

A guide to alley gating



merton.gov.uk/alleygating



Working together for a safer London



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Introduction

Merton Council is committed to enhancing the living environment of local residents by taking steps to prevent anti-social behaviour within the community. We have set up the alley gate scheme so local residents can actively participate in preventing crime in their area by restricting access to alleyways. The alley gates coordinator (Tel: 020 8545 4786) will assist and advise residents' groups that are interested in gating their alleyway. In addition, council grant funding may be available to help pay for the gates themselves. Grants are primarily available to assist with reducing fly-tipping across the borough, but as this booklet makes clear, there may be significant additional benefits from installing alley gates.

This guide is aimed at people who live or work in properties next to an alleyway who may have concerns about the levels of crime or anti-social behaviour occurring there. If you fit this description then you may be interested in forming an alley gating group to address these concerns. This can either be from scratch or based on an existing Neighbourhood Watch or residents' group.

This guide will tell you about the processes involved in setting up an alley gate for your area and help answer any questions you may have. Please note this guide is only a guide, and is not statute or mandatory and is for guidance only.

Alley gates and the community

A history

Alleyways were originally designed to allow access for coalmen and rubbish collectors. Today, deliveries to the back of the home are less frequent, with rubbish bins collected from the front. The alleyways that are left are often full of fly-tipped rubbish. They also allow easier access to the rear and side of a property. National statistics show up to 85% of burglars gain entry to homes via the rear or side of properties. Anti-social behaviour such as drinking, drug use and vandalism also occur in alleyways across the country.

Stopping easy access here by installing alley gates is therefore the main focus of this guide. But remember, there are other things you can do to improve your area's security and quality of life. These 'extras' will not take much effort if you do them at the same time as organising gates.

As each area is different, you have to select the combination of strategies that will work best for you. The main thing to remember is, whatever you try should not only improve the physical security of the area, but also make it more difficult and less worthwhile for fly-tippers and burglars to come there at all.

During the planning stages you should consider the fear of crime. This fear is real and it can blight people's lives. Your aim overall must be to reduce that fear. You need to keep this in mind when putting schemes into practice, as you will inevitably be raising awareness of crime, and therefore risk raising fear levels. Always reassure people that the measures you are taking will reduce crime.

Include everyone you can, from all sections of the community. If you have a particular problem, for example with pubs or schools, do your utmost to involve someone who will represent them during the planning stages.

Avoid the temptation to exclude 'problem groups' from your discussions. Remember to include local police.

In the early planning stages think everything through and try to foresee what likely outcomes there may be. You need to be prepared to adapt your plans as you go along.

As you bring together people to combat crime in your area, encourage them to be more aware of the needs and problems of their neighbours. Persuade them to watch out for their neighbours' safety, especially those who are frail or vulnerable, and encourage everyone to report anyone behaving suspiciously.

Please remember that levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in Merton are low compared to many areas but the aim is to reduce these levels even further.

We wish you every success and the very best of luck on your projects. You may come up against unexpected problems, but persevere and you will achieve your goals.

Merton Council is here to serve your interests and we will help and advise you every step of the way.

Gate designs and specifications

Merton Council is committed to helping gate off the alleyways of Merton where residents want them. However, due to having limited resources, we can only contribute money to schemes that follow our guidelines, and you must meet all the criteria on our grant application form. To help you meet the criteria we have set out specifications for gates so they are of a similar price, appearance, strength and effectiveness.

Gates made to order should:

- be made to measure and of adequate dimensions to secure entrance to the alley;
- be designed so that you can see through them clearly;
- have gaps no wider than 100mm (10cm);
- offer no climbing aids, such as handles, protruding locks or cross struts that provide foot or hand holds;
- last for a very long time;
- need little maintenance;
- be no more than 2 metres in height, otherwise planning permission will be required;
- be within your price range; and
- if steel, be finished in one coat of red oxide/primer prior to painting.

We do not recommend installing gates made from palisade fencing, as it looks too industrial for residential areas. If you buy ready-made gates you should check they meet the above requirements.

The following section shows a selection of gate types we recommend. We have listed the advantages, disadvantages and the average costs of each gate.

Wooden gate – Windsor



Advantages

- Medium level of visibility through gate.
- Fair to strong.
- Low to medium maintenance cost.
- Usually pre-treated.
- Easily bought ready or made to measure.
- Seen so often, they are visually acceptable to all.
- Fair to strong.
- Hard to climb from front.
- Low to medium initial cost.

Disadvantages

- Medium initial costs.
- Will need some additional anti-climb fixtures, as gaps on some types can be wide enough to allow footholds.
- Will need some additional anti-climb fixtures like metal mesh on back to stop cross struts being used as footholds.
- Will need treating with anti-rot preservatives.

Approx cost

£800

Wrought iron gate



Advantages

- High level of visibility through gate.
- Strong.
- Long life.
- Virtually no maintenance costs other than painting at regular intervals.
- Can be made to measure.
- Attractive design.

Disadvantages

Ready made

- Usually have bars over 50mm apart.
- May be difficult to fit any lock.
- Decorative curls can provide climbing aids.
- Gaps between bars can be wide enough to pass items through.
- Extra mesh panels may be needed to the fill gaps.

