

# THE HOPWOOD TRIANGLE

## REVITALIZING A DEPRESSED

## NEIGHBOURHOOD IN LANCASHIRE

LANCASHIRE CONSTABULARY, PC 1972 Gareth Pearson and  
PC 1842 Steve Armes, 2004

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- THE PROBLEM:** The 'Hopwood Triangle' is a city owned development of 91 dwellings. Located close to the city centre and two main arterial routes, the area has seen no investment compared to neighbouring areas. The area had slipped into a spiral of decline with an increase in damaged properties, burglary, prostitution and anti-social behaviour.
- ANALYSIS:** It was proving impossible to rent the vacated dwellings. Remaining tenants were increasingly apathetic to criminal and anti-social behaviour.
- RESPONSE:** Initiated in January 2002 the 'Hopwood Triangle' was a multi-agency approach designed to deliver long-term and sustainable changes and improvements. In partnership with Preston City Council Central Housing and Parks departments, Millbank Court and the local community, a range of responses were developed to meet project objectives which included:
- Funding streams identified and bid submitted
  - £130000 (\$238,000) funding secured from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
  - CPTED/Safer by Design survey conducted resulting in a Master plan
  - Identification and eviction of problem tenants
  - Targeted enforcement of offenders
  - Formation of Residents Association and Neighbourhood Forum
  - Establishment of 'local lettings policy'
  - Formation of Neighbourhood Watch
  - Improvement of relationship and working practices at Millbank Court
  - Operation Curb/Safer Sex Works – targeting prostitution
- ASSESSMENT:** Based on a project life of two years and set against project objectives, crime declined 52%, damage declined 73%, burglary declined 28%, vehicle crime declined 80%, calls to police declined 38%, cost saving to police of £82 (\$150) per dwelling, 100% occupancy of available housing, improved ground maintenance & natural surveillance, railings secure site & restrict access, secured access to low-rise flats, problem tenants were targeted, relations with Millbank Court were improved and council services were resumed.
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## SCANNING

The 'Hopwood Triangle' is a small development of 91 individual dwellings over 5 streets. The dwellings are split between 2 blocks of low-rise apartments set over 4 floors accounting for 32 dwellings. The remainder are single room apartments, houses and maisonettes throughout the rest of the development



The properties are all owned by Preston City Council and let by their Central Housing Department.

The buildings are set in a triangular shaped parcel of land running between 2 busy arterial roads and bordered by a housing scheme for the homeless known as Millbank Court and is in close proximity to Preston Prison.

In time the buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair with the adjacent grounds,

hedges and trees becoming overgrown. Many buildings have fallen victim to damage and at the beginning of 2002 over a third of the properties were unoccupied.

The housing was perceived as being so poor and the area so tarnished in reputation that it became impossible for the Central Housing Department to let the empty premises. Even the neediest of tenants refused to move into the area, one sadly declared "*I might be desperate, but I'm not that desperate*". To combat the threat of damage and squatters to empty properties all the windows and doors were covered with steel shutters to guarantee security. Although necessary this added to the air of neglect and decline. The council's own maintenance and ground staff were too intimidated to visit the area and stayed away.

The area had lost all sense of community with many remaining tenants surrendering their tenancies. Crime and the fear of crime increased with remaining tenants adopting a siege mentality, locking themselves in and turning a blind eye to problem neighbours, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity.

Street prostitutes were using the covered porches outside properties to conduct their business often leaving soiled condoms and used syringes to be found the following morning. Women were approached by Kerb crawlers and the male residents pestered by the prostitutes for 'business'

The supply and misuse of drugs became commonplace and the whole area went into rapid and terminal decline. Many residents blamed Millbank Court residents and their visitors for the problems arising in the first place and the Council and Police for allowing it to happen. Other tenants, legitimate or otherwise, revelled in the opportunity to create nuisance, commit crime and behave in a lawless and anti-social manner with little concern that they

would be subject to any enforcement measures.

