



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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5th May 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**23/01134/FUL Application under section 73 to vary condition 2 (approved plans) to enable scheme adjustments to planning permission no. 20/04371/FUL - Change of use, alterations and conversion of Tapton Court and the Annexe building into residential use, conversion/alterations of the Stables into residential use and conversion/alterations/extension to the Gate Lodge into residential use, with the construction of new build houses and provision of access improvements, parking, landscaping and other associated works (as amended by Non-Material Amendment Application 22/03960/NMA.)) Former Tapton Court Nurses Home, Shore Lane, Sheffield, S10 3BW**

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

Tapton Court is at some distance from the Grade II Registered Sheffield Botanical Gardens and as such any development at Tapton Court will not have any impact on the Botanical Gardens. However, the gardens of Tapton Court itself are on the Sheffield Local List.

When the UDP Policy Background Paper No 4 1997 was written, Tapton Court was still in a reasonable state. The opening paragraph states: 'Tapton Court was built in 1868 for JH Andrews, a steel manufacturer. In 1933 it was donated by the JG Graves Charitable Trust for use as a nurses' residence and this use continues today. An extension was added at this time and new blocks of residences were built in the former paddock in the 1970's. Despite these incursions, the garden retains much of its mid Victorian character and many original features. It has views over the city on the south side.' The entry concludes: 'Tapton Court is a good example of a mid Victorian large villa garden, in good condition, with many original features. It is well maintained and forms the setting of a Listed Building.' See Reference appended for the entry description.

We understand that the original planning application 20/04371/FUL was approved and there are subsequent applications for changes of conditions/amendments all approved. The Gardens Trust has not been consulted on any of the applications until we received this one - **23/01134/FUL**. Therefore, we have not had the opportunity to advise on any of the proposals.

The original application in 2020 has a Heritage Impact Statement p3:

'The site's Victorian ancillary buildings include the lodge on Shore Lane and the stable block in a walled yard; the adjoining glasshouses and kitchen gardens have been lost. The landscaped pleasure gardens included a stone terrace around the south and west sides of the house, a level lawn to the west, a large sloping lawn to the south with a pond, tree belts to the south and east and stone boundary walls. In 2010 a serious fire damaged the core of the villa; following this, repairs were carried out by the university, including to the floors and roof. The building is vacant and is on Sheffield Council's Building's At Risk register. The gardens are overgrown and in a neglected condition. The buildings are in need of further repair and adaptation to a new use, to ensure their viable future.' There are photographs which show the overgrown state of the gardens.

So, since Tapton Court was included on the list of Sheffield's Historic Parks and Gardens it has become a seriously damaged heritage asset. At this stage (May 2023) as we've not been consulted on the previous applications our advice is of necessity limited.

This approved development has large areas of hard landscaping for access, vehicle parking etc. There is little left of the historic garden setting for the Listed House. We consider that what little soft landscaping is left should show more sympathy to the historic nature of the site. We have not been able to visit Tapton Court, and do not know how much of the ornamental tree and shrub planting remains at this time. We note on the Proposed Softworks that there is to be selective clearing of invasive species. We agree that there should not be wholesale removal of the vegetation rather removal of bramble, self-sown material etc and retention of as much of the mature planting as possible – this would be good conservation particularly as established trees and shrubs are ecologically valuable, aesthetically pleasing and important as carbon sinks and for reducing urban temperatures etc in our changing climate.

Apart from 'Proposed formal planting of ornamental shrubs and herbaceous perennials' against the south and west house terrace, the Proposed Softworks seem to be promoting native species and wildflower plantings. Native species and wildflower plantings are of course valuable but as a heritage asset the remaining garden areas at Tapton Court should give credence to their Victorian origins in terms of planting and design, and what it was still like in the mid 1990's before it became so neglected.

Many non-native ornamental trees and shrubs give valuable food and excellent wildlife habitat. The Victorian era in gardening was one much influenced by all the new ornamental introductions and William Robinson's (1838-1935), *The Wild Garden*, (1870) which encouraged 'the placing of perfectly hardy exotic plants under conditions where they will thrive without further care', an idea so important in more recent gardens that the book was reprinted in 1977 and again in 1983. Robinson's influence is still apparent in the current taste for informality, with bulbs massed among grass, mixed borders of native and exotic plants, and a soft and subtle use of colour and plant associations. We suggest that Robinson's work should be the base-line for Tapton Court.

Tapton Court has largely lost its significance as a heritage asset on your authority's Local List. Please see below UDP Policy Background Paper No 4 1997, Tapton Court

Yours sincerely,

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc Yorkshire and the Northeast Historic England; conservation@ the Gardens Trust

**REF: UDP Policy Background Paper No 4 1997, Tapton Court**

Tapton Court was built in 1868 for JH Andrews, a steel manufacturer. In 1933 it was donated by the JG Graves Charitable Trust for use as a nurses' residence and this use continues today. An

extension was added at this time and new blocks of residences were built in the former paddock in the 1970's. Despite these incursions, the garden retains much of its mid Victorian character and many original features. It has views over the city on the south side.

The entrance on Shore Lane has a lodge and a low curved stone wall with remains of iron railings and some cobbles. The high stone boundary wall backed by mature trees remains along Shore lane and tot the east bordering Tapton Walk. The drive has been resurfaced with tarmac and concrete edgings. To the left of the drive are sloping lawns but no trace remains of the small lake shown on the 1890 ordnance survey sheet. There is evidence of turfed over island beds.

The tree lined drive divides and the right-hand branch of the drive leads to the main house entrance. The house is Listed Grade II, including a fine stone balustrade to the south and west-facing terraces with a stone flight of steps framed by old magnolias. Some stone urns remain but several are missing. Also Listed is an unusual partly sunken, conservatory. The western terrace overlooks the upper lawn with a beech hedge dividing it from the lower lawn.

The extension to the rear of the house is in a similar style to the house itself with a pillared stone portico leading to a semi-circular paved terrace with circular stone steps leading to the upper part of the garden. The north west corner of the garden contains the kitchen garden, a long bed against the northern boundary wall. A grasses passageway leads up to an unused wooden gate on Manchester Road. To the east of this is a large area of derelict glasshouses but it is not entirely clear if these belonged to or were shared with Kersal Mount.

Tapton Court is a good example of a mid Victorian large villa garden, in good condition, with many original features. It is well maintained and forms the setting of a Listed Building.