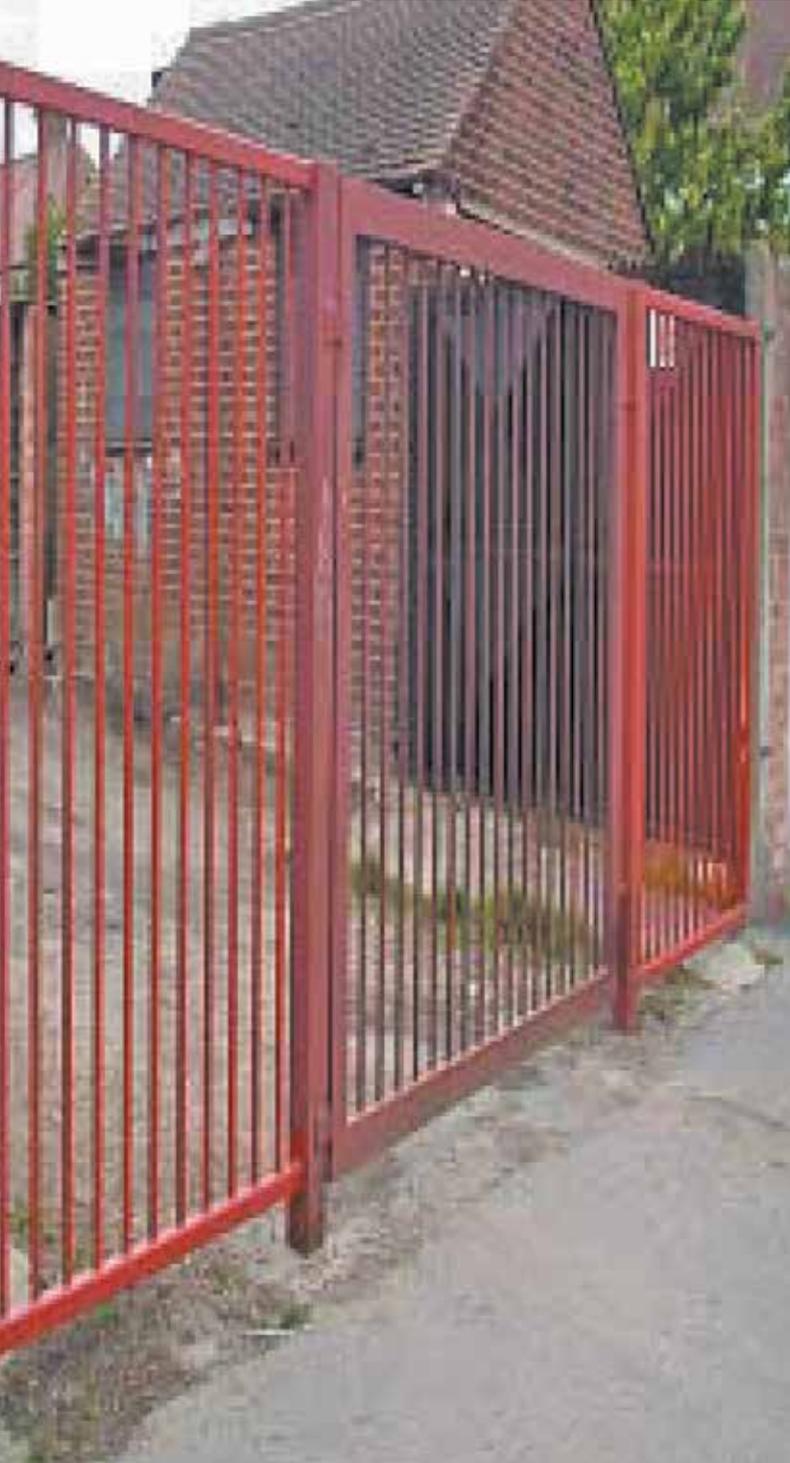
Made to measure

- If you require a more effective anti-climb gate there will be a higher initial cost.
- Hinges have to be fitted opposed to each other to prevent the gates being lifted off.

Approx cost

£1000

Steel access gate



Advantages

- High level of visibility through gate.
- Strong to very strong.
- Has a long life.
- Virtually no maintenance costs, other than painting and oiling at regular intervals.
- Can be made to measure.
- Less expensive than wrought iron gates of a similar size.

Disadvantages

- Can be expensive to have made.
- Functional looking but not the most attractive gate available.

Approx cost

£2000

Protect your area – be safe, feel safe

Garden protection

Now you have decided to install gates, it is important to make sure your perimeter fencing is also secure. Even in areas where there are no rear alleyways, where properties border open spaces such as parks, common land and railway embankments, a secure perimeter will offer protection against burglary and other crime.

We recommend homes with low walls or fences, which will have an alley gate adjoining their property, should have any gaps filled using either fencing or shrubbery to deter climbing. For examples of hostile planting contact your local police station for a copy of the leaflet “A Secure Garden”.

Merton Police recommend using square trellis for raising fences because:

- It does not look as oppressive as solid fencing;
- If a burglar attempts to climb the trellis, it can break noisily;
- It is inexpensive and easy to install; and
- Prickly plants can grown on it.

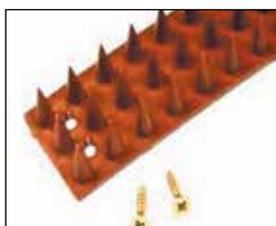
Remember that you may need planning permission to raise fences.

