

HIGHGATE CEMETERY: PAVING WORKS AROUND THE KARL MARX MEMORIAL

Issue for Listed Building Consent 11th October 2017

PART A: DESIGN STATEMENT

General:

Karl Marx was buried in Highgate Cemetery in 1883. His remains were moved to the present grave site in 1954 and the monument erected in 1956. The sculpted bust of Marx is by Laurence Bradshaw, who also designed the plinth.

The tomb of Karl Marx and Family is listed Grade I, first listed in 1974.

Setting:

The memorial to Marx is set back from a wide metalled path a distance of some 3m. The base of the memorial includes a plinth and paved surround approx. 2.7m square. This is in a pale grey granite, with a precisely cut and finished character.



There are graves and lesser monuments close beside the Marx tomb on three sides.

The area in front of the Marx memorial has been paved informally with riven York Stone paving slabs of random size, set crudely on a minimal subbase so that they are now irregular in their juxtaposition and levels. These slabs were a pragmatic response to the erosion of ground surfaces around the monument caused by footfall of the numerous visitors. Some loose gravel surrounds the slabs and unstructured grass and other ground cover plants struggle to establish themselves around and between the various finishes. The ground surfaces between the memorial and the path remain eroded and unsatisfactory. The uneven paving slabs and the edge of the metalled path present some trip hazards and an appearance and setting unworthy of the status of the monument.

A low steel railing existed in front of the memorial until 2016. This was not part of the designed ensemble and was of low quality. It was removed as a visual intrusion and a H&S liability. There is no intention to reinstate a railing.

Requirements:

The Highgate Cemetery, with the Marx Memorial Library (who are the legal grave-owners) seek to enhance the setting of the memorial whilst making the site more resilient, safer and more convenient for the numerous visitors. The scheme has been prepared to meet these requirements without challenging the primacy of the memorial in its relationship to the wider environment.

Design:

It is considered necessary to provide a robust and properly formed surface between the memorial and the path. A design has been prepared and selected that has a new regular and rectangular, (nominally) level, paved area reflecting the level and dimensions of the existing plinth surround and extending close to the path at the nearer corner. The tapered and sloping margin between this paving and the path will be finished in a self-binding gravel to the necessary contour.

It is considered appropriate to match the material (granite) but not the colour and texture of the existing memorial base. The choice of a black granite with a flamed finish will ensure that the composition of the memorial itself is not challenged.

On the other sides of the memorial it is proposed to remove the York Stone paving slabs and gravel and to plant ground cover plants that will bring the natural landscape right up to the base of the memorial. This will form a more dignified setting for the memorial itself, and will act as a natural constraint to visitors who will be able to approach the plinth across the new paved apron.

PART B: ACCESS STATEMENT

The contours of the ground, the primary consideration of the setting of a Grade 1 listed structure and the character of the Cemetery as a whole makes it inappropriate to design the new landscaping and finishes solely to accessibility criteria. The proposals will enhance the ability of those of limited mobility to approach the monument, and does nothing to reduce the accessibility up to the edge of the metalled path.

Further documentation:

Drawing 968/M/01A plan as existing
Annotated photograph as existing
Drawing 968/M/02B plan as proposed
Annotated photograph as proposed

John B I Scott RIBA AABC

*Oliver West & John Scott Architects Ltd
The Studio, 3A Bath Road, Bedford Park, London W4 1LL*

www.westscottarchitects.co.uk
020 8995 4275
studio@westscottarchitects.co.uk