

# NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

## SUBURB BURGLARY

Suburb burglary decreased last year by 10.4%. It dropped from 202 burglaries in 1989 to 181 burglaries in 1990. Now it is on the increase again and the total for 1991 could well be in excess of 200.

Some people seem to believe that there is little that they can do about this. "The tide comes in and the tide goes out", they say "and there is nothing that we mortals can do to change it." But this analogy is not correct. Three quarters of all Suburb burglaries are preventable and there is much that we residents could do to change the situation by taking sensible precautions.

More than three quarters of Suburb burglaries occurred because the house had one or more of these five characteristics:-

### 1. Unoccupied

The house was obviously unoccupied and could be easily seen to be unoccupied. The householders were either out at work, or out for the evening, or away for the weekend or on holiday. In almost all cases the house was in darkness. No lights were set to come on automatically. No radio was set to be on during the day. No curtains were drawn at night or, conversely, curtains were drawn during the day. The milk was still outside the door.

**Action point** - make reciprocal arrangements with a neighbour to look after each other's houses whenever either of you is away. Your good neighbours should then:

- check doors and windows, every day if possible;
- ensure that newspapers and

letters are pushed right through your letterbox;

- made sure that no milk, telephone books, or other deliveries are left on the step; and,

- of course ideally, enter your house, draw curtains each evening, switch on lights and so on.

### 2. Open door or window

Over a quarter of burglaries are through an open door or window. This summer, five Suburb houses were burgled in one week when a downstairs window, back door or patio door was left unlocked or open - in some cases at night while the occupants were asleep upstairs.

But this does not only apply in hot weather. Many burglars climb up a drain pipe or gain access over a flat roof to an upstairs open window - and a gap of less than 8 inches is all that is required for some slim young criminals to gain entry.

By day, many of us who deliver leaflets to Suburb houses know only too well how many front doors are left either open or unlocked so that a simple push on the letter box causes the door to open.

**Action point** - never leave a door or window unlocked if unattended - even if only for a very short time. Regrettably we no longer live in the 'good old days' when the front door could be left open all day long!



### 3. House inadequately secured

Many burglaries have taken place because windows and doors - especially patio doors - did not have adequate security locks and were easy to force open.

In early July, a Suburb resident left her front door unattended for sixty seconds only while she took a box of vegetables through to her kitchen. During that short time two passing burglars took the opportunity presented to rush into the house and up the stairs unseen and unheard. She and her husband then heard floorboards creaking above and went to the hall and called out. They then went upstairs to find two upstairs windows open through which the burglars had leapt onto the grass below before escaping with some jewellery.

Many of us may have difficulty in comprehending the degree of vigilance needed against young opportunist burglars who think and work at this speed. But this demonstrates the cheek, daring and nimbleness of some young men who are prepared to take advantage on the spur of the moment of any fleeting opportunity presented to them.

**Action point** - if you have not done so already, phone the Crime Prevention Office, Peter Davis (tel: 200 2555 and leave a message on his ansaphone for him to contact you) for a free security survey of your house or flat - and then take action on his recommendations.

### 4. 'Neighbourhood Watch' and 'Marked Property' stickers not prominently displayed

Of course, houses not prominently displaying 'Neighbourhood Watch' stickers on all sides of the house are a great temptation to the burglars. But an even greater temptation is a house not showing 'Marked Property' stickers. Over 95% of all Suburb burglaries are from houses that have not marked their

Thought - a dog is much more expensive to run than a burglar alarm, and generally far less efficient!

valuable property with their postcode and house number. After all no burglar wants to steal marked property that will incriminate him and which he cannot get rid of through a 'fence', when stealing unmarked property is still so easy!

**Action point** - borrow a property marking kit from your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator; mark your valuable property and then display prominently the 'Marked Property' stickers on all sides of your house. Your Co-ordinator will show you how to use the equipment, and it should only take a couple of hours, at most, of your time.

### 5. No Burglar Alarm

A burglar alarm is a wonderful deterrent. The cost of installing a modern, efficient burglar alarm system in a typical three or four bedroomed Suburb house will probably be in the region of £700/£750. If you can afford it, it is well worth it - and it will give you peace of mind if you are away from your house on holiday or for the weekend, or even just out shopping or collecting the children from school. The typical alarm system that is installed today doesn't go wrong like the older ones often do and, in any case, the bell will cut out automatically after 20 minutes. But they make the very devil of a noise both outside and inside the house when they are set off, and few burglars are going to hang around for long once a burglar alarm starts ringing.

There is, of course, one proviso, and that is that you must have the sort of responsible neighbours who will always, without fail, dial 999 if ever your alarm goes off, and you must stress to your neighbours that they should do so - and that you will do the same for them. Ideally, some 20 or 30 houses all round should dial 999, but regrettably we still have some way to go before all Suburb residents are trained to do so. At the present time, the police are lucky if even 2 or 3 different people dial 999 when an alarm starts ringing. But we will get there in time!

**Action point** - If you have not already got a burglar alarm, or if you have an old system that needs to be upgraded, get the names and addresses of several thoroughly recommended security firms either from the Crime Prevention Officer or from your Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator, and then invite each firm to carry out a survey and give a quotation for supplying and installing a system tailored to your needs.

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**THE PRICE OF FREEDOM FROM BURGLARY IS STILL ETERNAL VIGILANCE!!**

## The Suburb is unique - let's keep it that way

With a few exceptions, all our houses, flats and public buildings were architect designed to a plan and an ideal of garden suburb living envisaged by the creators of our Suburb.

Whether you live in the old Suburb, or in one of the later roads, your house is probably a fine example of its period.

Each road, crossroad, open space and view was carefully designed to look just right.

But this "most nearly perfect example of that English invention and speciality", as Pevsner put it, needs careful conservation.

The Suburb is, of course, a conservation area and as such is subject to planning controls.

## The Suburb is different

What makes our Suburb different is that it is subject to what is known as a Scheme of Management granted by the High Court and administered by the Trust.

This means that any alteration to freehold buildings must be approved by the Trust as well as by Barnet. The same restrictions apply under a Management Agreement to leaseholds still owned by Ashdale and by the Trust.

## What is so special?

Even apparently quite small changes to the outside of your house can spoil the effect so carefully designed in the original plan for a street or group of houses.

## Trust consent is needed for:

- building an extension
- changing windows, doors or gates
- installing new windows with or without double-glazing
- repointing brickwork
- erecting a garden shed or greenhouse
- putting up a fence or wall
- building a garage or lean-to
- taking down a chimney
- repairing or renewing the roof tiles
- cutting down or lopping a tree
- removing or renewing a hedge
- paving the garden making a hard-standing
- changing a garage into a room
- installing an external gas meter
- installing or altering external pipes
- putting a room in the room with dormer windows or roof lights.

## Here to help

The Trust manager Chris Kellerman and its architect Wilfred Court are here to help you.

Get in touch before making any plans for alterations and they can save you time and trouble and help us all to keep the Suburb a very special place to live.



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## Example of unnecessary alterations