## **ANALYSIS AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION**

The 'Hopwood Triangle' borders on to the main road running through the City and is between two other main arterial roads with good communication links and easy foot access to the city centre.

Government grants totalling millions of pounds have been allocated to neighbouring areas which border onto the 'Hopwood Triangle'. The 'Hopwood Triangle' sits directly between these neighbouring areas and yet has not been allocated any funding. This serves as a painful reminder to its residents who feel that their own housing has fallen into a spiral of decline whilst others enjoy something of a renaissance.

At the beginning of 2002 Preston City Council housing department approached the police with certain issues:

- The Council were receiving a number of complaints in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Tenancies were being surrendered and the council felt they could not attempt to re-let the empty properties until the problems had been addressed.
- Approximately 33% of the properties were unoccupied costing the council approximately £1300 (\$2,3700) per week.
- Repair and modernisation of unoccupied properties was seen as the only way in which they could hope to re-let the empty properties. With S.R.B. funding properties in the neighbouring areas were undergoing renovation at a cost up to £40000 (\$73,169) per dwelling. This level of funding was simply not available to the 'Hopwood Triangle'.

- The council hired a company to conduct surveillance on the area with Millbank Court providing an empty flat.
- The surveillance showed Millbank court to be a focal point for offenders engaged in anti-social behaviour.

## **Consultation Between Partners**

- Representatives from the Council, Millbank court, residents and the Police met to discuss the current problems.
- All parties were able to give their views and provide valuable information in relation to their perceptions of the problem.
- Enabled the police to achieve a greater understanding of the issues involved.

The police then conducted further analysis using tools and data sources to fully understand the nature, extent and underlying conditions of the problem.

A number of Police data recording systems were interrogated which gave some indication of the extent of the problems affecting the area (See Appendix A).

- 40 Reported crimes for the year 2001 excluding Millbank Court.
  - 66% chance of each dwelling being the victim of crime.
  - Apathetic attitudes to crime and incident reporting suggest actual figures higher.
  - 591 total calls
  - 162 calls from Millbank Court (27.2% of total calls).
  - Provided specific information on times and locations.
  - Provided further information on problem tenants and their visitors and associates.
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- Assisted in identifying council and Millbank court tenants involved in criminal activity.
- Showed an element of opportunistic offenders.
- Showed the extent of police enforcement in the area.

These figures include only arrests made in the location and exclude persons living in the area arrested elsewhere and arrests elsewhere for crimes committed at this location (See Appendix A).

- 5 of the 60 occupied dwellings identified as repeat victims.
- 8.3% against occupancy levels.

### **Results of the Analysis: The Problem Analysis Triangle**

#### **Features of the Location**

- The estate is made up of 91 individual dwellings. 2 blocks of low-rise flats set over 4 floors account for 32 dwellings. The remaining 59 are made up of a combination of bedsits, flats and maisonettes.
- Over the years the buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair and been the victim of damage and arson resulting in many properties being covered with steel shutters to guarantee security.
- 33% of the dwellings are unoccupied.
- The design of the housing and the estate is outdated in terms of 'safer by design' (CPTED) standards. As a result there are numerous 'rat-runs' and 'cubby holes' providing concealment of movement.
- Used as a short cut from the city centre for non-residents offering concealment of movement.
- 2 blocks of lock-up garages all of which have fallen into a state of

disrepair, been damaged and used for rough sleeping.

- Poorly lit due to the original lighting being in a state of disrepair and not maintained.
- Adjacent grounds, trees and hedges have become massively overgrown.
- Suffers from prevalent fly-tipping (littering)
- Situated on the main access road into the estate is Millbank Court, a self-contained housing scheme for homeless people.
- The 'Hopwood Triangle' fell outside the criteria for multi-million pound funding for regeneration.
- The area has a reputation for being an area of high crime.
- An empty sheltered accommodation property, Newton House, had recently been sold to private investors and was due for redevelopment into student accommodation.



