



Speaking for Scotland's Buildings

Service Manager - Planning
East Lothian Council
John Muir House
Haddington EH41 3HA

11 April 2017
Your Ref: 17 /00258/LBC
My Ref: 17.08 [EH41 3NT]
Allied case:

Dear Sir

Thank you for giving the Society the opportunity to comment on the following planning application.

17/00258/LBC Memorial Park, Knox Place/ Station Rd, Haddington, EH41 3NT
COMMENDATION

Proposal: alter wall, erect railings & gates, demolish fence.

The Society is pleased to commend this proposal, which will enhance the special character of Haddington's Conservation Area by re-instating the ornamental cast iron railings, formerly around the Memorial Park containing the listed Ferguson Memorial, on the land between Knox Place and Station Road. These railings were removed during WW2, and replaced by a makeshift fence of angle-iron and chicken-wire, which blights the present principal view, looking west from the end of Court Street. The Memorial takes the form of a 45-foot stone, fluted Greek Doric column, on a square base with battered sides, the standing figure of Robert Ferguson of Raith M P on top, and four lifesize mourning figures at its base. It dates from about 1840 and the architect was Robert Forrest. The mature trees shading the Neo-Classical monument and the weeping figures now compose the most striking public statuary group of the burgh, only detracted from by the makeshift fence along the roadside. A 'Valentine' postcard picture records the original railings, set on a low rubble wall with a heavy, chamfered dressed stone cope, turned down at each gateway. Trefoil heads top each cast iron spear, linked by a single rail, and tubular gateposts are each topped by a sphere. The proposed new cast iron railings follow closely the evidence of photos, but propose to widen the two gateways to allow use by mechanical grass cutters, while adapting the pattern of the railings to allow double gates.

In June 2006 the Transportation Division of the Council gave due notice to the Planning Department of their intention to re-align the roadway, in order to improve traffic flow from Hope Park across into Knox Place, by cutting back by several metres the corner in front of the Ferguson Monument (Ref 06/00705/NID), and this proposed development was advertised in the press. This Society wrote a letter objecting to the proposal, which also involved the felling of some of the trees, and the re-instatement on the new boundary, of a wire-mesh fence. The letter described the scenic merits of the statuary group and shading trees, and suggested that an alternative programme could enhance the setting by re-instating the iron railings and gates shown in old photographs, while abandoning the proposed road widening.

The application seems to have been approved, but fortunately nothing was done to implement the destructive plans. Eventually a query by the Planning Officer evinced a statement from

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Highways Division, dated 16 January 2016, that the application had been withdrawn. The present application to re-instate the railings is opportune after nearly 10 years of planning blight.

Since 2006 Haddington has had the splendid example of the re-instatement of the decorative cast iron railings and gates along the roadside boundary of the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, under the guidance of the local architect Bob Heath. He found an Edinburgh foundry which still had the wooden patterns for casting the ironwork, and surviving cope stones were trenched to remove the cut-off stumps of iron, and the new spears were fixed in holes drilled into a new inset band of stone, flush with the old.

The present application's drawings were impossible to read on the Planning Portal, but the new railings should continue across the frontage of the cottage in Knox Place; and the colour for painting the railings is quite important. If evidence of the original colour is lacking, then a very dark green, almost black, (like a patina on bronze), was popular in the mid 19th century, and may be appropriate here. Modern powder-coated finishes should be avoided.

Yours

Sarah Pearce
On behalf of the East Lothian Cases Panel