

HIGHGATE CEMETERY: REPAIRS TO THE COLONNADE

Planning issue, May 2016

PART 1A: DESIGN STATEMENT

General:

The Colonnade was constructed in 1838, and comprises a curved open loggia with vaults behind, and a flight of steps on the central axis rising some 4m to an upper ground level. Listing description attributes it to Stephen Geary, but it is widely held to be by architect J B Bunning. It is listed Grade II, Historic England ID 478234.



Condition:

Condition report following inspection in 2014 indicated that the following significant defects were manifest, and the proposed works are to address them:

- The front wall of the colonnade is on good order with minor pointing defects.



- The vault to the loggia is supported on iron beams at each column position. These are suffering surface corrosion, which is unsightly and progressive, but has not yet significantly compromised the structure.



- The rear wall of the loggia (which has burial vaults behind it) suffers from extensive water penetration, largely from the top. It has been repointed in patches in the past with an unsuitable cement-rich pointing, and has extensive areas where the pointing has failed completely. The pointing that remains is contributing to problems and is unsightly. There are numerous failed or broken bricks, some associated with the fixing of memorial plaques which have now disappeared.



- There is serious cracking at the central arch opening carrying the vault over the steps.



- The flanking walls to the steps have a large crack roughly where the vault structures behind them end and they become retaining walls

- The pointing to the flanking walls is degraded similarly to the rear wall.
- The steps have suffered structural movement, which has deformed them in the middle, making the risers of very unequal height.



- The roof, in asphalt, has serious defects particularly along the rear edge, where any water penetrating it can go into the fabric of the rear wall.



Advice on structural aspects has been sought from Conisbee Consulting Structural Engineers.

Summary of proposed repairs:

The following repairs are proposed, and scheduled/specified in detail below:

- Removal of invasive vegetation
- Renewal of asphalt roofing and alterations to substructure detail of rear edge detail, abutment and flashing details etc.
- Repointing in lime mortar, to a mix derived from analysis of original mortar, of walls and parapets flanking the steps, with structural reinforcement at the cracks.
- Repairs to stabilise and mitigate damage to the steps. There are 2 options here, for a comprehensive resetting of the flight with all the risers regularised and the new fixings specified by the structural engineer concealed, and a less invasive proposal resetting just the worst affected steps but necessitating fixings which will have a visual impact on the steps.
- Repointing and brickwork repairs to rear wall of loggia in lime mortar, to a mix derived from analysis of original mortar,

- Micro-pinning repairs to cracked brick arch
- Minor repointing to vaults and front wall in lime mortar, to a mix derived from analysis of original mortar,
- Preparation and decoration of iron beams in a corrosion-inhibiting paint coating.

The Highgate Cemetery trust will check the Listed Building Consent status with London Borough of Camden, but all of the above constitute careful conservation repairs.

In addition it is proposed to erect handrails to the steps, fixed to the wall both sides. These are necessary to enhance accessibility as is appropriate to a site that is publicly accessible and to which not all visitors are fully physically able. They are to be hand-made traditional railings in forged wrought iron.

PART 1B: ACCESS STATEMENT

The colonnade building forms part of the entrance complex to Highgate Cemetery, in active use for burials and as a visitor attraction. The steps form part of the principal route into the site, but can be bypassed by a ramped route.

The steps in good condition are sufficiently accessible (given the alternative) but in their degraded state pose difficulties for the ambulant disabled and others.

The lack of handrails to the steps has been identified as an added difficulty

The proposals address both these issues, with the intention of maximising the number of people for whom the steps will afford usable access to the cemetery site.

Other aspects of the work have no impact on access issues.

Further documentation:

Part 2: Schedule of Works, tender issue May 2016

Part 3: Specification of materials and workmanship, tender issue May 2016

Engineers notes March 2016

Drawings 968/ 01, 02, 03, 04, 05

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