than to repair the wrong door One Hundred Times"*

A. Denyer

## Response



The fencing and hedges in were blocking light and visibility making in the alley making it a very unattractive route home for all. Directional LED lights were also advised.



## Response

Because we were removing hedges and wooden fencing from the front of the property, I felt it was important to provide the residents with some garden space, front of house.

I hoped that by having ownership of these garden spaces, the residents would start to take care of their wider garden area, in the spirit of Oscar Newman's Defensible space.

To maintain high levels of natural surveillance 'roll top' fencing was advised.



## Response

An environmental visual audit (EVA) which outlined all of the design advice relating to security was completed and formally submitted to the Affinity Sutton housing association.

Affinity Sutton successfully submitted the EVA to Bromley County Council in support of their bid for regeneration funding.

They were given £10,000. Works were completed by 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018.



## Response

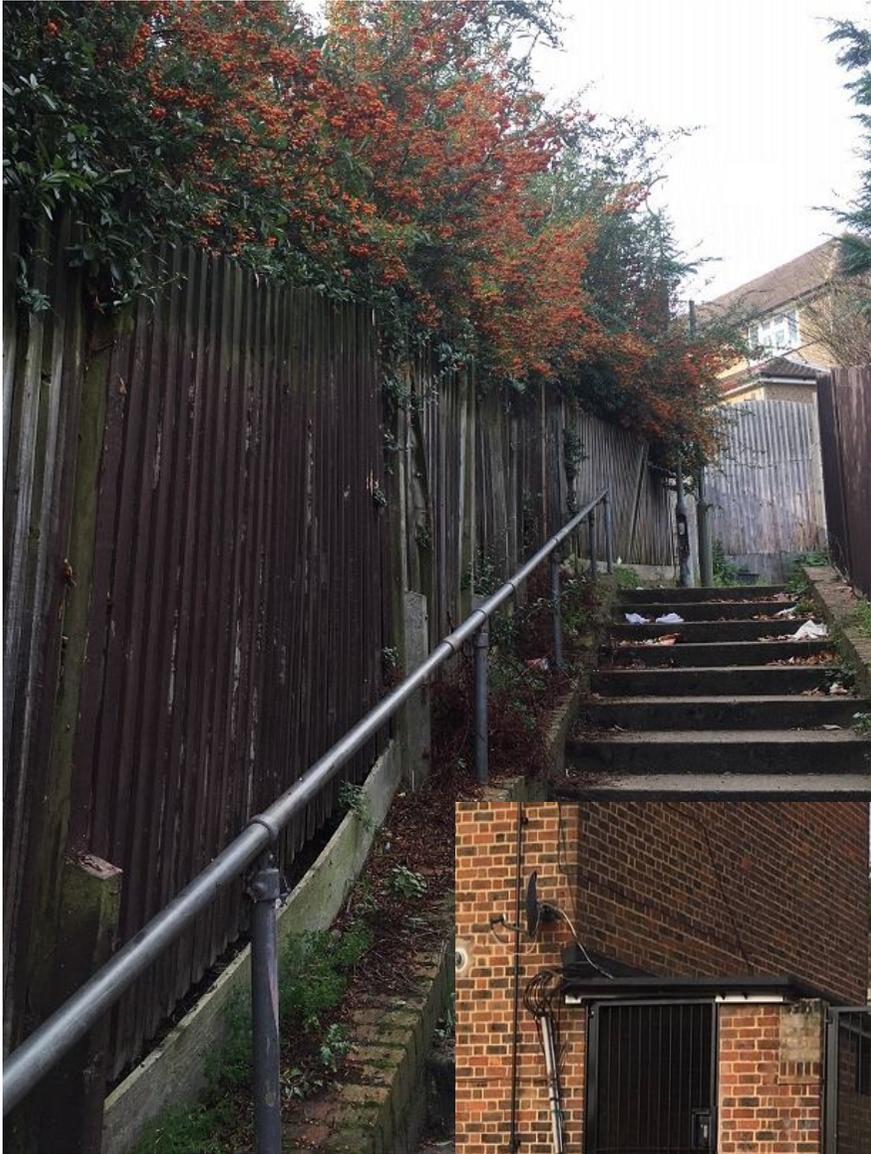
- Removal of the x2 Walls either side of gardens.
- Demolition of x2 Brick sheds to the either side.
- Removal of all fencing and bushes to ground level in the front Garden.
- Removal of x 2 doors to bins stores.
- Removal of all fencing, bushes etc. at the boundary with the alley way.
- Removal of overhanging bushes and trees to the rear and along boundary.
- Fitment of Palisade Fencing to front gardens at sides of house.
- Fitment of Palisade Fencing at boundary with the alley way.
- Fitment of roll top fencing at 120cm height to created x 4 front garden areas.
- Topsoil and turf for x4 front garden areas.
- Fitment of x 2 gates within Palisade fence with digital locks to access Gardens.
- Fitment of x 2 heavy gauge mesh bin store doors with digital locks.
- Fitment of directional LED Street Lighting to the Alleyway.
- Fitment of directional LED lighting to the garden areas on a PIR setting.

## Assessment



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## Crime 'Drop off'

From September 2018 to October 2019 there were 31 reports at Huntsmoor House.

Six of these reports were 'No Crimed'. All 31 reports related to three 'problematic Families.'

None of those 31 reports relate to any criminal activity of any kind in the gardens.

Feedback from the residents has been very encouraging.

One resident told me that she now lets her children play out in their own garden.

Another resident said that it took them a while to realize that the garden was theirs again, and they've started gardening, and planting vegetables and flowers.

Small things such as BBQ's, children's toys, and washing lines indicate that the residents are finding use and enjoyment in the garden again.

Complaints from the residents to the housing association have all but stopped, except for business as usual requests for repairs and maintenance.

## Room for Improvement?

All Crime data, and available data from the Housing association point towards a 100% reduction in the problem. Residents who had asked to be re-housed have since stopped calling, or actually called requesting to stay.

The budget limitations meant that there were not enough funds for works to proceed beyond the garden space – although the crime figures indicate they were unnecessary.

The ‘trades’ buttons on the communal doors are still in operation – although they do not afford any access to the gardens.

The steel gates on the bin stores, and gates leading into the gardens are fitted with digital locks. These aren’t preferable, however the codes are changed every six months by the housing association.

There was some evidence of displacement. In October 2018 there were reports that some youths had begun to loiter and take drugs at another apartment block nearby. However, this premises is controlled by the same housing association who applied similar crime prevention measures there, which also removed the problem.

There have been no other reported instances of displacement.

**Ladies and  
Gentlemen, thank  
you for your time. I  
welcome any  
questions you  
might have.**

