



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Chris Webb
Chair, YGT

30 November 2024

Dear Mrs Griffiths

R/2023/0746/RSM: land off Trefoil close and Meynell Avenue Guisborough. Residential development of 56 houses with associated access, open space, landscaping, parking and drainage infrastructure (resubmission)

The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is responding to this application as the only expert body entirely focused on significant and important designed gardens in Yorkshire. YGT is a member organisation of the Gardens Trust (GT), works in partnership with it in the protection and conservation of Registered sites, and is authorised by GT to respond on GT's behalf to consultations and applications relating to Registered sites. GT is a Statutory Consultee for proposed developments that could affect sites included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens.

This application is a further iteration of applications submitted over the last several years:

Ref:

R/2021/0986/FFM dated 21st December 2021, and Amended BNG and Protected Species dated 28th October 2022

R/2023/0746/RSM dated 8th December 2023, and Resubmission 26th April 2024.

This response is complementary to the responses we have written to each of these applications and should be read in conjunction with them. On each occasion we have documented the reasons for our firm and complete objection to the schemes put forward for this site. This present response also confirms our objection to the scheme now proposed. The first part of our response summarises the importance of Tudor Croft Garden. The second part summarises the permanent damage this application will do to the Garden if it is approved.

Why Tudor Croft Garden is important

Tudor Croft Garden is a rare survival of an inter-war suburban garden still intimately associated with the house it was built for in 1934. The Garden's key features are threatened by this planning application which, if it were approved, would permanently diminish the Garden's existing and future significance and value.

An up-to-date and sophisticated assessment by the leading scholar of gardens built by the York-based Backhouse Nursery shows that it is a nationally rare survival of an emerging new inter-war style. While sharing elements

with the arts and crafts style, Tudor Croft is a living example of a suburban garden and associated house built by a successful industrialist in a style that is seeking to transition away from established full-blown arts and crafts and towards a less formal style more appropriate to the economic and social realities of the years after the Great War. The development of this new style was cut short by the declaration of war in 1939, so very few examples now remain of this significant inter-war movement.

Tudor Croft Garden invites comparison with Goddards, the Terry house and garden in York (1927) designed by Walter Brierley and with Winterbourne in Birmingham. Both are earlier, much bigger, and more firmly Arts and Crafts; but both are by industrialists (the latter also moving his home away from the smoke), there are water and rock gardens, and engagement with the landscape beyond.

Tudor Croft garden is firmly rooted in the immediate region's industrial past. The builder, Ron Crossley, was descended from John Crossley, who started Crossley and Sons in Comondale in 1872. The Crossley family owned the whole of Comondale by 1893, ran five brickworks by the 1930s and developed further to become one of Britain's first successful Builders' Merchants with four depots.

This unique industrial heritage is visible throughout Tudor Croft Garden. The house itself is built from Crossley Tudor style bricks (hence the Tudor Croft name); there is a long rose pergola supported by 48 pillars built of different Crossley bricks; and a walled garden of Crossley bricks.

Crossley was aware of, and showcased, the region's medieval past, too. He acquired several tons of dressed and carved stone from Gisborough Priory and used them throughout the garden. The carved stones have, under the care of the current owner, been meticulously recorded and catalogued by Historic England.

It's clear from his choice of garden designer, though, that Crossley was keen to create a garden that was thoroughly in keeping with the straitened times of the period after the Great War. He employed Backhouse of York, one of the most significant designed landscape nurseries in England. Backhouses are best known for their rockwork, and there are important examples of their work in all parts of Tudor Croft Garden.

The fern cave is an important example of a form that is almost extinct. It is like that at Southport Botanic Gardens. The rockwork is original. There are lead water pipes visible (though their buried connections are of modern, sustainable materials); they feed a fountain that falls to a grotto and pool, then along a rill to a 2nd pool and grotto. Fountain and grottos are decorated with Comondale Pottery made for Tudor Croft. The cave has characteristic Backhouse features, including a signature rock atop the rockwork. The grottoes suggest that filmy ferns were grown. Historic England's website lists only 2 filmy fern caves, one by Backhouse at Ellen Willmott's Warley Place (collapsed) and one at Penjerrick (Cornwall).