Include any proposed raised fencing in your planning applications for gates.

Where fences are raised as part of an alley gate scheme, every property owner must give consent in writing.

Remember, on properties where the side of the garden borders the pavement you will need to ask permission from the owners to either attach a post to their garden wall or place a free-standing post, possibly on their property, risking some disturbance to their garden.

Placing a gate at the entrance to the alleyway will stop most burglars from entering the alleyway system, but end of terrace homeowners may be concerned that this will leave their property vulnerable. To overcome this you may decide to raise these walls or fences with trellis and include this in the gating costs.



Avoid using barbed wire or broken glass, as they may injure a police officer in pursuit. Anybody injured by these materials can take legal action against you. Plastic anti-climb spikes (pictured left) are available to place on top of fences, gates and walls and come in strips of varying lengths.

The building:

A good standard of physical security is required, which means fitting key operated locks on accessible areas such as windows on the ground floor and those accessible from low or flat roofs.

Important note: make sure wooden doors are of solid timber and not rotten. When installing new UPVC doors make sure they have strong locking systems.

Lighting:

It is essential you can identify a caller at night so outside lighting is a must at the front door. It should light callers but allow you to keep out of the light. Lighting at the rear and sides of the house should follow the same principles – lighting the surrounds not the homeowner. Do not position lamps so that they shine into windows, making it difficult to see out.

Preliminary steps

It is now time to begin your alley gating project

1. Find out from the council if your alleyway is a public right of way. If it is a public right of way, you will probably not be able to gate it. Most alleyways are private property with access to all who back on to it. The public does not have a right to use private alleyways.
2. Contact the Land Registry. You can find contact details for your nearest office by visiting www.landreg.gov.uk (see page 31). Arrange an appointment to view deeds relating to your alleyway. Try to come away with a map and written details covering the ownership and rights of way over the land (alleyway). Look at your own and others' house deeds and what the general rights of access are. **You will need the consent of those who own or have rights of way over the alleyways you wish to gate. See also page 29, paragraph 1.** Please contact us and tell about your plans.
3. Talk to your neighbours and other people you know or recognise on your block. Ask if they would be prepared to put time and money into a gating scheme. Without the active support of at least a few of those affected you will not get the gates up. Aim for a group of at least five if possible.
4. If your group is based on a Neighbourhood Watch scheme you will still need to start a separate alley gating group. This is because the Neighbourhood Watch scheme will not have a constitution designed for raising money or maintaining property such as gates. However you could start a sub-committee of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme to be responsible for the gating scheme. The committee members will tend to be those who are part of the residents' group and are willing to play a greater role in planning and completing the gating project (see next section – Group meeting and planning).
5. Contact the local Crime Prevention Officers. They will give you advice on where the gates should be placed, which fences need to be raised and other crime prevention measures you should consider. Ask them to arrange for your local Safer Neighbourhoods team to contact you.
6. Contact the council's planning department to find out if you need planning permission. If you do, then make sure you treat all the gates and the fencing on the block as one application (see page 30 of this guide).

Group meeting and planning

1. Hold a group meeting of affected residents and businesses to discuss the reason for your alley gate scheme. Consider inviting the police, your local councillors and certainly other residents who back your scheme. At this meeting elect a committee chairperson, secretary and treasurer. You could also elect a minute taker. You will need to adopt a constitution when you form your group. A sample is available at the back of this guide.
2. If you have not been able to persuade enough people to join the alley gating scheme, decide which members of the newly formed committee will knock on people's doors to ask property owners who have not responded to a request to consider joining the scheme and to complete a consent form. Ask your Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team to help with this.
3. Get estimates from gate manufacturers for the type of gates you are considering.
4. Get information on types of bank accounts that can be used for your gating fund. You will have to agree a constitution before you can open a group or community account.
5. You need to contact the following organisations to make sure there are no objections or problems with installing gates. However the alley gate coordinator will normally assist you by completing these checks.
 - The water company (generally Thames Water) – to check if there are public sewers or mains pipes under the alleyways.
 - The council's Waste Operations Section – to check if there are homes that have rear collections via the alleyways.
 - Electricity (generally EDF Energy) or gas companies – to ask them to check the layout of any underground cables and pipes. Access will be needed if there are substations in the alleyways.

These checks are for health and safety reasons and must be performed as part of our grant criteria.

Information reply

As we are hoping to offer grants to people living in Merton, it is important that we are aware of any residents' associations that exist. Our **Grant Application Form** at the back of this guide is designed to allow us to issue grants to associations who meet all our criteria.

We cannot provide grants to groups that do not follow the procedures set out in this guide.

Please fill in, cut out and return this page to us once you have successfully formed a residents' association. This will allow us to better track the existence and progress of your group.

Have you formed a residents' association with a chairperson, treasurer and secretary?
Yes No

What is the name of your group? _____

Which roads do you cover with your group? (Including numbers)

Do you wish to be considered for an alley gate grant? Yes No

Please provide a contact telephone number or an email address for your group.

Name _____

Contact number/email: _____

Please
affix
stamp
here

London Borough of Merton
Alley gate coordinator
Environment and Regeneration LBM
Civic Centre,
London Road
Morden
Surrey SM4 5DX
Direct: 020 8545 4786

Fold here and staple or tape edges

Alley gate scheme in phases

Phase 1 – Land ownership and consent

1. Write a letter to your neighbours stating the reasons why you think alley gates are a good idea for your area and ask if they are interested in starting an alley gate scheme. Get their consent in writing (see sample letter on page 36 of this guide). **You must deliver this to every affected property, including any businesses.**

2. Contact the Land Registry to determine who owns the alleyway. Get written consent to erect alley gates from the landowner(s).

