



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Ms Little

## **Thwaite Hall Potential Planting via Community Forest for Hull and East Yorkshire**

Thank you for consulting the Yorkshire Gardens Trust. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the Gardens Trust (GT) and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of sites on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens.

The Gardens Trust is the Statutory Consultee with regard to any proposed development affecting a site included on the Register and the YGT is authorised by the GT to respond on the GT's behalf.

Thwaite Hall (formerly Thwaite House) is important as a rare survival of an impressive 19th century villa garden in an urban setting at Cottingham and is recognised as such by its inclusion on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (NHLE: 1000137). In the mid-20th century (c.1948), the Hall was extended, and the gardens developed as botanic and experimental gardens by the University of Hull.

Thank you for the proposed planting map:

- In principle we have no objection to the planting of the hedge, but we do have various queries that I will describe later in our letter.
- We do not agree with the low-density woodland consisting of a mix of broadleaf species for the blue checked areas and will also explain later in our letter.

We don't know how much you know about the historic background to Thwaite Hall and our responses to various planning applications since 2019, so I will explain something of that here as we think that will be helpful.

John William Hentig, a Hull merchant, built Thwaite Hall in 1803-7 and by 1839 had created a garden. The ship owners David and Charles Wilson (later Lord Nunholburne), whose wealth came from the expanding port of Hull, subsequently bought the estate and during 1870-80s developed the garden, pleasure grounds and small parkland. Cottingham was a favoured rural retreat, located away from the city of Hull, where the wealthy had space to build villas and lay out gardens. Albert Rollitt, a solicitor and Mayor of Hull, bought the estate and during his ownership, as President of the Hull

Botanic Garden, the gardens were well maintained. He sold it on to Colonel Goddard, who by 1928 sold it to University College, now the University of Hull. They extended the house renaming it Thwaite Hall and established a botanic and experimental garden. This almost certainly resulted in its survival as many contemporary villas and gardens at Cottingham were built over in the 20th century. While most of these villas had relatively small gardens (1 to 2 acres), Thwaite House was considerably larger (31 acres), which gave more scope for the initial layout of a formal garden, with parkland containing a spring fed stream, surrounded by shelterbelt plantations. The design was meant to be a miniaturised view of the larger landscape gardens associated with more substantial properties that designers such as Humphry Repton was working on at the time. The second phase of landscaping during the 1870-80s, particularly the sinuous lake, shows influences from the more informal style as advocated by William Robinson later in the century.

The 19th century villa garden was a sign of social status. It reflected the owner's taste and influences, and this makes them unique. Few were designed by professionals but influenced by garden design at the time and mostly consisted of a lawn and specimen trees. Occasionally they would have quirky buildings, winding paths and shrubbery to create the idea of a larger space. The sense of space, within the encroaching urban scene, is still an important aspect of the current garden layout. Today Thwaite Hall Gardens is an important green oasis in an increasing urban environment, as Cottingham is now enveloped within the suburbs of Hull. The gardens are a significant component of the Cottingham Conservation Area, which enhances its beauty and environmental quality. Its woodland and lake provide an important wildlife habitat. Establishment of the botanic gardens added further interest to the setting, by introducing rare species of plants, shrubs and trees and those surviving are documented.

Thwaite Hall Gardens is valued locally as evidenced by the Cottingham Civic Society having been a driving force in getting it listed (Grade II) on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Under the tenure of the University of Hull it provided a valuable environment for students living in the halls of residence, those studying and advancing research in biological science and horticulture, also a stimulating environment for schoolteachers and children. Friends of Thwaite Gardens are an active group, who now help maintain an area of the gardens – a valuable community asset – still owned by the University of Hull and accessed further to the west along Thwaite Street.

Thwaite Hall Gardens has a history of exotic planting and we understand that a member of the Friends has been working with the 'Tree Register Of Britain and Ireland' (TROBI) whose job it is to gather and collate records of all tree species grown in the British Isles. From this data they are able to ascertain the largest individual examples of any species in the UK. These are designated 'Champion' status - National Champions, or County Champions on the basis of height or girth or both. About 80 trees in the Thwaite collection were assessed by TROBI who considered no fewer than 37 to be "remarkable" in some way. Of these, 31 were confirmed to be Yorkshire Champions and 6 were National Champions. These have been checked by visits from TROBI officers. This list does not include many other trees which, although not 'remarkable' are nevertheless highly admired - like the Redwoods and Foxglove Tree. Chief recorder for TROBI - Dr. Owen Johnson (author of Collins Tree Guide) described the Thwaite collection as "After Thorp Perrow, it's perhaps the most interesting collection of mature rare trees in N.E. England".