Fly tipping (littering) was a serious problem



Signs of disorder and disarray

### Features of the Offender

- Council tenants living on the estate involved in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.
- Visitors and associates of the council tenants attracted to the area.
- Opportunist offenders walking through the area.
- Tenants of Millbank Court involved in criminal activity and problematic behaviour.
- Visitors and associates of Millbank court tenants.
- Street prostitutes working in the area.

### Features of the Victim

- Council tenants.
- Millbank Court staff and tenants.
- Members of the public living and working in the area.
- Repeat victims.
- Visitors and associates of council and Millbank Court tenants.
- Council grounds staff.
- High fear of crime.

### Spiral of Decline

As a result of the combination of the continued spiral of decline of the area and an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour there was a complete loss of any community and a very real fear of crime. Residents felt that the council and police

had failed to take action to remedy the problems resulting in many residents surrendering their tenancies. Remaining tenants adopted a siege mentality locking themselves in and turning a blind eye to problem neighbours, anti-social behaviour and criminal activity for fear of reprisals. A majority of residents had a deep-rooted fear and resentment towards Millbank Court and its tenants blaming them for the problems arising in the first place.

The analysis resulted in a number of project objectives:

- Reduction in crime – with particular emphasis on property crime.
- Reduction in police calls to service.
- Eradication of street prostitution from the area.
- Securing and reducing points of access to the area
  - Lighting – Repair of existing street lighting, provision of additional external domestic lighting
  - CCTV – Full area coverage and recording facility
  - Fencing/Railings
  - Demolition of lock-up garages
  - Grounds maintenance/Clean up fly-tipping (littering)
  - Landscaping – Tree and undergrowth removal and hedge reduction
  - Improved natural surveillance
- Housing – 100% occupancy of available housing.
  - Identification and eviction and/or arrest of problem tenants
  - Ensure vetting of potential new tenants
- Public Reassurance.
  - Tackling fear of crime
  - Tackling Repeat Victimisation

- Improved relations between Millbank court and council tenants and a greater understanding of their role and responsibilities
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Residents Association and Focus Group
- Reinstatement of council services

## RESPONSE

For the project to be a success the residents would have to be engaged at an early stage ensuring that they felt involved and empowered in tackling the issues identified. A number of the responses would need to be partner-led as opposed to police-led in order to ensure sustainability and to afford the police an exit strategy. Following an initial survey by the police and discussions with Preston City Council a number of options were discussed including stock transfer to a Housing Association, demolition of housing stock, and implementing a quick fix. However, these were not sustainable in the long term. Therefore, a multi-agency problem-solving partnership emerged called the Hopwood Triangle. This included a range of strategies, some driven by the police, and others driven by the community and council. They included the following 16:

### 1. Crime Reduction & Safer By Design Survey

- The location was identified in the analysis stage as having a major impact on the problem.
- A crime reduction and safer by design survey was conducted by the community Safety Department of the police in consultation with Preston City Council Housing staff, local residents and the police.
- The results of the survey led to the development of the 'Master plan'

for the improvement of the location in terms of:

- Improved Lighting.
- Closure of certain footpaths leading into the estate.
- Fencing/Railings to reduce access points into the estate for greater security (the idea being to have a one-way in and one-way out system).
- Grounds maintenance, landscaping and clean up.
- CCTV coverage.
- Demolition of lock-up garages.

### 2. Evidence Gathering for Problem Tenants

- Using police data recording systems problem tenants were identified and evidence of criminal and anti-social behaviour was gathered.
- The police conducted high visibility patrol in the area engaging with residents to assist in the evidence gathering.
- Following close liaison with the Council further evidence gathering was conducted from complaints received by the housing department.

### 3. Drug Dealing

- Intelligence was gathered by the police to identify the extent of the problem and to identify who was involved.
- Following liaison with the 'Nimrod' team, a department set up specifically to target drug dealing in Preston, a period of enforcement was undertaken on the properties and individuals identified in the intelligence gathering process.

