



RIPON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January 2017



A VERY HAPPY 2017 TO EVERYONE



Over the last few months the Society has commented on a number of planning applications. These include:

THE OLD LECTURE BLOCK, College Road

In the last newsletter (Summer 2016) we described the long-lasting saga of what was built as the Girls' High School and was subsequently used as a lecture block for the College. The Society wrote twice in September to the Chief Planner at Harrogate Borough Council (HBC), again urging prompt action to protect the building, which has systematically been stripped of its roof slates. We pointed out that the Council has powers to serve an urgent works notice on an unlisted building in a conservation area under Sections 54 and 76 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and also to serve an untidy land notice under Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

The response was couched in legalese; it suggests that using the 1990 Act would be difficult – this even though the council's own planning committee argued that the building was too valuable to permit

demolition. As for using Section 215, the Society was told that:

... the Council's opinion is that the building is not of sufficient dis-amenity (sic) to warrant the service of a notice. The scope for use of the power is in practice limited by the scope of the right of appeal conferred by s.217, under which the recipient of a notice may claim not only that the condition of the land does not adversely affect the amenity, but that even if it does, it is attributable to, and such as results in the ordinary course of events from, the carrying on of operations or a land use which is not in contravention of Part III (planning control).

Dissatisfied with this response we met one of the local HBC councillors on site, who agreed that the building was in a poor state because of the deliberate stripping of slates and some vandalism. A planning application for the building's conversion into apartments, with housing in the grounds, was subsequently accelerated in the planning process, and permission was granted in November. We then wrote again to the Chief Planner at HBC, welcoming a decision on the structure, asking if the owners had provided a timetable for action, and what plans HBC had both to enforce the protection of the building over the next few months and to ensure that the conversion works proceed swiftly. We said that, 'Given the history of planning on this building, we are not willing to see yet more deterioration that might yet lead, despite the current permission, to another application to demolish because it has reached a state in which it cannot be repaired.'

The reply to this noted that HBC would not take action under its powers, and that 'the Council has no formal ability to require the commencement of works ... we will continue to monitor the condition of the building and will also write to the owner expressing concern regarding the unsecured condition of the building and encouraging an early start to work to implement the recently-granted permission.'

Despite well over a year of asking, HBC has failed to ensure that this important building is watertight over the winter months – without its roof slates it is open to all the weather

and is inevitably deteriorating. It may be that that is the wish of the owners, and that it will deteriorate so far that demolition (which was applied for initially) must take place. This cannot be allowed to happen; the Society will continue to pursue this matter – and also the non-payment of rates on the building after the Valuation Office had been wrongly informed it had been demolished; if necessary we shall do so in the public media.

HOLY TRINITY C. of E. INFANT SCHOOL, Trinity Lane



North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) applied to demolish the existing dining hall and replace it with a prefabricated dining hall, including brick staircase, a platform lift and hard standing.

The Society noted in its response that the building to be replaced was an unattractive structure that has outlived its purpose, but pointed out that its location was next to, and within the boundaries of, the Grade II listed, early 19th-century Holy Trinity School. While we did not object to the replacement of the building, we argued strongly that the proposed replacement was unworthy of its setting and of the wider Conservation Area. It made little attempt either to fit in with the buildings or to be anything other than a utility shed.

We argued, as did the Conservation Officer at HBC, that this

was not acceptable in visual terms for its position, and sent the wrong message for other applications within the Ripon Conservation Area and in the vicinity of Listed Buildings.

In its Heritage Statement NYCC said:

It is accepted that the school site lies within the Ripon Conservation Area and therefore represents a significant heritage asset which is sensitive to new development in respect of design and choice of materials. Careful consideration must be given to ensure that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the area. Being purpose-built, the prefabricated unit level of design input possible is limited. However, the new dining hall has been designed in a way to be sympathetic to the Conservation Area designation and to have minimal impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. It is considered that the application satisfies all relevant policies outlined within the Ripon Conservation Area Appraisal ... The structure will be no more visible from the highway than the existing structure.

