

HCAAC's objection in relation to HGY/2022/4251

This is the objection of the Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee ("HCAAC") to application HGY/2022/4251 for listed building consent for the following works to the boundary wall to graveyard, Highgate School, North Road, London:

"Repairs to boundary wall including structural elements to ensure safety. Redecoration and repair of railings. Installation of movement monitoring."

We have considered the Heritage Statement and Schedule of Works prepared by Donald Insall Associates and believe that, subject to what we say below, the proposed works are appropriate.

Unlike the setting of the proposed works to The Bank (HGY/2022/2801), the "green" setting of the graveyard warrants the choice of invisible green paint for the railings. As noted by the leading historical paint specialist, Patrick Baty, in his paper "The Use of Colour on Architectural Ironwork 1660-1960":

"Towards the end of the eighteenth century a dull dark green produced by grinding yellow ochre and black into a lead white base can be found on ironwork. The resulting colour was termed "Invisible green"

"...so denominated from its being proper for covering gates and rails in parks, pleasure grounds, etc. by rendering them in a measure invisible at a distance on account of its approximation to the hue of the vegetation" (Crease, 1808, 12).

Despite what we have said above, we are extremely concerned that no reference has been made to the health and safety aspects of what is being proposed. Whilst the Schedule of Works refers to the need for care in respect of the graves, there is no mention of the risk to operatives and the general public of exposure to diseases.

We are aware of the archaeological findings at St Luke's Church, Old Street, Islington (see, the report by Angela Boyle, Ceridwen Boston and Annsofie Witkin of Oxford Archaeology at <https://iso.co.uk/images/pdf/Oxford%20Archaeology%20Report.pdf>).

The archaeological team at that project had to dig up the bodies next to the wall, wearing PPE to protect against small pox (as no one below a certain age is vaccinated against it) and, potentially, the plague. The bodies were carefully taken away by a specialist firm (Necropolis) and reburied in a safe place. It is an extremely difficult operation which needs fully to be considered by the Council to protect not only those working on the site, but also the general public.

The application should not be granted until such time as this serious health and safety concern has been addressed and consulted upon.