

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

In Support of an Application for Listed Building Consent for: Opening the Gates at the Gnoll Gatehouse. Grid Reference: 275642, 197320

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Heritage Significance
3. Site
4. Condition
5. Design Proposals
6. Design and Access
7. Assessment of Impact
8. Options Analysis
9. Conclusion

APPENDICES:

1. CADW Listing Description
2. Gnoll Gatehouse - Location Plan
3. Gnoll Gatehouse – Layout Plan
4. Bollard Specification
5. Land Plan for Gnoll Drive

1. Introduction

A proposed Active Travel Route between Neath and Cimla is intended to encourage unhindered pedestrian and bicycle traffic via the Gnoll Gatehouse. Directing the route through the gatehouse would be the safest and most direct for all users. Other routes were investigated, however, these were deemed unsafe due to volumes and speeds of vehicular traffic. Currently, one of the gates are open ajar, this is causing some users to have to squeeze through the gates or to not be able to pass through altogether. The proposal is to open one of the gates to full opening to allow all users to pass through and use the gatehouse. This application for Listed Building Consent identifies repairs and alterations required to achieve this goal. That is:

- 1.1 Removal of a metal hoop restricting device.
- 1.2 Repair and refurbishment of both gates.
- 1.3 Repainting using appropriate conservation grade materials.
- 1.4 Additional ironmongery for gates to be held in an open position.
- 1.5 Repairs to masonry at the hinge locations.
- 1.6 Fabrication and installation of new hinges to better support the gates and structure.
- 1.7 Road vehicles are to be denied access by installation of bollards, these are to be set back from the gates.
- 1.8 Road surface repairs.

The purpose of this statement is to address design solutions for the below:



Figure 1, Gnoll Gatehouse

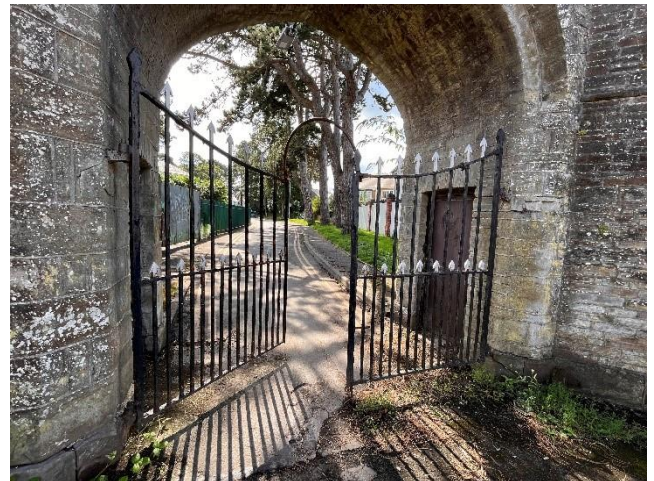


Figure 2, The Gates at Gnoll Gatehouse

The gate is located within a pointed stone arched gateway setback between stone octagonal lodges. The gatehouse was originally used as the entrance to the Gnoll Park. The gatehouse is currently used as a pedestrian thoroughfare between Gnoll Avenue and Gnoll Drive.

2. Heritage Significance

Gnoll Gatehouse and its gates are a Grade II listed structure, recognised for their architectural merit and historic contribution to the landscape of Neath. Key heritage values include:

- **Aesthetic Value:** Decorative detailing and craftsmanship typical of estate architecture.
- **Historic Value:** Associated with the Gnoll estate and its development across decades.
- **Communal Value:** Longstanding role as a symbolic entrance to a public green space.

3. Site

The site is just outside of Neath Town Centre and is located between two busy residential streets, Gnoll Avenue and Gnoll Drive. Victoria Gardens are to the West of the Gatehouse and The Gnoll is to the East/South East. The Gnoll is currently undergoing a vast amount of development of tourism infrastructure, further increasing the need to provide accessible links to and from Neath Town Centre to The Gnoll. There are also good links to wider communities and visitors via public transport (buses and trains) as well as the M4 corridor and A465 when driving.

4. Condition

- 4.1 A steel hoop has been added between the top corners of the gates to restrict the width of opening and prevent vehicle access. This constant 'part opening' has possibly contributed to excess stress at the hinge location and subsequent damage to masonry.



Figure 3, Damage at Hinge Location



Figure 4, Damage at Hinge Location

- 4.2 The metal gates are painted and there are areas of rust causing the paint to peel. The age of the gates is not known but exposed areas indicate welded carbon steel construction or areas of previous repair. The condition of welded junctions is hidden by paint.
- 4.3 There is a ground locating bolt to one of gates that is preclude from fixing in an open position due to the restricting hoop. The bolt receiver hole should be located in the ground but is filled in by debris.
- 4.4 Some masonry is stressed and partially dislocated with open mortar joints at the hinge locations.
- 4.5 There is wear and tear to the tarmac road surface making trip hazards for pedestrians and hazardous to bicycles. This is also creating standing water along the foot of the gatehouse.