### 4. Neighbourhood Watch

- The police identified residents interested in forming a

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and encouraged its formation through discussion on potential benefits.

- The Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator from the police community safety department then assisted with its formation.

## **5. Tackling Fear of Crime**

Tackling the fear of crime cannot be done in isolation. In order for any approach to be successful it needs to take in to account the many and varied social, environmental and personal factors that may be contributing to the fear of crime. A fear of crime matrix was constructed to assess the extent to which this area suffered from fear.

The 'Hopwood Triangle' fell into the high crime and high fear category of the matrix. It was therefore obvious that responses needed to be aimed at addressing the fear of crime.

## **6. Crime Reduction Strategies**

- Targeting of individuals involved in criminal and anti-social behaviour.
- Regular communication with the community making them aware of the action being taken.

## **7. Community Crime Prevention**

- Crime prevention information delivered to all dwellings on the estate.
- Follow-up visits to discuss any issues.

## **8. Regeneration of the Neighbourhood**

- Crime prevention and safer by design survey.
- Development of the 'Master Plan' (See Appendix B).

## **9. Repeat Victimisation**

- Repeat victimisation policy of Preston police.
- Victims graded with Bronze, Silver and Gold response dependent on whether first, second or third instance of being a victim of crime.
- Level of intervention increases with each response.

## **10. Community Engagement/Reassurance**

- Local Police Community Beat Managers provide a regular presence in the area.
- Maintain consultation with the community on all issues.

## **11. Facilitate Empowerment**

- Formation of a Residents Association and Focus Group.
- Formation of a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- Encourage a shared ownership of all issues and increased social cohesion.

## **12. Street Prostitution**

- 'Operation Kerb' and its successor 'Safer Sex Works' are multi-agency problem solving initiatives created to tackle street prostitution in Preston.
- The issues identified in the 'Hopwood Triangle' were specifically addressed as part of these initiatives.

## **13. Preston City Council – Housing Department**

- Capital funding required delivering the 'Master Plan'.
  - Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (N.R.F) identified as most suitable funding stream.
  - Bid for £120,000 (\$219,000) submitted and was successful.
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- Further £10,000 (\$18,300) pledged in recognition of project potential.
- Funding was used to deliver the 'Master Plan' actions:
  - External lighting for all properties.
  - Comprehensive CCTV system.
  - Demolition of lock-up garages.
  - Secured access to low-rise flats – Intercom and passkey.
  - Fencing/Railings throughout estate to reduce use as a thoroughfare.



CCTV was placed in strategic locations



Enhanced fencing



New rules were posted for disorderly behaviour



Closing off key walkways for resident use only



Specific garages were identified as part of the problem



With resident support, they were removed during revitalization

The Central Housing Department were also responsible for the following responses:

- Facilitation of residents meetings leading to the formation of a Neighbourhood Forum and the 'Hopwood Residents Association'.
- Provision of training and guidance for the chairperson of the association.
- Following close liaison with residents, development and adoption of a local lettings policy to safeguard the selection process of potential tenants.
- Identification and eviction of problem tenants.

#### 14. Preston City Council – Parks Department

Despite an absence of many years the Parks Department carried out a survey of the area to identify landscaping requirements to complement actions identified in the 'Master Plan'. Agreement was reached with the head of the Parks Department in consultation with housing staff, local residents and local community beat managers. Actions included:

- Tree removal – Clearing obstructions and line of sight for the provision of CCTV.

- Hedge Pruning – Reduction in height of hedges to facilitate improved natural surveillance.
- Landscaping – Removal of overgrown and neglected borders and hedgerow and turfing of cleared areas and pruning of specimen trees.



