

HIGHGATE WEST CEMETERY:

PROPOSED WORKS TO NORTH WEST BOUNDARY WALL

Draft 3 issue July 2019

PART A: HERITAGE 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.

West cemetery boundaries:

The boundaries to the East Cemetery are formed with brick walls of varying height, those to the exposed street boundaries being high. The principal entrance is to Swains Lane, with impressive railings and piers around the entrance building built with a chapel each side of a formal entrance arch.

The north west boundary abuts the rear of gardens to houses in South Grove and Bacons Lane. The run of wall is interrupted by the east wall of St Michaels Church and the adjacent Church Hall. A large section of it runs immediately behind the terrace formed by the roof of the Catacombs, seen to the left of the photograph below.



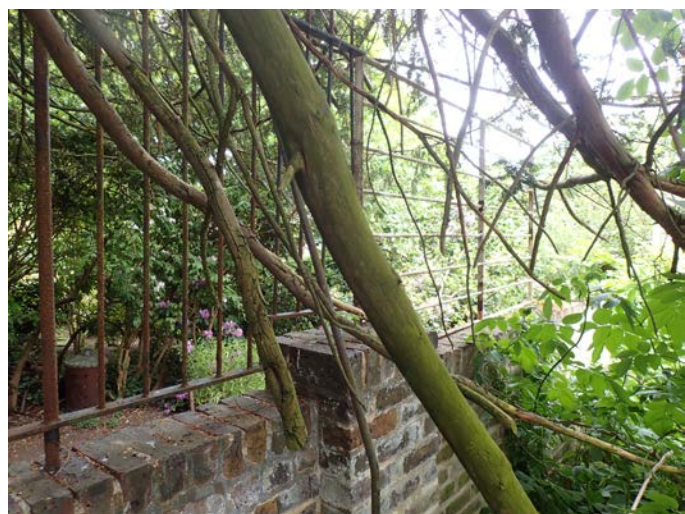
In response to historic security issues several of the properties outside have augmented the wall, which is here only about 1.8m high and eminently climbable, with various additions. To the boundary of the Old Hall there are railings, to the adjacent No 4 Bacons Lane there is rickety wooden trellis. To No 5 Bacons Lane there is nothing above the wall, but the wall is higher due to the ground levels changing on the cemetery side. It is understood that the additional works to the lower walls reflect a real or perceived security issue to the owners of neighbouring houses.



Existing fabric: assessment and significance

Wall: The boundary wall has consistent materials and character (stock brickwork laid in English garden wall bond with reinforcing piers and a plain brick-on-edge capping) but the age of the brickwork to the existing wall differs along its length, due to successive repairs and rebuilding of sections in the past. The section that is the subject of this application is clearly of 20th century construction, with a construction joint to older fabric just beyond it to the north and east. It is not of high significance for its materiality, but is an integral part of the cemetery site and has corresponding significance as such.

Railings: The railings to the Old Hall boundary are of traditional construction and character, relatively light in construction with very plain detailing. Whilst clearly not historic fabric... they probably date from the last quarter of the 20th century... they have traditional and appropriate character and are well patinated. The railings are formed around existing mature trees in places. These are not of significance in themselves but do not harm the character or significance of the site and are an appropriate response to a security need.



Trellis: the trellis erected above the wall section that is the subject of this application is of very temporary construction. It comprises prefabricated panels of a type widely available from garden centres, crudely erected and now in a poor state of repair. It is neither appropriate nor satisfactory in construction or appearance, and it is a negative feature in terms of significance.



Statutory protection:

The whole Highgate Cemetery site is listed Grade 1 in the Register of Historic parks and Gardens. Within it are a number of listed building, including part (but not this part) of the boundary wall. Listed buildings close to the affected length of wall are The Catacombs and terrace (II*), St Michaels Church (II*), The Old Hall (II*) and a number of tombs. Of these only the Catacombs and Terrace (II*) are close enough for their setting to be potentially affected by the proposals.

PART B: DESIGN STATEMENT

Needs:

The owners of No 4 Bacons Lane consider it essential to enhance and maintain the security of their boundary to the cemetery. In order that the work to the boundary is visually and constructionally coordinated the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust has taken on the implementation of this initiative.

Design:

The proposals are for the replacement of the substandard trellis with a railing to match that adjacent. The railing is carefully detailed to reflect the traditional character of the wall and setting, and of plain design such that it will be a recessive feature.

Other options were considered but an extension of the existing and satisfactory design feature was considered the most appropriate.

The appearance of the boundary wall will be enhanced by the proposed changes, and no harm will result from the works proposed.

PART C: ACCESS STATEMENT

Access:

The access to the West Cemetery has been by arrangement and guided tour only, but a trial period of unescorted access by ticket is under way. Nonetheless there are breaches to the security from time to time and the management of the site are in a state of constant vigilance.

Proposals:

The proposals have no bearing on the accessibility of the site.

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-B-01, 02, 03 include plans and elevations as existing and as proposed. Drawing 968-B-04 shows details of the proposed railings.

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