5. Design Proposals

The procurement process intends to identify a contractor with an appropriate track record and skills in the delivery of similar Heritage works.

- 5.1 Gates are to be removed by an appropriately qualified metal fabricator. Lead Paint Precautions Works to be undertaken by an appropriately experienced painter /decorator with experience of recognising potential for historic lead paint and taking appropriate measures to work safely.
- Remove constricting hoop and fix to the opened gate to store and be on view.
 - Report any unforeseen defects to the Contract Administrator and agree a method of repairs before proceeding.
 - Strip away any peeling paint and clean back surface rust deposit.
 - Paint bared surfaces with an appropriate primer recommended by the topcoat manufacturer.
 - Paint with Rust Oleum Combicolour Metal Paint, to match the existing.
- 5.2 New hinge eyes in masonry to be extended through the masonry walls with a threaded end and internal Pattress Plate: galvanised steel or painted to match gates, size to be agreed to overlap mortar joints.
- 5.3 Masonry repairs and repointing to secure existing loose stones by a specialist Heritage Masonry company using appropriate lime based mortars and method statements to be approved.
- 5.4 New ground fixed, hold open Gate Stop to relieve excess weight on the hinges: To metal fabricators details and approved by contract administrator. Include a Locking mechanism to hold the gate in an open position.
- 5.5 Bollards would be constructed in front of the gates to prevent vehicular access. The bollards would be of the same colour as the gates and would be of a similar design to match the setting of the gates and gatehouse.



Figure 5, Bollard Example

A bollard layout and location drawing will be provided in the appendix. As well as a specification showing bollard dimensions.

- 5.6 The tarmac surface surrounding the gatehouse has deteriorated and is in need of relaying. Currently it is not draining properly and is damaged creating trip hazards for users. This is to be repaired using contemporary highways resurfacing methods. The contractor to provide method statements for the protection of the Historic Fabric.
- 5.7 The landscaped area adjacent to the gatehouse will be improved to enhance the biodiversity value.

6. Design and Access

The proposed design is intended to provide an active travel route passing through the gatehouse that will be more user and disabled access friendly, further to the removal of the restricted opening width of 0.9m. This will enable all abilities of users to pass through and enjoy the gatehouse including disabled people using adapted bikes, mobility scooters, or wheelchairs. This will in turn prevent any further damage to the gate by users squeezing through the presently narrow opening of 0.9m, the new gate width will be just over 1.5m.

7. Assessment of Impact

The proposed works are considered low intervention and focus on conservation led enhancements to improve access while protecting the historic asset.

During the works, there will be a temporary restriction of access through the gatehouse while the refurbishment works are carried out, resulting in a short-term physical impact. Visually, the introduction of bollards may alter the immediate setting; however, their design will be carefully selected to ensure they remain sympathetic to the historic character of the structure. Structurally, the installation of new hinges is intended to support and protect the gates and masonry, helping to preserve the overall integrity of both the gatehouse and its associated features.

Mitigation measures will be implemented to safeguard the heritage significance of the gatehouse throughout the proposed works. All alterations, improvements and refurbishments will employ materials and techniques suited to the conservation of listed buildings, ensuring compatibility and longevity. Where feasible, bollards and associated fittings will be designed to match the aesthetic of the gates, preserving future options for alteration without compromising the historic fabric. In addition, a clearly marked and carefully considered pedestrian diversion route will be introduced to minimise disruption and protect the wider heritage environment during the refurbishment period.

8. Options Analysis

The options considered are as follows:

Option 1 – Removal of the gates

Removing both gates from the gatehouse was considered as this would provide necessary widths for users. However, this would be unsuitable as removing the gates from the gatehouse would alter the overall aesthetic of the structure and would have a negative impact on the setting.

Option 2 – Open both gates to full opening

Opening both gates of Gnoll gatehouse would provide the widths to meet the Active Travel Act Wales 2013. However, more bollards would be required to prevent vehicular access between Gnoll Drive and Gnoll Avenue which would be unnecessary.

Opening both gates would also effect the appearance of the gatehouse as the public and users would be used to the appearance of one of the traditional gates being shut.

Option 3 – Open one gate to full opening

Opening one gate of Gnoll Gatehouse would provide the widths required to meet the Active Travel Act Wales 2013 and therefore allow all users to connect to Neath Town Centre via the safest possible route. This option would have minimal effect on the current setting and aesthetic of the gatehouse as one of the gates is currently ajar. Bollards would be provided to prevent any damage to the structure by vehicular access.

The preferred option would be Option 3 as this would have minimal effect on the current aesthetic of the gatehouse while providing suitable access for all users.

9. Conclusion

The proposed opening of the gates at Gnoll Gatehouse has been deemed necessary to allow access for all users of all capabilities, everyone will be able to use and enjoy the historic structure. The proposed works would not drastically alter the current appearance while improving the condition, integrity and longevity. Preventing further deterioration of the gatehouse masonry at the hinge locations and carrying out essential maintenance/repairs to the metalwork.