

LAND AT BRANCEPETH

Heritage Benefits

1.0 Castle and Drive

The drive that passes between the gates and the castle is an anti-climax after the approach along The Village towards the gates. Beyond the gates and screen wall there is a serpentine roadway which passes around to the spectacular gateway. The gate tower is largely a 19th century building but it is flanked by towers which clearly contain older masonry.

- 1.1 The driveway itself does not look good mainly because of its condition and materials. It is a tarmac road which has been patched many times and still has potholes. This driveway is the route to St Brandon's church. The church is an important historic building and even though it lost a lot of its historic significance in the fire, the way that the church has been repaired following the fire makes it a beautiful interior and a beautiful place. This route between The Village, past the castle to the church could be made to look better by a new surface on the road. Ideally, this should be bitumen-bound gravel. It must be laid at the right time of the year to be effective but, ideally, the character of the approach should be of a gravel drive with soft edges to the verges.

Planting should be allowed to grow over the edges but define the drive with a reasonably straight line. The current vegetation along the edge is weeds and nettles with some rhododendrons. More specimen planting and more flowers would improve the character of this approach.



- 1.2** The area in front of the Gate House would also benefit from a more carefully defined area of bitumen-bound gravel. The areas between the drive and the gate house is grass covered with dandelions and some weeds. This is broadly appropriate and the appearance of the area would be improved by a better road surface.



- 1.3** However, the strongest improvement that could be made would be to relocate the car parking away from the front of the Gate House. Cars spoil the relationship between the gateway, the castle gate house and the church.



Cars parked in random positions block the view along the route towards the gateway to the church graveyard. It might be possible to relocate parking to an area to the east that is screened behind trees. It could be next to the route to the church or within the woodland directly to the east of the gate house.



- 1.4** At the north part of the driveway, greater character could be provided by providing a matching hedge on the east side. This would introduce a welcome formal element immediately south of the gate and screen.

2.0 Castle Driveway Entrance: Gates and Screen

The gate screen is a symmetrical arrangement around the central gate with side gates in a seven bay arrangement. The central gates appear to be the original ones. The notice board for the church that is fitted to the railings detracts from the overall quality of the gates and would be better as separate notice board mounted on timber or metal posts.



- 2.1** East pier – in fair condition. Some repointing is needed. Replace iron fixing to the east side with non-ferrous or stainless steel to avoid future rust jacking. Remove paint smear from the west face. Reinstall missing urn – possibly the one that is on the ground to the south of the east screen wall.

The urn from the pier is lying on the ground on the south side of the railings. It will need a new top knot carved stone and specialist conservation. Oddly, it does not match the two urns on the west side gate, so it might have been an urn from the end pier.



- 2.2** Outer east bay – the railings are badly encumbered by yew branches which should be cut back. The railings should be overhauled in situ by careful preparation and repainting. All ivy should be removed. Some repointing is required at the stone below the railings.
- 2.3** East gate, east pier – remove ivy. Some repointing required. Cut back yew branches. Reinstall missing urn in carved stone.
- 2.4** East gate – overhaul gate. The gates appear to be fixed iron railings. Wire brush and repaint. This work will involve clearing ivy and clearing the ground at the base. Some setting of stone threshold for the gates is needed in order to prevent weeds growing back.

- 2.5 East gate, west pier – the pier is subject to some rust jacking, possibly associated with iron dowels between courses. There is rust jacking apparent in the hinge positions for the railings to the west.

The urn, urn base, cornice and top three stones of the pier should be taken down. The upper most stone of the pier should be replaced where it is badly cracked with a corner stone broken away.

- 2.6 East central bay – this has railings above a stone riser.

One spear head is broken and needs to be repaired.



Remove and relocate church sign.

Remove moss from riser and include some pointing.

- 2.7 East central pier – remove traces of glue and former notices on the north side. The urns might be replacements, but they are in fair condition. At the base of the urn is an iron strap which holds the overthrow. This is probably not the original arrangement. Some pointing and removal of vegetation is needed.

