

Subject: Re: Chester Terrace/CEPC

From: Allan murray-jones [REDACTED]

Date: 01/11/2019, 16:07

To: Richard Loftus [REDACTED]

That is brilliant, thank you so much. Your email was full of insights which sound utterly grounded in common sense.

I spoke to our in house surveyor yesterday, and I know he thinks that some of the balustrade can be repaired. As I said, I do not want to do anything in this garden which a sensible person who owned it personally (like my own house) would not do.

Best wishes

PS. Will come back about your comments on trees. My wife and I planted over some years more than 6000 in our country place with above a 98% survival rate over just over 20 years. She and I are passionate about the importance of trees, whether or not they help with 'climate change'. We are planning another 500 over the next 2 years.

Allan

On 1 Nov 2019, at 15:53, Richard Loftus [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Alan

1. Nothing yet received from CEPC.
2. Apologies if it was inappropriate to copy in Michael, but I wanted him to know what was happening as he asked me to get involved.
3. I confirm when we meet we will agree arrangements for keeping residents informed at the appropriate times.
4. I am pleased to confirm that I will assist and attend the first two working group meetings. After the first two meetings, I will decide if I want to stay on the working group and you can decide if you want me.

Warm regards

Richard

On 01/11/2019 15:11, Allan murray-jones wrote:

Very helpful, thanks

Did the CEPC staff get the papers to you?

Richard, if you take this job it needs to be clear that to the extent that you are reporting back it is to residents generally, not just to Michael or the CTRA. So I am worried about you copying Michael on emails to me. I have no problem with what you say to him privately.

But you are eminently qualified to help and I want you to do so. So please let me know when you are in a position to make up your mind on this.

Best wishes

On 1 Nov 2019, at 12:42, Richard Loftus [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Alan

Many thanks for sparing the time to meet with me.

I am grateful for your confirmation that the proposal to remove the majority of the healthy trees in Chester Terrace is not supported by all the Commissioners and would in any event meet with opposition from Camden Council. I know that many residents in Chester Terrace are not supportive.

I had a look at the balustrades and railings with my in-house surveyor and have some initial observations.

1. Balustrade in Cumberland Terrace: These were cast stone, but appear to have natural stone copings. Interestingly, the copings have weathered badly and the balustrade doesn't look as good as a few years ago.

2. The balustrade in Chester Terrace was constructed with cast concrete and, apparently, mild steel reinforcement that is rusty and visible in a few places. Some of the vertical balustrade elements (max 5%) are cracked or broken and need replacing or specialist repair in situ. There are significant gaps in the coping and all the copings need repointing. Some of the copings have lifted, which has probably been caused by the steel in some of the vertical balustrade elements rusting. Assuming one was to repair the existing balustrade then it might be worth lifting all the copings and putting a waterproof membrane under it to prevent water entering the vertical balustrade elements.

It would also be worthwhile pressure washing a section of the balustrade. I am not convinced that the replacement of the existing balustrade can be justified purely on aesthetic reasons and it will be interesting to compare the appearance with Cumberland Terrace after pressure washing a small section. There may be a case for replacing just the copings with cast stone.

3. The eastern retaining wall that supports the balustrade has 2 or 3 sections (each 10-15 metres long) that need rebuilding or reinforcing. I note that one section has concrete kenteledges which appear to be over 20 years old. They are ugly, but if the adjacent flower beds were built up or the kenteleges had some cast stone detailing applied they could remain. Additional kenteleges may be an appropriate way to replace the central section which has scaffolding supports. Note, however, that these scaffolding supports appear to be supporting the coping on the balustrade rather than reinforcing the retaining wall.

It is interesting to note that the height of the eastern retaining wall in the garden varies and the northern section looks in reasonable condition. Where the rendering on the garden side of the retaining wall has split it is apparent that some of the red brickwork has suffered significant water and frost damage.

It may be necessary to remove all the defective rendering to expose the brickwork and then decide if any sections of brickwork need replacing or whether alternative strengthening can be provided.

If the height of the earth in the flower beds is raised by say one or two feet, this might also assist in maintaining long term stability of this retaining wall.

4. Western wall in garden: As I suspected, the report by Tod Longstaffe-Gowan attempted to use the condition of the western wall and the need to lower the level of the earth as 'their justification' for removing trees and shrubbery.

There appear to be 3 sections - representing say 10-15% of the length of the western retaining wall - that have moved significantly towards the pavement. The worst section is next to the trunk of a large tree which has literally pushed the wall towards the pavement.

These three sections of the retaining wall will all need to be rebuilt.

The render on most of the wall - on the pavement side - with cracks or bulging render is in poor condition and should also be replaced.

There is no reason whatsoever to lower the general height of the earth.

Whilst the railings are modern and not in keeping with other railings, they are generally in good condition. Replacing them with the original dwarf railings would require new copings and the total cost could be prohibitive. I doubt that it could be justified and would most certainly be resisted by most tenants as any benefits are mainly to the public not the leaseholders.

5. The garden: Unquestionably, the garden needs attention and does not compare to the private garden in Cumberland Terrace. It has enormous potential for improvement.

Setting aside the issue of removing or extensively pruning some of the existing trees, I believe that most residents would support expenditure on the gardens if it will create a nice private area which they can use when the weather is suitable. Generally, I am in agreement with the proposals for more lawn, improved pathways, better planting and some furniture so the gardens can be an amenity to the residents who will be paying for these works. Very few Chester Terrace properties have any garden space.

I trust that these preliminary observations are of use.

If the CEPC does not have a suitable structural engineer, then I would recommend either Alan Baxter Associates or the Moreton Partnership. Both practices specialise in listed structures.

I did a little research on cast stone and these are some of the manufactures who appear on the internet.

<https://www.haddonstone.com/en-gb/our-materials-explained/>
<http://www.lonsdalestone.com/>
<http://www.stonecrete.co.uk/balustrades/balustrades.htm>
<https://www.caststoneuk.co.uk/>
<http://www.ilamstone.co.uk/>

In summary, my current view is:

(a) The balustrade in Chester Terrace can be repaired/refurbished, it does not need to be replaced.

(b) Selective repairs/reinforcement required for some sections of the eastern retaining wall.

(c) Selective rebuilding of sections of the western wall are required and replacing render facing the Park.

May I emphasise that my views may change after we have opened up some of the defective areas and have received specialist advice.

I would be pleased to walk around Chester Terrace with you to discuss my initial observations.

Warm regards

Richard

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Richard Loftus

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