Before



After

#### 15. Millbank Court

This is a 36 flat housing scheme for homeless persons and families, with a short-stay tenure of 6 months. Given the size of the scheme, the potentially problematic tenants, their families and associates and the quick turnover of tenants it is inevitable that problematic behaviour will be evident.

Working in partnership with New Leaf Housing (the scheme's operators) a number of improvements to working practices have been developed to minimise the impact of the scheme on the wider community. These included:

- 24-hour staffing of reception.
- Closure of external access to self-contained flat and provision of internal access via the scheme.
- Vetting of tenant visitors at first visit.
- Visitors to show recognised form of identification.
- No visitors allowed after 11pm.
- Overnight visitors to be registered.
- No concealment of face upon entry (e.g. hats, hooded tops).
- Resident's access via intercom after 11.30pm.
- Facilitation of delivery of drugs awareness package developed by local community beat managers to all staff.
- Regular grounds maintenance.
- Improvements to internal phone – Allowing more privacy so tenants will use this phone as opposed to kiosk outside thus preventing kiosk being a focal point.

The scheme has also offered the 'hand of friendship' by providing the hard drive for the CCTV recording system on the 'Hopwood Triangle' and is now the venue for all Hopwood Residents Association meetings.

### 16. Litter-Pick Days

A number of litter-picking days to maintain the grounds maintenance on the estate have been undertaken bringing together all the partner agencies and the residents. This showed that a true community spirit was developing in the area.



## ASSESSMENT

The assessment is based on a project life of 2 years with all figures and outcomes having been calculated up to the end of 2003 and set against the initial project objectives.

The situation on the ground has not been static throughout the life of this project as certain responses were delivered at different times. Therefore, we have not been concerned with interim figures and have waited until the responses have been delivered and properties re-occupied.

Assessments have been made on the impact and effectiveness of individual responses, however, this report focuses on the results that have been achieved on the ground. As a result of the combined use of these partnership responses the project objectives have been met and this assessment gives an indication of the overall success of the 'Hopwood Triangle' project (See Table 4.1, Appendix A).

- All reported crime - **53% reduction.**
- Burglary offences - **28% reduction.**
- Damage offences - **73% reduction.**
- Auto crime offences - **80% reduction.**
- Drugs offences - **60% reduction.**

- All calls to the ‘Hopwood Triangle’ area down 38% (See Figure 4.1, Appendix B)
- Total calls to the area including Millbank Court down 19.96%.
- Cost saving to police of £3193 (\$5,843) per annum against a total cost of £5200 per annum (*based on minimum cost calculation of £38.70 (\$69) per officer per hour assuming on average half hour per incident and one officer attending*).
- Cost adjusted per dwelling shows a saving of £82 (\$150) per dwelling
  - 2001 £139 (\$254) per dwelling
  - 2003 £57 (\$104) per dwelling

It is important to note that occupancy levels have increased over this period with the 33% unoccupied properties now occupied.

With this in mind when viewing crime against occupancy levels:

- 2001 66% chance per dwelling of being a victim of crime
- 2003 21% chance per dwelling of being a victim of crime (See Table 4.3, Appendix A).
- As a result of the targeting of problem tenants and visitors to the area there naturally followed an increase in police enforcement in this location.
- Increased police enforcement activity can be viewed as a positive result following on from a greater willingness from the community to report crime and criminal activity. Furthermore, the evidence of positive action by the police coupled with crime reduction reassures the community their concerns are taken seriously (See Table 4.4, Appendix A).

- 2 of the 91 properties identified as repeat victims.
- 2% against occupancy levels.

### **Street Prostitution**

- There have been no complaints from the Hopwood community about the activities of street prostitutes during 2003.
- Officers are confident that at this time street prostitution has been eradicated from this residential area.
- Measures to monitor and preserve this situation are in place in the form of the multi-agency problem solving POPS plan ‘Safer Sex Works’.

