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Hippisley-Cox, Charles

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The secret garden suburb

Built between 1907 and 1912, the Moorpool Estate in Birmingham represents a variation on the themes established by George Cadbury at nearby Bourneville.



Park Edge at the

the 19th century. Many of the key industrialists were (Grade I). keen philanthropists, using their fortunes to transform Birmingham into a place where education, the arts and housing reform could flourish. The Nettlefolds, the N in GKN (Guest, Keen and Nettlefold), and the Chamberlains were two such families with a direct involvement in the Moorpool project.

John Sutton Nettlefold (1866-1930) was the first chairman of the Birmingham housing committee. He commissioned the local architect Frederick Martin to alley overlooking two tennis courts in the centre of the create proposals for a low-density housing scheme on a Circle. Other community amenities were to include a 56-acre site centred on the old Moor Pool, which had bowling green next to the old Moor Pool and space for been purchased for £15,000 by Harborne Tenants Ltd. allotments to supplement the gardens of the smaller Harborne Tenants was an experimental partnership scheme by which the tenants could eventually progress towards ownership. Original rents for the smaller properties were generously low, at between 4s 8d and 11s a week.

been co-founder of the famous Birmingham practice Carless Avenue to join North Gate. Margaret Grove Chamberlain and Martin, which was responsible for was named after Nettlefold's wife (nee Chamberlain), such fine buildings as the School of Art (1881) on who cut the first sod for the estate in 1907.

Tucked away a few miles west of Birmingham city Margaret Street. William Martin had been the city's centre and a short walk from Harborne High Street, public works architect, responsible for at least 40 of Moorpool is one of the country's least-known garden the famous board schools. One of Frederick Martin's suburbs. It was the product of the progressive thinking first important commissions after he joined his father's associated with the liberal non-conformist tradition, practice was his terracotta masterpiece known locally which flourished in Birmingham in the second half of as the Telephone Exchange (1896) on Newhall Street

> Martin's master plan for the Moorpool Estate was based on a gently curving axis running uphill in a westerly direction from the Harborne Railway bridge to Lordswood Road (along what became Moorpool Avenue and Carless Avenue). At the halfway point he proposed a community hall, some shops and the estate offices enclosed within what became the Circle. The community hall included a snooker room and a skittle

Off the main axis smaller roads were given directional names such as North Gate and East Pathway. Carless Avenue was named after a small wood that bore the name of an old landowning family, and High Frederick Martin's father William Martin had Brow was the name given to the road that rises up from the larger ones at the west end of the estate at the top to form two crescents. of Carless Avenue.

detached houses with five bedrooms. One of the attractive gantry-entrance dwellings on Ravenhurst earliest residents was the renowned arts-and-crafts Road opposite the Moor Pool. silversmith Bernard Cuzner (1877–1956).

lights and two-pane, top-hinged lights.

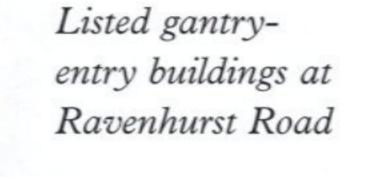
Having established an architectural language, Martin managed to generate a wide variety of houses through- ship, Harborne Tenants was taken over. The estate out the estate. It is difficult to find any two houses is now administered by the international property that are identical. Ingenious variation of plan-form, company Grainger, which is keen to build on some of combined with the imaginative and careful positioning the amenity spaces. The centenary celebrations were the whole estate is integral with the house designs. All by garages.

Between 1907 and 1912 about 500 houses were the roads are tree-lined with grass verges, and Carless built. The first was completed for an opening cer- Avenue opens out to include two semi-circled open emony in 1908. The last houses to be completed were spaces known as the Spinney, with the houses set back

The estate offices at the Circle became the admin-Nettlefold and Martin's vision was for an inclusive istrative hub where rents were paid and provided a estate, where manual workers and skilled artisans base for a small direct workforce engaged in routine would live alongside professionals and prosperous maintenance. By the 1960s a number of the houses members of the business community. The plan was were owned independently. The estate was designated to include a wide range of houses, from smaller a conservation area in 1970, and the buildings within two-bedroom terraces through to substantial semi- the Circle were listed, along with the particularly

In 2006 an Article 4 (2) Direction was approved, Martin's designs for the houses combine some of as 30 years of independent improvements had led to the features of the arts-and-crafts movement with an erosion of character. All elevations visible from the those of Port Sunlight and Bourneville. The basic street are covered by the direction, which specifies themes of the estate are the regular use of front-facing that planning permission is now required for external gables over the main bedrooms and the extensive use doors, windows, porches, small extensions, roof alteraof cream-painted stucco, providing a contrast with the tions (including dormers and rooflights), off-street ubiquitous red brick. The two-tone houses with the parking areas, access ramps, aerials, satellite dishes, stucco upper storeys are particularly attractive. Other gates, walls, fences, and the painting of pebbledash effective architectural devices include the imaginative and brickwork. Although it is perhaps too soon to be use of brick arches and the decision to use opening able to assess the impact of the direction, it has been window casements based on six-pane, side-hinged welcomed by local residents keen to maintain the special character of the estate.

Once the majority of houses were in private ownerof each building, is handled very effectively. In accord- overshadowed by the prospect of new buildings being ance with garden city principles, the landscaping of squeezed into allotments and areas currently occupied





Charles Hippisley-Cox is a senior lecturer and course leader for architectural technology at the Department of Architecture and 3D Design, Huddersfield University. Between 1963 and 1969 he lived on the Moorpool Estate.

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