

Filenote 018a_Keats' poetry and proposal for the new entrance

Project: **Keats House**
 Job No: 702
 Author: PV
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 Subject: Keats' Poetry and the Proposal for the New Entrance to Keats House and Garden

This note is a further explanation of the architectural development of the identity and presence of the proposed gates in relation to Keats, his work, Keats House and his Garden. It is to complement the wider architectural and planning policy description described elsewhere in the submission.

1.0 Keats and his poetry

- 1.1 Keats is one of the great British Romantic poets. He sits alongside Byron and Shelley of the same period even though he died only at 25 years old. He wrote the 'Ode to a Nightingale' at Keats House, inspired by a singing nightingale outside. It is believed he sat under the still existing Mulberry tree while writing it.
- 1.2 Keats believed he had made no literary mark in his lifetime and while dying, he wrote to Fanny Brawne in February 1820, *"I have left no immortal work behind me – nothing to make my friends proud of my memory – but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd."*
- 1.3 Appreciation of his work and significance grew posthumously, and he became revered as the great sensory poet. His work was supported by Tennyson and the Cambridge Apostles and he inspired the pre-Raphaelites including Rossetti. In the [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) of 1882, Swinburne wrote *that the Ode to a Nightingale, [is] one of the final masterpieces of human work in all time and for all ages* and later it was stated that the odes *are a group of works in which the English language find ultimate embodiment*. And for 'To Autumn' [Bate](#) stated: *Each generation has found it one of the most nearly perfect poems in English* and M. R. Ridley that the ode *is the most serenely flawless poem in our language*.
- 1.4 'Ode to a Nightingale' is said to have been written under the still existing Mulberry tree in the gardens at Keats House today and 'To Autumn' shares Keats' love of England and the garden at Keats house is believed to have had fruit trees (see CMP p71).

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

*First stanza of "To Autumn",
 September 1819*

- 1.5 The growth of his importance saw public subscription (mostly from U.S.A.) save the house and garden from redevelopment in 1920-21 and it opened as a public memorial and museum accordingly.

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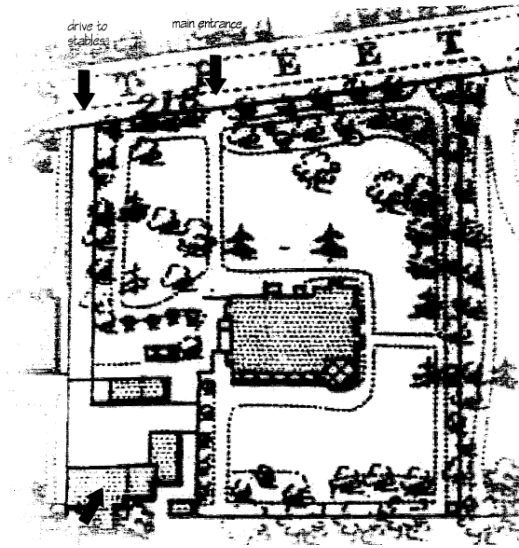


Fig. 1) Reconstruction of 1866 plan, prior to stables (in bottom left) being replaced with the library. The back entrance (at the bottom) has now disappeared by enclosure by other properties. The entrance to Keats House (right hand side of two semi-detached houses) is entered from NE (top right). Today is the largest and the main entrance for visitors. Visitors arriving from the coach park come from this direction for example.

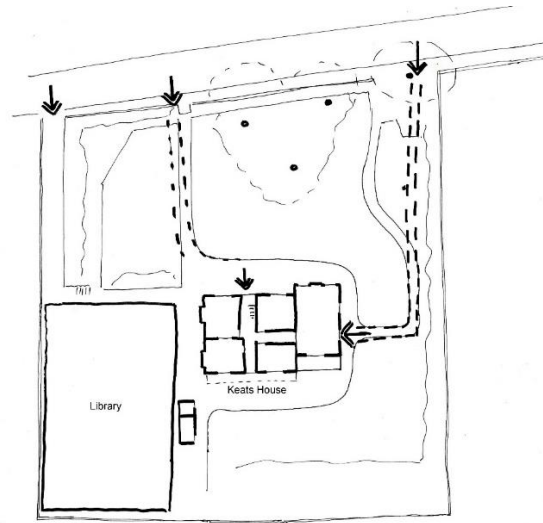


Fig. 2) Site Analysis - Historic Main Entrances remaining.