### **Housing – Tenancy Issues**

- 100% occupancy of available housing safeguarding council revenue achieved.
- Local lettings policy in place to select suitable tenants.
- 12-month probationary period for all new tenants.
- Modest repairs to damaged properties prior to re-letting funded by housing department.
- Removal of steel shutters on properties throughout estate.
- Identification and subsequent eviction of all original problem tenants achieved.
- Reporting procedures in place to identify any future problem tenants and ensure prompt action to remedy problem or pursue eviction.

### **Environmental Improvements**

- All dwellings fitted with external lighting.
- Damaged street lighting repaired.
- Lock-up garages demolished.
- Improved natural surveillance.
- CCTV – Area fully covered and recorded with 8 new cameras and existing network at Millbank Court.

- Landscaping, hedge trimming and tree removal carried out.
- Installation of intercom and passkey security door system on low-rise flats.
- Installation of high quality 6-foot tall galvanised iron railings enabling:
  - Complete securing of garden space around low-rise flats.
  - Reduction in the number of points of access into the estate.

### **Public Reassurance**

- Establishment of Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- Creation of Hopwood Residents Association and Focus Group.
- Reinstatement of council services – Grounds maintenance and caretaker.
- Improved relations with Millbank Court and greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities:
  - Monitoring and recording of CCTV system housed at Millbank Court.
  - All Resident Association Meetings now held at Millbank court.
  - Improvements in procedures and internal phone have meant Millbank Court is no longer a focal point for problematic behaviour.

### **Resident Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was designed and given out to residents to gauge their perceptions on the impact of the project on the neighbourhood. The questionnaire was

deliberately targeted at those tenants who had been resident for at least two years during which the project had been implemented. The questionnaire was split into five distinct categories which closely mirrored the fear of crime matrix. Respondents were able to select from five options when answering ranging from 'Much Better' to 'Much Worse' (See Table 4.5, Appendix A).

In all categories the results show that the residents feel there has been an improvement in the area. Although the majority of residents are still concerned about crime, there is a definite feeling that progress has been made and the initial high fear of crime is diminishing.

### **Conclusion**

Over a project life of 2 years the 'Hopwood Triangle' has exceeded all expectations and met all project objectives. For modest initial capital funding, savings in policing costs and the securing of Council rental income has been delivered.

The neighbourhood has a dramatically improved sense of community and a greater tolerance and understanding of its neighbours at Millbank Court.

Residents have seen significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour as well as physical improvements to their living environment. Through participation in the Residents Association and Neighbourhood Forums they are now empowered to preserve the cohesive and increasingly safe neighbourhood in which they live.

## APPENDIX A: Tables

**Table 2.1 – Crime Figures 2001**

YEAR	HOPWOOD						TOTAL
	BIAD	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	DRUGS	
2001	7	5	6	15	2	5	40

### Police Calls to Service 2001

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	429	162	591	27.2

### Arrests/Enforcement 2001

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK%
2001	19	6	25	24

### Repeat Victimisation 2001

2001	BURGLARY	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	TOTALS
13 Newton St	2	1	0	0	0	3
12 Edmund St	0	0	4	0	0	4
1A Driscoll St	0	0	0	2	1	3
29A Hopwood St	1	0	0	1	0	2
33A Hopwood St	1	0	0	1	0	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>

**Table 4.1 – Crime 2001/2003**

YEAR	HOPWOOD						TOTAL
	BURGLARY	AUTO	VIOLENT	DAMAGE	THEFT	DRUGS	
2001	7	5	6	15	2	5	40
2003	5	1	7	4	0	2	19

**Table 4.2 - Police Calls to Service 2001/2003**

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	429	162	591	27.4
2003	264	209	473	44.1

