

HIGHGATE CEMETERY:

WORKS TO CHESTER ROAD ENTRANCE

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PART A: DESIGN STATEMENT

General:

Highgate Cemetery opened in 1839 on the 17-acre site that lies to the west of Swains Lane. By 1854 it had become sufficiently fashionable, popular and profitable that it acquired a further 19 acres to the east of Swains Lane, and opened in 1860 what is now known as the East Cemetery. After a period of decline in the latter part of the 20th Century, the operation of the cemetery was taken over by the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust in the late 1970s, and it is still run by them as a working cemetery, a visitor attraction, a sanctuary for wildlife and an environmental amenity.

East cemetery gates and boundaries:

The street boundaries to the East Cemetery are formed with low walls surmounted by impressive iron railings, to a height in places of over 3m. Major entrances with gates are provided to Swains Lane in the north west corner, and Chester Road near the south end of the east boundary.



The gates to Chester Road offered both vehicular and pedestrian access through a total of four gates, with an impressive sweep of railings either side of the four large gate piers.

Half of the symmetrical ensemble is shown in the photograph below.



Access:

The access to the West Cemetery is by arrangement and guided tour only. The East Cemetery is on more open ticketed access during the day from the Swains Lane entrance only. The gates to Chester Road are kept locked except for authorised service access.

Needs:

The Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust wishes to provide better access to the East Cemetery for grave owners and local residents. There are a number of recent graves in the southern part of the East Cemetery, but grave owners must go all the way up Swain's Lane and then down the main path inside the Cemetery to reach them. This will save them a considerable trek. It will also make it easier for those arriving by the C11 bus, which stops just outside the Chester Road entrance. For elderly or disabled visitors and those living south of the Cemetery this will be a major improvement. The gates will also be able to be used to exit the site, and so will bring visitors to new Chester Balmore café and shops, and the Highgate Library on Chester Road. As Highgate Cemetery relies on entrance charges to fund its operations, access via this entrance must be controlled.

The proposals for the Chester Road entrance are a response to that need, and have developed from a full analysis of how it can be achieved without compromising the fundamental security and controllability of the site.

Access constraints:

To allow the reopening to selected public of the Chester Road Entrance it has to be provided with a secure arrangement for automated access by keycard, embracing both the ambulant and wheelchair users. Analysis of this requirement including expert professional advice has identified a need for a double gated enclosure to one of the pedestrian entrances, with powered gates and an interlocking arrangement of the two gates that maintains security. Surfaces need to be level and safe for all users within the norms of the access found within the East Cemetery.

Visual and Heritage Constraints:

The new access arrangements need to reflect the importance of the visual environment of the Cemetery, the streetscape of Chester Road and the status of the Cemetery as a Grade 1 listed Historic Park and Garden (Historic England ID 1000810), and as an important component of

Highgate (Camden) Conservation Area. The East Cemetery houses a number of individually listed tombs, but none are directly affected by the proposals. The boundary walls, railings and gates to the East Cemetery are not listed, but are recognised here as an Undesignated Heritage Asset.

Design:

Options have been considered for the secure enclosure required for the double gated access, and proposals are favoured which reflect the character of the historic gates and railings. All parts of the existing gates ensemble are retained, and the materials, details and appearance of the proposed additions are carefully specified to match them.



All of the proposed works will be carried out using traditional materials and building methods appropriate to an historic structure, including forged iron and steel work, reclaimed and matching bricks and new stonework laid and pointed in lime mortar and traditional natural materials for paving.

PART B: ACCESS STATEMENT

Access to the cemetery for all will be enhanced by the proposed changes, which reflect current guidance in respect of surface treatment, access operation etc and which will be compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations.

Further documentation:

Location plan. Note that the 'red line' site is limited to the area of the works proposed. The blue line shows adjacent areas controlled by the applicant.

Drawings 968/E/01, 02B, 03, 04, 05 plans and elevations as existing and as proposed

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