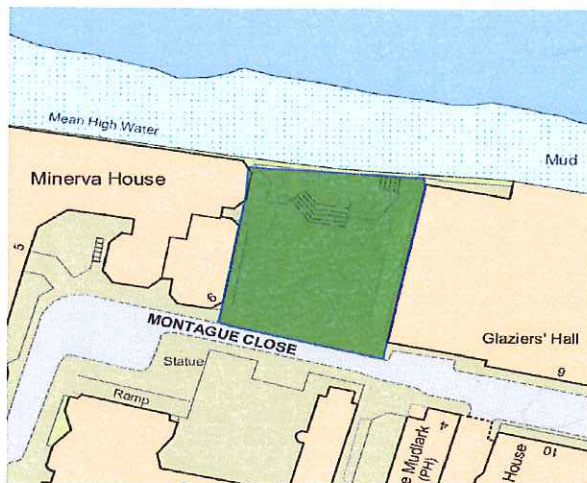


Dear Resident/Stakeholder

I am writing to you to seek your views on the proposals received from members of public that concern public access to Cathedral Square, Montague Close, SE1 (see image below). These will inform a report that we intend to take to the relevant cabinet member for formal decision shortly.



The Council has been informed that residents of adjacent flats in Minerva House have been suffering from night time nuisance from the square over a period of years. Despite a series of multi agency interventions which include extra night time patrols, a re-design of the square, signage and enforcement, the residents maintain that the only course of action open to the council is to gate the square as they tell us that night time disturbances continue. Their proposal in detail is to seek funding to erect gate posts and gates and have these closed from dusk to dawn to reflect park opening hours.

Whilst the Council appreciates that the residents are very distressed by these disturbances, the Council considers that the response needs to be proportionate. It also needs to take account of costs. The exercise of seeking stakeholders views will help officers to assess whether gating for these hours would be a proportionate solution, and indeed whether there are other solutions which may assist the residents short of this.

The Council considers that any gating would have a wider impact than just on the residents who reside in Minerva House flats. This is one of only three public open spaces along the river walk in the London Bridge and Bankside area (the others being at Potters Fields and Tate Modern). Southwark Plan policy 3.30 seeks to protect and enhance access points to and alongside the River Thames and policy 3.29 seeks to ensure that development supports an inclusive and accessible waterside. The Open Spaces Strategy agreed by Cabinet in

January 2013 recommends that Cathedral Square be protected, which reiterates its amenity value in an area which has significantly less park/open space provision per capita than other areas of the borough and in which significant growth in homes and office space is expected over the next 10-15 years.

The Council notes that the residents are not suggesting that the square is gated in daylight hours. However, apart from the revenue costs of providing an officer to lock and unlock the gates, during the winter months the square would be closed at a time when many visitors wish to visit the area and indeed during office hours as park closing can start as early as 4.30 in December.

The Council have taken advice from the police, who state 'whilst we appreciate the issues that residents of Minerva House have raised over the past year we cannot accept that there has been severe anti-social behaviour within this area nor has it been a drain on police resources'

As a local stakeholder organisation your views on this issue are important to us, therefore I would be grateful if you could write to me by Tuesday 11th March setting out your views on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Towers
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