

October 2nd, 2018



The Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA) has been following the addition of high fences and gates at the ongoing construction of the war memorial at the C Hexagon, and would like to submit the professional views of the landscape architecture fraternity on this issue for your kind consideration.

ISOLA CONCERNS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF HIGH, VERTICAL BOUNDARY FENCES & GATES AROUND THE C HEXAGON

We as ISOLA, direct your attention to the critical issues of site planning in light of the introduction of boundary fences and other site elements and our professional concern with the ongoing design process. Introduction of fences and other site elements including landscape design and planting must be considered through this wider prism.

Consideration of spatial design, qualitative benefits, visual experience and functionality must be guiding principles of any such intervention. This is no mere site to be planned, but the most significant public open space in India that represents the democratic, equitable and inclusive access of all its people to its elected and legislative governance structures. It is unique in its sense of shared democratic history of all citizens of modern India.

Spatial Character and Design

The design intent and comprehensive site planning needs to cater to the character of place, symbolism and function prior to the ad hoc introduction of site elements that will inadvertently have implications beyond the immediate needs of security and control. They will limit the equity and inclusiveness of barrier free access through controls, and provide opportunities to discriminate and shun. The introduction of gates, in a place representing free India is exclusionary and incomprehensible. The core of our democracy, and its symbolic representation in this place, of a justice, liberty, equality and fraternity will be lost.

Symbolism

The site, along the axis of the seat of the head of government, the promenade of the Rajpath, the memorial of India Gate and Amar Jyoti, have a significance of not only geometry and balance of planning, but also of symbolism. In India today it symbolizes an access of the people. The decision to make the site inward looking instead of open, free and controlled is exclusionary. A place of control instead of one that invokes a sense of belonging to country and kin.

Visual Access

With its integrated and open aspect of landscape planning, the C hexagon is both a circumambulation of a place of centrality, but also a testament to the visual and physical access to one and all to the memorial and the larger heritage precinct. Its open aspect allows those arriving or passing by to see into and from within see outwards, through the mature tree canopies, and connect to the larger city and symbolically the country and all its peoples. The intent of openness cannot be understated- it represents inclusiveness, the lack of barriers to this key juncture of our Independent history and sacrifices made and also blurs boundaries of class, caste, region and gender. Not only physically, but also perceptibly through its lack of barriers.

INDIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Registered under Indian Societies Act 1860 Sec. 21 No.: Guj2557 & Bombay Trust Act 1950 Section 29 No.: F9417

Communication Address: 312, Chitrarath Complex, Opp. Hotel President C.G. Road, Ahmedabad 380009(Gujarat) India
Telefax: +91 79 40323110, Email: isolaoffice@gmail.com, Web: www.isola.org.in



Disaster Management

In a gated precinct, another aspect that is ill-considered is that of safety and disaster preparedness. With the vast numbers that visit at all times of the day and night, the open aspect allows for easy egress during emergencies. Controls, not only limit numbers going in, but out as well, creating a problem where there is none.

Competition Brief

The design guidelines for competition brief was in line with these concerns and highlighted. It required

Respect the Context: *As the location of the Memorial is in the vicinity of the India Gate, the design would need to respect the surrounding context. The design must respect the sanctity of the Central Vista and India Gate as national assets, and as a major open space for Delhi.*

and

Emphasis on free access: *The Memorial should be open to public in general with unhindered access for all. It should have space for people who would like to spend some time peacefully to pay their respect and honour the memory of the soldiers.*

Need to Address Function with Creative Site Planning Solutions

We strongly recommend that any and all development impacts be reviewed comprehensively to create the best possible development solutions with, and not instead of, the character of the place. The fences proposed at a height of eight feet can only suggest introducing exclusionary barriers. We understand the imperative of edge control, but suggest creative design solutions instead, that will serve the purpose, without due diligence. There are a number of low-impact ways of doing this. Through landscape barriers that will prevent entry to the memorial without creating a vertical built element such as a grade change with the earth sloping or stepping down, earth berm or low planting and hedges among others.

Only then can the design of an element be integral to the larger approach and intent, instead of a pastiche of elements as and when a point of view brings up a functional requirement, marring the larger city landscape.

Need for Multi- Disciplinary Review Process

This project cannot be conceived, designed or developed as standalone gated project. It has an impact on the city and country at large. And require inputs from planners, urban designers, landscape architects, service consultants, stakeholders, environmentalists, engineers and specialists with expertise and also its citizens.

ISOLA stands with our allied professional fraternity in petitioning the Delhi Urban Art Commission to extend their responses and actions with respect to the following:

1. Bringing into public domain the exact scope of work including the extent of respective sites of:
 - a) The War Memorial Project
 - b) C-Hexagon Fencing project

2. Status of approvals given by DUAC for each of the above projects, clearly mentioning whether the boundary design of C-Hexagon has received approval or not prior to execution.

INDIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Registered under Indian Societies Act 1860 Sec. 21 No.: Guj2557 & Bombay Trust Act 1950 Section 29 No.: F9417

Communication Address: 312, Chitrarath Complex, Opp. Hotel President C.G. Road, Ahmedabad 380009 (Gujarat) India
Telefax: +91 79 40323110, Email: isolaoffice@gmail.com, Web: www.isola.org.in



3. Given the sensitivity as well as significance of negative implications related to the fencing of C-Hexagon and restricting free public access, the ongoing execution work of the project is to be stayed until all mandatory approvals are in place and public hearing on the project is conducted.

Sujata Kohli

Honorary President

INDIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

The Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA), the professional body of landscape architects, includes over 600 members across India and around the world. The mission of ISOLA, established in 2003, is to nurture and enhance the profession of landscape architecture by providing leadership in the creation of artistic and ecologically sound designs, and in the shaping and management of our human-made, cultural and natural environments. The organisation has also been accorded the status as a member of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) - a body representing the concerns of the profession worldwide. Details of the organisation can be accessed at www.isola.org.in.

INDIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Registered under Indian Societies Act 1860 Sec. 21 No.: Guj2557 & Bombay Trust Act 1950 Section 29 No.: F9417

Communication Address: 312, Chitrarath Complex, Opp. Hotel President C.G. Road, Ahmedabad 380009 (Gujarat) India
Telefax: +91 79 40323110, Email: isolaoffice@gmail.com, Web: www.isola.org.in