3. Contact your local council to find out if you will need planning permission. You should not need planning permission if the gates are on private land, do not obstruct the public highway and do not exceed 2 metres in height. If necessary, complete and return the planning application to the council. Remember to include scale drawings and maps with each application showing clearly the proposed positions of the gates, where you want fences to be raised and to what height. Include specifications of gates and how they are going to be fixed.

4. Remember to push along with the scheme and keep residents informed with your progress as lengthy projects can lose momentum.

Phase 2 – First committee meeting

1. Once you have the majority of property owners consenting to your scheme, hold an alley gate committee meeting and invite residents and property owners so that they can air their views on the scheme. Invite your local councillor and Safer Neighbourhoods team, they may be able to answer some of the questions that arise.
2. Form a committee and elect a chairperson, secretary and a treasurer, these will be the constitution members. The committee will take the lead in your alley gate scheme. They will obtain estimates from gate manufacturers, write to the utilities companies to obtain plans of the area where gates will be installed and keep residents and property owners informed on the progress of the scheme. The remaining committee members will attend meetings and help out where possible.
3. At the meeting, decide on a name for your alley gate scheme. Fill out a constitution form (see sample constitution on pages 46–49 of this guide). The name of your scheme/committee should be displayed at the top of your constitution form. The constitution and committee members' details must also be displayed.

Phase 3 – Bank account, utilities checks and quotations

1. Now that you have formed a committee and agreed your constitution, the chairperson, secretary and treasurer will need to set up a group bank account in the name of your alley gate scheme. Use your constitution as confirmation of your residents' group. The bank account will be a safe place to keep funds that you collect from residents' contributions to the alley gates.
2. Get three estimates from security gate manufacturing companies and compare the costs. Decide whether the gates will be hung on free-standing posts that are cemented into the ground or attached to the wall of the property. Ask the gate manufacturer to quote for a security locking system. This will make it difficult for people without access right to your alley to have keys copied.
3. Write to the utilities companies to check that there are no pipes or cables that are likely to be damaged when gates are installed (see also page 14 (5) and page 26 of this guide).

Phase 4 – Second committee meeting

You should by now have the consent of the majority of property owners and the estimates from gate manufacturers.

1. Hold a second committee meeting, invite all residents. You may wish to invite your local councillor and Safer Neighbourhoods team. You will have more information to give property owners and more questions may arise.
2. Discuss the type of gates that the committee members have chosen and relay the costs. Let residents know how they can make their contribution towards the scheme.
3. Discuss where the gates will be situated and how they will be installed.
4. If there are any property owners objecting to the scheme or property owners who have not responded to your scheme, discuss how this may be resolved.

You must take all objections into account

5. After the meeting, have the secretary send notes of the meeting to all of the involved properties so that all property owners are aware of progress, give a date for when you will be collecting funds to pay for the gates.
6. Write to those who did not return a consent form telling them which gates were chosen and how much they cost. Ask them to support the scheme and pay towards the gates. **Point out that without their support the gates may not go up, leaving everyone vulnerable.** Ask for replies to be within a set time period (for example, ten days).

Note: The council acknowledges that a lot of time and effort goes in to an alley gate scheme and recently undertook to play a greater part in contacting those residents who have not responded to requests for their consent (see pages 28–29).

If someone is still objecting at this point, unless it is a simple misunderstanding which you can correct, direct them to us so we can explain the scheme to them in greater detail.

7. Send another letter to affected houses asking for permission to fix gates to walls (if you have chosen this option), or dig holes for free-standing posts. If any fences need to be raised, you will need written permission from the property owner for this too (see sample letters and reply slips in the appendix). Again, ask for replies to be within a set time period. When the deadline passes, you can start chasing those who have not replied.

8. You can ask the Police to provide property marking and other security advice to people at this stage. Contact your local Safer Neighbourhoods team. Dial 101 and ask for your ward team for more information.

9. Collect funds from contributing properties on the date that you stated in your letter.

At the end of the set time for returns you should have:

- All permissions from residents and land owners and users.
- Planning permission granted (if you needed it).
- Most, if not all of the money you will need.

Phase 5 – Making and installing the gates

1. Once you have collected enough money to pay for the gates, tell your chosen company that you are ready for them to start manufacturing the gates. Tell them about any alterations you have made to the plans they gave you estimates for. Agree any difference in price only after telling your committee and getting their agreement. Once agreed, or a new firm is brought in and their price agreed, give the go-ahead.

Gates usually take 3–4 weeks to manufacture and up to a week to install.

2. Tell all affected homeowners when the gate installation will take place if known.
3. When the gates are up, inspect them with the owners whose property the posts are set by or fixed to, to ensure that everything is satisfactory.
4. After the locks are fitted, get keys cut and distribute them to all contributing residents' homes before closing the gates. Tie them open if necessary but they must not be locked until all contributing residents have a copy of the key.

If you have been helped or sponsored you could place a plaque on the gates as a thank you. Stainless steel plaques are the most durable.