Tudor Croft's Water Garden is also by Backhouse. It is entered through a rock arch and has a rock shelter, like the Backhouse rock garden at Thornbridge Hall (Derbyshire) and with similar steps leading to the side and above the shelter. There is a bog garden, kept moist by piping water from the top of the garden to a cascade, thence to a bog. This shows that substantial underground piping was laid when Tudor Croft was designed. This lower part of Tudor Croft also shows the extent of engineering required: there are drainpipes to divert the natural beck temporarily so that stone walling could be built to support its sides.

The Secret Garden's rockwork reflects its layout. It is like the 1950s karst rock garden at Cambridge Botanic Garden and the Backhouse rock garden at The Retreat, York. Tudor Croft's rockwork here is of water-worn limestone, with a water source from the top of the rocks down to the surface and across a rill to a central pool. Steps ran down from here but were replaced, perhaps for safety reasons, with a hedge, which is also a boundary to the rose garden.

A defining feature of gardens of this period is their concern to look beyond the garden itself to neighbouring countryside. Tudor Croft Garden is one of the best examples of the practical outcome of this characteristic design feature anywhere in England. The house is set close to the road, so that the garden front gives the longest, loveliest view of the borrowed landscape beyond. There is little to distract a viewer, as a grassed area starts immediately by the house, and the subsequent view across to Highcliffe, which dominates the views to the south and towards the moors, is magnificent. This is a deliberate piece of landscape design, arranging house and garden in a close

relationship with the wild landscape beyond. The arrangement deliberately and provocatively contrasts the domestic and cultivated with the wild and open, while acknowledging that the garden harnesses nature in its use of the beck, and that the Crossley fortune grew from transforming the local clay into a marketable industrial product.

For these and other reasons (following this up-to-date assessment by a leading scholar) YGT has put forward Tudor Croft for assessment and possible inclusion on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England.

How the application affects Tudor Croft Garden's importance

The view outwards from the Garden is, as demonstrated above, a key feature of its national importance as a designed landscape. The proposed housing development, on rising ground immediately beyond the Garden's boundary, fatally compromises this feature. If it is approved, this application will destroy, permanently, a work of art that has been open to public enjoyment for the best part of a century.

The Garden will be further damaged, as a garden, by the development of the open, uncultivated land beyond its boundary. This land and the Garden are in a symbiotic relationship – each supports the other in mutually beneficial ways. The physical and property boundary we see is of no account to the natural world. Pollinators, mammals, birds, seeds and insects flow across this entire space (Garden and open land), so that it is in fact a single ecosystem, supporting a huge range of living creatures. The health of the Garden will be compromised by the vast diminution of the natural wealth that helps to make it such a vibrant and vital environment.

The beck is integral to this ecosystem and will also be adversely and permanently affected by the development of the land, and consequent increased human influence on an already stressed system. At present the beck is a corridor for otters, there is some evidence of water vole presence, and it supports insects that feed bats. It is hard to see how it can continue to fulfil these vital functions with the introduction of 56 houses close by.

This land is the last large area of green open space left in Guisborough. The fact that its medieval ridge and furrow is still visible shows that it has been an open space, accessible to the local inhabitants, for centuries. Taken together, in this land and Tudor Croft Garden Guisborough has a unique, physical demonstration of its rural and industrial past; a unique area of biodiverse, partly managed, partly natural land with public access; and a green lung and wildlife corridor into and out of the town. It is something to cherish and be proud of. It can continue to make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Guisborough's human and non-human inhabitants and visitors, and to play its part in the emerging York and North Yorkshire Nature Recovery Strategy. The land proposed for development can continue to be the critical factor in a celebrated and unique work of art that is open to the public. Or it can be none of these things, and be yet another group of private houses, unregarded except by the small number of people who live in them.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Webb
Chair, YGT

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