- 2.8 Central bay – the overthrow should be repaired and painted. The light fitting should be returned to full use. The glass in the lantern should be cleaned and properly fixed. There is a cable up to the light fitting which passes up the east central pier.

- 2.9 Central gates – gates will need to be taken off their fixings. Fixings into the piers should be remade so that they are stainless steel or non-ferrous metal so that they

cannot damage the piers by rust heave. The gates will need thorough overhaul. This will include replacement of ironwork, particularly at the central standards which are badly rusted and the bands attached to them. There is considerable rust at the base of the gates, all of which will need to be overhauled. The shaped plates which hid the locking arrangement also need thorough overhaul and possibly part-replacement. The gates should be returned and fitted to full working order. There should be fixed open stays which can be held and locked in an open position. There should be a stone threshold between the piers and some stone edging to define the gate piers and also conduct water to the drains on either side of the carriage way.

- 2.10** West central pier – the pier is in fair condition in its stone work but it has been displaced. The urn and cornice are possibly being retained in their original position by the overthrow but the pier itself is leaning to the west. It is possible that this is impact damage. The pier should be taken down for its full height down to the base of the railings. This includes four pier courses, the blocking course, cornice stone, urn base and urn. The same stones would be rebuilt vertical. The base of the lower stone to be taken down, immediately above the riser for the railings. There will need to be some fixing back of broken stone into position and a small indent around about 400 x 400 x 400mm deep at the south west corner where the corner has broken away severely.
- 2.11** West central bay – the railings have been repainted and are in good condition. The riser should have moss removed and some repointing. It would be preferable to remove the planter fixed to the railings.
- 2.12** West gate, east pier – this pier is in fair condition. The urn should have a new carved top knot which is missing, there is some stone decay at the base of the urn and the part where the cornice rises to meet the base. This requires some conservator work to consolidate loose stone surface. Although this masonry is in fair condition, there has been a patch repair in mortar where the railing meets this pier. This is in fair condition. This patch should be cut out and replaced by a part-stone indent around about 300 mm square and 50 mm deep. When this is done, the opportunity should be taken to re-fix the fixing between the railing and the pier in stainless steel or non-ferrous metal.
- 2.13** West side gate – this gate is in fair condition.
- 2.14** West gate, east pier – this pier is also in fair condition. The urn has lost its carved top knot. Moss should be removed from the cornice. Some paint has been splashed onto the east side of the pier and should be removed.
- 2.15** West bay – the railings have been repaired and repainted and are in fair condition. The 'For Sale' sign will presumably be removed in due course. The planters should also be removed.
- 2.16** West pier – appears to be in fair condition but requires about 50% repointing. At the head is a concrete block that should be removed and replaced with stone. It is

probable that there was an urn on this pier which should be re-carved to complete the composition.

2.17 Landscaping - remove barrel planters. Design better context for gates, including a symmetrical arrangement. Relocate bench to rectilinear position.

2.18 To the east and at right angles is a flanking rubble wall with a stone cope. This is the garden wall of Castle Lodge. It is in poor condition and requires 100% repointing. The stone cope should be re-bedded with some tree roots removed.

2.19 To the east is a retaining wall that should be repointed. There is a railing above this wall that can be overhauled and repainted.

2.20 There is an estate railing passing down the roadway to the east. This entire railing should be overhauled and repainted.

3.0 Other possible works in Brancepeth Village



- 3.1 At the junction with the main road is a single street light which is in poor condition and could be wire brushed and repainted.



- 3.2 The well could be repointed with some conservator work to the shell. The iron bands over the head of the bowl should be wire brushed and repainted. Joints should be raked out and repointed. Chickweed removed. The area of paving in front of the well could be re-laid with better drainage. To the east and west of the well are areas of rubble wall about 2 sq. m each which should be repointed.

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