



Technological solutions can cut security costs by more than half and improve protection at the same time

Site: A substantial plot comprising three former students' hall of residences in Manchester

INTRODUCTION

Three halls of residences, standing alongside each other, were vacated by students during 2019. The owners of the property, a religious organisation, and its insurers, Ecclesiastical, were concerned that the properties would be substantially at risk from vandalism, fly-tipping, arson or squatting, whilst vacant, and whilst their future development and funding was being planned.

METAL THEFT:

A change in law in 2013 with the introduction of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act, together with intense police activity, significantly helped reduce the theft of copper and cable over the following four-year period, from over a thousand incidents a month to about a third of that. However, as the police forces and local authorities have cut back their inspections and enforcement teams to almost zero, so there has been a consequential rise in metal theft in the last two years, and increasing evidence that it is far more the result of more organised crime, rather than opportunistic thieves.

These halls of residence underlined that concern, as within days of falling vacant, intruders broke into the site and cut and stole copper piping.

OVERVIEW

SECTOR	Insurance
CUSTOMER	Sisters of the Cross and Passion
CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant student halls of residence at risk of vandalism, fly-tipping, arson and squatting.
SOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VPS Smart Tower • VPS Alert Tower • VPS Steel Security • VPS SmartAlarm



FLY-TIPPING AND FIRE RISK:

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said councils in England dealt with more than one million incidents of fly-tipping in the accounting year 2018-2019. It was an 8% rise on the 998,000 in 2017-18, with nearly two thirds of incidents made up of household waste.

The Local Government Association (LGA) said fly-tipping cost taxpayers “more than £57m a year to clear up”. The figures suggest the number of fly-tipping incidents - 1,072,000 in 2018-19 - was the highest for a decade. That is the equivalent of an illegal fly-tipping occurrence happening every 40 seconds.

This site has car parking, surrounding grass areas with pathways and can quickly attract litter, and which could easily become a magnet for fly-tippers. Not only is fly-tipping expensive to clear, but when a property falls empty, combustible materials building up in the surrounding grounds can lead to arson attacks. Last year 76,000 fires in the UK were as a

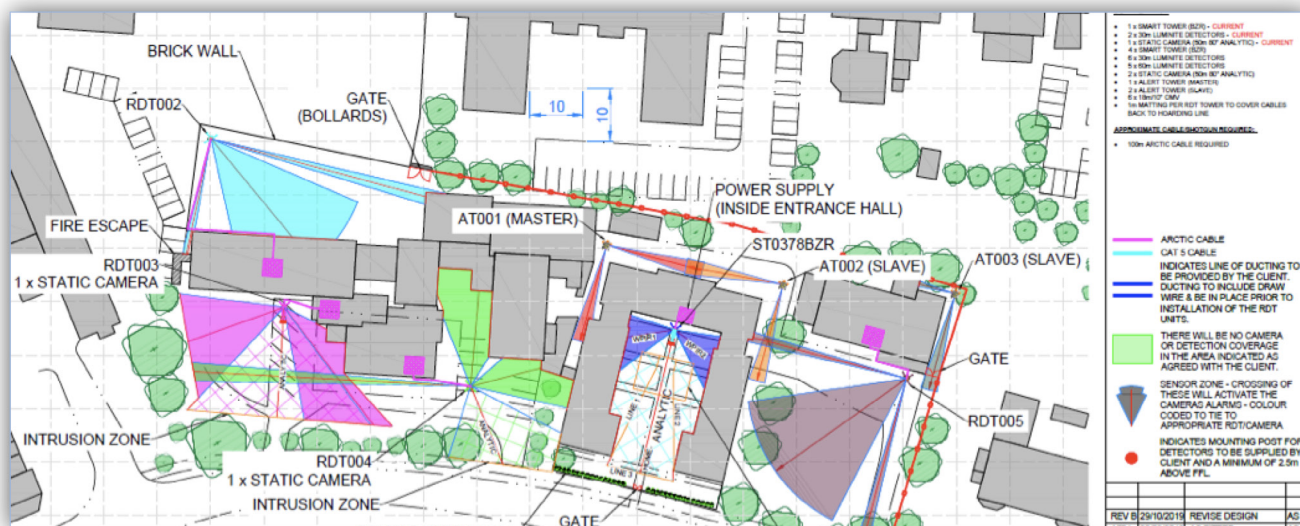
result of arson – that’s over 200 a day – and vacant properties are often principal targets.

Arson attacks are costly to undo the damage: the total bill for insurance claims for arson attacks last year came to £1.2 billion.

THE TASK

VPS Security Services carried out a risk assessment on request from the insurers. The site is located on a busy street, easily visible but also with some hedge and tree cover. The building furthest West has an irregular boundary, with outbuildings, and areas hidden from view. The central building, with a courtyard, looks architecturally attractive, whilst the easterly premises has parking and also plenty of hedge cover.

VPS drew up a detailed map to plan the security provision that would best fit the whole site, taking into account the perceived value of the buildings, the easy access to the grounds and the obscured views.



To secure the windows and entrances, VPS installed over 100 steel screens around the ground floors of the three premises, and whilst further security plans were being implemented, installed a manned guarding operation for two weeks, with shifts that enabled two guards to be on duty 24 hours a day.



However, once several VPS CCTV Smart Towers, Alert Towers and internal SmartAlarm systems were in place, the guards were no longer required. These systems are monitored 24/7 by the VPS accredited remote monitoring centre. Their key advantage is to be able to provide continuous 'eyes' over the vulnerable access and entry points, without a break.

Since the combination of towers and monitoring has been in place, in over six months of operation there have been no security breaches bar one instance, when suspected intruders were deterred by the interactive audio facility operated by the monitoring station staff.

The overall saving in security costs, in a direct comparison with the manned guarding operation, is well over 60%.

Since then, the client has requested quotes from VPS to extend the services to include full fire protection and a 'winterisation' protection package including drain down and utility checks.





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