But, as the HBC Conservation Officer pointed out, 'Poor design cannot be justified on the basis that it is hidden'.

The Society also made the point that the County Council should bear in mind that this was a building for children, whose perceptions are being formed by their surroundings; we said that we did not look for high design principles, but we did look for a decent structure that will fulfil its propose and look appropriate.

It is, therefore, disappointing – if unsurprising – that NYCC granted itself permission to erect its new prefabricated dining hall.

STATION HOTEL, North Road,

Plans were put forward to convert the former Station Hotel as a house in multiple occupation (HMO). In our response to the application we said that we did not object in principle to the development; we said we should have preferred that the Hotel remain as an hotel, but we appreciated that it may not be possible to achieve such an outcome.

We raised concerns about the internal layout, and what seemed to be a desire to cram as many residents as possible into too small a space. If the application were to be permitted as a HMO, we urged the Council to put strict management requirements in place. We also noted concerns about access to the rear, and we asked if this application was being considered in conjunction with an application for ‘park homes’ on the Auction Market Site, which will apparently have joint access.

IRELAND COURT



Ireland Court is an area to the west of Fishergate and immediately north of the ginnel alongside the Wren’s store. A major application has been made to redevelop the area, and relate this ‘backlands’ section of the city to the car park by Booth’s supermarket. This is an area that the Society has been concerned about for some years. When Booth’s supermarket was being built in 2008 we pointed out that looking towards the buildings at the rear of Fishergate was one of Ripon’s most unattractive views, and that, as visitors may approach the city centre from there, stores should make that aspect of the city as attractive as possible.

The proposal for the jumble of buildings around Ireland Court includes both retail and residential elements. Ripon Civic Society agrees that this is a good place for such development, and it would offer a much more attractive façade to visitors and locals

using the Booth's car park. The site is a suitable location for more new shops and is included in the draft Ripon City Plan, which also encourages 'active frontages' on to the car park.

But the Society has doubts about the plans as they are presented. There is no evidence in the application documents that the developer began with, or explored, a 'conservation' option. Although the plans generally respect the layout of this area of the city along its long, narrow 'burgage plot' footprint, there is no indication that a development option that is truly aware of the Conservation Area has been considered. We also have serious concerns that it is proposed to fell large, mature trees that give character to this part of the city; no attempt, it appears, has made to incorporate them into the development.

The Society considers the application scheme to be unjustified and we have urged withdrawal of this application so that an improved scheme on conservation lines can be considered. If that does not happen, we recommend refusal of planning permission and listed building consent on a scheme which we consider to be overbearing and uninspiring in detail.

AWARDS GLITTER AGAIN

Our two-yearly Awards, which we present at the city's Spa Hotel recognise good design, craftsmanship and environmental schemes from the area around the city as well as within the city's boundaries.



This year we were delighted to give the Society's *Helen Whitehead Salver for the Best Project* to Highfield Coach House. The judges noted that it was a careful and ingenious conversion, using recycled brick and with of plenty of glass and wood – a

project in which the architect worked closely with the owners to interpret their wishes in an imaginative and sustainable way. It is a super-efficient insulated house, with state-of-the-art monitoring and a mechanical ventilated heat recovery system; there is only one radiator in the whole house. Highfield Coach House was also the winner of the Price Flagon for Best Restoration, and of the Sustainability Award.

The Society's *Best New Building Award*, with the Hazzard Cup, went to The Orchards, a residential mental health care facility in Princess Close, which the judges said was carefully-grouped and on a human scale, with varied elevations and textures. The Orchards also won the *Environment Award*, with the Younge Rosebowl, for its imaginative planting.

Other Awards included *The Taylor Plate for Best Shop Front*, which was won by Jennifer Holmes Hair and Beauty and G Clarke Barbers, two shops in Masham's Park Street that were formerly the Co-operative store. *The Craftsmanship Shield* went to Ripon Cathedral for the restoration of the exterior of the north east aisle, including spirited new gargoyles.



