

GARNSGATE HALL.

Proposal to Upgrade the Landscaping around the House

Design and Access Statement

Background / Introduction

Garnsgate Hall has a Grade II listing status. It is a handsome early Georgian style Manor House of distinctive handmade brick facades and garden walls. The house has recently and is still in the process of undergoing sympathetic restoration work by the current owners. Recent approved planning applications include H12 1086-13 and H12 0031-14.

Previously part of the neighbouring farm, the grounds currently include approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre of lawns together with a paddock area, stables and outbuildings. The handsome period frontage to the east elevation is enhanced by distinctive brick walls and traditional iron railings. The garden walls historically extended along the northern property boundary beside an existing field, this wall having been demolished sometime in the last century. The essence of the landscape proposal is to re-instate the brick wall with materials and construction sympathetic to the original and existing structures, and to provide paved surfaces and spaces to the rear of the house that offer practical functional spaces that are sympathetic to, and enhance the character of the architecture and setting.

Involvement

A pre-application has been made on April 9th 2014 (ref PE00289-2014) supported by photographic records.

DESIGN ASPECTS

Re-instatement of Brick Perimeter Wall

Impressive brick walls including a large partition wall connecting to the south east corner of the house, and a boundary wall adjacent to the highway (Lutton Garnsgate) to the east of the house complement the distinctive brickwork of the house facades. A short return on the boundary wall at the north east corner of the site evidences the previous extension of the wall along the northern boundary line. A 2.0 metre stretch of wall remains which then disintegrates amongst scrub and hedgerow. It is proposed to install a new wall in a similar style of construction using new handmade bricks that complement the existing material of both the garden walls and house facework. The proposed wall will include piers at appropriate intervals to match the existing, and will extend for approximately 37.0 metres along the northern property line. Historic aerial photographs confirm the previous extent of a similar structure. This will re-create a 'walled garden' feature adjacent to the house appropriate to the classic layout of the period of such a house. The household will benefit greatly as house is exposed to the busy A52 adjacent to the field. Similarly the setting of the house will be improved by the restoration of the wall structure. The existing hedgerow is overgrown and in a state where it is bare / woody at a low level (up to 1,5m) and has a canopy that is now unmanaged. As a hedgerow it is of no use and will be removed along the extent of the proposed wall installation. Beyond this the hedgerow plants will be selectively thinned and pruned to allow a ongoing management, a 2.0m high timber fence will be installed adjacent to the hedge line to introduce a functional boundary screen to the property and the nearby highway.

The wall to the eastern property boundary adjacent to Luton Garnsgate will be retained together with the wrought iron railings. A 4.0m panel of fencing exists within the length of the wall, this will be replaced by similar new wall structure to restore the original extent of the wall.

Paved Surfaces

The west (rear) elevation of the main house is dominated by an eclectic array of windows and impressive chimney breasts. An existing paved surface immediately adjacent to the house utilises unsympathetic pressed concrete slabs and bares no contextual or proportional relationship with the character of the house. It is proposed to remove the existing paving and replace with a combination of paving and formal planted beds that will provide a bolder and more characterful layout that will balance better with the imposing rear façade of the house. In addition it is proposed to install a new sunken terrace to the north of this which will extend to the proposed new garden boundary wall. This is intended to provide an attractive and functional space that is appropriate to the scale and character of the house. Paving materials will include a combination of natural sandstone flags and brick paviors that will be selected for paving suitability and to link with the existing architectural materials. Family activities and dining will be facilitated by this space. Enclosed by low retaining wall, planted ornamental beds and well crafted timber trellis panels, the spaces will provide a characterful setting for contemporary living whilst ensuring a positive reference to the history and styling of the house and its features. A formal self-contained raised pool constructed of matching brickwork will provide a focal feature within the new sunken terrace area. Storm water drainage will be installed to a soakaway in the main lawn. Consideration has been given to the accessibility of the new paved surfaces which will be level with surrounding surfaces. The sunken terrace area will be accessed by steps and a paved ramp.

Soft Landscaping

Whilst proposed planting in beds adjacent to the house will utilise ornamental herbaceous combinations, existing shrub and tree copses around the garden will be retained with selected restorative pruning and thinning to promote the health and character of natural copses. Additional planting within these copses will be of native species such as hazel to establish an attractive natural copse effect.