Final considerations

Everyone's happy, the gates (and perhaps fences) are up, household property is marked, and it's time to sit back and relax. Almost.

Do your alleyways need to be cleared of rubbish and dangerous items? The local council is not responsible for clearing any fly-tipped rubbish from private alleyways. But talk to them as they will be able to advise on safe and legal waste disposal.

All you need to do now is agree to have the alley gating group meet every now and then to report any problems, and collect a small sum every year for repairing, maintaining and insuring the gates.

If people lose their key, or want a spare, you could charge them double the cost and put the "profit" into the gate kitty (your group bank account).

Prepare a letter explaining the scheme for people who are moving or selling their property. Ask them to give the letter to the new occupier.

If all new residents know about the scheme and get a key. This will stop the gates getting damaged by irate removals companies or builders.

Remember, people must get into the habit of shutting the gates!
Consider writing an agreement for users of the alleyway covering its use and the care of the gates.

Now you have finished. Congratulations!

Removing alleyways

Removing alleyways by extending the rear gardens of properties may seem an easy option, but we do not recommend it.

If you wish to follow this route, you need to produce a joint document and get it agreed by **all**. This document will need to state that the rights of access over the alleyway are null and void and that everyone agrees the new property lines. You will have to get legal advice to help you draw up this document. If the agreement is not legally binding, a future property owner might insist that the access route to their property be reinstated.

If you also intend to build a structure on land recovered from an alleyway you **must** apply to Merton Council's Planning Department and inform the Land Registry. The Land Registry may insist that you register these changes with them, which would cost approximately £40 for each title.

Removing alleyways is an extremely difficult and expensive task with lots of legal implications. If you choose to take this route we will be unable to help you or give you any advice.

Removing alleyways can be very difficult.

Seek legal advice.

Other costs

- Planning permission is not usually needed if you install gates further than 2m from a road and less than 2m high. If your gates exceed these measurements, or if you are unsure, then you should contact Merton Council's planning section. If you do not get planning permission, the council may insist you take the gates down.
- **Your alley gating group will own the gates once they have been installed. You will be responsible for supplying keys and repairing and maintaining the gates. All residents will share these costs, as the gates will protect all properties.** You will need separate insurance for the gates so the group will also need to collect money every year to pay for this.
- Average gating costs are shown on pages 8–10. Prices are given as a guide only. Check with your gate manufacturer to see if you can get discounts because of the nature of your project and the good publicity you are hoping to generate.
- You would be wise to ask your local police crime reduction officer for a list of approved locks and get several estimates for the type you decide on. However your chosen gate manufacturing company should be able to incorporate a registered security lock in your quote.
- When hiring commercial companies to install the gates, make sure that all the costs are included in their estimates. If ready-made gates are being installed they may need to “pack out” the posts to make the gates fit the gap. Ensure this and everything else in your specifications is included in the price, or is written fully into the estimate.
- Find out the price of extra keys and how much the locksmith will charge if you have to call them out.

Insurance

Please remember to take out an insurance policy on all the gates within a scheme. At the least, this needs to cover against third party liability.

Utility company checks

We ask groups to check with utility companies about the location of pipes and cables to ensure no damage is caused if works take place. See also page 14 (5).

These checks are vitally important to the gating process. In the past many groups have incorrectly assumed they know where gas pipes, water mains and electricity cables run. We urge groups to consider the safety elements of the utility checks. Gate contractors will need to know they are not going to hit an electricity cable when installing gateposts. Although most contractors carry detection equipment with them, it is your responsibility to provide them with the relevant maps showing the layout of things like pipes in the alleyway. At the present time (April 2018) the alley gate coordinator has free access to check electric, gas and water utilities for residents and will complete them for you if requested.

Frequently asked questions

Will the gates stop everyone getting over?

The gates are unlikely to stop all people being able to climb over but will act as a good deterrent and will make it very difficult for people to take stolen goods with them.

How will I use my alleyway?

You will be given a key to open the gates on the alleyway.

Who will get a key?

Every participating/contributing homeowner that has a right of access to that particular alleyway.

They will be given one key each; any other keys required will be available at an additional cost.

What if my window cleaner or builder needs to get to the back?

It is okay to lend your key to a tradesperson, but make sure you get it back.

Will anyone else have keys?

This will depend on your block and what you have agreed with your committee.

Possible organisations wanting keys are: Electricity substation owners, water companies, council agents or owners and landlords with properties in these blocks.

What about my key, will it open other gates?

No. Your key will be registered to the properties adjoining your alleyway and will only open the gates on your alleyway.

What about the Fire Brigade, do they agree with these proposals?

Yes. They have agreed they will use ladders to go over gates if the situation is not life threatening. If it is, they may force the gate open.

Legal aspects

Ownership of land

Sometimes the person living in a property affected by the gates does not own the property. If so, you will have to ask the owner for permission before you can install the gates.

If you are not sure who the landlord or owner of the property is, it may be possible to find out by speaking to the person who receives the rent. It may be possible to find out who owns the property yourself by carrying out a Land Registry Index Map search. This should tell you if the property is on land that is registered or unregistered at the Land Registry. If it is registered, details of who owns the land or anybody who has interests in the land will be recorded at the Land Registry, which is open to public inspection.

If the property is unregistered then only the title deeds will hold such information. The title deeds are usually kept by the owner or sometimes by their solicitor. If the property is mortgaged, then the bank will most likely hold the title deeds.