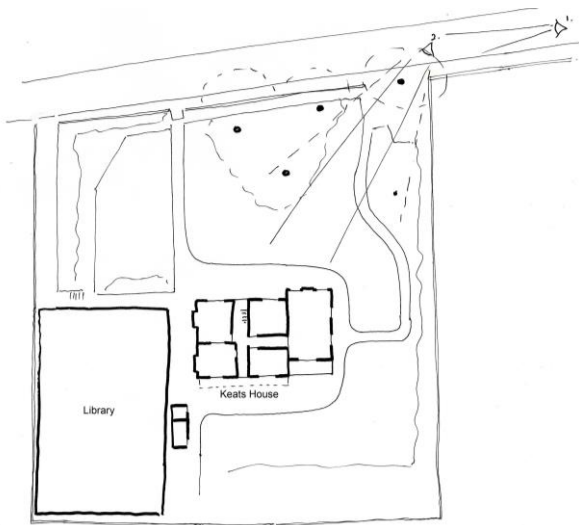


Fig. 3) Site Analysis - Enhanced views from current main entrance.

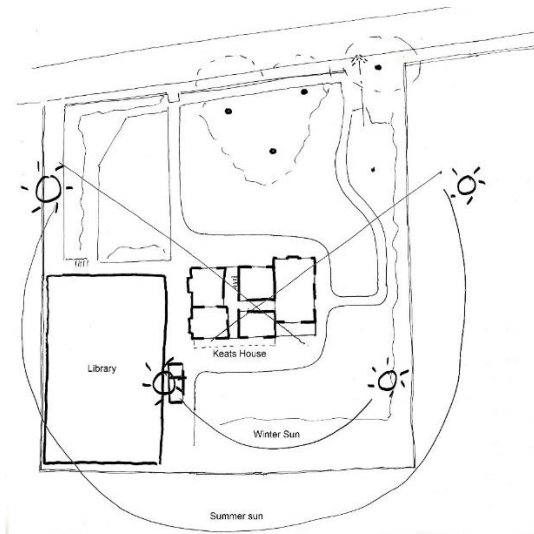


Fig. 4) Site Analysis - Sun Paths. Sun through NE entrance demarks NE main entrance today. (See also fig. 5)

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2.0 Design of the entrance

- 2.1 From the other elements of the submission, see email 702/B02/E025_2017/6570/PRE for reference, the existing NE gates are:
- Not original or in the style of the original
 - Not Intended to be a service gate.
- 2.2 Originally the building we call Keats house today was two semi-detached houses. The original gate to the NE corner of the garden was the main entrance to Keats house. The house was semi-detached and Keats lived in the east house. Keats House as we know it today is quite different having been knocked into one house and extended (eg conservatory and library to the east side). See figs 1 and 2.
- 2.3 The original gate that served Keats' half of the house shares with today that it was the main entrance. Today it is a wider opening serving its main function as a public gate through which most visitors (over 30,000 p.a.) arrive.
- 2.4 The intent has been to enhance the setting of the house as a museum and its arrival.
- 2.5 Initial designs picked up on the fact that views of the house and its garden (including the famous Mulberry tree) can be improved with a better, wider opening, which can also frame and set off the lime tree better. The tree is currently attached to the existing unoriginal timber gate and fence. This approach has been reviewed and is supported by the planning officers. See fig 3.
- 2.6 The presence of this main entrance is also seen as best presented by using the light that comes through from the south onto Keats Grove. See figs 4 and 5.
- 2.7 This has set the scene for and allowed a subtle intervention rather than a conspicuous entrance, eg projecting and with a colourful graphics approach. The aim is to create a physically robust and appropriately significant yet subtle design for the public visiting (many from abroad) yet retain the 'quiet' of the gardens.
- 2.8 There is existing signage for the gates currently which is "stuck" on and looks stuck on and the identity of the main entrance is poor, rotting (as identified in the Conservation Management Plan), is used and treated as the service entrance, and not enhancing the setting, as further described above. It is also not original in style or material.
- 2.9 Initial designs for the new entrance picked up on the tree stepping behind it with a mesh behind the tree and cut outs in another panel, both letting dappled light through to mark the entrance even when closed.
- 2.10 The representational challenge has been one of how one represents the rhythm and structure of Keats' poetry without resorting to merely printing words. Using words is a fashion and so not unique to Keats and the words merely 'literal' in the true sense. The aim was to try to create a direct sensory experience to Keats' poetry.
- 2.11 The branding information for Keats House includes a typeface for it and also particular quotes and representations for the more popular poems e.g. with images of an Urn (referencing 'Ode to a Grecian Urn') or Nightingale and tend to revolve around the more sentimental lines. These are printed on the various items such as brochures for events, etc. The curator was keen not to have these on the entrance but reserve them for the inside of the museum.
- 2.12 The third panel in the first design also had an embossed timeline for Keats' life with some of the branding icons against particularly important periods (e.g. time at East Side of the house, when various poems were written).