Presentation by Richard Taylor to the Dean of Ripon

Presentation by the Chairman to Sir James and Lady Graham

The John Whitehead Award, which allows the Civic Society to recognise an outstanding contribution to the area, was presented to Norton Conyers, in recognition of the work carried out by Sir James and Lady Graham, undertaken over many years to

take this ancient, historic and fascinating house into the future in good heart.

David Winpenny, Chairman of the Society, said, 'This year's Awards, which we now hold every two years, show the diversity of new and restored buildings in Ripon and the surrounding area, and the care that is taken in ensuring they look their best. We are very pleased to have been able to award so many projects, and we hope that the example of them all will inspire others to do the same, so we can reward them in 2018, the Civic Society's 50th anniversary year.'

The full list of the 2016 winners:

The Hazzard Silver Cup for Best New Building:

WINNER: The Orchards - residential mental health care

COMMENDED: Water Skellgate – housing

The Price Flagon for Best Restored Building:

WINNER: Highfield Coach House

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Vinden Estates, Blossomgate - restoration for office

HIGHLY COMMENDED: St John's Church, Bondgate

COMMENDED: Ice Houses, Studley Deer Park

COMMENDED: 82/83 North Street - upper floors restoration for housing

The Younger Rosebowl for Best Environmental Improvement:

WINNER: The Orchards

COMMENDED: beside Lockwoods, North Street
Artwork on ginnel

The Taylor Plate for the Best Shop Front:

WINNER: Shop fronts of former Co-op, Park Street, Masham

HIGHLY COMMENDED: 8 High Skellgate - shop front

COMMENDED: Yorkshire Trading - Moss' Arcade new entrance

The Craftmanship Shield for Best Craftmanship:

WINNER: Cathedral north choir aisle exterior - three gargoyles

HIGHLY COMMENDED: St John's Church, Bondgate – tilework

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Restored crown from former Crown Hotel, Sainsbury's

The Sustainability Award:

WINNER: Highfield Coach House

HIGHLY COMMENDED: Fountains Abbey Visitor Centre

Ground source heating,

The Helen Whitehead Salver for the best project:

Highfield Coach House

The John Whitehead Award:

Norton Conyers

Our Ripon Re-Viewed photos project is fully up and running. The images – somewhere between 6,000 and 8,000 of them – are being scanned and conserved by staff at North Yorkshire County Record Office in Northallerton, where the originals will be stored in museum conditions. Our Project Officer, Katy Thornton, has recruited a dedicated group of volunteers to look at all the images and add to – and document – our knowledge of what each one shows.

Now, after taking professional advice, we are in the process of identifying and commissioning both a database management system so that the images will be easily searchable by tag – keywords – that the volunteers will add, and a website designer to provide us with an attractive ‘public face’ for this important project.

As well as our Heritage Lottery Fund grant to cover much of the work, we have generously been given donations by Ripon City Council and by Ripon’s two County Councillors – Cllr Bernard Bateman and Cllr Peter Horton.

This year will be an important one for the project, so watch out for the old pictures!

Our 2017 programme of talks and events begins on Thursday 5 January with a talk from one of our own members, Peter Hills, who will tell us about ‘Ripon’s Bridges’ into which he has done many years’ research. On 2 February Jane Furse, a member of the City Plan Committee and formerly of English Heritage, will talk on ‘The Latest Research at Newby Park’ – better known today as Baldersby Park, home of Queen Mary’s School, and not

RIPON
RE-VIEWED

WHAT’S
HAPPENING
IN 2017?

to be confused with Newby Hall!

The talk on 2 March is one of those arranged by our friends in Ripon Historical Society; it will be a costumed talk on 'The Civil War and Cromwell's Head' by Russell Marwood. On 6 April, Glen Young from the Heritage Craft Alliance, based near Bedale, will talk about the promotion of heritage skills in the built environment.

The second of our three Ripon Historical Society talks this year will take place on 4 May, when Richard Almond will speak about 'Medieval Hunting', and on 1 June Sue Wrathmell from Skipton Civic Society will speak on 'Civic Skipton Revealed'.