Access

Alley gates must not affect any existing rights of access. If any rights of access are infringed, a court may order that the gates are removed. This is why it is extremely important that you get the agreement of everyone who may be affected by the gates. This will not just be people who occupy properties connected to the alleyway. You also need to get written permission from every single person who is entitled to use the alleyway for access. Keep the written permission somewhere safe.

In instances where no response for requests for consent to the proposed gate(s) has been received from residents or businesses, the council will endeavour to contact the legal owners of those properties by writing to them or by placing a public notice in the local press. Where appropriate, this may be followed up by personal visits. If at the end of this process, which will last 28 days from the date of the press notice, there is still no response, then the council will approve funding as long as the number of those properties not responding is no more than 10% of the total number of properties from which consent has been requested (or 20% after continued efforts by the alley gate coordinator or lead residents of the scheme) and you have written consent from the relevant property owners to install posts on their land or affix the gate to the wall of their property.

It is important to remember that objectors may prevent the entire project going ahead. In the worst case, if you had not consulted every person or received their written permission, they could force you to remove the gates. However, the council will look to assist in negotiation with objectors to resolve concerns/issues.

It is also very important that utility companies give their permission for you to install the gates and you give them any keys they need.

Once the gates are installed, you should give keys to everyone that needs access to the alleyway. **However, the effectiveness of the gates depends upon the safekeeping of the keys and copies should not be given out unnecessarily anyone requesting a key should be directed to a committee member.**

Legal advice

If queries arise, the Citizens Advice Bureau, legal centres and private solicitors are available to help. A private solicitor may charge for their services.

Planning considerations

You can make your property more secure without involving the council's planning team. Examples include installing window locks, door entry systems, intruder alarms and planting thorny plants alongside boundary fences. However, some action you can take needs you to get planning permission.

If you want to increase the height of your boundary fence or install security gates you need planning permission if the height of the boundary would then exceed 2m. Where the boundary fronts a road you will need planning permission if it is over 1m high.

Sometimes people want to improve the security in conservation areas. The council would need to check that the alterations preserve or enhance the character of that conservation area. Planners promote the use of traditional materials (such as timber) in all areas, but in conservation areas in particular. In some cases removing or altering existing boundary walls and fences may need conservation area consent. The use of razor wire, for example, whilst proving to be a strong deterrent, might not be acceptable in design terms.

Following central government action to tackle crime, planning controls over installing CCTV cameras have become more relaxed. However planning permission is still needed in certain cases, especially where the building is a listed building or where you want to install a large number of cameras on the same building.

We advise you to always contact the council before carrying out works to alter your property or installing CCTV cameras.

The general enquiry number for Merton Council's planning section is:
020 8545 3777

The town planning staff will be happy to tell you if you need planning permission and give you advice on the suitability of the proposed works.

If you carry out work without getting the necessary planning permission, we could insist that the unauthorised works are removed. Again, it is in your interest to discuss the proposed changes with a planner before you do anything.

The Land Registry

The Land Registry is responsible for creating and maintaining a register of landowners. Anybody can get information from the register.

Is all land registered?

Not yet. Although the Land Registry has details of more than 19 million registered properties in England and Wales, there are still millions of properties not yet registered.

Who do I contact?

Croydon District Land Registry
Trafalgar House
1 Bedford Park
Croydon
CR0 2AQ

Tel: 0300 006 0411

Fax: 020 8781 9110

Email: customersupport@landregistry.gsi.gov.uk

How do I find out if the alleyway is registered?

There are several ways to find out which properties have ownership or rights of way. Performing a Title Search on an Official Copy of the Register is one possibility. You can apply for this by post using the **Form OC1** from the Land Registry.

Residents have found that it is sometimes more beneficial to visit the Land Registry office, or to phone the Land Registry and arrange an appointment with a member of their staff to talk about the land in question. You can get more information from a meeting about the area and the Land Registry staff member will be able to clarify the information. If possible, get a plan showing the extent of the alleyway.

Alternatively you can access the Land Registry website at **www.landregistry.gov.uk** to download the appropriate forms.

On the website it is also possible to do a title search (on one property) and pay online. However this will not necessarily provide you with the information you want. A search for the ownership of the entire alleyway is more specific than the ownership of one section of land.

Further information

If you would like further information about any of the services, please contact the Land Registry's enquiry team at the above address.

It is important to remember, however, that although members of the Land Registry will try to help the public in every possible way, they are not able to act as legal advisers.

Useful contacts

Alley gate coordinator

020 8545 4786

Merton Neighbourhood Watch

020 8649 3213

Merton Police

020 8947 1212 or 101

Ask for the Police station, then the department or officer.

Reporting Crime

All crimes should be reported to the Police.

Use 999 if it is an emergency.

The following numbers are for use in non-emergency situations only:

Crimestoppers

0800 555 111

Merton Council contact details

Phone numbers and staff can change. If you can't get through please dial the general number 020 8274 4901.

Anti-Social Behaviour Unit – Safer Merton

020 8274 4907 (24 hours)

Fly-tipping and graffiti

To report incidents of fly-tipping or graffiti, call the council on 020 8274 4902

Planning section

You may also visit the planning section's web page merton.gov.uk/living

Public Rights of Way

020 8545 3133



Sample letter

(Put your contact details here)

(Address)

(Date)

Dear _____

I am a member of a group of residents of *(road names)*. We are concerned at the level of fly-tipping, burglaries and other anti-social behaviour in this area. To reduce these we have started work with Merton Council on a project to gate the entrances to the alleyways.