This was also seen as too explicit and to be reserved for the inside of the museum and was omitted.

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2.13 The cut outs of the words lengths in rectangles only were seen as:

- a) a strong way to communicate Keats' poetry rhythm and structure without being literal;
- b) at the same time, it allowed light through and reference its dappled light for the trees and allow the sun's signature (and Keats' through the cut outs) to light the path through the rectangular cut outs;
- c) also allowed some possibility for intrigue and unfolding interest by providing through it peeks of the house and garden, including the Mulberry tree under which it is believed he wrote the Ode to a Nightingale, whilst still providing the necessary barrier when closed.(See figs 5-11.

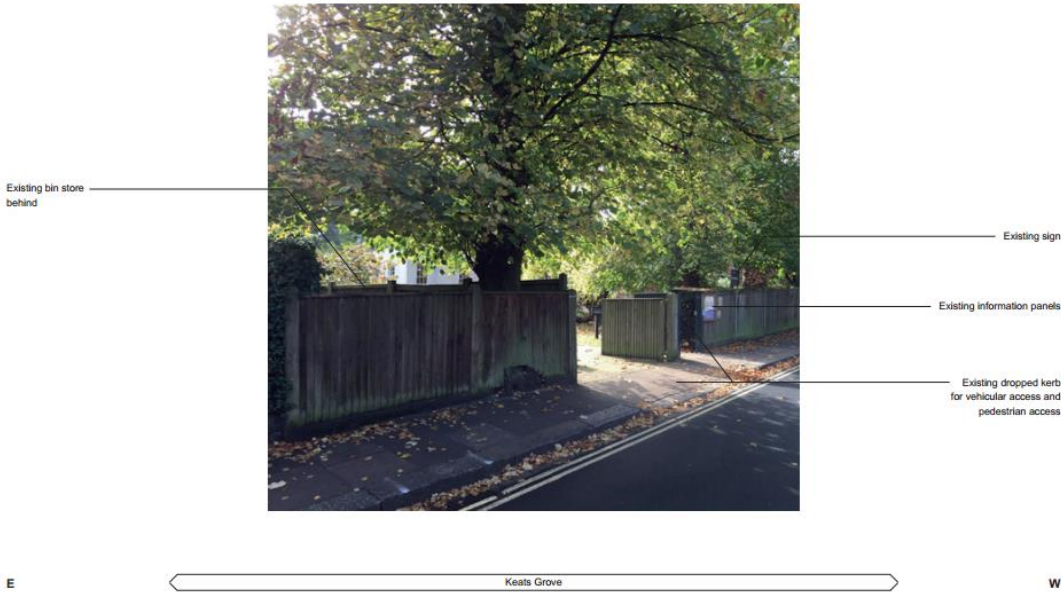


Fig. 5) Existing view. Sunlight demarks main entrance.

1. NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION. Do not measure from this drawing. All dimensions to be verified on site. Please note that for any construction, demolition, fitting, installation etc., pricing or costing a detailed survey of the related work is to be taken.
 2. This is an indicative proposal only and subject to all statutory requirements. Input will be required from Structural and MEP engineers.

Metal cladding slots from e.g. "To Autumn" to allow light and views through gate when gate is closed. Each slot length defined by word length in Keats' "To Autumn"



Proposed - East Entrance from Keats Grove OPT4b NTS @A3

A_303 Nov 2017

Fig. 6) Proposed entrance from Keats Grove. Proposed entrance steps back, improving the setting at the existing line tree. Signage is minimal. Enclosure (e.g. for security) is retained and some permeability to allow views and light through. The material proposed is a dark "autumnal" colour, referring to "To Autumn" poem by Keats, as well as being subtle and robust. The perforations are created from cutting out the words of the same poem 'to autumn' see top right of image figs 9-11.

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Fig. 7) Proposed Entrance from Keats Grove. View when pedestrian access is open.



Fig.8) Proposed entrance from Keats Grove. View with open pedestrian view of house and Mulberry tree (right of the Lime tree) and vehicular access.

2.14 The next stage of design development was to simplify the language of the gate and replacing the more commercially used mesh behind the tree with rectangular cut outs of another poem by Keats. Thus, further integrating the design. The step around the tree was also removed so the gate was in one line behind the tree. See fig 6.

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- 2.15 The signage itself has the name of the house integrated in the correct typeface with a material to match that behind it, but with different texture and relief. Similarly, the brochure holder is more integrated than the current one. See fig 6 bottom right image.
- 2.16 The material of the gate was chosen as an 'Autumnal', dark material, referring to Keats' seasonal "To Autumn" and also 'stepping back' in terms of colour, providing a robust signified entrance. Figs 6 to 8.

To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
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Fig. 9) Section of poem "To Autumn."

Fig. 10) Blocked out section of poem "To Autumn.

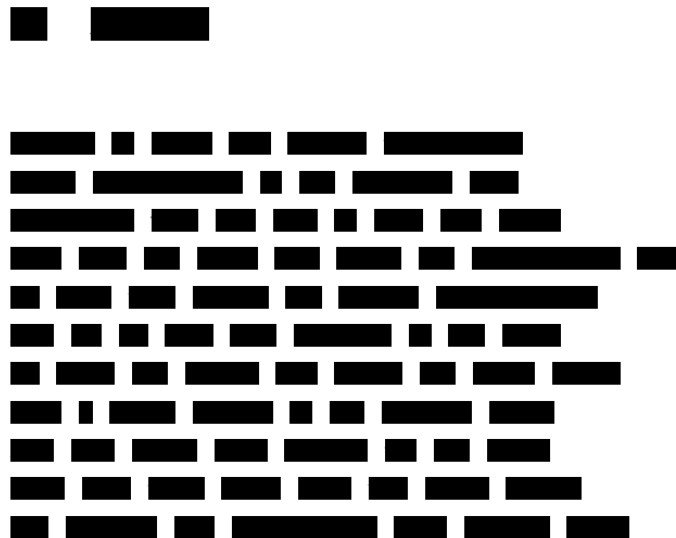


Fig. 9) Creation of perforation sizes based on section of the poem "To Autumn" by Keats.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Keats holds the most significance on the street. The street is named after him (Keats Grove). Clearly, he is known and most appreciated for his work around the world and across ages and this is drawn into the design of the proposed entrance to reinforce and enhance the setting where he wrote one of his most famous poems and other pieces. The design has been carefully curated and paired back to suit the intimacy of the garden and direct expression of the poetry's rhythm and structure.
- 3.2 We hope this explanatory is useful in conveying what has been a careful and appropriate pairing back to a unique, subtle and appropriate design befitting Keats, his house and garden. END