We hope to run a visit to Skipton not too long after Sue's talk, as well as an evening visit to Ripon Select Foods on Dallamires Lane in Ripon. We are also planning a coach trip in July to Renishaw Hall near Chesterfield, home of the literary Sitwell family. As well as a tour of the fascinating house, there is a wonderful garden to explore, a good café for lunch and a vineyard that we can visit, too. More details will be available later.



PAST EVENTS

As well as our regular talks, several events have taken place recently; the annual Heritage Open Days again saw the Society opening the Gazebo off Blossomgate and arranging with our

friends at the Masonic Hall and the Grammar School for the opening of their premises, too. Our Christmas Social Evening at the beginning of December was a convivial evening, which included a quiz in which small ad-hoc teams competed; there were no prizes, but there were wine and nibbles for everyone attending. Both events will happen again this year – please do support them!

We have responded to Harrogate’s *Draft Local Plan* (DLP) Among our concerns were:

HARROGATE
LOCAL PLAN

—Lack of reference to the northern part of the district being part of the wider North Yorkshire economy linked to the Tees City Region and its network of market towns (of which Ripon is part).

—The need to include key public transport corridors between Ripon and Thirsk/Northallerton (railway stations), and Ripon and York. We pointed out that even if the service is poor at present it does not mean that these should be ignored.

—That the holistic approach of the *Draft Ripon City Plan*, prepared by local people with informed knowledge of the city and its planning issues and opportunities, should be embodied in the *Local Plan*.

—We strongly objected to the DLPs assertion that because the *City Plan* ‘is not making larger scale allocations of land for new homes...’ the ‘...*Local Plan* is therefore making allocations of land for new homes in Ripon’. We argued that the whole point of *Ripon City Plan* is to present growth in Ripon through the use of previously developed land as a sufficient, generous and sustainable strategy. We objected most strongly to the insinuation that, because the *City Plan* is relying upon brownfield sites alone, it is justified for the DLP to come forward unilaterally with greenfield sites. This will result in Ripon’s taking a heavily disproportionate share of district-wide growth. In consequence, we argued that the site on West Lane, where 450 houses are proposed, is superfluous to the housing needs of the city and should be deleted from the DLP.

—The implication in the DLP that development limits are there to be breached. We proposed a correction to state that, ‘Proposals

for new development on sites outside the development limit of a settlement will not be supported unless this does not result in a disproportionate level of development compared to the existing settlement consistent with the role of the settlement.’

—The fact that open sites protected by Policy HP6: *Protection of Existing Sport, Open Space and Recreation Facilities* are not shown on the Policies Map. We pointed out that the public looks to the planning system to protect open space from development and such an omission will affect the DLP’s credibility.

—That the Tower Road site in Ripon has not been included in the list of Local Green Space; the Society urges its inclusion. Applications for designation of sites as Local Green Space will arise throughout the Plan period and yet there is no acknowledgement of this or what process and criteria apply.

—That the DLP needs to ensure that the wording of its policy on Unstable and Contaminated Land takes full advantage of expert advice provided by the British Geological Survey. Whilst the Society freely accepts that unstable land is a concern for sustainable development in Ripon, the incidence of gypsum dissolution over a wider area must not be presented as a detriment to Ripon’s reputation as a city.

You can read our complete comments on the Society’s website at www.riponcivicsociety.org.uk

AGM ADDITIONS

At the Society’s Annual General Meeting we welcomed two new faces to the Committee – Carolyn White and, as Treasurer, Paul Jackson. Carolyn has been a member for a little while and has bravely stepped forward to help; Paul came to us after we asked one of our Vice-Presidents, Barrie Price, if there was anyone at his company, EuraAudit, who might be willing to help. Paul has taken on the task very willingly, and we are very grateful to him – and to Barrie.

A REMINDER

**Your annual subscription is now due
Please pay promptly**

Thank you

Ripon Civic Society is a Registered Charity, No: 517434