The advantage of security gates is that all residents can still use the alleyway as before, since each house will be provided with a key. It is also possible your insurance company will reduce your home contents policy premium if we gain this extra security.

This project can only succeed if we gain the backing of those who live here, those that have the right of way and by all of us being prepared to share the cost involved. [There will be a public meeting regarding this project in *(location)* on *(date and time)*. Please attend if you can.]

We would like to know what support we have and of any concerns, so please complete and return the section below. Please note that if you are a tenant we need the agreement of the owner of the property for the scheme to go ahead. I ask you to send them this letter today, as long delays can occur contacting landlords.

Please return your voting slip by *(date set)* and do not hesitate to contact me with any queries. We would also be very grateful if you will help us to promote this scheme.

Yours faithfully, *(name)*

Please put a ring around the scheme you prefer and return to me by *(date set)*.

1. Install wooden gates. Cost per house approx. £(?) (for pedestrian access only)
2. Install metal gates. Cost per house approx. £(?) (vehicular and pedestrian access)
3. Leave alleyways without gates (please state reasons below or contact me direct)

(Continue on the back or use a separate sheet if necessary.)

Your name _____ (Capitals please)

Your address _____

Sample letter wall fixed posts

(Put your contact details here)

(Address)

(Date)

Dear _____

RE: *(insert address of property where works to be carried out)*

(Name of association – alley gating project)

If you are not the owner of this property please return this letter to us immediately with details of your landlord or whoever you pay your rent to.

Delay may lead to the gate not being installed to this property, but further into the alleyway.

Thank you for supporting the alley gating project.

As the owner of a property where the builders will need to install a gatepost we need your written permission giving us the authority to instruct them to carry out the necessary works.

The post will be fixed directly to the wall of your property, which will involve (insert brief description of work involved e.g. the drilling of four holes in the brickwork to attach the post). These works may mean builders need access to your property.

Your involvement in the alley gating project is at your own risk. However, you should remember that the gates are being installed for the benefit of your security and that of your neighbours. In any case, since you will be one of a number of people that formally instructs any builders, you will still have the right to sue them just as you would have if you were hiring them to put the gates up yourself.

We have confirmed the builders installing the gates have insurance against third party liability. They can be held liable for any damage caused through their negligence. However, the work involved is fairly straightforward and we do not expect there to be any problems.

Please sign and return the enclosed slip below. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

(Name of association)

Sample reply wall fixed posts

Permission to fix gatepost to wall

I am the owner of _____

There is/is not a mortgage over this property (please delete as applicable)

The contact details of the bank/mortgage company/building society are

I am the tenant of this property, _____

My landlord is _____ of _____

Or I pay rent to _____ (name of agent)

I authorise (*insert name of association*) to hire a firm of builders and instruct them to fix a gatepost to the wall of my property. I understand that this will include (*insert brief description of work involved e.g. the drilling of four holes in the brickwork to attach the post*).

I also grant permission for those concerned to have access to my property for the purpose of carrying out these works and any following maintenance.

I understand that the builders have the necessary insurance policies to cover them against third party liabilities, and that this agreement does not affect my rights to take legal action against them if necessary.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name _____ (Capitals please)

Sample letter free-standing posts

(Put your contact details here)

(Address)

(Date)

Dear _____

RE: *(insert address of property where works to be carried out)*

(Name of association – alley gating project)

If you are not the owner of this property please return this letter to us immediately with details of your landlord or whoever you pay your rent to. Delay may lead to the gate not being installed to this property, but further into the alleyway.

Thank you for supporting the alley gating project.

As the owner of a property where the builders will need to install a gatepost, we need your written permission giving us the authority to instruct them to carry out the necessary works.

The work will involve *(insert brief description of work involved e.g. dig a hole and prepare the foundations necessary to fix a free-standing post on your property.)* This may lead to some disturbance just inside your garden. The reason for this is that the post needs to be as close to your fence/wall as possible to ensure that it provides adequate security. (These works may mean builders need access to your property).

Your involvement in the alley gating project is at your own risk. However, you should remember that the gates are being installed for the benefit of your security and that of your neighbours.

We have confirmed that the builders installing the gates have insurance against third party liability. They can be held liable for any damage caused through their negligence. However, the work involved is fairly straightforward and we do not expect there to be any problems.

Please sign and return the enclosed slip below. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

(Name of association)

Sample reply slip free-standing posts

Permission to place free-standing post

I am the owner of _____

There is/is not a mortgage over this property (please delete as applicable)

The contact details of the bank/mortgage company/building society are:

I am the tenant of this property, _____

My landlord is _____ of _____

Or I pay rent to _____ (name of agent)

I authorise *(insert name of association)* to hire a firm of builders and instruct them to install a free-standing post on or near my property. I understand that this will include *(insert brief description of work involved e.g. dig a hole and prepare the foundations necessary to fix a free-standing gate post on my property)*.

I also grant permission for those concerned to have access to my property for the purpose of carrying out these works and any following maintenance.

I understand that the builders have the necessary insurance policies to cover them against third party liabilities, and that this agreement does not affect my rights to take legal action against them if necessary.

