



The Heath & Hampstead Society

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The Society examines all Planning Applications relating to Hampstead, and assesses them for their impact on conservation and on the local environment.

To London Borough of Camden, Development Control Team

Planning Ref: 2019/1518/L

Address: 10 Keats Grove NW3

Description: Replacement of pedestrian and vehicular gates to northern elevation; relocation and rebuilding of bin store; landscaping works to include paving and replacement ground lighting; cycle parking provision; external WC refurbishments and associated works to ground of Grade I listed building

Case Officer: Samir Benmbarek

Date: 10 April 2019

This is potentially an interesting proposal. The key move of opening up the garden to the street is an attractive idea, and importantly also offers a moment of spatial generosity back to the streetscape. However, this opening up does need to be balanced against potentially undermining the quiet enjoyment of this tranquil garden. We are concerned if the intention is that cars are to be admitted.

The new gates themselves do need to be designed to the highest standard to do justice to its setting and Keats' legacy. The detail & execution of this project will be absolutely critical to its success and at present the proposals are not sufficiently convincing in this regard.

1. The proposed design is understandably aiming to assert its presence on the street but we question the need to draw attention to the entrance to this degree; the essential move of opening up the gates will do the important work already. At the moment the design appears overly brash and more subtlety is needed in the design of the gates

2. The choice of material will be critical. The large flat metal surfaces will be prone to distortion and damage, and so need to be physically and visually more robust. The material chosen should patinate or at least age gracefully over time, as the surrounding fence has done. We are also concerned that the new gate will contrast too greatly with the timber fence which is being left in its current state, and potentially make it seem shabby by comparison.

The proposal is to use a powder coated or anodised finish with a bronze effect, and reference is made to an 'autumnal' colour; this is too vague. In this context there is a real danger that this will look affected or just naff. The design is trying too hard to be something that it is not- surely an anathema to Keats? Better by far to use a solid metal finish with its own integrity and depth of character, perhaps a dark weathered bronze if it can be afforded. If a paint finish is to be used, it should be dark in colour and plain. It may in fact be better to use a more

traditional material in a contemporary way, for example well made and crisply designed timber gates could work well.

Whatever material finish is ultimately proposed, photos should be provided showing an example of it in close up detail. Camden must then require physical samples to be provided as condition to any approval.

3. The proposal uses morse code-like slots abstracted from a Keats Poem, intending that the it will cast dappled light within, and that the observer will look through Keats' words at his world. We are not convinced this idea will be read or understood as intended- the slots are too low to produce a dappled effect very often given the north facing location, though their rhythm might evoke the notion of poetic metre to some observers. The detail design of cutouts would need careful calibration; the metal itself would have to be thick to remain both robust and aesthetically satisfactory. In another context, or executed with more verve, this concept might work but here it is unconvincing.

4. We don't see any justification for sliding gates, they are out of style and mood for both Keat's House (which is very modest and was never grand , let alone grandiose) and Keat's Grove.

5. Is the pavement lighting really necessary? Less is more and lighting is often overdone. The garden light fittings proposed (13.1 EGL01 - Floor recessed light fittings to access and path and 13.2 EGL02 – Floor recessed light fittings to signage) are both fitted with bulbs of 4000K. This is rather bright/blue for use in an outside area and would be contrary to Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan. The two other proposed garden light fittings do not come with bulbs, so there would need to be an undertaking as to what bulbs - particularly their Kelvin value - were used, in order that it should be human and wildlife-friendly after dusk. Policy NE4: Supporting biodiversity: *In order to enhance biodiversity, development proposals will be encouraged to use restrained exterior lighting in low blue content white or yellow light only.*

As it stands please refuse, but encourage further development of the design.