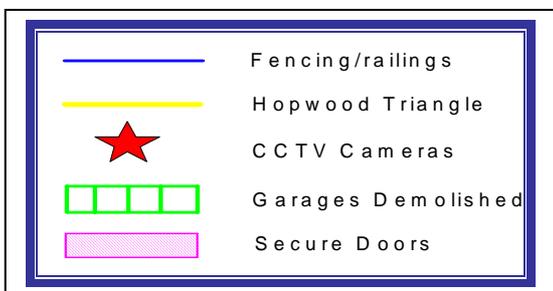
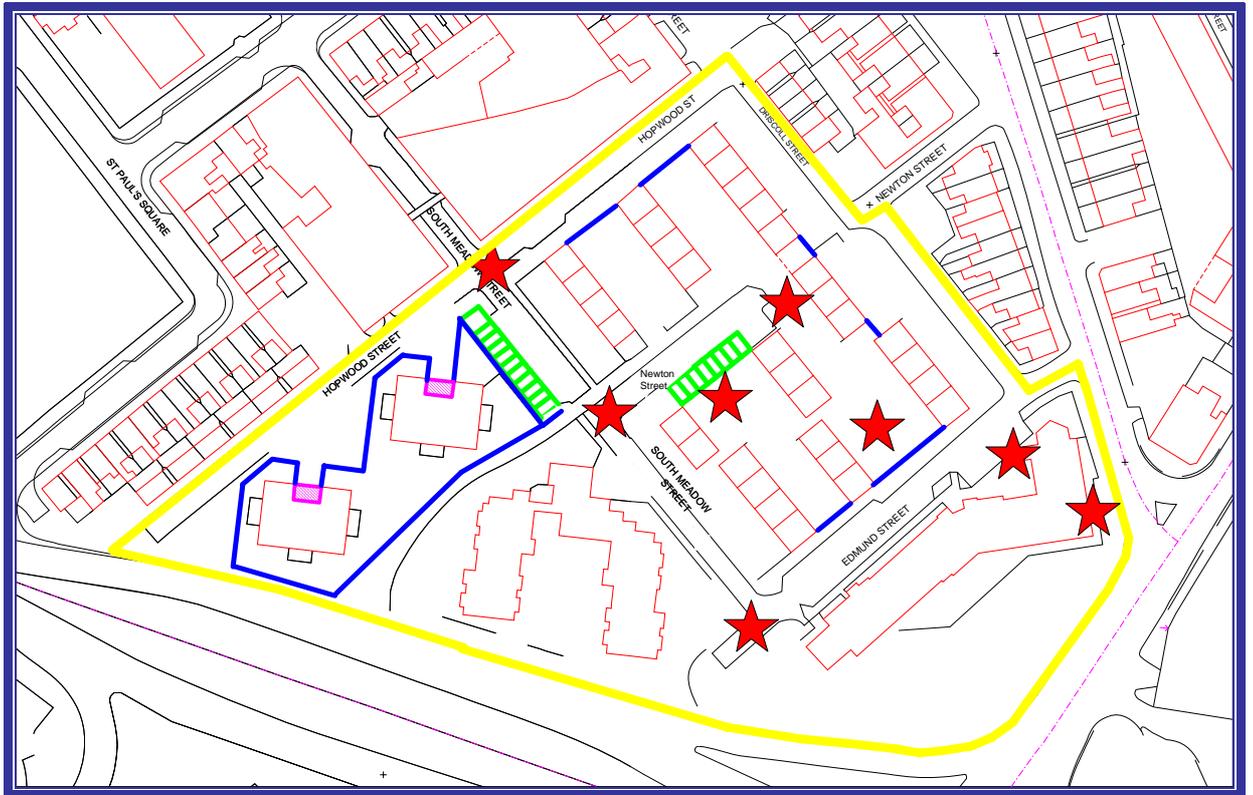
**Table 4.3 - Arrests/Enforcement 2001 - 2003**

YEAR	HOPWOOD	MILLBANK	TOTAL	MILLBANK %
2001	19	6	25	24
2002	27	21	48	44
2003	24	28	52	54



## APPENDIX B: Figures

### The 'Master Plan' created during the Hopwood Triangle Project



**Figure 4.1 – Crime Graph**

