

41 Highgate West Hill, Highgate

A justification for the design of the proposed two pairs of wrought iron entrance gates for the Gatehouse.

1. The Gatehouse at 41 Highgate West Hill was built in two stages in an Edwardian vernacular interpretation of the 'Wrenaissance' Hawksmoor baroque style, with its giant pilasters rising through two stories to a heavy brick frieze and cornice. A precedent for the gatehouse can be seen in a Hawksmoor designed terraced house in Fournier Street, Spitalfields. The design of the replacement gates reflect the period of which 41 Highgate West Hill and its gatehouse are a revival style – that of Carolean Baroque, which represents an amalgam of English building styles from the 1670's through c.1710. Once the gatehouse is restored, the brickwork cleaned, the sash windows repaired and repainted, and the strong contrast between the red brick pilasters and yellow London stock brick façade is revealed, the building will be seen to have been conceived in a grand scale, even though it was built in the economic depression of 1927 using reclaimed building materials from previous structures on the site.
2. The established historical vernacular for entranceways in the locality, notably on The Grove and South Grove, is for wrought iron gates and railings. Some of the 17th century houses in close proximity to 41 Highgate West Hill have elaborate scrolled decorative iron gates, and the proposal for the 41 Highgate West Hill gates are a more elaborate version of these, reflecting the size and grandeur of the house.
3. Harold Peto's terraced garden at 41 Highgate West Hill incorporates elaborate wrought ironwork in its design, namely in the dividing gates leading to the lower terrace, and the gatehouse gates proposal can be read as an extension of this precedent.
4. 41 Highgate West Hill's new entrance arrangement, for which planning approval has been granted, incorporates a driveway flanking a circular pond, sweeping down to a broad paved forecourt with curved ends punctuated at the corners by four pedimented brick and stone baroque pavilions. The front façade is now to be enhanced with a stone porte cochere with columns. The design of the new entrance gates is an appropriate reflection of this improved introduction to the house.
5. The new design for the gates are derived from several sources, but principally the gates by Jean Tijou of c.1693 at Kensington Palace, and the Victorian copy of the three Tijou Hampton Court sets at Petworth House, Sussex, recently restored. The two pairs of gatehouse gates to 41 Highgate West Hill would incorporate integral pilasters flanking the central panels, and an integral elaborate overthrow. The gates would be hand-made in England using traditional forging techniques, in wrought iron with screwed, collared and riveted elements, and incorporating medium-gauge repoussé acanthus leaves, scrolls and tendrils.

41 Highgate West Hill represents the Indian summer of Edwardian house building in London, a revival that prized showing off above all. It was built as an example of the British Empire barking loudly through its final years as top dog. Sir Arthur Crosfield embodied the spirit of the house builders of this era: 41 Highgate West Hill may have been a white elephant before it was completed, but the spirit in which it was conceived, reflected in the scale of its architecture and quality of the building materials it used, invites an appropriate set of entrance gates which enhance and complement this.

George Warrington



Kensington Palace Gates



Tredegar House Gates



Petworth House gates



Hampton Court Lion Gates



Hampton Court Fountain Gates