Signed _____ Date _____

Name _____ (Capitals please)

Sample constitution

The Association shall be known as:

and shall have no affiliation to any political party and shall be non-sectarian.

Aims

The aims of the Association are:

- To install alley gates to protect and maintain the rear alleyway.
- To operate as key holders for the alley gates.
- And all other business relating to the alley gates.
- The association will not become involved in neighbour disputes.

Membership

Membership is open to all residents who back on to the alleyway, use it for garage purposes or have a right of way over it.

Management

The business of the Association shall be conducted by a Committee of Management consisting of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and not less than three of the residents.

AGM

All office bearers of the Committee shall retire at the Annual General Meeting. They shall then be eligible for re-election. Seven members are needed at the meeting for proceedings to be valid.

Meetings

An Annual General Meeting will be held in each year to:

- Receive the report of the Committee of Management.
- Receive the financial statement to *(date)*.
- Elect office bearers.
- Carry out any other business.

The Committee of Management can call a Special General Meeting (SGM) at any time. An SGM can also be called if three voting members write to the Secretary to ask them to organise one. The Secretary will organise the meeting within 28 days of receiving the letter. Members will be told in writing when a SGM is being held at least (?) days beforehand. The letter must also state what business will be discussed.

Voting

Any member will be able to vote at General Meetings of the Association.

The Chairperson will sign the Minutes of Meeting when everyone attending has approved them. Seven members are needed at the meeting for proceedings to be valid.

Finance

All money will be banked in the name of the Association, less that amount necessary for current expenses. The Bank Account will be operated by two of the following – Chair, Secretary or Treasurer.

Matters arising

If a member wants to raise something they must write to the Committee of Management.

Constitution

The Constitution can only be altered at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Secretary must be told in writing about any intention to alter it 28 days before the AGM. At least two-thirds of the members at the meeting must approve any alteration before it is made.

Auditors

Two auditors, not members of the Committee of Management, will be elected at the Annual General Meeting.

Winding up

Members must call a Special General Meeting of the Association if they want to wind it up. At least two-thirds of the members voting at the meeting must approve the resolution. If the resolution to wind up is passed, the Association's assets will be distributed in a way that is agreed by members at the meeting when the resolution to wind up is passed. Assets will only be distributed after the Association pays and makes provision for all the Association's liabilities.

Constitution agreed and signed by:

Chair..... Print name.....

Secretary..... Print name.....

Treasurer..... Print name.....

Committee Members

..... Print name.....

Alley gate grant application

Name of person applying for grant _____

Address _____

Contact telephone number _____

Name of your association _____

Addresses of all properties that will benefit from the alley gates you are installing/number of properties protected/number of gates installed

Before we can send a cheque towards the cost of your alley gates make sure that you have carried out the following. Please note that we will not give grants otherwise.

1. Have you formed a residents' group with a chairperson, secretary and treasurer?

Yes No

2. Do you have a constitution?

Yes No

A sample is available on pages 46–48.

3. Have you opened an account in the name of your alley gating group? (Please note that we will not make cheques out to individuals)

Yes No

4. Have you checked with the council to see if there are any public rights of way within your scheme?

Yes No

5. Have you contacted the Land Registry to see who owns the alleyway? Please provide evidence of this

Yes No

6. And if it is owned by residents have you checked whether anyone else has a right of access to the alleyway?

Yes No

7. Have you checked with the council to see if you need planning permission? See page 30

Yes No

8. If needed, have you completed and sent planning applications to the council and advertised your application in the local paper? See pages 28–30

Yes No

9. Do you have signed permission from all properties and businesses affected? Please provide evidence of this (If a property is rented permission is needed from the owner.)

Yes No

10. Do you have signed permission to fix posts to walls or place free-standing posts? Please provide evidence of this.

Yes No

Sample letters are available on pages 38–45.

11. Have the utility checks been performed? See page 26 for information.

Yes No

12. Have you checked to see if any homes have rear collections via the alleyway? See page 11

Yes No

13. Do your gates conform to the specifications laid out in the alley gating guide? See pages 7–10

Yes No

If applying before you have installed the gates, please provide specifications from your gate installer and a picture if possible.

Print name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Feedback

Did you find this guide helpful?

Yes No

Were there any areas that you felt were not covered?
(Please enter comments below)

Yes No

Did Merton Council provide helpful information
and a useful point of contact?

Yes No

Feedback comments:

Please fill in, cut out and return these pages to:

Merton Council
Alley gate coordinator
Environment and Regeneration
Civic Centre (8th floor)
London Road
Morden
Surrey SM4 5DX

Data Protection information for residents assisting with alley gate schemes

The information that you collect from residents will include personal information and you should therefore take appropriate steps to use and protect this information in line with the Data Protection and General Data Protection regulations.

In certain circumstances you can share personal information with the organisations necessary to set up the alley gate scheme such as the Council or the Police. This information should not be shared with other third parties for other uses other than administering the alley gate scheme.

You should keep the information you collect in a secure place, such as a locked cabinet, and ensure nobody other than yourself has access to this information. When using this information outside of your home, you should take care in ensuring its security and preferably use a lockable bag or briefcase.

Once the alley gate scheme has been implemented, you should return all information relating to the scheme to the alley gate coordinator, who will ensure the safe and secure retention and disposal of these records.