The whole of the area including Thwaite Hall and the buildings to its north developed by the University, and now owned by Mr Ledger and his partner, are within the boundary of the Registered park and garden.

The Planning Application for Thwaite Hall dates from 2019 and the below is the 2022 detail of the amended plans:

**19/00480/STPLF | Residential Development for 82 dwellings comprising the conversion of existing buildings into 30 flats and 29 town houses and erection of new buildings to provide 20 houses and 3 town houses following demolition of ancillary buildings (AMENDED NEW BUILD DWELLING PLANS) | University Of Hull Thwaite Hall Thwaite Street Cottingham East Riding Of Yorkshire HU16 4RE**

You will appreciate that it is important that the historic designed nature of the site and its ornamental planting is understood, recognised and acted upon in future planting schemes such as the one that you are proposing.

We had a site meeting with the owner, his planning agent and architect and Mr Thomas Booth-Robinson of ERYC on 7<sup>th</sup> September when we again emphasised the need to have a Conservation Management Plan (CMP), produced by a heritage professional familiar with this type of historic garden. Such a document following historic research and analysis would give a plan for sympathetic repair and enhancement to the site over a period of years and should encompass paths and their surfaces, ornamental and wildlife planting, seating, management of the lake etc.etc. linking the historic significance with future management and usage. YGT/GT and Historic England have been advising that a CMP is necessary for Thwaite Hall Gardens for about three years. (The registered park and garden is on HE's 'Heritage at Risk Register'.) There is now a Garden Appraisal (19<sup>th</sup> Nov 2021) which is a start but is not sufficient in detail.

We have also seen a Landscape Strategy and Maintenance Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment, but we have serious reservations about their objectives and proposals as they fail to properly recognise the botanical and arboriculturally value of Thwaite Hall Gardens and their significance; the reason that they are included in the HE Register.

For example, Heritage Impact Assessment p38 states that 'New tree planting to be native species with selected fruit and nut bearing trees to support wildlife'. And, 'The planting design has been developed to respond to the site context and the overall selection of plants favours native species.'

Whilst the GT and YGT consider this to be a commendable aim we consider that due to Thwaite's history and design, that any new tree planting priority should not be native species but also include ornamental species as the original design intention that continued during the ownership of the University of Hull. Many non-native ornamental trees and shrubs give valuable food and excellent wildlife habitat.

Our understanding of the significance of the site at Thwaite Hall is the basis of our response that follows:

We understand that the landowner has approached you for some potential tree planting at Thwaite Hall. The proposed planting map shows 165m of hedgerow along the owner's boundary to the north and east of the houses that lie to the west of Thwaite Hall. The blue checked areas south of the lake and east of the tennis courts are proposed to be a low-density woodland (0.16 hectares, which equals around 385 whips of mix broadleaf species.) The landowner has already come back and said he is happy with this plan.

**Hedge:** In principle we have no objection to the hedge planting, but we do not know the species proposed. We note from the planting map that the proposed hedge intrudes into the garden of the neighbouring property to the west and we query why this is the case. In addition could the hedge line continue further west to the south of the tennis courts?

**Blue Checked Area:** We have concerns about the proposed two areas of low-density woodland to the south of the lake and east of the tennis courts. Historically this was an open grassed area as shown on OS maps from 1891 to the 1960's and included an elliptical walk with some scattered probably ornamental trees that would be part of the design. Currently in this area is a Caucasian Wingnut (No.10) and a Honey locust (No. 20) – the numbers refer to Thwaite Gardens, University of Hull Tree Trail. (Early OS maps can be seen on-line without charge on the National Library of Scotland website.)

The Blue Checked Area should be planted with some individual ornamental trees in an arrangement similar to an arboretum ie with several metre spacing so that they can develop their crowns properly. The grass could be mown or managed as a wildflower meadow. We are concerned about the possibility of flooding on this site and the problems from climate change so see this as an opportunity to trial non-native trees that could cope well with a wet area and withstand a high water- table. The

Forestry Commission are working on what future planting can survive climate change and we think that they could be consulted for non-native trees to continue the exotic planting history of the site.

The area of the tennis courts could be used for low-density woodland instead.

We trust that any planting supported by public funds ie as part of the Humber Forest project, will have a monitoring and maintenance plan.

We hope that the information in this letter is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc Thomas Booth-Robinson, Planning Team Leader (East North Team), East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Chris Mayes, Landscape Architect North of England, Historic England, [e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:e-yorks@historicengland.org.uk); Conservation@ the Gardens Trust,